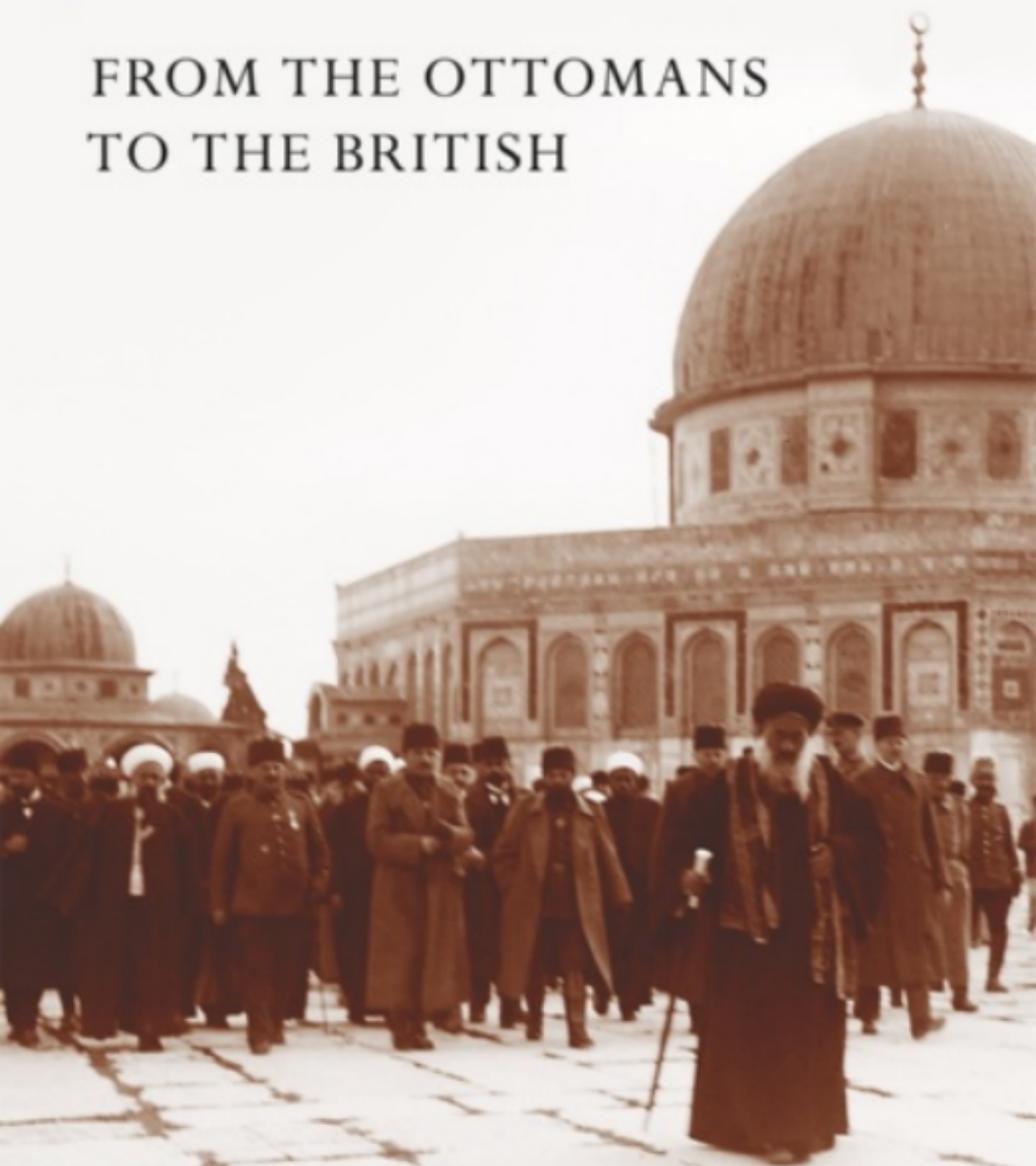


# JERUSALEM

FROM THE OTTOMANS  
TO THE BRITISH



ROBERTO MAZZA

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*For  
Monica*



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Despite the fact that this is an academic book on Jerusalem, there is an intimate side embedded into it. In the summer of 2000 I was in Jerusalem with Monica, then my future wife; there was a general feeling of hope, soon to evaporate when the peace process collapsed and the al-Aqsa intifada began. I can still vividly remember watching the news and linking those pictures with my individual perceptions of Palestine, Israel and Jerusalem. I suppose it was the very beginning of a long path that eventually brought me to explore the history of the city, and to question a number of preconceptions in the media and academic literature.

This book officially started as a PhD dissertation at SOAS, and it would not have been possible to publish it without the help of many people. I am delighted to acknowledge the support and friendship of a large number of individuals. I should start thanking my PhD supervisor Dr Nelida Fuccaro, who read numerous versions of this work, in the form of a thesis and then as a book; she has provided me with precious and priceless suggestions, and is presumably now bored with the topic! Many thanks also go to the SOAS History Department, and in particular to Dr Benjamin Fortna for his support and for the opportunity I was given to teach what I like in a place that I love.

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A book is not just the outcome of research, but I believe is more the concretisation of a dream. In my childhood I wanted to be and do many things, some of them quite unrealistic; I certainly could not aspire to being beamed aboard the Enterprise, but to have my name on a book has proved to be more feasible. Dreams, however, are not realised alone, and I want to thank Dr Vivian Ibrahim for providing precious advice, numerous corrections and priceless smiles that often brighten difficult moments. I am delighted to thank Dr Trudy Jacobsen and Dr Nir Arielli; they read early versions of this book, and their comments helped me to greatly improve it. Since I started my research I met so many people that it would be almost impossible to remember all of them, however, Dr Abigail Jacobson deserves special mention, as we share the same interest in Jerusalem and I benefited a lot from her work. I would also like to thank Dr Eitan Bar-Yosef, Dr James Renton and Dr Yair Wallach: their works have been an inspiration for me, and chatting with them has given me even more than just an insight. I would also like to take the chance to thank my future colleagues in the History Department at Western Illinois University, Macomb IL; I am sure I will have the chance to share some future works with them.

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Jerusalem was, and still is, a city of communities, with a great sense of family and home. There is a debt of gratitude which can hardly be paid back. I thank my parents Paolo and Carla Mazza who have always been supportive: they visited me during my research in Istanbul and Jerusalem, although they will never understand these few words as they do not speak English. Above all I am grateful to my wife: dear Monica, I cannot simply say thank you; in fact you are the one who has walked by my side everyday for the last few years, sharing failures and successes: I know a 'thank you' is not enough.



# GLOSSARY

*'aliyah*: Jewish immigration to Palestine and then to Israel after 1948

*Ayan*: Notable Muslim and Christian families of Jerusalem and Palestine

*Belediye*: Municipality

*Beylerbeylik*: Territorial subdivision which corresponded to a greater province

*Capitulations*: Treaties or grants which established a system of privileges and reductions in custom duties, as well as extraterritorial jurisdiction, favourable to Europeans

*CUP*: Committee of Union and Progress

*Custody of the Holy Land*: Religious institution founded by the Franciscan order in the thirteenth century with the purpose to take care of Catholics in the Holy Land

*Custos*: Fr Superior of the Franciscans in the Holy Land; he is resident in Jerusalem and by internal constitution he must be an Italian citizen

*Firman*: Decree, order, issued by the Sultan in Istanbul and valid through the Ottoman Empire

*Halukka*: Collection and distribution of funds for the Jewish residents of Palestine and Jerusalem

*Kazı*: Administrative unit, a subdivision of the *sancak*

*Meclis*: Council

*Meclis-i Idare*: Administrative Council

*Meclis-i Umumi*: General Council, usually of the province

*Millet*: State recognised community, defined according to religion

*Miri*: State lands, owned by the Sultan and available on the market

*Mutasarrıf*: Governor of the *sancak* or *mutasarrıfluk*; in Jerusalem he was appointed directly by Istanbul

*Mutasarrıfluk*: Administrative unit corresponding to a province; synonymous with sancak

*Mülk*: Private property; privately owned land

*Nüfus*: Population register

*Paşa*: Highest official Ottoman military and civil title

*Sancak*: Administrative unit, Province

*Status Quo*: Set of rules and customs ruling the disputes over the control and management of the holy places in Jerusalem and the Holy Land

*Status Quo Ante Bellum*: Rules of military occupation

*Tanzimat*: Name given to a set of reforms carried out in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century

*Tapu*: Land and property registry

*Vali*: Governor of the vilayet

*Vilayet*: Administrative unit, a larger province which included a number of *sancaks*

*Waqf*: Charitable endowment, lands not available on the market

## INTRODUCTION

My arrival in Jerusalem occurred on 6 December 1322 [19 December 1906] and I am still within the seventh month of my appointment, which I know is a great act of grace bestowed upon me by His Majesty the Caliph. There is no denial, therefore, that the authority to study and examine such a major issue as the Jewish question in Jerusalem which a six-seven month experience can provide a weak man, especially such as your slave, is valueless to the point of being in effect non-existent. [This question] has perhaps no equivalent in the Empire and, without denial, is continuing to get more and more complicated and intricate, taking many different shapes and forms. It is always prone, because of the involvement of all powers in it, to become a major political problem and from all points of view, it is, in short, a most difficult and crucial one. (Ali Ekrem Bey, Governor of Jerusalem, 1906-1908)<sup>1</sup>

There are enough books on the history of Jerusalem to fill entire libraries, so it is fair to ask: do we need yet another history of Jerusalem? However, the large availability of works does not necessarily mean there is a thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject, even if these works are a reflection of its relevance and publicity.

There are several reasons why scholars, writers and readers have approached the history of Jerusalem. The different narratives available not only represent different styles, methodological approaches and focus; narratives are often, and foremost, the expression of different political and religious visions. These narratives have often been employed to make claims which served

the purpose of those who wished to control the city and its meanings. In this context, Jerusalem has become an ‘imagined community’: in Andersonian terms, the city is imagined as there are many groups whose members do not necessarily know each other, but share strong feelings towards Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The city is also imagined as a community, irrespective of its manifest divisions, as it is conceived more as an ideal, where religious myths have been turned into collective memories, transmitted as history. Issam Nassar has noted how these narratives are in constant competition, as they connect the city with those groups who share the same history, thereby *de facto* isolating the history of different communities from the overall history of the city.<sup>3</sup> Is it then possible to write about Jerusalem without falling into these traps? Is it possible to avoid being subservient to a cause or a claim?

This book aims to discuss at least three issues rarely, if at all, touched on in the majority of works which relate to this popular city. Looking at the major literature on the history of Jerusalem, it is noteworthy that the particular period discussed in this work has often been neglected. There are several studies dealing with the late Ottoman history of Palestine, but the whole period of transition from Ottoman rule to British administration, and the period of the First World War, has been almost entirely overlooked. Rather than highlighting specific titles which have disregarded this period, it is more interesting to try and discover why this phase has been ignored. The question of periodisation is not only a practical or methodological issue: it is a choice of values and, to an extent, of claims to make. The division of history into periods is not something that is self-evident but rather – as E.H. Carr argues – a necessary hypothesis whose validity depends on interpretation.<sup>4</sup> This means that, beyond the simple task of dividing history on paper, what really matters is giving some meaning to the subdivision. While there is no issue with the idea of dividing history, the choice of the periodisation cannot be driven by political, ideological and religious claims. As it happens, concerning the available literature, there are not many claims to be made regarding Jerusalem during the First World War: there is indeed more to be said on the British mandate era, on early Jewish immigration, or on rising Palestinian nationalism. In view of this,

ironically, the years of the war have been ignored for political and ideological reasons.

The choice of the periodisation links to the second issue debated in this work. In Jerusalem during the war, local issues like lack of food or the militarisation of the local environment overshadowed international questions such as the management of the holy places or Jewish immigration. This period, therefore, is less attractive to professional historians. This has to do with the dominant discourses in the historical works in relation to the city. There are more works dealing with Europeans and Zionists than with the local population regardless of their affiliation: it seems as if the natives or local residents were not to be considered as agents of change in this formative period. Jerusalemites have rarely been placed at the centre of attention, and tend to be shown only if interacting with Europeans or Zionists. However, there is also a problem in defining who a Jerusalemite actually is. Personally, I decided to use a broad definition and include not only natives but also permanent residents; it is the interactions of these people that made Jerusalem a lively place, rather than a large open-air museum, Pompei-style. Sometimes, certain narratives give the impression that the inhabitants of the city were supporting actors or extras performing walk-on parts and cameos. This has a major repercussion on the way in which Jerusalem becomes the focus of the production of historical narrative. Including Jerusalemites in the picture broadens the sources to investigate; it becomes necessary to move away from the traditional sources used in the discussion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The questions of sources and historiography are also debated. There are two major issues to discuss: the use of local sources, and the insufficient interaction between the historiographies available. The majority of the works available are based on European sources and accounts of Western travellers. In itself this is not a problem; it is the way these sources have been used that is the issue. For instance, consular sources have been employed mainly to explain political relations between international actors, to shed light on the battles between religious institutions, and regarding Zionism and Jewish immigration; sometimes, data and information on the local population have only been mentioned to support the benevolent

effect of a European presence. The narrative of this book is based on a massive amount of data gathered through Western sources, but it focuses more on local issues, with a particular interest in what went on in the city during the war. The people of Jerusalem *were* the city, so it is necessary to take account of local voices expressed, mainly through diaries and memoirs. A good example is provided by the diary of the Spanish consul who resided in the city during the war; however scholars such as Abigail Jacobson, Issam Nassar and Salim Tamari have worked on diaries and memoirs of other local residents providing crucial information. Clearly, these sources are biased, and offer just one point of view: but it is the point of view of a local resident, and not of travellers imbued with religious fervour or a sense of *mission civilisatrice*. How can one write a history of Jerusalem without Jerusalemites, whether they are Orthodox monks, local businessmen or members of the Ottoman administration?

If sources are the main issue in writing the history of the city, in academic terms what should concern us is the production of narrative in different languages. Histories of Jerusalem have been written in several languages, notably English, Arabic, Hebrew, French and German, but some literature has also been produced in Italian and Spanish. Although most Israeli and Arab scholars have also published in English, what is really striking is the general lack of interaction between academics. In most of the literature in English, it is almost impossible to find references to French, Italian or Spanish narratives, whilst all of these narratives often feel obliged to quote from Anglo-Saxon works as English is the leading academic language. The works of Henry Laurens, Dominique Trimbur or Catherine Nicault are often unknown, while an article by Vincent Lemire and Yasemin Avcı seems to have been overlooked by Anglo-Saxon narratives. Indeed, different national narratives have different purposes: the French and the Italians have often focused on their activities in Jerusalem, while the British have focused on Jerusalem the biblical city or on the issue of Zionism. Arab and Israeli scholars have focused on political narratives, often relying on local sources to argue their cases, but *de facto* relying mainly on Anglo-Saxon literature for the historical context. Despite all possible attempts at interaction, what remains is an atomised

academic field, unable to communicate. The landscape is neither clear nor idyllic. What I have attempted to do in this work is bring together as many narratives as possible; to process them, explore what they have to offer, and to merge these works with my own sources. To claim full knowledge of all available literature on Jerusalem would be a mistake. Also not all primary sources available have been directly scrutinised, such as the diaries of Wasif Jawhariyyeh or Ihsan Tourjman; however my hope is to have broken through certain academic dogmas, and open the field to new perspectives and more research.

This book is divided into five chapters, dealing with several aspects of Jerusalem: administration, Churches, foreigners, the war, and politics. Chapter 1 discusses the late Ottoman administration of Jerusalem. It presents an overview of the administrative machine, including the local inhabitants, with the long-term purpose of considering the changes and continuities between the Ottoman and the British administrations. As far as Jerusalemites are included in this narrative, it is crucial to define composition of the local population, both in terms of numbers and structure at the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in an effort to present a reliable and apolitical picture of the population, I have tried to gather and combine all sources available. In Chapter 2, the position of religious institutions in the city during the war is debated. My point is that these institutions, despite being alien entities in the city, with poor connections with the local population, had to change their attitudes during and due to the war, renegotiating their positions *vis-à-vis* local inhabitants. A case study is provided through the discussion of the Custody of the Holy Land during the war, which summarises all the paradoxes of the Christian religious institutions of Jerusalem. I also discuss the emergence of the Christian-Muslim associations in response to Zionist activities, less in political terms and more as local organisations reshaping the traditional alliances between the various communities in the city.

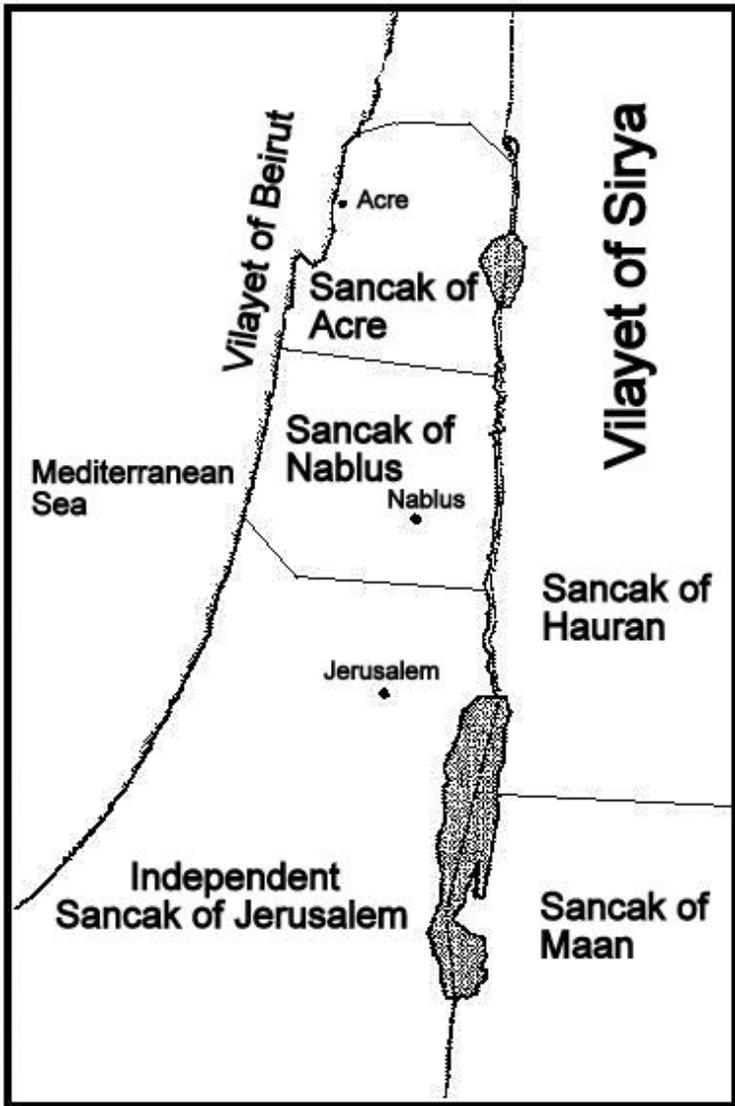
Chapter 3 introduces the question of foreigners in the city. It is clear that there is a need to differentiate between visitors and those who, for short or long periods, became residents. The agency of foreigners is scrutinised to show their impact on the city. I am

particularly interested in those foreign residents who lived in the city throughout the war, like the American consul Glazebrook and the Spanish diplomat Conde de Ballobar. Each of them provides a different perspective on the city, but it is the young Spanish diplomat who offers a very interesting insight into wartime Jerusalem. Ballobar wrote a diary of his mission during the war, with plenty of comments about the military, administration, and the local people; in fact, he effectively became one of them. He reported on the social activities taking place in the city, primarily dinners or social gatherings between the local, Ottoman and foreign elites, shedding light on a little-studied phenomenon.

Chapter 4 discusses the overall impact of the war on the city of Jerusalem. The war is discussed from different perspectives. Jerusalem was never an open field for military operations; however, mobilisation, militarisation of the environment, and British plans and occupation had a massive impact on the local milieu. All aspects of daily life were renegotiated, and sectarian barriers were lowered. In the context of the war, it can also be seen how Jerusalem was deprived of its status as a real city of real people, and turned into a symbolic place, a prize for the ultimate winner. It is easy to observe the dichotomy of a city which was inhabited by local people and idealised by the new conquerors, who did not hesitate to define themselves as new crusaders.

Chapter 5 partly mirrors the first chapter, discussing the British military administration of the city. The war was over in Jerusalem in December 1917, with the British occupation of the city, but in fact, I argue that the war period continued until 1920, when a civil administration was established. The military establishment was simple, and worked efficiently though it had to face several problems. Once again, the administrative decisions taken in relation to the city are scrutinised, as is the impact they had on the local population. This means looking at the well known, but not often discussed, figure of the military governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs, and his vision of Jerusalem, which was often translated into decrees with a long-lasting impact upon the city and its inhabitants. Eventually, the military administration was brought to an end by the explosion of violence between Arabs and Zionists in April 1920 – the Nebi Musa riots. A discuss of these events considers their

dynamics, and the impact these riots had on the city and local communities, arguing that Ottoman Jerusalem was fading, giving way to a new city, with renegotiated local values and alliances, but not yet a divided city.



Map 1: Ottoman administrative division of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria ©Roberto Mazza