

## PART TWO

# Cultural Heritage

JERUSALEM'S HERITAGE IS A CULTURAL AMALGAM, recently absorbed into the discourse about who owns the past. Questioning the proprietorship of antiquities, determining the international standards of cultural, scientific, and ethnic principles, and examining how these have been applied and governed by various religious and political administrators form the core of this part of my study, in which science meets ideology. Relevant to this investigation is the understanding of how decisions are made as to where to expose, what to preserve, and how to showcase archaeological ruins capable of telling a story. This discussion of cultural heritage explores who produces knowledge and how the information is disseminated, presented, and consumed in educational settings and in public displays such as monuments, sites, parks, and museums. The heritage at stake is of relevance to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as, more recently, Israelis and Palestinians, none of whom are homogenous groups or holders of monolithic interests.



## From Destruction to Preservation

When Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, visited Jerusalem in 1898, he was repelled by “the musty deposits of two thousand years of inhumanity, intolerance and foulness” in the “reeking alleys” of the Old City. He vowed that the first thing the Zionists would do when they got control of Jerusalem would be to tear most of it down, building an “airy, comfortable, properly sewerred, new city around the holy places.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, when East Jerusalem and the Old City were captured by Israel in 1967, David Ben-Gurion (the founder of the State of Israel and the first prime minister of the country), then a member of Knesset, called for the demolition of the walls of Jerusalem because they were not Jewish and thus threatened to disrupt the visual continuity of Israeli control.<sup>2</sup>

Though neither Herzl’s nor Ben Gurion’s vision or goal was realized, massive and deliberate destructions of material legacies occurred following the UN Partition Plan of 1947. During the period of Jordanian rule of the Old City and East Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967, numerous synagogues and other Jewish institutions, particularly in the Jewish Quarter, were abandoned, neglected, or demolished.<sup>3</sup> Then, in June 1967, immediately following the armistice that concluded the Arab-Israeli War, all inhabitants of the Mughrabi Quarter near the Western Wall were evacuated, and the historic district was razed to create room for a wide, open plaza that would be joined to the Jewish Quarter.<sup>4</sup> Additional destruction occurred throughout the Jewish Quarter. Here, instead of preserving the original character of the neighborhood, the municipality replaced medieval alleys and buildings with a completely new cityscape, creating a deliberate segregation—ethnic, religious, cultural, and architectural—between the refurbished area and the

other quarters in the Old City.<sup>5</sup> Since 1967, campaigns seeking the destruction of significant historic monuments have continued. For example, the Temple Mount Faithful as well as other radical groups have repeatedly militated for the destruction of the holy Muslim shrines and the return of the compound to Jewish control as the first step toward the rebuilding of the Temple on the site of the Dome of the Rock.<sup>6</sup>

Individual, public, and institutional attitudes toward the paradigms and problems of cultural heritage and its preservation have undergone significant changes and developments, both conceptually and practically, over the course of the last century. Despite the significant progress of the public and academic discourse on cultural heritage, in particular in Europe and the United States, the implementation of progressive policies in Israel, especially in Jerusalem's Historic Basin, have been limited or hindered as a result of political conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Indicative of both the progress and stagnation with regard to honoring Jerusalem's diverse building heritage is one of the IAA's most important current conservation projects, which once again turns our attention to the city walls. Exactly fifty years after Ben-Gurion suggested demolishing the walls of Jerusalem's Old City, the IAA identified the Ottoman fortifications as one of the city's "most important cultural heritage assets."<sup>8</sup> The Jerusalem City Wall Conservation Project was launched in 2007. But in addition to conserving and stabilizing the original sixteenth-century construction, the project also aims to use the Ottoman walls to highlight the modern history of the State of Israel. When the Hagana (the Jewish paramilitary organization active during the time of the British Mandate, which later became the core of the IDF) tried to break into the Jewish Quarter in May of 1948, they damaged the ashlar surrounding the Zion Gate (see figure 14). After the 1967 war, the bullet-scarred gate became one of the hallmarks of a "united Jerusalem," a symbol that the IAA decided to preserve as "the single most important event to have left its stamp on the gate's façade in its 468 year history."<sup>9</sup> In other words, the Ottoman city walls—whether perceived as a hurdle to the construction of a new Jewish city, an obstacle for a "united Jerusalem," or as a means of commemorating the Israeli narrative of the "conquest" of the Old City—have played a consistently important role in the ideological discourse on Jewish Jerusalem.

The notion that physical remnants of the past, whether intact, damaged, or even largely destroyed, should be valued as common human heritage and protected from exploitation by nation-states has taken an increasingly important place in academic as well as public discussions of cultural heritage.<sup>10</sup> The task of preserving the tangible and intangible legacies of nations or peoples without fostering religious zeal, supporting ideological discourse, or endorsing national agendas, however, is particularly complex and challenging for a contested city like Jerusalem.



FIGURE 14. The bullet-scarred Zion Gate. Photo by Katharina Galor.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS, GUIDELINES, AND CHARTERS

The concept of protecting cultural property from the effects of war was first defined in The Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907 and in the Washington Treaty of 1935.<sup>11</sup> The serious damage to cultural property that occurred during the Second World War dramatically increased the perceived need to establish more effective guidelines and laws to protect cultural heritage, especially in areas that had suffered significant wartime damage. In the preamble to The Hague convention of 1954, the concept of the common heritage of humanity as applied to cultural property finds expression for the first time.<sup>12</sup> That convention was followed by a UNESCO convention in 1970 titled “Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1972, the World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage stipulated the obligation of states—or parties acting as states—to report regularly to the World Heritage Committee on the conservation of their World Heritage Properties. This convention was one of UNESCO’s most successful endeavors, reflected by the fact that 167 states ratified it. It covered the protection of cultural heritage both in peace and wartime, it transcended national boundaries, and it set rules for both natural and cultural heritage. Its primary mission was to “define and conserve the world’s heritage by drawing up a list of sites whose outstanding values should be preserved for all humanity and to ensure their protection through a closer cooperation among nations.”<sup>14</sup>

The 1972 World Heritage Convention was followed in 1995 by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) Convention on Stolen and Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. Finally, the UNESCO Underwater Convention of 2001 established the protection of underwater cultural heritage. These initiatives shared the conviction that cultural heritage should not be regarded as a purely local, ethnic, or national endowment. Instead, it should be viewed and treated as the cultural property of humankind as a whole and should thus be preserved.

In 1990, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a non-governmental organization, published its Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage, providing guidelines for the management of cultural heritage in all its forms and diversity.<sup>15</sup> Although this document does not have the status of an international treaty, it represents a consensus reached by academics and professionals in the field of culture preservation. The charter explicitly states that “legislation should be based on the concept of the archaeological heritage as the heritage of all humanity and groups of peoples, and not restricted to any individual person or nation.”<sup>16</sup> These international guidelines and conventions have certain implications for Jerusalem, though most of them affect the academic and public discourse rather than the reality of archaeological fieldwork and preservation.

#### CULTURAL HERITAGE IN JERUSALEM

Perceptions of what constitutes the cultural heritage of Jerusalem have evolved, changed, and embraced different and sometimes opposing views over time, reflecting the numerous cultural, ethnic, religious, and national groups claiming ownership of the city’s past and present. A number of local and international administrative bodies—both NGOs and governmental institutions, representing various religious, secular, political, and apolitical groups—have been established to ensure the preservation of the city’s heritage.

Though some of the most important monuments and sites in Jerusalem have sacred status, an attribute that tends to increase in significance over time, much of the city’s cultural heritage can be categorized as secular.<sup>17</sup> In other words, Jerusalem’s cultural heritage encompasses not only places of worship, holy sites, consecrated monuments, and sacred artifacts. It equally concerns buildings, objects, and traditions—both in the private and public realms of the city—that have no religious or spiritual attributes, including residences, industrial installations, tools, weapons, or various literary and artistic memorabilia, such as songs, poems, and photographs.

During the late nineteenth century, the growing appreciation of antiquities led the Ottoman authorities to formulate the first legal precepts designed to protect

the region's cultural heritage. The Ottoman Law of 1884 established national patrimony over all artifacts in the empire and tried to regulate scientific access to antiquities and sites by introducing excavation permits. Movable artifacts could no longer leave the empire's territory and automatically became the property of the Imperial Museum in Constantinople (Müze-i Hümayun), indicative of the now more established and legal form of cultural imperialism.<sup>18</sup> In 1918 the British Mandate Antiquities Proclamation, which endorsed the importance of the region's cultural heritage, imposed a more rigid legal framework on excavation and the export of antiquities. Based on the Ottoman Law of Antiquities, the newly established Antiquities Ordinance vested the ownership of moveable and immoveable cultural heritage in the civil government of Palestine. For the first time, the protection and oversight of cultural heritage in the region were administered locally rather than from an imperial capital.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the fact that East Jerusalem had maintained its religious significance under Hashemite rule, it temporarily ceased to function as a capital.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of Jordan's investment in the image of Jerusalem as a magnet for Christian and Muslim pilgrims and tourists, by losing direct access to the coast, the city suffered economically and thus the restoration of ancient monuments of historic and religious significance—apart from the 1952–64 restoration of the cupola of the Dome of the Rock—was not of primary concern.<sup>21</sup> Following this period of relative inattention, considerable damage occurred during the military conflict of 1967, especially in the Old City's Jewish Quarter.

A dramatic shift in the history of archaeological exploration and conservation took place with the onset of Israeli rule, at which point the domain of cultural heritage turned into a battlefield between Jews and Arabs, between Israelis and Palestinians. Massive excavation and restoration projects have been carried out in Jerusalem ever since the creation of the State of Israel, first in West Jerusalem, beginning in 1948, and then in East Jerusalem, with an emphasis on the Historic Basin, starting in 1967. The administrative framework, as defined by Israeli law and enacted by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) and the IAA (and before 1990 the IDAM), has treated archaeological activity and the preservation of cultural heritage in East and West Jerusalem as a unit, thus serving the political concept of the greater and united city. From an international point of view, however, which coincides with the Palestinian perspective, all archaeological work carried out in the occupied sector of the city after 1967 is illegal. Israel has countered international pressure and condemnation of massive excavation projects in the city's occupied sectors by framing these as salvage operations. Perhaps more deserving of the term *salvage operations* are the Hashemite restorations of various holy places on the Haram al-Sharif, including Salah al-Din's *minbar*, following the arson in the al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969, and additional restorations of the Dome of the Rock cupola between 1992 and 1994.

Structurally, up until 1978, the Antiquities Ordinance of 1928 remained in effect as the primary legal reference for cultural heritage—along with most of the general legislation enacted during the Mandate period—at which point it was replaced by the Israeli Antiquities Law.<sup>22</sup> Whereas many formalities that regulated fieldwork under British rule were adopted under Israeli governance, the new realities of rapid urban growth along with the massive excavation activity imposed an updated structure for the oversight of archaeological heritage. New rules regarding the discovery and the scientific and commercial handling of antiquities were formulated.

Though the continued surveys and excavations carried out by Israelis in West Jerusalem led to the discovery of innumerable archaeological remains, only some of them were preserved in their original locations or in nearby museums. The majority of them were sacrificed for the benefit of urban development.<sup>23</sup> Given the astonishingly rapid and expansive urban growth of the city, the difficulty of preserving all or most antiquities is hardly surprising or unusual. The cost of such preservation would have been exorbitant and unrealistic. In contrast, the preservation of archaeological remains in East Jerusalem, and specifically in the Historic Basin, has been dealt with differently, and the Israeli government has been exceedingly generous in allocating municipal and national funds to the display and preservation of archaeological sites and artifacts.<sup>24</sup> Numerous museums and parks, expanding above and below the ground, have been established.

#### ISRAELI ADMINISTRATION

Since Israel's capture of East Jerusalem, governmental policies as they pertain to matters of cultural heritage have been based on two legislative concepts: the 1967 Protection of Holy Places Law and the 1978 Antiquities Law. The first law, under article 1, guarantees that holy places are “protected from desecration and any other violation and anything likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places.” Israel has officially recognized the Ottoman Status Quo of the Christian Holy Places and has made only some minor adjustments to the Mandatory status quo arrangement with regard to the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif.<sup>25</sup> The Palestine Order in Council (Holy Places) 1924, as originally enacted by the British Mandate government, ruled that all cases concerning worshippers, members of religious communities, and holy sites should be excluded from the civil courts and can thus be overruled by the British high commissioner.<sup>26</sup> Under Israeli rule, the 1967 Protection of Holy Places Law was first administered by the Israeli minister of religious affairs, but after the disbanding of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2004, authority over decisions regarding designated holy places has resided with the prime minister.<sup>27</sup> Religious and potentially sensitive matters concerning cultural

heritage have thus gradually moved away from legal frameworks and are increasingly handled by political authorities.

The 1978 Antiquities Law also plays a key role in defining and protecting cultural heritage in Israel. Based on the Mandatory ruling for the protection and preservation of indigenous antiquities—defined as “any object [that] was made by man before 1700 C.E., or any zoological or botanical remains from before the year 1300 C.E.”—the Antiquities Law establishes state ownership of antiquity sites, monuments, and artifacts. Hence, it accords the IAA as a governmental institution the power to excavate, preserve, study, and publish archaeological finds. This responsibility includes major public-policy decisions regarding the development and urban planning around heritage sites.<sup>28</sup>

Among the more problematic aspects of this law is the fact that it does not provide legal protection to antiquities that postdate 1700 C.E., thereby leaving three centuries of heritage unprotected.<sup>29</sup> It is only recently that excavations have documented this more recent history. Several large-scale excavations conducted immediately after Israel’s capture of East Jerusalem reserved their primary focus on remains from the so-called First and Second Temple periods, including those in Silwan (City of David excavations) and in the Jewish Quarter and around the southwest corner of the Haram al-Sharif (Southern Temple Mount excavations).<sup>30</sup> Excavations conducted since roughly the mid-1990s, on the other hand, have been far more meticulous in exposing and recording all construction and deposit layers evenly, thus doing justice to the official category of salvage work. Examples include the recent initiatives carried out in the Western Wall Tunnels and near the New Gate, which even show evidence of the destruction from the 1948 and 1967 wars.<sup>31</sup> Conservation, preservation, and display practices, however, do not reflect this professional development; they continue to highlight the material culture most relevant to the city’s Jewish origin.

According to the IAA’s mission statement, significant efforts are invested in the preservation and presentation of antiquities. Their conservation department (*min-hal shimur*) aims to safeguard the cultural assets and built heritage in Israel “from a national point of view.” “This heritage,” according to the official definition, “is a mosaic of cultures that have existed in the region from the dawn of humanity until the present.”<sup>32</sup> The ultimate authority to preserve or destroy sites lies in the hands of IAA’s director-general and requires the approval of the Ministerial Committee for Holy Places.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the current administrative framework reserves the power to decide what aspects of the heritage should be highlighted to a governmental body, in which the professional archaeological voice plays only a marginal role.

To underline and formalize the governmental link to all archaeological activity in the country, the Knesset Lobby for Archaeology was established in 1996, assisting the IAA in accomplishing its tasks. The lobby’s work is based on the view

that archaeological sites and artifacts constitute the cultural heritage of Israel. In theory, it embraces tolerance toward members of all religious and cultural groups, but in practice, it reserves ultimate control and decisions regarding the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in the name and interest of the Jewish state, which openly and explicitly prioritizes its Jewish citizens and their religion, traditions, and cultural roots.

#### PALESTINIAN EFFORTS

Given the lack of an official Palestinian-controlled municipality in Jerusalem, various independent administrative bodies have adopted social, cultural, economic, and political, functions that attend to the needs and customs of the local non-Jewish population.<sup>34</sup> The efforts of the Waqf in service to the Islamic Palestinian community have included the preservation of cultural heritage. Since 1983, this work has been supplemented by the Palestinian Welfare Association, which is dedicated to the cultural heritage of both the Christian and Muslim populations. The significantly reduced authority of the city's Islamic leadership following the Israeli occupation in 1967 has led to a highly complicated situation regarding the administration of sites previously under Islamic ownership and, most significantly, the preservation of the city's monuments which hold a sacred significance to Muslims, locally, regionally, and internationally.<sup>35</sup> The unresolved power struggle among Jordan, Israel, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has contributed to the recent growing presence and leading role of the Islamic Movement in Israel in the preservation of cultural heritage.<sup>36</sup>

The first Islamic Waqf foundations in Jerusalem were created as early as the mid-seventh century. It was not until the Ayyubid period that these foundations began to play an important role in the economic, political, and cultural life of the city of Jerusalem. Since 1967—at which point the Jerusalem Waqf was absorbed into the newly established Jordanian Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Awqaf—it is mostly known for controlling and managing the Islamic buildings on the Haram, but their property, encompasses about half of the Old City, and thus determines most of the urban landscape and architectural framework.<sup>37</sup> From the time of British rule, the Waqf administration (*idarat al-awqaf*) has been strongly identified with efforts to preserve the Arab and Islamic character of the city.

Numerous building projects were initiated under Ayyubid ruler Salah al-Din, with a further significant increase occurred during the Mamluk period.<sup>38</sup> The Abu Madyan foundations constituted one of the most important assets in the city. Encompassing most of the Mughrabi Quarter, it was founded in 1320 C.E. and destroyed during the construction of the Western Wall Plaza of 1967. Since Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Waqf administration is accountable to the Ministry of Waqf in Amman. A director-general in Jerusalem oversees its

multiple departments, which include Islamic archaeology, engineering and maintenance, the al-Aqsa Mosque Restoration Project, and pilgrimage affairs. Though the Israeli government does not legally recognize the Waqf administration—and the latter rejects Israeli jurisdiction—in 1967 Israel conceded the management and maintenance of the Haram platform and all associated buildings to the Waqf.<sup>39</sup> Before the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September of 2000, some informal contacts existed between individuals on both sides. Since the beginning, however, cooperation on matters touching upon the preservation of cultural property has been minimal.<sup>40</sup> Most of the restoration projects carried out under the auspices of the Jerusalem Waqf concern domestic structures, a program that in most places would be carried out by an antiquities department or housing ministry.<sup>41</sup> One major Waqf project is the al-Aqsa Mosque Restoration Project, which in 1986 was granted the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture. This project concerns primarily the fourteenth-century painted decorations of the dome interior, using the *tratteggio* technique, a method in which fine vertical lines are used to distinguish reconstructed areas from original ones.

In 1983 the Welfare Association was established to support Palestinian development throughout the region. It is a Palestinian NGO, based in Geneva, that finances and implements restoration projects in the Old City through its technical branch, known as the Center for Development Consultancy (CDC). In 1995, the Welfare Association, in cooperation with the Islamic Waqf and UNESCO, launched the ambitious Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Program (OCJRP), dedicated to the preservation of historical monuments and to the creation of a better quality of life for residents. In addition to restoring ancient monuments, the project aims to provide training and education opportunities to the local population and to raise public awareness of the value of historic buildings. To date, the program has supported over 160 projects, including domestic structures—either single buildings of two or three floors housing one or two families or traditional residential complexes (*hosh*) that comprise several units built around a central courtyard, which are inhabited by up to ten families. Additional work is geared toward the restoration of public buildings, both secular and religious, including hostels, madrasas (religious schools), churches, and mosques. One exemplary public monument is the Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiya complex, also a recipient of the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture, which was restored between 1999 and 2004. The structure consists of five buildings from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, with the earliest dating to 1388. Another project concerns al-Imara al-Amira (Khassaki Sultan) and Dar al-Sitt Tunshuq, which in 1921–22 were combined and transformed into an orphanage. These along with several other buildings serve a variety of educational purposes.

The Palestinian contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage in Jerusalem is clearly a difficult task. Unlike the Israeli mission, which is government

controlled and administered through an efficiently organized and unified network, Palestinian efforts are still relatively fragmented. The preservation of the Haram, the most significant historic and religious Islamic monument in the city, is hampered by competing administrative authorities (Jordan, Israel, the PLO, and, more recently, the Islamic Movement in Israel). No unified program exists for the preservation of East Jerusalem's cultural assets, despite significant progress in recent years. The existence of separate administrative powers for the city's Islamic and Christian heritages also accounts, at least partially, for the absence of a cohesive program and centralized management. Finally, public attention, both local and international, to cultural heritage has been overshadowed by sociopolitical, economic, and humanitarian problems and conditions, which tend to be considered higher priorities among most agencies that provide financial and logistical support.

#### UNESCO INITIATIVES

UNESCO's definition and appreciation of Jerusalem's cultural heritage covers a broad chronological and thematic spectrum of the city's legacy. Distinct from the IAA's main focus on the "excavated, archaeological and built heritage" of the city, UNESCO's principal concern is with the "tangible and intangible" attributes of the city's past and present cultures. It complements the activities of the IAA and, in fact, invests primarily in those areas that are a low priority to the Israeli governmental institutions.

As early as 1968, soon after Israel captured East Jerusalem, UNESCO issued its first condemnation of Israeli archaeological activity in the Old City, objecting to any attempt to alter its "features or its cultural and historical character, particularly with regard to Christian and Islamic religious sites."<sup>42</sup> It was not until UNESCO's World Heritage Convention of 1972, however, that a system enabling member states to nominate sites for inclusion on the World Heritage List (WHL) was established. This method was designed to protect and manage natural and cultural heritage sites considered of outstanding universal value. On the initiative of Jordan, Jerusalem's Old City was declared a World Heritage Site (WHS) in 1981, and the following year it was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD).<sup>43</sup> The significance of listing the Old City on both the WHL and the LWHD has been to endorse the principle that its heritage belongs to all and that it therefore requires protection by the international community.

In 1973 the first official UNESCO representative for Jerusalem was appointed, charged with reporting on the evolution of the urban fabric of the city. Until the mid-1990s, relations between UNESCO and Israel were relatively friendly, which chronologically—and to some extent ideologically—coincided with Professor Raymond Lemaire's tenure as director general of UNESCO's Special Representative on Jerusalem between 1971 and 1997.<sup>44</sup> Though mostly supportive of Israel's preservation

activities, from the beginning UNESCO repeatedly criticized the excavations at the southwest corner of the Haram al-Sharif (Southern Temple Mount excavations), which, according to international opinion, were illegal.<sup>45</sup> UNESCO also questioned the tunnel project north of the Western Wall Plaza (Western Wall Tunnels excavations), both with regard to its ideological mission and the scientific methods used. The dire state of Jerusalem's Islamic heritage also became apparent early on.

In 1987, in response to an appeal, UNESCO created a Special Account for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage, focusing in particular on the Islamic monuments of Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> This effort led to a tripartite cooperation between UNESCO, the Islamic Waqf, and the Welfare Association, formalized in 1997. This partnership enabled various renovation and restoration programs with the primary goal of encouraging and increasing the permanent residence of Palestinian Muslims in the Old City.<sup>47</sup> These efforts included the surveying and mapping of historic buildings, restoration work of the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque along with training programs in conservation methods, and finally various social-outreach programs to support the local community.

The heightened political tensions in the region during the Second Intifada and the almost daily clashes between Israeli and Palestinians in Jerusalem prompted UNESCO to send a special delegation to the city to once again reassess the state of conservation. The inspection resulted in the Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of the Old City, along with the formal acknowledgment that the cultural heritage of Jerusalem encompasses not only the WHS, but also museum collections and archives, as well as the city's intangible heritage and spiritual values. The first phase of the plan, consisting of a unified database featuring all of Jerusalem's heritage resources, was initiated in January 2005 and has since been completed. In 2008 the second phase was launched, designed to support an apprenticeship program to train local craftsmen, targeting mostly Jerusalem residents.

Structurally, the Action Plan encompasses multiple projects for the conservation of ancient monuments, streets, and open spaces. Within this context, numerous residential and commercial buildings have been renovated, with the dual aim of preserving the city's unique urban landscape and improving the living quality of its inhabitants. Noteworthy examples include the rehabilitation of the al-Saha Compound facades, the conservation project of the St. John Prodromos Church, the establishment of a Centre for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts located in the Madrassa al-Ashrafiyyah, and, finally, the safeguarding, refurbishment, and revitalization of the Islamic Museum of the Haram al-Sharif and its collection. Most of these efforts provide education and training opportunities for local residents. In spite of numerous collaborative efforts between UNESCO and Palestinian organizations over the years, it was not until October 2011 that Palestinians were granted full membership of UNESCO.<sup>48</sup> Significantly

less effective than most of these proactive initiatives benefiting primarily Jerusalem's Palestinian communities were UNESCO's attempts to impact Israeli initiatives. For instance, efforts to halt the City of David and Mughrabi Gate excavations or the planned constructions of the Kedem Center in Silwan and the Beit Haliba Building opposite the Western Wall have mostly failed.

Contrary to UNESCO's claims to be a nonpolitical agency and to be operating on behalf of the cultural heritage of all humankind, their activities have often been perceived as partial, both locally and internationally. Symptomatic of their difficulty to maintain a neutral position is the recent Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between UNESCO and Israel, a document recognizing and acknowledging existing partnership and heritage commitments, signed in 2008. To Israelis, this agreement represents an official recognition of their role in Jerusalem; to Palestinians, however, it signals UNESCO's adherence to the political normalization process, legitimizing Israeli occupation of the city. Official and unofficial discussions and meetings between UNESCO representatives and Israeli officials regarding the possibility of extending the area inscribed on the WHL were initiated around the same time. Israelis proposed incorporating Mount Zion and other sites outside the city walls into the officially protected area.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of these isolated attempts to cooperate, however, in particular with regard to verbal or written efforts of communication, relations between Israel and UNESCO have deteriorated further over the course of the last two decades.<sup>50</sup> Indicative of the tense relationship is the difficulty UNESCO showed in selecting representatives acceptable to the Israeli authorities and the repeated short-term appointments.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, UNESCO's harsh criticism of Israeli archaeological activity—along with their explicit support of Islamic and, to some extent, Christian monuments, and more generally, their support of Palestinian cultural heritage and the living Palestinian community—is viewed by the Israeli community as proof of a pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli agenda.

There is no doubt that UNESCO's role as an independent mediator and global guardian of threatened world heritage has been compromised by the difficult social and political climate in Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> To some, their impotence and inability to protect Jerusalem's cultural heritage is in fact more apparent than their efficacy in preserving its tangible and intangible legacies.<sup>53</sup>

#### OTHER AGENCIES

Additional local establishments dedicated to the city's cultural heritage include Elad and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, both actively involved in the excavation and presentation of archaeological findings.<sup>54</sup> As their activities are almost exclusively focused on the Jewish narrative (excluding the Christian and Muslim heritage) of the ancient city, their initiatives are criticized internationally.

Locally, their activities are countered by Emek Shaveh, an organization of Israeli archaeologists and community activists focusing on “the role of archaeology in Israeli society and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” In their view, “the cultural wealth of the archaeological sites is an integral part of the cultural assets of this country and is the joint property of all the communities, peoples and religious groups living here.”<sup>55</sup> Most of Emek Shaveh’s initiatives are dedicated to the city of Jerusalem, including lectures, tours, and publications. An additional local organization, mentioned previously, is the Islamic Movement in Israel, which is dedicated to preserving the Islamic heritage of the city. Similar to the way cultural heritage, ideology, and politics are intertwined for many of the organizations discussed earlier, the cultural heritage program designed by Islamic Movement in Israel is also imprinted with a clear ideological and political agenda.<sup>56</sup>

An international organization involved in the cultural heritage of Jerusalem, the Alliance to Restore Cultural Heritage in Jerusalem (ARCH), was established in 2010 in Geneva, Switzerland. Their research activities focus both on the physical and nonphysical aspects of the city’s cultural heritage, as stipulated by UN resolutions.<sup>57</sup> ARCH’s interests encompass “archaeology, architecture, antiquities, holy sites, historical monuments, manuscripts and culturally significant landscapes,” as well as intangible aspects of cultural heritage, such as “language and dialects, oral histories, traditional festive rituals and ceremonies, handicrafts, folklore, music, dance and other indigenous arts.”<sup>58</sup>

#### HERITAGE BELOW AND ABOVE THE GROUND

Several communities, nations, and multiple organizations thus share the ambition to preserve the city’s cultural heritage. Unlike Israel’s imposed monopoly over excavations in Jerusalem, administered through the governmental agencies of the IAA (or the IDAM before 1990) and the INPA, other aspects of the city’s cultural heritage are either partly or fully handled by other institutional bodies. The Waqf operates on behalf of the Muslim population and the Welfare Association in the interest of the Palestinian community in general. Representing the international community, UNESCO supplements the efforts and initiatives of those major local organizations. In spite of the common claim that these initiatives are not politically motivated, it has proved difficult and even impossible to maneuver without becoming entangled with the diverse political and ideological agendas of the different groups and institutions implicated in the construction of Jerusalem’s origin narratives and the preservation of the city’s cultural legacy.

The focus of Israeli activity contributing to the preservation of the city’s cultural heritage consists of massive excavation, mostly (or consistently for projects in East Jerusalem) presented as salvage work, dedicated to the exposure of material remains that can be linked to the roughly six hundred years of disrupted Israelite

and later Jewish sovereignty in the city. Given the increasingly limited open land above ground, over the last two decades, much of this activity is conducted underground, creating an intricate network of tunnels and spaces that serve not only as the working space of numerous archaeologists, staff, and laborers, but also as a rapidly growing destination for local visitors and international tourists. The goal to create a tangible link between the city's Jewish past and the Zionist return to the Holy Land has been stated often and explicitly. This physical and ideological connection has enabled a concrete justification of the appropriation of land, particularly relevant in the realm of Israeli's policy of a united Jerusalem, building restrictions for Palestinian residents, and development of archaeology, tourism, and Jewish building initiatives in East Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup>

Palestinian activity in support of the city's cultural heritage is dedicated to the preservation of the Haram platform and numerous standing monuments within the Christian and Muslim quarters of the Old City. The 1,300 years of almost uninterrupted Islamic rule constitute the chronological focus, encompassing the Umayyad Dome of the Rock as well as countless churches, mosques, and vernacular buildings from the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods, which still largely determine the present character of the Old City. The main objective of this activity is to protect the living community, to raise awareness of Palestinian cultural heritage, to improve housing conditions, and to educate and train locals in preservation and conservation techniques.<sup>60</sup>

Israeli archaeological activity in East Jerusalem is mostly dedicated to uncovering hidden layers by excavating and creating underground levels. It can be viewed as a dubious attempt to compensate for and overshadow the exposed built heritage, which is often of monumental dimensions and mostly Christian and Islamic in character.

Given the absence of a political resolution and international consensus regarding the status of Jerusalem, as well as the lack of coordination and agreement among the various players in charge of or advocating for the city's cultural heritage, implementing a comprehensive plan for the protection of the city's cultural heritage has proved extremely difficult.

There is increased attention to matters of cultural heritage in Jerusalem, more carefully designed principles and legal concepts regulating excavation and preservation procedures, and a growing number of communities and institutions dedicated to these initiatives, but these factors are hindered by the principal players' opposing interests. Efforts to preserve the city's Palestinian heritage are regrettably scattered and, as a result, largely inefficient. Interventions to preserve and construct the Israeli legacy, in contrast, are increasingly coordinated, centralized, and powerful.