

# Jerusalem Citadel:

## Between Historical Constants and the Zionist Narrative

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*From* the dawn of history, humanity has witnessed countless invasions and wars, driving civilizations to develop methods of defense, fortifying their gathering places, which would later evolve into cities. One of the earliest and most vital forms of defense, particularly for cities coveted by invaders, was the construction of walls, the digging of trenches, and the building of towers and fortresses to monitor enemy movements and safeguard the city.<sup>1</sup>

Archaeological discoveries reveal that Jerusalem's Old City stands as one of the oldest fortified Arab cities. It has been unequivocally established that the Jebusites, an ancient people, were the first to establish Jerusalem. They built their city on the Hill of ad-Duhur, located in the southeastern part of Old Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> overlooking the village of Silwan. This was confirmed by the discovery of the Jebusite wall, dating back to the third millennium BC.<sup>3</sup>

Modern historical studies further assert that due to the city's robust fortifications, it was once known as the Fortress of Zion,<sup>4</sup> a name that predates the Hebrew presence in the region. Thus, «Zion» is a name with deep roots in Jerusalem's history, long before the arrival of the Hebrews.

1 - The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology, (2010). Clifford J. Rogers, William Caferro & Shelly Reid (editors). Oxford University Press, vol.1, p.267.

2 - It is well-established that the old walled city of Jerusalem was built upon four primary hills. Initially founded on Tel al-Duhur, the city gradually expanded eastward towards Tel Moriah, the site where the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque now stands. As it grew further, Jerusalem extended northeast to Tel Bizita and finally reached the southwest, encompassing Tel Zion. References:

- Al-Aref, Aref (1961). Al-Mufassal fi Tarikh al-Quds, Jerusalem, p. 3.

- Al-Muhtadi, `Abla (2000). Jerusalem: History and Civilization, Beirut: Dar Nimah for Publishing and Distribution, p. 16.

3 - Kenyon, Kathleen M. (1974). Digging up Jerusalem, London: E. Benn, pp.9-78.

4 - Longman III, Tremper. & Enns, Peter. (2008). Dictionary Of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship. USA, Intervarsity Press, p. 936.

The Jerusalem Citadel stands as a testament to the city’s ancient significance, one of its most striking archaeological landmarks. Unlike most cities in the Levant and Palestine, which lacked such structures, towers and fortresses were reserved for central and vital urban centers. The citadel’s importance lies in its strategic position, built on a vulnerable lowland where the southwestern and northwestern hills converge. Rising from the remnants of earlier fortifications, it anchored the city’s wall at its most critical corner, demanding the strongest defenses.<sup>5</sup>

***The Jerusalem Citadel: Sentinel at the Corner of the City Wall***<sup>6</sup>



In 1967, with the fall of East Jerusalem, including the walled Old City, into the hands of the Zionist occupiers, they quickly began using the citadel to promote their fabricated historical claims to the city. From the very first days of occupation, they implemented a practice they had followed since 1948, which continues across all occupied Palestinian land: erasing names that reflect the Arab and Islamic heritage of places—whether cities, villages, sites, or neighborhoods—and replacing them with Jewish and biblical names.

Thus, they changed the longstanding name of the Jerusalem Citadel, known

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5 - Hawari, Mahmoud. (2017). “Capturing The Castle: Archaeology, Architectural History and Political Bias At The Citadel of Jerusalem”, Jerusalem Quarterly 55, p.48.

6 - The image is taken from the following website: [www.qudsgate.com](http://www.qudsgate.com)

for centuries as «the Citadel»<sup>7</sup> or «the Citadel of Jerusalem,» to «the Tower of David.» This renaming was a deliberate attempt to tie their occupation of the city to an ancient, mythical Jewish past. Our use of the term «mythical» aligns with popular ancient beliefs and the legendary tales surrounding the Prophet David, which modern archaeological and historical studies have shown to be ungrounded in historical fact.<sup>8</sup>

Historical sources confirm that during the Byzantine era in Jerusalem, there was a tall tower known as the Tower of David on the current site of the Jerusalem Citadel. It served as a Christian shrine, first mentioned by the Italian pilgrim Antoninus of Piacenza. Writing about his pilgrimage to the Holy Land around 570 AD, he noted: «Christian pilgrims pray at that site.»<sup>9</sup>

The archaeological excavations conducted at the citadel site during the late 20th century lend credence to this historical account. Buried beneath the earth, researchers uncovered mosaic floors from church buildings and inscriptions dating back to the early Byzantine period.<sup>10</sup>

These findings suggest that the site's religious significance during that era had no connection to the Prophet David. However, the origins of the name «Tower of David» remain unclear. One theory, suggested by a scholar studying Islamic shrines in Palestine, posits that many such sites, especially during the transition from Christianity to Islam in the 7th and 8th centuries AD, were named after figures revered by all three monotheistic faiths—Abraham, David, Solomon, among others.<sup>11</sup>

It appears the tower's association with the Prophet David persisted for centuries,

7 - Al-Isfahani referred to the formidable fortress at the city gate as «the citadel,» though he did not pinpoint its exact location. He described it as the stronghold where the governor resided. Al-Isfahani, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Hamid, also known as Imad al-Din al-Katib (d. 597 AH/1201 AD), mentions this in *Al-Fath al-Qussi fi al-Fath al-Qudsi (The Wars of Saladin and the Conquest of Jerusalem)*, Cairo: Dar al-Manar, 2004, p. 81.

8 - Magness, Jodi (2012). *The Archaeology of The Holy Land: From the Destruction of Solomon's Temple to The Muslim Conquest*, University Of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Cambridge University Press, p.143.

9 - Hawari, Mahmoud (2010). «The Citadel of Jerusalem: A Case Study in The Cultural Appropriation of Archaeology in Palestine» IN *Present Pasts*, London: University College London, Institute of Archaeology, pp.95-89.

10 - Hawari, *Capturing the Castle*, pp.3-52.

11 - Carlson, Thomas A. (2015), «Contours of Conversion: The Geography of Islamization in Syria, -600 1500» In *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135.4, p.800.

with periodic modifications to reflect the shifting political realities. When control of the city transitioned from Christian Byzantine to Arab Islamic rule, the name evolved from «Tower of David» to «David's Mihrab (Sanctuary),»<sup>12</sup> emphasizing its religious importance to Muslims after having served as a Christian shrine. This illustrates how political circumstances can shape not only cultural perceptions but even religious beliefs.

The Arab geographer Al-Istakhri<sup>13</sup> mentioned this tower in the early 10th century AD, noting: “The prayer niche of David, peace be upon him, is here, a tall structure, approximately fifty cubits (25 meters)<sup>14</sup> high and thirty cubits (15 meters) wide. Above it is a room, which serves as the prayer niche. When you arrive from Ramla, this is the first building you encounter at the Holy House.<sup>15</sup>” Based on these dimensions, it is clear Al-Istakhri referred to one of the ancient towers, rather than the current castle. His mention of Ramla, a city northwest of Jerusalem, further indicates that the tower stood on the western side of the city wall.

When the Crusaders seized Jerusalem in 1099 AD, the name «Tower of David» was revived. French historian Fulcher of Chartres, who accompanied the First Crusade, described it: «To the west lies the Tower of David, encircled on all sides by the city wall... This tower is constructed of solid stones, with its upper half built from immense square blocks sealed with molten lead.»<sup>16</sup> From this description, we can deduce that this tower was different from the one Al-Istakhri described, more closely resembling the current citadel surrounded by walls on two sides. This suggests a transformation in the structure, or multiple structures,

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12 - Mihrab: a chamber, and in religious terms, a niche in the front of a mosque, marking the qibla, where the imam leads the congregation in prayer. For further details, refer to: <https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar>

13 - Al-Istakhri passed away in 346 AH/957 AD, living during the era when Jerusalem was under Ikhshidid rule, during the reign of Abu Qasim Muhammad, known as Anujur, who died in 349 AH/960 AD. For more, see Al-Muhtadi, *Jerusalem History*, pp. 103-102.

14 - In the international system, a cubit is equivalent to half a meter.

15 - Al-Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Muhammad al-Farsi, known as al-Karkhi (d. 346 AH/957 AD), authored (n.d.) *The Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, which discusses the Land of the Levant. This work was published in Cairo by the General Authority for Cultural Palaces, p. 44.

16 - Al-Muhtadi, `Abla. *Jerusalem: A New Perspective on the Land, People, and Stone 3000 BC1517- AD*. Amman: Publications of the Jordanian Ministry of Culture, 2021, p. 221.

on the site between the mid-10th and late-11th centuries.



**A captivating image reveals the castle buildings encircling the inner courtyard, where the remnants of the ruins are distinctly visible.**<sup>17</sup>

We discerned this transformation through the archaeological explorations conducted on the castle site in the 20th century. The first excavation was carried out in 1934 by British archaeologist Cedric N. Johns on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of the British Government of Palestine. His five-year endeavor revealed the northwestern corner of an ancient fortification system likely linked to King Herod's palace.<sup>18</sup>

It also unearthed architectural remnants and pottery associated with a circular tower at the southernmost end of the castle courtyard, dating back to the Umayyad era in the eighth century AD.<sup>19</sup>

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17 - The image is taken from the Palestinian News and Information Agency - Wafa: [https://info.wafa.ps/ar\\_page.aspx?id=9711](https://info.wafa.ps/ar_page.aspx?id=9711)

18 - Galor, Katharina (2017). Finding Jerusalem: Archaeology Between Science and Ideology, University of California Press, p.36.

19 - Hawari, Capturing the Castle, pp.4-53.

However, upon re-examining the archaeological evidence, Dr. al-Hawari disproved Johns's conclusion regarding the castle's origins. Historical studies reveal that the remains of the stones and colored glass actually date to the late eleventh century, specifically during the Seljuk Turks' rule<sup>20</sup> of Jerusalem from 1072 to 1096 AD.<sup>21</sup>

This finding is bolstered by the fact that the Arab region did not see the construction of castles during the Umayyad period. Furthermore, historical sources from the Seljuk era affirm this conclusion.

These sources indicate that the position of the Dizdar, or castle commander and protector, was one of three key roles within Seljuk governance in Jerusalem at that time.<sup>22</sup>

The Andalusian traveler Ibn al-Arabi described the castle, referring to it as the Mihrab of David. He noted its impressive dimensions, with stones measuring fifty cubits in length and thirteen cubits in width. Ibn al-Arabi remarked that the castle's height in winter rendered its peak invisible among the clouds.

He also detailed a small door and a wide staircase, noting that the castle housed dwellings and included a mosque, which featured an eastern opening towards Al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>23</sup>

The Seljuks prioritized building castles in the Arab region for their fortified protection, as they were outsiders needing safety from the local populace.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Ibn al-Arabi's description of the castle's stones bears a resemblance to the French historian's accounts of the monumental stones used during the Crusader era.

The castle maintained its structure throughout the Crusader period until around 1160 AD, when significant expansions were made to include a larger number of

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20 - Ibid, p.4-53.

21 - Al-Muhtadi, Jerusalem: History and Civilization, pp. 111-110.

22 - Al-Muhtadi, Al-Quds Al-Shareef, pp. 157-156.

23 - Ibn al-Arabi, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Maghribi al-Ma'afari al-Ishbili (al-Andalusi) (d. 543 AH/1148 AD). The Rulings of the Quran, edited by Muhammad Abd al-Qadir Atta, 4 vols., 3rd ed. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2003, vol. 4, pp. 7-6.

24 - Ibn al-Qalanisi, Hamza ibn Asad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad Abu Ya'la al-Tamimi, known as Ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 555 AH/1160 AD). History of Damascus, edited by Suhayl Zakar, 1st ed. Damascus, pp. 181-180. Ibn al-Athir, Izz al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Shaybani (d. 630 AH/1233 AD). Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, ("The Complete History") 10 vols., edited by Omar Abd al-Salam al-Tadmuri. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1997, vol. 8, p. 260.

towers.<sup>25</sup>

The Ayyubid forces, led by Saladin Ayyubi, attacked the city of Jerusalem in 1187, reclaiming it from the Crusader Franks. This assault subjected the citadel to acts of vandalism and destruction. However, with the city's return to Islamic governance, Saladin initiated fortification and reconstruction efforts.<sup>26</sup>

Muslim historians revived the mention of the Mihrab of David. Al-Isfahani, writing in the late eleventh century AD, described it as “a fortified fortress at the city gate, a high and lofty place where the governor resides.” He noted that the Sultan took great care of it, appointing an imam, muezzins, and a caretaker, transforming it into a mosque.

This Mihrab became a place of pilgrimage, as it was believed to be the former home of David and Solomon, peace be upon them.<sup>27</sup>

Through al-Isfahani's description, we discerned that the Mihrab of David was situated within a fortified fortress at the city gate, which he later identified as the castle. This name was given to one of the ancient towers within the castle's boundaries. The Sultan's attention to the Mihrab implies that it had been designated as a mosque, which drew frequent visitors due to the popular belief that it held historical significance connected to the prophets. However, modern archaeological studies have found no evidence linking David or Solomon to the city or this castle, highlighting the persistence of mythical beliefs that have been passed down through generations without factual support.

Throughout history, invaders sought to demolish towers and castles to assert their control over important sites. Despite King al-Muazzam Sharaf Al-Din Isa bin Al-Adil Al-Ayyubi's reconstruction efforts in 1213 AD,<sup>28</sup> the ongoing conflicts between the Ayyubids and the Franks led him to demolish the Jerusalem Castle and other fortifications in 1219 AD. He feared they might again fall into Crusader hands.<sup>29</sup>

25 - Al-Muhtadi, Al-Quds Al-Shareef, pp. 222-221.

26 - Al-Hajj Khaleel, Maqbula Hassan (2009). The City of Jerusalem in the Ayyubid Era. Amman: Publications of the Jordanian Ministry of Culture, p. 120.

27 - Al-Isfahani in Al-Fath al-Qussi, p. 81.

28 - Ghosheh, Muhammad Hashim. (2009). Jerusalem in the Ottoman Era (922 AH/1516 AD - 974 AH/1566 AD). Amman: Publications of the Jordanian Ministry of Culture, p. 84.

29 - Al-Muhtadi, Jerusalem: History and Civilization, p. 223.



Ibn Wasil chronicled this destruction, noting the extensive walls and towers built during Saladin's time. He recounted how stonemasons and carpenters were gathered to dismantle the stronghold, preserving only the Tower of David.<sup>30</sup>

The Citadel of Jerusalem remained largely in ruins until the thirteenth century. Sibṭ (grandson of) Ibn Al-Jawzi noted the destruction of several castles, including those in Jerusalem when he said: "Along the Levantine coast, several castles were laid to waste, including those in Jerusalem, Kawkab, and Tur..."<sup>31</sup> The citadel lay in a state of neglect until the Mamluk era. Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad bin Qalawun, whose biographer Ibn Taghri Bardi remarked without details<sup>32</sup> on the numerous stone buildings constructed in the Levant during his reign, undertook its reconstruction in 710 AH (1310-1311 AD). Bardi also noted that the majority of his structures were crafted from stone, a precaution taken to guard against the threat of fires.<sup>33</sup>

The history of this edifice and its construction was revealed through the archaeological plaque that adorned the entrance to the castle, remaining in place until the conclusion of the Ottoman era. This significant record was documented by the archaeologist Van Berchem in 1894. However, during the period of Israeli occupation in Jerusalem, the plaque was removed from its rightful position and vanished without a trace.<sup>34</sup>

This act was an attempt by occupying forces to erase the legacy of Islamic civilization in the construction of this historic castle.

With the transfer of Jerusalem's governance from the Mamluks to the Ottomans, the city underwent a significant reconstruction during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. This period saw extensive efforts to restore the city wall and

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30 - Ibn Wasil, Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Salim (d. 697 AH/1298 AD). (1957). Mufarrij al-Kurub fi Akhbar Bani Ayyub (The Dissipator of anguish in the Account of the Ayyubid Dynasty), Vol. 615 4 AH628-AH), edited and annotated by Hassanein Muhammad Rabi', reviewed and introduced by Sa'id Abd al-Fattah Ashour. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub wa al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya (Egyptian National Archives), al-Amiriya Press, Vol. 4, p. 32.

31 - Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, Shams al-Din Abu al-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn Qizauhli ibn Abdullah (d. 654 AH/1256 AD). (2013). Mirat al-zaman fi tarj al-ayan (Mirror of Time in the Histories of Notable People), 1st ed. Damascus: Dar al-Risalah al-Alamiyyah, p. 96.

32 Ibn Taghri Bardi, Jamal al-Din Abu al-Mahasin Yusuf al-Atabaky (d. 874 AH/1470 AD). (1963). Al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa-al-Qahirah [The Illuminating Stars in Egypt and Cairo Kings], 16 vols. Cairo: Ministry of Culture, vol. 9, p. 210.

33 - Ibid, Vol. 9, p. 181.

34 - Hawari, Capturing the Castle, p.55.



its citadel. In 938 AH / 1530 AD, the Ottoman authorities undertook essential restoration work on the Jerusalem Citadel, overseen by Muhammad Bey, Emir of the Jerusalem Brigade, prior to the commencement of the new city wall. A commemorative inscription within the citadel marks this restoration. Furthermore, the citadel underwent a second restoration in 944 AH / 1537 AD.<sup>35</sup>

From these accounts, we can infer that the citadel's current architectural form is the result of a succession of Islamic constructions. In our contemporary era, despite the Zionists' firm belief that the name of the Prophet David is unrelated to the citadel's construction or the ancient towers it houses, they have intentionally assigned the name "Tower of David" to the current citadel. This decision, as previously noted, aims to perpetuate a misleading narrative among the public, echoing the myths that once prevailed. Their ultimate goal is to assert a connection between the modern Zionist presence in Jerusalem and the ancient history of the Jews in the region.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, the Zionists assert a link between the history of the citadel and ancient Jewish history in Jerusalem, basing their claim on the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus (d. 100 AD). He spoke of the «Acra» fortress,<sup>37</sup> built by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV to govern Jerusalem<sup>38</sup> between 175-164 BC.<sup>39</sup> The Zionists argue that this connection proves the citadel's origins trace back to Jewish rule during the Hasmonean dynasty.<sup>40</sup>

Some Israeli archaeological studies attempt to support this claim, rooted in biblical narratives, by suggesting that the castle underwent three main construction phases. Two of these, they claim, belong to the Hasmonean period, while the third dates to

35 - Ghosheh, Jerusalem in the Ottoman Era, pp. 92 ,84.

36 - Galor, Finding Jerusalem, pp.4-3.

37 - The term «Acra» is derived from the Aramaic abbreviation of the Greek word **Akropoli**, meaning fortress or castle. For further details, refer to: ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acra\\_\(fortress\)#Etymology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acra_(fortress)#Etymology)).

38 - Josephus. Flavius (1984), The Jewish War, G. A. Williamson (trans.), Revised Edition, England: Penguin Classics, Ch.1, p. 410.

39 - Al-Muhtadi, Al-Quds Al-Shareef, p. 39.

40 - For further exploration of the Hasmonean dynasty during the Seleucid period in Palestine, consult: - Bevan, Edwin R. (1902). The House of Seleucus, 2 vols., London: Edward Arnold.

the reign of Herod the Great, when he constructed his palace on the site.<sup>41</sup>

However, modern historical studies paint a different picture. They show that Roman Jerusalem in the first century BC was divided by the Tropion Valley into two distinct areas. The southeastern low hill, descending from the area of the Holy Sanctuary, formed the lower city,<sup>42</sup> the most densely populated. The higher western hill, on the other hand, housed the upper city. According to one such study, Josephus likely used the term «Acra» as a reference to the lower city,<sup>43</sup> not the upper city on the western hill where the citadel now stands. This interpretation is further supported by a nineteenth-century map labeled No. 3.

Opponents of the theory linking the site of Acra with the current citadel point out the lack of archaeological or historical evidence supporting such a claim. They also note that the western hill was sparsely inhabited during the Hellenistic period.<sup>44</sup>

Another argument against this theory is the natural barrier formed by the steep Tropion Valley, which would have prevented any forces stationed on the western hill from effectively intervening in the densely populated lower city.<sup>45</sup>

Archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, based on findings from excavation, confirms that Herod's palace was constructed on the western edge of the city, aligning with the present-day location of the citadel. The main tower of the citadel contains stone remnants from Herod's era, standing at great height.<sup>46</sup> From this, we can conclude with certainty that the first major construction on the citadel site took place during the Roman period under Herod, not during the Hasmonean era as claimed by the Zionists.

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41 - Bahat, Dan (2008). "Jerusalem Between the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great," in *Cities Through the Looking Glass: Essays on the History and Archaeology of Biblical Urbanism*, edited by Rami Arav, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, p. 122.

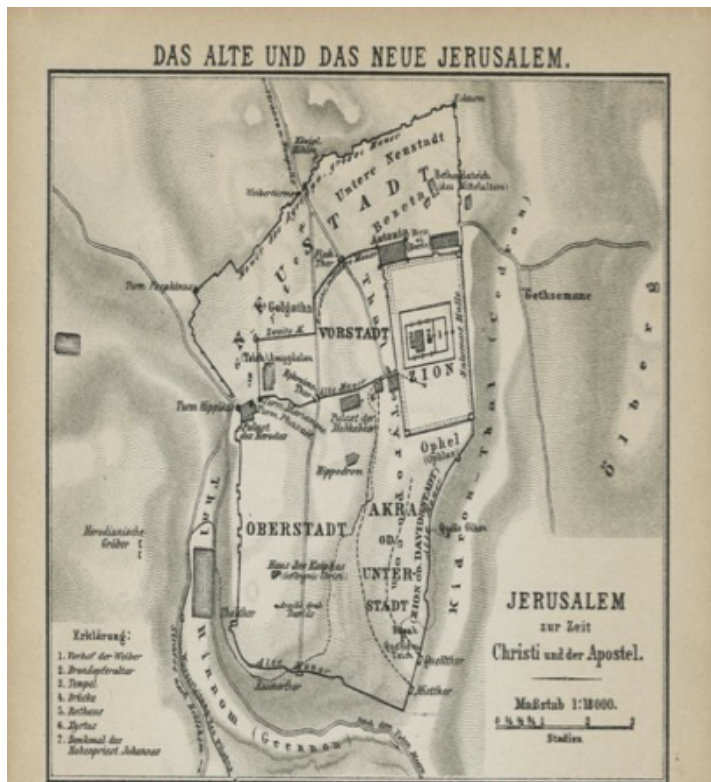
42 - Finegan, Jack (1946). *Light From the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of The Hebrew-Christian Religion*, vol.1, Princeton: Princeton Legacy Library, pp. 9-238.

43 Decoster, Koen (1989). "Flavius Josephus and the Seleucid Acra in Jerusalem", In "Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins (-1953). Published by Deutscher Verein Zur Erforschung Palästinas, pp.8-70

44 - Stern, Ephraim & Others (eds.). (1993). «The Acra» In the *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. 4 Vols., New York- England, vol. 2, p.723.

45 - Shotwell, W. A. (1964). «The Problem of the Syrian Akra». *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Boston, Massachusetts: ASOR, 19-10 :176.

46 - Kenyon, Kathleen M. (1967), *Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 Years of History*, U.S.A: Thames & Hudson, p.142.



***[3] A 19th-century German map of Jerusalem, depicting the sacred sites from the time of Christ and various places of worship.<sup>47</sup>***

Immediately after the 1967 war, on August 30 of the same year, the Zionist entity declared the Old City of Jerusalem and its surroundings as protected archaeological sites under the Antiquities Law, a proclamation published in the Official Gazette of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, No. 1390. They swiftly intensified Zionist entity’s excavation efforts in the heart of Jerusalem, with the Citadel being one of the most significant sites targeted.<sup>48</sup>

Notably, although most of these excavations were carried out by Zionist institutions, very few findings were published,<sup>49</sup> suggesting that the results did not

47 - In this old German map of Jerusalem, while we cannot verify its precise source, date of creation, or the specific period it represents, it marks the citadel’s location as Palast Des Herodes (Herod’s Palace). It also identifies AKRA as situated in the southeastern part of the city.

48 - Galor, Finding Jerusalem, pp.40-39.

49 - Hawari, Capturing the Castle, p.50.

support their fabricated historical claims to the Citadel.

Recognizing the limitations of this approach, the Zionist entity shifted tactics, opting to follow in the footsteps of earlier colonial powers, particularly the British. During their initial occupation of Jerusalem, the British, after conducting minor renovations on the Citadel, transformed it into a cultural center, hosting musical performances and exhibitions by local artists. From the late 1930s until 1948, they repurposed it as a museum of Palestinian folk heritage,<sup>50</sup> a move aimed at enhancing their colonial image before the local populace.

In a similar vein, the Zionists decided to repurpose the Citadel, turning it into what is now known as the «Tower of David Museum.»

To realize this project, the castle underwent extensive excavation and restoration between 1980 and 1988. During this period, the floors were removed, and further excavations were carried out under the stated aim of creating additional space for the proposed museum<sup>51</sup>. However, given the explicit calls from Zionist leaders, starting with Theodor Herzl during his 1898 visit to Jerusalem, and later David Ben-Gurion after the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem<sup>52</sup>, to destroy every non-Jewish monument in the city, the true, unstated purpose of these excavations becomes clear. They were intended to erase any traces that could challenge the fabricated Zionist narrative linking the castle's history to the Hasmonean (Jewish) rule of Jerusalem in the second century BC.

Al-Hawari notes that excavations in the castle courtyard revealed traces of ancient fortifications, particularly sections of a wall with two large towers, possibly dating to the Hellenistic period around the second century BC. These walls may have been restored during the reign of King Herod in the first century BC<sup>53</sup>. However, these findings do not confirm a Hellenistic origin, as modern studies have proven it impossible that a fortress from that era could have been built in the upper city before Herod's reign.

Therefore, the remains of the wall and the two towers likely belong to two of the three towers built by Herod in the northwestern corner of his palace, now the

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50 - Galor, Finding Jerusalem, p.79.

51 - Hawari, Capturing the Castle, p.50.

52 - Galor, Finding Jerusalem, pp.6-45.

53 - Hawari, Capturing the Castle, p.52.

site of the present castle. These towers were constructed to reinforce the northern edge of the city, which lacked the natural defense of deep valleys found on the other sides, and to protect Herod's palace, itself fortified<sup>54</sup>. Each tower bore a name in memory of a loved one. The first, the Tower of Mariamne, named after his murdered wife, stood 50 cubits (25 meters) high. The second, the Tower of Phasael, named after his brother, reached 90 cubits (45 meters), and the third, the Tower of Hippicus, honored his friend, standing 80 cubits (40 meters) tall<sup>55</sup>. Phasael's tower was the tallest of the three.

When the Roman general Titus besieged Jerusalem in 70 AD, he razed two of these towers, leaving only the lower portion of Phasael's Tower intact. Its upper section was later restored using smaller stones than those from Herod's original construction. Today, this tower still stands within the castle.<sup>56</sup>

It is worth noting that visitors to the castle often confuse Phasael's Tower, historically known as the Tower of David, with the minaret of the Ottoman mosque still standing in the castle courtyard. Even some scholars have misidentified the massive construction of the minaret as Phasael's Tower.<sup>57</sup>

The Tower of David Museum, opened by the Zionist entity within Jerusalem's Citadel in 1989, has faced widespread criticism from archaeologists. The foremost issue raised is the Zionists' deliberate exploitation of the citadel, a structure that stood resilient for centuries. Rather than using it to display the true history of its construction or the cultural heritage of the city, they transformed it merely into an aesthetic backdrop for the museum.<sup>58</sup>

A key criticism lies in how the museum's halls were designed. Traditionally, museums aim to display original artifacts, emphasizing the importance of the city and state in the broader context of world history. However, in this museum, the Zionists presented artifacts that reflect different historical stages of Jerusalem, selectively linking each stage to their alleged Jewish history. The museum

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54 - Magness, *The Archaeology of The Holy Land*, p.140.

55 - Finegan, *light*, p. 241.

56 - *Ibid*, p. 241; Magness, *The Archaeology of The Holy Land*, pp.3-142.

57 - Magness, *The Archaeology of The Holy Land*, p.143.

58 - Galor, *Finding Jerusalem*, pp. 80-79.

glosses over the city's rich heritage from the Middle Ages and Islamic periods, which are bursting with cultural and historical significance, and instead focuses predominantly on the Jewish and Israeli narratives. Additionally, the museum applies biblical terms like the «First Temple» and «Second Temple» without regard for neutral, traditional terminology that would align with the historical stages they claim to represent.<sup>59</sup> Many have thus concluded that this museum fails to document the true historical development of the Old City.<sup>60</sup>

Further criticism arises from the words of the Israeli museum curator, who stated: «There is no such thing as an objective presentation. All presentations rely on interpretive possibilities, and those possibilities combine to tell a story. Therefore, it is up to professional curation to choose which story to tell.»<sup>61</sup> This statement reflects the very approach the Zionist entity uses in crafting its misleading narrative about their supposed ancient history—an approach they apply across all forums in the hopes of embedding the idea of the Jewish state into public consciousness, with the hope it will be accepted over time.

### **Conclusion**

The ancient Citadel of Jerusalem stands as a living testament to the city's rich history and its strategic significance. This paper has demonstrated how, since their occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, the Zionists have deliberately sought to erase the castle's established name, famous for centuries, and replace it with a long-forgotten title. This renaming aims to link the citadel to a mythical story that was once popular in ancient Jerusalem, though entirely lacking in historical or religious validity. Furthermore, archaeological discoveries have clearly revealed the profound cultural influence of successive Islamic civilizations on the architectural design of the citadel. Yet, the Zionist entity has ignored this legacy, reducing the castle's historical role to nothing more than a decorative element within their narrative, one designed to reinforce the fabricated Jewish history they seek to impose upon the city.

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59 - Galor, Finding Jerusalem, p. 80; Hawari, Capturing the Castle, p.62.

60 - Galor, Finding Jerusalem, p. 80.

61 - Ibid, p. 80.

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