“The Preservation and Safeguarding of the Amenities of the Holy City without Favour or Prejudice to Race or Creed”: The Pro-Jerusalem Society and Ronald Storrs, 1917–1926

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The Beginnings in the Middle of Transition

On September 6, 1918, twelve individuals met at the residence of the military governor of Jerusalem.¹ The room was filled with tension as the governor was trying to win the confidence of those who were still skeptical and suspicious of British rule. A few months earlier, in December 1917, General Allenby had led the British troops into Jerusalem, ending Ottoman rule in the city and paving the way for greater British success in the region. Though the conquest of Jerusalem proved to be a relatively easy military task, the control of the city required a larger set of skills. All aspects of the conquest and the takeover had been carefully planned in London. While Allenby's military operations were unfolding in Palestine, the Foreign Office and War Office were discussing the future asset of Jerusalem. Most of the policies adopted in relation to Jerusalem were a reflection of wartime agreements, including the Sykes–Picot Agreement and Balfour Declaration. British policy makers, starting with Mark Sykes, were aware of and sensitive to the tensions between the different religious communities in Jerusalem. From the very early stages, the British aimed to avoid clashes between the Christians and Muslims, and among the different

1 Jerusalem Municipal Archives (JMA), 361, Pro-Jerusalem Society, Minutes, no. 1, Jerusalem, September 6, 1918. The twelve individuals were: Ronald Storrs, Ferdinando Diotallevi (Custos of the Custody of the Holy Land), Dr Eder (representative of the Jewish community), Father Ippolytos (representative of the Greek Orthodox Church), Kamil Effendi Husayni (Grand Mufti), Musa Kasim Pasha (president of the municipality), Bishop Kud (representative of the Armenian Orthodox Church), S. G. Salama (vice-president of the municipality), Father Abel, Mr C. R. Ashbee, Major Richmond and Mr J. Spafford. The composition of the council was very fluid and changed at every meeting.

Christian communities. Indeed, they anticipated that conflict would arise at the end of Ottoman rule.²

Three weeks before the occupation of Jerusalem took place, the War Office formalized the policies to be adopted for the administration the city. Internal security was paramount, so Allenby proposed that Muslim holy places should come under the control of Indian Muslim troops. The British were to be in control of Christian and Jewish troops.³ British concerns at that juncture were security and the risk that communities would turn against each other. By the end of November 1917, when the occupation of Jerusalem was on the agenda in London, it was only a matter of time before it would become a reality. The Foreign Office advocated strong civilian rule, while the War Office suggested keeping the city under martial law until the future of Jerusalem and the region became clearer. In the end, military rule proved to be a relatively long period of transition that was superseded by civilian rule only in the summer of 1920, with the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine.⁴

Military rule was established *de facto* in Jerusalem when General Allenby entered the city on December 11, 1917, and read a short proclamation declaring martial law. More importantly, his declaration emphasized that the British would protect all holy places according to existing customs and beliefs.⁵ According to international law, the military administration of occupied territories should have preserved the status quo *ante bellum*. In other words, the British were committed to making only minor changes dictated by the necessity of the war effort.⁶ Within the boundaries of the status quo, the military administration established departments of health, law, commerce, and finance in order to restore essential services.⁷ As Jerusalem was now under British rule, General Allenby appointed Colonel Ronald Storrs as governor of the city. This

2 On Jerusalem during World War I, see Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Roberto Mazza, *Jerusalem: From the Ottomans to the British* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

3 The National Archives of the UK (TNA): FO 317/3061, War Office to Headquarters in Cairo, November 21, 1917.

4 Mazza, *From the Ottomans to the British*, 129.

5 TNA: FO 371/3061, General Allenby Reports, Jerusalem, December 11, 1917.

6 Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 20; John McTague, “The British Military Administration in Palestine, 1917–1920,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 3 (1978): 56.

7 *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (London: HMSO, 1937), 113. For a more details on the British Military Administration, see Mazza, *From the Ottomans to the British*; Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*; Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917–1948* (London: John Murray, 1999).

appointment proved crucial for the development of the city in the interwar period. In the early days of British rule, Storrs was immediately involved with the delivery of supplies for the city and, in a fashion that would characterize his governorship, he placed the distribution of food and medicine in the hands of the municipality, under the supervision of the representatives of all religious communities.⁸

Newly appointed governor Storrs had been Oriental Secretary to the British Residency in Cairo, and though he was given the title of colonel, he had no previous military experience. He was meant to serve as a bridge between the military administration on the ground and the political establishment in London. His appointment as governor was not an accident of war. Rather, one might argue that he sought the appointment, which he may have seen as the climax of his career. His work in Cairo proved to be an ideological matrix for his work in Jerusalem.⁹ Eventually he would serve from 1918 to 1920 as military governor of Jerusalem and from 1920 to 1926 as civil governor. Despite his long tenure in the city, in twenty-first-century Jerusalem, there are no memorials, statues, or plaques dedicated to him. Forgotten though he appears to be now, his decisions left an indelible mark on the city.¹⁰

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the establishment of the Pro-Jerusalem Society in 1918, its composition, and its aims. It will also analyze the

8 TNA: FO 141/746, Military Administrator's Report, Jerusalem, December 15, 1917; TNA: FO 141/688, Clayton to Headquarters, Jerusalem, December 22, 1917.

9 A look at the various editions of Storrs' memoirs is revealing of the nexus established between his education in Britain, his work in Egypt and then his role in Jerusalem. It is not a surprise that after his governorship in Jerusalem, his work in Cyprus and Northern Rhodesia turned into a disaster as he had no knowledge or appetite to work outside the Middle East. Noah Haiduc-Dale suggests also the importance of looking at studies on India and Africa in order to appreciate the sectarian divisions that emerged during Storrs tenure. See Noah Haiduc-Dale, "Rejecting Sectarianism: Palestinian Christians' Role in Muslim-Christian Relations," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26, no. 1 (2015). Noah Hysler Rubin, similarly, reminds us that Patrick Geddes, before working in Jerusalem, practiced in India what he learned at home in Britain, and then exported to Palestine the amalgamated version of his theories. See Noha H. Rubin, "Geography, Colonialism, and Town Planning: Patrick Geddes' Plan for Mandatory Jerusalem," *Cultural Geographies* 18, no. 2 (2011): 235.

10 In 2010 the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv organized the first and only exhibition on Storrs, his work in Jerusalem and his relations with the local communities. See Dalia Karpel, "Discerning Conqueror," *Haaretz*, November 12, 2010, accessed January 15, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/discerning-conqueror-1.324306>; "The First Governor," Eretz Israel Museum, accessed January 15, 2018, <http://www.eretzmuseum.org.il/e/20/>.

ideology and symbolism that it adopted, with a particular focus on preservation and sectarian harmony. Though a number of articles have been dedicated to the study of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, an assessment based on the minutes of its council and on the parallel activities of the Town Planning Commission has yet to be written. Most of the literature available relies mainly on the publications of the Pro-Jerusalem Society and on British administration reports. The minutes shed light on the internal dynamics of those organizations, showing how the decision-making process worked and eventually translated into action. In presenting the society's activities, I will focus on a particular decision first proposed by the society and later adopted by the Town Planning Commission: the adoption of Jerusalem – white – stone as the only visible building material allowed. This decision changed the way the city would look and develop.

The *citadinité* or urban citizenship shared by the inhabitants of Jerusalem was challenged by the new order brought by the British. Sectarianism was superimposed onto the Ottoman order; the city's diverse inhabitants were compartmentalized, at the expense of Jerusalem as a world city. More importantly, though, the history of the local communities was segmented into a large number of narratives that favored certain communities over others and regularly excluded one or more of these communities. This chapter will assess the extent to which urban planning, which not only relates to maps and borders, but also includes materials and regulations, impacted *citadinité* and its representation.¹¹

A Comment on Sources: A Complex and Partly Hidden Archipelago

Scholars wishing to examine the Pro-Jerusalem Society have, for the most part, relied on limited sources: the publications of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, British documents, material from the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) and local newspapers, and, more seldom, diaries and memoirs. Plans have been scrutinized through the lenses of sociology, arts and architecture, politics, anthropology, religion, and indeed history. The narratives produced often view the city from the perspective of one or more communities, but rarely discuss it as a global entity. On the one hand, this may be the result of a careful choice – to prove or disprove claims – but on the other, the archival complexity of Jerusalem often acts as a deterrent to write a comprehensive history of the city. A good example

11 *Citadinité* is a term proposed for the study of Jerusalem by the Open Jerusalem project. See the introduction of the volume.

is represented by the Pro-Jerusalem Society and Town Planning Commission from 1917 to 1926, which coincided with the governorship of Storrs. The minutes of the society's council are not to be found at the Jerusalem Municipal Archives, but in fact are available at the CZA. Unfortunately, some of the minutes are missing. For this chapter I also relied on the minutes of the Town Planning Commission available at the Municipal Archives. Building permits, known as *ruksah*, seem, however, to have disappeared. After searching in several institutions in Jerusalem, I came to the conclusion that this material may simply be buried in some corner of the municipality. It is also possible that, due to its possibly controversial nature, it has been hidden. In order to overcome this issue, I relied on material from different archives in the city and abroad. I also perused material from the Custody of the Holy Land and the Latin Patriarchate and looked at material available in the French and Italian consular archives. The holdings of the renovated Israeli State Archives are now available online and material related to urban planning is available in a number of files related to the British Mandate. None of the archives visited contain a specific section dedicated to urban planning, but a global history of the city and its plans needs to be brought to life, patiently, one step at a time.

The Establishment of the Society: Between Patrimonial Ideology and Demunicipalization

Early in 1918, Storrs conceived the idea of establishing a society, or a “committee of the three races,” as he put it to Sykes, with the purpose of developing a common spirit among the communities of Jerusalem.¹² The Pro-Jerusalem Society was born as a nongovernmental organization designed to assist the military governor in “the preservation of the interests of Jerusalem, its districts, and inhabitants.”¹³ Storrs mobilized local leaders with the intent to promote and achieve sectarian harmony. He wished to establish a system that would preserve the interests of everyone and prevent one community's interests from being imposed over the others.¹⁴ At this stage, the Pro-Jerusalem Society was involved in the cleaning, reconstruction, and preservation of the

12 Storrs Papers, Box III/1, Pembroke College, Cambridge. Storrs to Sykes, undated. As the first council was convened in September 1918, this letter must have been written earlier.

13 Charles Robert Ashbee, ed., *Jerusalem, 1918–1920: Being the Records of the Pro-Jerusalem Council during the Period of the British Military Administration* (London: John Murray, 1921), vii.

14 JMA, 361, Pro-Jerusalem Society, Minutes, No. 1, Jerusalem, September 6, 1918.

Old City. "Can one make Jerusalem modern?" asked Storrs. "Yes, gentlemen, one can; but on one condition, its destruction."¹⁵ The twelve individuals that met for the first time on September 6, 1918, agreed to establish a council that would help and advise the government in all issues related to the character of the city; in other words, its religious milieu. The minutes of the first meeting of the society's council show that it was not going to interfere in the work of the municipality and that the responsibilities of the municipality would remain the same.¹⁶ In reality, the activity of the two institutions seems to have been blurred; the governor often had the last word. With the establishment of the Town Planning Commission, the role of the municipality became even more unclear, and it may be argued that the first years of British rule marked a process of demunicipalization.¹⁷ In other words, the Jerusalem municipality was deprived of many of its functions. It was reduced to a secondary role, which emphasized British, rather than local, rule over the city.

The rapid establishment of the Pro-Jerusalem Society several months after the British took Jerusalem suggests that there was a sense of urgency in gaining control of the physical environment.¹⁸ This sense of urgency had been expressed as early as April 1918, when the governor issued a public notice whose paramount purpose was to preserve the aspect of the city: "No person shall demolish, erect, alter or repair the structure of any building in the city of Jerusalem or its environs within a radius of 2,500 meters from the Damascus Gate (Bab al-Amud) until he has obtained a written permit from the Military Governor."¹⁹ Similarly, the governor proposed forbidding the use of red brick and corrugated iron. As we shall see later, this was a decision that would mark the future development of both Old and New Jerusalem.²⁰ The establishment of the Pro-Jerusalem Society was also meant to legitimize British rule, and the preservation of the Old City was a means of debasing the improvements introduced

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 I must thank Falestin Naili, who coined this word while reviewing an earlier version of this chapter. Municipalities of other cities in British Palestine were empowered with new functions. A good example of this is Haifa, suggesting there were inconsistencies in the ways in which the British ruled Palestine. Above all, it reinforces the view that Jerusalem was considered somewhat unique.

18 Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler, "Marrying Modern Progress with Treasured Antiquity": Jerusalem City Plans during the British Mandate, 1917–1948," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 15, no. 1 (2003): 41.

19 Ashbee, *Jerusalem, 1918–1920*, v.

20 JMA, 361, Pro-Jerusalem Society, Minutes, no. 1, Jerusalem, September 6, 1918.

by the late Ottoman administration.²¹ Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler is right when he suggests that preservation was turned into a “nobody does it better” propaganda tool.²² The extent of the control exercised over the city becomes clear in the last report signed by Storrs before the Pro-Jerusalem Society was dissolved in 1926. Storrs wrote that “during the eight years of the society’s existence stringent control has been exercised on new building and particularly in the Old City ... Shop signs have been controlled under a regulation originated by the society. All streets both in the Old and New City have been named.”²³

Which *lingua franca*, and for What Purpose?

The aims of the Pro-Jerusalem Society were embedded in its establishment and were highly publicized. Once the society became officially recognized and incorporated in the British Mandate after 1920, its membership and donations grew. According to clause no. 7 of the society’s charter, “any person may become a member of the Society on payment of an annual subscription of not less than £5 or a donation of not less than £25.”²⁴ In the spirit of the society, the list of its members and donors includes Jerusalemites from all communities, financial institutions, and a number of British officials. Quarterly reports and other society publications reassured members of its development. Members were apprised of how donations turned into visible assets and were constantly reminded of the society’s mission, which was sevenfold:

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- 21 Here is a selection of works discussing Jerusalem municipality in the late Ottoman era: Vincent Lemire, *Jerusalem 1900: The Holy City in the Age of Possibilities*, trans. Catherine Tihanui and Lys Ann Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Yasemin Avcı and Vincent Lemire, “De la modernité administrative à la modernisation urbaine: une revaluation de la municipalité ottomane de Jérusalem (1867–1917),” in *Municipalités méditerranéennes: les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d’une histoire comparée (Moyen-Orient, Maghreb, Europe méridionale)*, ed. Nora Lafi (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2005); David Kushner, *To Be Governor of Jerusalem: The City and District during the Time of Ali Ekrem Bey, 1906–1908* (Istanbul: Isis, 2005); Haim Gerber, *Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem, 1890–1914* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1985); Salim Tamari, “Confessionalism and Public Space in Ottoman and Colonial Jerusalem,” in *Cities and Sovereignty: Identity Politics in Urban Spaces*, ed. Diane Davis and Nora Libertun de Duren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
- 22 Gitler, “Marrying Modern Progress,” 53.
- 23 JMA, 361, Pro-Jerusalem Society, Ronald Storrs, Jerusalem, November 24, 1926.
- 24 JMA, 361, The Pro-Jerusalem Society Quarterly Bulletin, March 1922.

1. The protection of and the addition to the amenities of Jerusalem and its district.
2. The provision and maintenance of parks, gardens, and open spaces in Jerusalem and its district.
3. The establishment in the district of Jerusalem of Museums, Libraries, Art Galleries, Exhibitions, Musical and Dramatic Centres, or other institutions of a similar nature for the benefit of the Public.
4. The protection and preservation with the consent of the Government, of the Antiquities in the district of Jerusalem.
5. The encouragement in the district of Jerusalem of arts, handicrafts, and industries in consonance with the general objects of the Society.
6. The Administration of any immovable property in the district of Jerusalem which is acquired by the Society or entrusted to it by any person or corporation with a view to securing the improvement of the property and the welfare of its tenants or occupants.
7. To cooperate with the Department of Education, Agriculture, Public Health, Public Works, so far as may be in harmony with the general objects of the Society.²⁵

Raquel Rapaport has noted that by 1937, Storrs considered aims one, two and five as the most important. At least, these were the aims that had been achieved by the society.²⁶ One of its underlining purposes was to promote harmony between the communities. In an attempt to start on the right foot, the meetings of the society's council were conducted in French. It was generally believed that French would serve as the most appropriate *lingua franca*, but it was also chosen in order to demonstrate British benevolence and lack of colonial-imperial spirit.²⁷ We have no written records of linguistic problems at council meetings, but it is possible that they turned into a babel of tongues or resulted in pure silence. While carefully examining the minutes of the council, I noted that some members are never reported as saying anything; perhaps what they said was not worth recording, or they may have simply sat silent

²⁵ Ashbee, *Jerusalem, 1918–1920*, vii.

²⁶ Raquel Rapaport, "Conflicting Visions. Architecture in Palestine during the British Mandate" (PhD diss., University of Cardiff, 2005), 54.

²⁷ The minutes of the Pro-Jerusalem Society's council can be found at the Jerusalem Municipal Archives and the Central Zionist Archives; the meetings and minutes were conducted in French, though translation was available. See Ronald Storrs, *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1937), 327.

around the table. In line with this behavior was certainly the *custos* of the Custody of the Holy Land, Father Diotallevi. Though the records show a fairly good attendance, it seems as if he chose to be silent throughout the meetings, which reached a lively pitch at times. In his diary, he only mentioned that he would attend the council, but he never reported anything about it.²⁸

Sectarian harmony, however, transcended languages, and Storrs promoted the idea of common interest in the image of an Old City that would look ancient but would function as a modern city. Storrs may have been the mind behind this idea, but it was Charles Ashbee, in his role as civic adviser who translated it into action. Ashbee understood the Old City as a place where, for centuries, sectarian rivalries and hatred prevailed, but now under British rule all parties would meet together and “regard the Holy City as a Trust for all mankind, put the sectarian interests as far as possible on one side, and see what they could do.”²⁹

Sectarian harmony was based on a major misconception: the idea that communities were divided in Jerusalem and in conflict with one another. In this view, local inhabitants were romanticized and orientalized, understood in a sense as “authentic” actors in a religious theme park. Such a mythologization served to make Jerusalem seem more biblical and less modern.³⁰ Paradoxically, the Pro-Jerusalem Society imposed a model that was based on the sectarianization of the city. Benjamin Hyman has suggested that Ashbee and Storrs were painstakingly working towards the segregation of the Old City from the New City. I will return to this hypothesis later, but for the moment, I argue that this segregation encouraged the “unmixing” of the local population, and brought centuries of relatively peaceful coexistence and, more importantly,

28 Ferdinando Diotallevi, *Diario di Terrasanta: 1918–1924*, ed. Daniela Fabrizio (Milan: Biblioteca Franceseana, 2002).

29 Charles Robert Ashbee, “Pro-Jerusalem” *The American Magazine of Art* 12, no. 3 (1921): 99. Details on Ashbee can be found in many publications, here is just a sample: Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

30 On the romanticization of local inhabitants, see Lorenzo Kamel, *Imperial Perceptions of Palestine: British Influence and Power in Late Ottoman Times* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015). As for the concept of sectarianism, I borrow the definition suggested by Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 5–6, who defines it as “a practice that developed out of, and must be understood in the context of, nineteenth-century Ottoman reform. Second, it is a discourse that is scripted as the Other to various competing Ottoman, European, and Lebanese narratives of modernization.”

FIGURE 20.1 *Newer Jerusalem and suburbs. St. Paul's Hospice, a government office near Damascus Gate.*

G. ERIC AND EDITH MATSON PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION.

active cohabitation, to an end.³¹ Jerusalem had been a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilinguistic city, but at this point in its history this order was challenged and homogenization became the paramount objective. *Citadinité* was restricted and fragmented; the shared space Wasif Jawhariyyeh and Gad Frumkin had described in their writings was rapidly disappearing.³²

31 Benjamin Hyman, "British Planners in Palestine, 1918–1936" (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 1994), 394.

32 Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar, eds., *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904–1948* (Northampton: Olive Branch, 2014); Gad Frumkin, *Derekh Shofet bi-Rushalayim* [The path of a judge in Jerusalem] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1954). Yair Wallach, "Shared Space in Pre-1948 Jerusalem? Integration, Segregation and Urban Space through the Eyes of Justice Gad Frumkin, Elect," working paper no. 21, Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, accessed January 15, 2018, <http://www.conflictincities.org/PDFs/WorkingPaper21.pdf>.

Old City versus New City

The Old City was the main target of the activities of the Pro-Jerusalem Society. Several projects intended to turn intramuros Jerusalem into an open-air museum. The cleaning of the Citadel was designed to bring back the former glory of what was understood to be the city of David: a site of memory and a site of power. It was not an easy task to clean and restore the Citadel, meant to become a showcase of British power. The Citadel, once used as a locus of the local military power, was transformed into a place for secular cultural activities and performances. Storrs and Ashbee divested the Citadel of its religious significance and imbued the newly reopened monument with a colonial spirit. In 1921, Storrs opened an exhibition displaying the drafts of the urban renewal plans and Palestinian arts and crafts produced under the aegis of the Pro-Jerusalem Society.³³

A second important project developed in the Old City was the restoration of the walls and of the ramparts.³⁴ Ashbee declared that Jerusalem was the finest medieval city still standing: “the most perfect example of Medieval City circumvallation.”³⁵ The idea was to clean the walls so that people could

33 Since Israel's taking of Jerusalem from the Jordanians in 1967, the Citadel has been transformed into a Municipal Museum. Its purpose is to show the role Jerusalem has played in Jewish history and in the life of the Jewish nation. See <http://www.tod.org.il/en/museum/about-the-museum/>. While Ashbee and Storrs wanted to attribute to the Citadel an imperial – and secular – character, the Israeli authorities imbued the place with religious significance. Despite the suggestion that all three faiths are equally represented in the museum's exhibitions, the Jewish identity is indisputably predominant. Rather than choosing the name “Citadel,” the name “Tower of David,” wrongly attributed to the place by the Byzantines, was kept, thereby creating an artificial nexus with the ancient Jewish king. See Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common. Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron* (London: Hurst, 2014), 15–16.

34 In relation to this project, Storrs ordered the removal of the Ottoman clock tower that had been built in 1907 by Abdülhamid II as a symbol of modernization. In 1922 the clock tower was removed on the ground of “un-slightness,” as stated by Storrs. See *Palestine Post*, September 27, 1934. From the records of the Pro-Jerusalem Society's council, it is clear that the clock tower was going to be short-lived as it did not fit the criteria of aesthetics and protection of the Crusader character of the city. See Ashbee, *Jerusalem, 1918–1920*, 62. Also Geddes condemned the clock tower as a vulgar modern decoration. Central Zionist Archives (CZA) Z4/10202, Patrick Geddes, “Jerusalem Actual and Possible: A Preliminary Report to the Chief Administrator of Palestine and Military Governor of Jerusalem on town planning and city improvements,” November 1919.

35 Simon Goldhill, *Jerusalem: City of Longing* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 172–74; Ashbee, “Pro-Jerusalem,” 101.

walk around the city and, with the reconstruction of the ramparts, that visitors and inhabitants could enjoy the most “beautiful and romantic park promenade in the world.”³⁶ The restoration of the walls was, however, not just a matter of creating a space for the enjoyment of a city landmark. It was a sign of the segregation between the Old and New City.³⁷ The Old City was intended as a city of the mind, as Gitler has argued, dedicated to spiritual, cultural and religious life.³⁸ The green belt around the Old City proposed by Ashbee may be interpreted as a way to isolate it from the New City. I argue that his plan created the impression that the Old City and the neighborhoods that developed outside its walls were blended together in order to respect the Mandate policy of avoiding religious segregation in urban planning. The reality was rather different. Though city dwellers may have crossed the fictitious borders between the two entities, visitors and pilgrims were certainly less keen to spend time in the New City. Segregation may have not existed officially, but it undoubtedly pervaded the daily lives of Jerusalem’s inhabitants.

The publications of the Pro-Jerusalem Society suggest that it was involved in town planning deemed essential to protect Jerusalem from violent changes, but above all, to make sure that principles of adaptability, the grasp of social and architectural norms, and the effective administrative machinery would be respected.³⁹ Though Ashbee discussed the plans presented by McLean and Geddes in a publication of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, the minutes of its council suggest that planning was never really discussed. Plans were adopted, but never fully scrutinized. Both Ashbee and Storrs were well aware of the potential for contention between the communities involved. McLean’s plan was presented to the Municipal Council; Geddes’ plan was never presented to anybody, and Ashbee’s plan was presented to the Town Planning Commission that superseded the Pro-Jerusalem Society.⁴⁰

36 Ashbee, “Pro-Jerusalem,” 101.

37 Gitler, “Marrying Modern Progress,” 44.

38 Ibid., 54. Gitler suggests that the city was not segregated but the Old City became a sort of “spiritual zone.” It is indeed true that, unlike the great majority of colonial cities, Jerusalem did not experience the creation of a European area vs. an indigenous one. Nevertheless, a form of segregation occurred as the Old City was designed to host pilgrims and visitors, mainly coming from Europe and America.

39 Ashbee, *Jerusalem, 1918–1920*, 11. See also Jonathan Rokem, “Politics and Conflict in a Contested City: Urban Planning in Jerusalem under Israeli Rule,” *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, no. 23 (2012); Rubin, “Geography, Colonialism, and Town Planning,” 231–48.

40 JMA 829, Jerusalem Town Planning Commission, Minutes, no. 5, September 1, 1921. Members of the commission (many were also part of the council of the Pro-Jerusalem

The New City was different from the Old City. The former would house different ideologies, which would accommodate the necessities of the Zionists, now cashing in on the promise made by the British with the Balfour Declaration.⁴¹ In this sense the Pro-Jerusalem Society proved its limits, including the fact that the society was more the expression of individuals like Storrs and Ashbee and their visions rather than a coherent organization with goals that would transcend the will of a few characters. In relation to the New City, the Pro-Jerusalem Society was, for the most part, involved with projects in developing the establishment of libraries, exhibitions, musical and dramatic centers, as defined in the charter. Ashbee also worked towards the development of local arts and crafts and local industries, which were then employed in the reconstruction in the Old City. A dichotomy between the Old and New City emerged under the Ottomans when the first neighborhoods outside the walls were built and people, mainly wealthy residents, began to move out, suggesting a contrast between a more secular and modern city outside the walls vis-à-vis a less modern and more religious city within them. The Pro-Jerusalem Society with its influence, the Town Planning Commission, and British planners certainly amplified this division, but it would be a mistake to create a barrier between the two entities. Both were part of the same fabric.

Symbolism: Holiness in the Foreground

The emblem of the Pro-Jerusalem Society (fig. 20.2) comprises four small Christian crosses drawn inside a Star of David outflanked by a Muslim crescent. The idea was to convey the message that harmony between city dwellers and those who cared about it was possible. Despite the symbolism and the declared interest to preserve and protect the city, the Pro-Jerusalem Society seems to have forgotten one key element: Jerusalemites. The minutes of the society's council are filled with details about discussions in relation to the walls, the markets, arts and crafts and other activities, but overall very little was discussed in relation to the inhabitants of the city. One exception was the debate over the materials to be employed in the restoration of old buildings

Society) stated that, in fact, "the plans of the City upon which the present and the late administration had been working during the last 2 years ... had been discussed at different times ... they had not yet been put in any uniform scale before this commission."

- 41 Rana Barakat, "Urban Planning, Colonialism, and the Pro-Jerusalem Society," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 65 (2016): 24; Nicholas E. Roberts, "Dividing Jerusalem: British Urban Planning in the Holy City," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, no. 4 (2013): 20.

FIGURE 20.2 *The emblem of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, as depicted on the cover of Charles Robert Ashbee, Jerusalem, 1920–1922. LONDON: JOHN MURRAY, 1924.*

and the construction of new ones. Like any ritual city, Jerusalem was often, if not always, appropriated and therefore transformed by its new rulers.⁴² From King David, who reunited the kingdom of Israel and made Jerusalem his new capital, through to the Roman, Muslim and Crusader conquerors, everyone adapted the city according to their purposes and visions. Following the

42 Jeff Halper, "On the Way: The Transition of Jerusalem from a Ritual to Colonial City, 1800–1917," *Urban Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1984).

Six Days War in 1967, Ben Gurion promoted plans to remove the very same walls Storrs and Ashbee had regarded as a symbol of Jerusalem.⁴³

A symbolic act of quasi-colonial control and of ideological value was the operation of renaming and numbering the city's streets. The preservation of the biblical image of the city was the primary concern of the society, a close second to imperial politics. Naming the streets was therefore understood as a modernizing necessity. The naming criteria were, however, different compared to other colonial cities.⁴⁴ The symbolism of the Pro-Jerusalem Society was transformed from an innocuous logo to real allocation of names and numbers. The names chosen for Jerusalem's streets reflected British imperial history in part. A special subcommittee was formed; in 1926, Storrs wrote that "all streets both in the Old and New City have been named. Suitable ceramic plates made by the Bezalel School of Arts have been erected in the New City and a complete set for the Old City made in the society's ceramic factory."⁴⁵ Naming was not an easy task. Ashbee wrote that the "list is so full of history, poetry and folklore that it is well worth careful study."⁴⁶ Storrs eventually chose saints, prophets, scholars, and kings belonging to the history of all religious communities, which symbolized his attempt to achieve a sectarian balance. He personally chose names such as St. Francis Street and St. Paul Road, Richard Cœur de Lion Street and Saladin Road. One road was also dedicated to a woman, Queen Melisende.⁴⁷ These names were indeed linked to the history of the city, however, none of them truly symbolized the unity of Jerusalem. On the contrary,

43 Meron Benvenisti, *City of Stones: The Hidden History of Jerusalem*, trans. Maxine Kaufman Nunn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 136.

44 There are many works dedicated to the topic of street naming. Here is a sample I have used to compare Jerusalem with other colonial cities: Liora Bigon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines and Street Naming in French Dakar and British Lagos, c. 1850–1930," *Urban History* 36, no. 3 (2009); Brenda S. A. Yeoh, "Street Names in Colonial Singapore," *Geographical Review* 82, no. 3 (1992); Liora Bigon, ed., *Place Names in Africa: Colonial Urban Legacies, Entangled Histories* (Cham: Springer, 2016); Seamus Conboy, "Changing Dublin Street Names, 1880's to 1940's," *Dublin Historical Record* 64, no. 2 (2011).

45 JMA 361, Pro-Jerusalem Society, Ronald Storrs, Jerusalem, November 24, 1926. CZA A153/172, Minutes of the Street Naming Committee. The archives hold the minutes of four meetings held between October 1923 to January 1924. The members of the subcommittee discussed a list of names proposed for the Old and New City. Names were written in English, Arabic and Hebrew.

46 Charles Robert Ashbee, *Jerusalem, 1920–1922: Being the Records of the Pro-Jerusalem Council during the First Two Years of the Civil Administration* (London: John Murray, 1924), 26–28.

47 Storrs, *Memoirs*, 331–32.

when one reflects on the history of Jerusalem, some of these names suggest cleavage, division, and conflict than unity and peace. As mentioned earlier, naming the streets of Jerusalem granted the British a degree of physical control, while local Jerusalemites viewed it as the radical transformation of their local environment. Anonymity in Jerusalem was almost unknown, even outside the walls, and every person was easily located. In Ottoman Jerusalem streets were known by more than one name, however, this did not affect the knowledge of the city fabric and mail was still delivered to the right mailbox.⁴⁸ In the long term, street naming brought a practical amelioration for the city dwellers. On the other hand, the same process suggests that Jerusalemites lost a key element defining the concept of *citadinité*. Toponyms based on groups' heritage and history were imposed on Jerusalemites, once again fostering sectarianism and reducing the sense of Jerusalem as global city.⁴⁹

Red Brick and White Stone: A Political Reading

With the formulation of the town planning ordinance, Jerusalem's Town Planning Commission began operation in 1921. Ashbee was then a member and secretary of the commission and member of the Central Commission. Nearly all building permits and plans underwent his scrutiny and decision.⁵⁰ The Town Planning Commission was meant to represent the progress that the British Mandate would bring to Palestine. However, this was not a democratically elected institution, and membership came to include officials, professionals, and local representatives. The authority of the commission was limited, but crucially included the authorization of constructions of building and streets. The Pro-Jerusalem Society was partly superseded by the new institution, which then debated all building permits submitted to the municipality. The vision of the Old and New City as planned by the Pro-Jerusalem Society was now

48 On the naming of the streets, see Yair Wallach, "The 1920s Street-Naming Campaign and the British Reshaping of Jerusalem" (paper presented at the Second World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies, Amman, June 11–16, 2006), and Wallach, "Reading in Conflict: Public Text in Modern Jerusalem" (PhD diss., Birkbeck College, University of London, 2008).

49 Maoz Azaryahu, "Naming the Streets of (Arab) Jerusalem during the British Period, 1920–1948," *Horizons in Geography*, nos. 60–61 (2004).

50 Hyman, "British Planners," 406–7.

transferred to the commission, which became the official British approach to the urban development of the city.⁵¹

Jerusalem possessed “an appeal to the imagination that not Rome, nor even Athens could rival.” Storrs and Ashbee clearly disliked physical evidence of nineteenth-century modernity.⁵² When asked to grant a concession to run a street-car line to Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives, Storrs replied through several newspapers: “the first rail section would have to be laid over the dead body of the military governor.”⁵³ The argument was soon closed and both the minutes of the society’s council and the Town Plan Commission do not report any major discussion of public transportation around the Old City. The topic was left untouched until 2011, when the contemporary Jerusalem municipality opened a very controversial tram line. I argue that the unilateral decision by Storrs proved to be a crucial barrier for the future development of communal relations in Jerusalem. Local inhabitants were deprived of a facility that could have created new meeting points or fostered relations between communities.

One of the most consequential decisions imposed by the commission, as discussed by the society’s council, was the imposition of Jerusalem white stone.⁵⁴ This is a limestone material available in a number of quarries in Palestine. In the eyes of Storrs and Ashbee, the white stone of Jerusalem was a key material representing a visible connection with the biblical past of the city.⁵⁵ The council had already argued during its first meeting that the Old City could have not been modernized without its destruction. Following this declaration of principles on September 30, 1918, the council met for the second time and Storrs, in his capacity of governor, proposed the banning of use of red brick and corrugated iron in construction and renovation in the Old City. According to Storrs, celestial Jerusalem was not meant to be contaminated by more modern

51 JMA 829, Jerusalem Town Planning Commission, Minutes, January 19, 1921.

52 *The Times*, “The New Era in Jerusalem,” London, December 30, 1920.

53 Storrs Papers, press cuttings.

54 Not many works are available on building materials in Palestine. A good work dealing briefly with this topic is Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905–1948*, trans. Orit Gat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). A work dealing with Tel Aviv and Jaffa is Sharon Rotbard, *White City, Black City: Architecture and War in Tel Aviv and Jaffa* (London: Pluto, 2015).

55 The conceptualization and problematization of building materials in Palestine is not yet a common topic. To this extent, I relied on the work of Olivia Muñoz-Rojas Oscarsson on Franco and post-Franco Spain. See Olivia Muñoz-Rojas Oscarsson, *Ashes and Granite: Destruction and Reconstruction in the Spanish Civil War and its Aftermath* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

and cheaper materials. Kamil al-Husayni, representing the Muslim community, but certainly voicing the concern of several other members of the council, suggested that the idea was good in principle but that it would be difficult for the dwellers of the Old City, who for the most part belonged to the lower classes, to access the more expensive white stone.⁵⁶ According to the minutes, a discussion followed and it was decided to look for public funding in order to balance the cost for the preservation of the Old City. Al-Husayni touched upon a very delicate issue to the extent that the topic was then postponed and rarely discussed again.

In May 1922, the red-brick question was back on the table, this time not at the Pro-Jerusalem Society, but the Town Planning Commission. It was agreed that silicate bricks could be used on the following conditions:

1. For internal or "carcase" work without restrictions.
2. For external work:
 - a. In all the industrial zones shown in red on the Zoning Plan.
 - b. In the garden cities of Talpieh, Bonsh Bayi, and Jinjriah without restrictions.
 - c. Elsewhere in the new city subject to the special approval in each case of the Jerusalem Town Planning Commission
3. Its external use in the Old City is absolutely prohibited.⁵⁷

Following this decision, the commission had to deal with a large number of cases regarding the erection or reparation of buildings without the necessary permits. Al-Husayni's argument resurfaced: despite being local and indeed more suitable for the aesthetic of the Old and New City, white stone was more expensive and many could not afford it.

In time, the white stone was imposed on every building in the region and local Palestinians developed a sense of pride in it.⁵⁸ Materials often come to represent and symbolize the history of a city or a region. However, more than just a choice, the white stone was a colonial burden that limited the possibilities of the local population, narrowed their development and, in the long term, disentangled those lives in common that had developed throughout the centuries in Jerusalem.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ JMA, 361, Pro-Jerusalem Society, Minutes, no. 2, Jerusalem, September 30, 1918.

⁵⁷ JMA, 829, Town Planning Commission, Minutes, no. 12, Jerusalem, May 4, 1922.

⁵⁸ Goldhill, *Jerusalem: City of Longing*, 136.

⁵⁹ For example, the myth of the white city and the Bauhaus style in Tel Aviv has been debunked by Rotbard, *White City, Black City*.

Conclusion: Back to the Everyday Archives

In recent years, a growing amount of literature in relation to the Pro-Jerusalem Society and the urban planning of the city has been published or is in the pipeline for publication. Ashbee's and other plans have been scrutinized from different perspectives; however, very little attention has been paid to the minutes of the society's council and of the Town Planning Commission. Similarly, Storrs, who was the mastermind of the Pro-Jerusalem Society and the governor of Jerusalem, has been largely forgotten in the public sphere. Preliminary analyses of this material suggest a lack of a long-term vision concerning the development of the city.⁶⁰ A number of projects, such as the restoration of the ramparts and the renovation of the cotton market, were carried out. The commission established a more organized work division and formalized requests and permits. In 1922, Clifford Holliday, who succeeded Ashbee, pointed out that the existing plans for Jerusalem were inadequate. He also reminded us that until 1926, the process of planning was practically supported by the force of Storrs' personality and interest.⁶¹ This may explain why Storrs disappeared from public discourse after his departure. Though as a person he was, so to speak, ancient history, his legacy as an actor of local urban planning was not.

Despite the quite harsh judgement reserved by Holliday on Ashbee and his criticism of Storrs – he was certainly right to believe they were “amateurs” – we should remember that some of the decisions made by the society and commission have resulted in long-term consequences that are still visible in the city. For instance, renaming the streets of Jerusalem symbolized the extent of British control; similarly, the adoption of white stone, in itself a rather innocuous act, had large and likely unintended consequences.

One of the leading principles of the Pro-Jerusalem Society was “the preservation and safeguarding of the amenities of the Holy City without favour or prejudice to race or creed.”⁶² Though preservation was certainly achieved, prejudice was a leading principle of the society. Rapaport has argued that Ashbee brought about a clear vision for Jerusalem, one that was meant to create a harmonious urban community.⁶³ The fact is that a sectarian balance existed in Jerusalem prior to the arrival of the British; *citadinité* as a counterweight to

60 Raquel Rapaport, “The City of the Great Singer: C. R. Ashbee's Jerusalem,” *Architectural History* 50 (2007). Rapaport argues the opposite, suggesting that he had a consistent vision.

61 Hyman, “British Planners,” 433–34.

62 Ashbee, *Jerusalem 1920–1922*, 71.

63 Rapaport, “The City of the Great Singer,” 201.

segregation and conflict was a powerful tool that emerged within the boundaries of the late Ottoman reforms and was shaped and implemented by the local population. It was the lack of local agency, taken away from the British and partly shared with the Zionists, that led to the failure the aims of the Pro-Jerusalem Society and subsequently of the British administration. Lives in common were gradually transformed into lives in isolation.