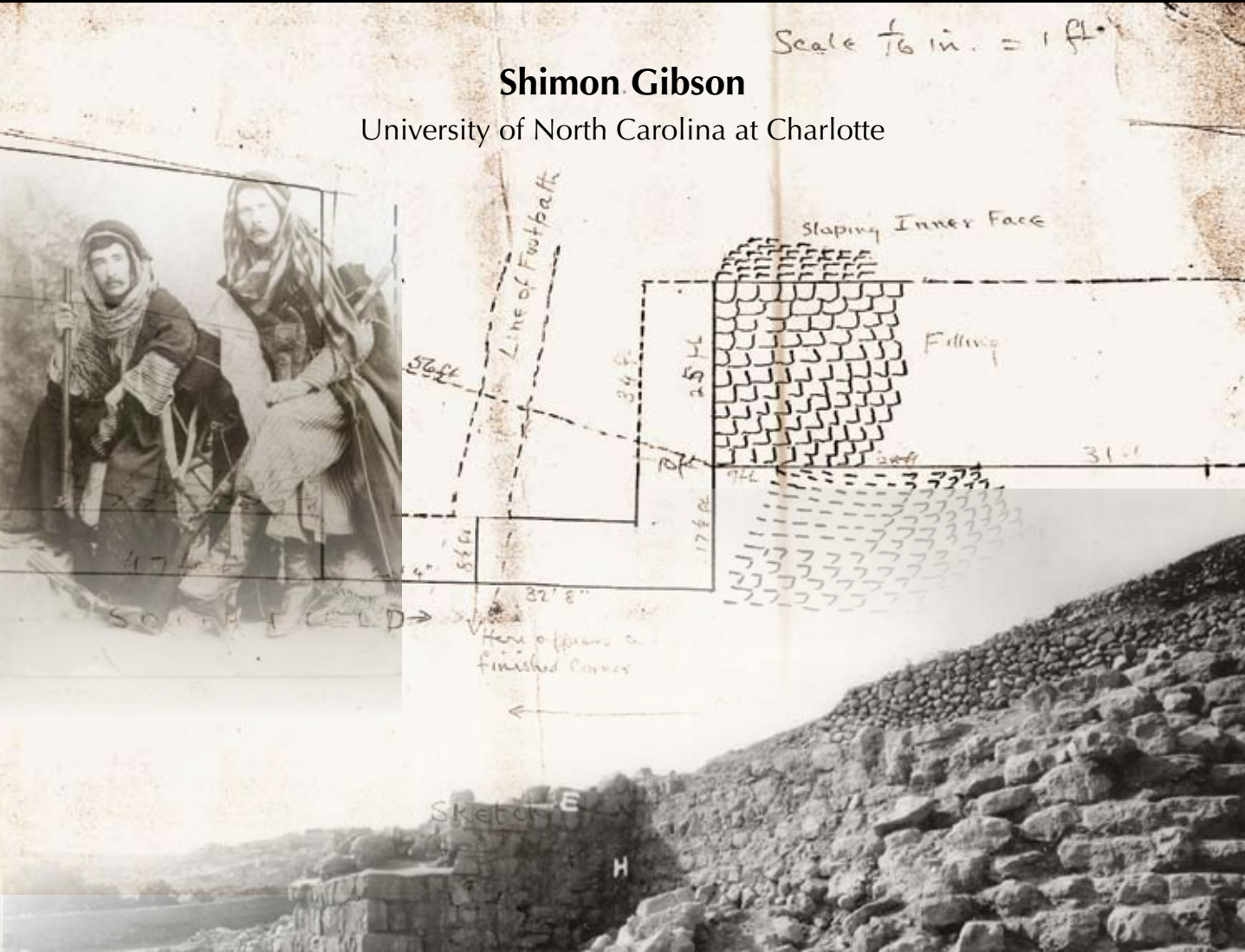




# The Palestine Exploration Fund and the Search for the "City of David"



The search for the true location of the biblical "City of David" was at every stage of the development of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) one of its stated objectives, from the establishing of the society in 1865 and until the 1960s. The society was founded by the biblical historian and musicologist George Grove with the intention of making an "accurate and systematic investigation of the archaeology, the topography, the geology and physical geography, the manners and customs of the Holy Land, for biblical illustration" (Watson 1915: 17). These lofty aims to make an overall study of the Land of Israel were indeed achieved when an exploration and mapping operation (the "Survey of Western Palestine") was conducted by the PEF in the 1870s, but although work was conducted throughout the country, Jerusalem remained at all times a major target of its antiquarian and scholarly interest. This is well reflected in the enormous quantities of archival materials pertaining to the study of ancient Jerusalem – letters, manuscripts, drawings, maps and photographs – that are presently preserved in the offices of the PEF in London. <sup>1</sup>

The goal to undertake excavations in Jerusalem was very much a central theme of the founding meeting of the PEF in 1865, and one that clearly resulted from the previous success of the "Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem" of 1864 and 1865 made by Charles Wilson.



**Fig. 1:** Portrait of the explorer Charles Wilson.

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<sup>1</sup> Numerous drawings and notes made by PEF explorers exist in the PEF archives in London and much of this material was partly published or not at all. One has to remember that in the nineteenth century the placing of a drawing or report into the archives of the PEF was perceived by many at that time, notably by PEF Committee members and associated scholars, almost as an act of publication. Hence, one frequently finds notes in the *Quarterly Statement* to drawings and plans having been 'placed' into the PEF archives for future reference by visiting scholars.

In the PEF's prospectus, produced in 1865, it was stated that Jerusalem was a prime target for digging operations and that "what is above ground will be accurately known [only] when the present [Ordnance] survey is completed; but below the surface hardly anything has yet been discovered... It is not too much to anticipate that every foot in depth of the 'sixty feet [ca. 18 m] of rubbish' on which the city stands, will yield interesting and important materials for the Archaeologist or the Numismatist" (from a Prospectus of the PEF included within *PEF Proceedings and Notes, 1865-69: 2*).

Among the initial goals set forth for study was the search for the royal tombs of David and Solomon on Mount Zion; locating the "Ophel"; and making a thorough examination of the Virgin's Fountain (now known as the Gihon Spring) and the conduit of Hezekiah. It is worthwhile pointing out that after more than 130 years of research, surveys, and excavations in Jerusalem, only a few of these targets relating to the area of the City of David as set out in the Fund's original prospectus of 1865 have been achieved. First of all, the location of the royal tombs of David and Solomon are still not known. Two rock-cut tunnels situated on the south-eastern slope of the City of David were identified as the royal tombs by Raymond Weill following his excavations there in 1913-14, but they are unconvincing as sepulchral monuments. The whereabouts of the Ophel is generally assumed to be south of the Temple Mount, but uncertainty as to its identification is apparent in the scholarly literature. Some believe it to be a topographical feature situated on the north side of the City of David. Benjamin Mazar and Eilat Mazar identified it in 1989 with Iron Age II building remains uncovered immediately south of the Temple Mount, but this seems unlikely. The reference to yet another Ophel at Samaria (2 Kings 5:24) suggests that the Jerusalem Ophel was probably a massive *artificial* fortification complex (a kind of citadel) and not a *natural* topographical feature at all. Perhaps we should identify it with the early Iron Age "stepped stone structure" (excavated by Shiloh in Area G) and the inter-connecting building with massive foundation walls situated to its west on the adjacent ridge (excavated recently by Eilat Mazar) rather than as a royal palace. The Gihon Spring has been thoroughly investigated in recent years by Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron with the discovery of numerous remains ranging from the Middle Bronze Age and until Second Temple times.

George Grove, Honorary Secretary of the PEF, made it clear in a meeting held in Cambridge in 1867 that it was decided to concentrate almost all future excavations in Jerusalem, and towards that purpose Lieutenant Charles Warren of the Royal Engineers, with previous experience in topographical and excavation operations in Algeria and Gibraltar, was to be sent out to Jerusalem in the company of two sappers. In regard to the questions raised by scholars about the topography of Jerusalem, some of which had been debated for decades without resolution, the Dean of Westminster pointed out to his audience that "without excavation all

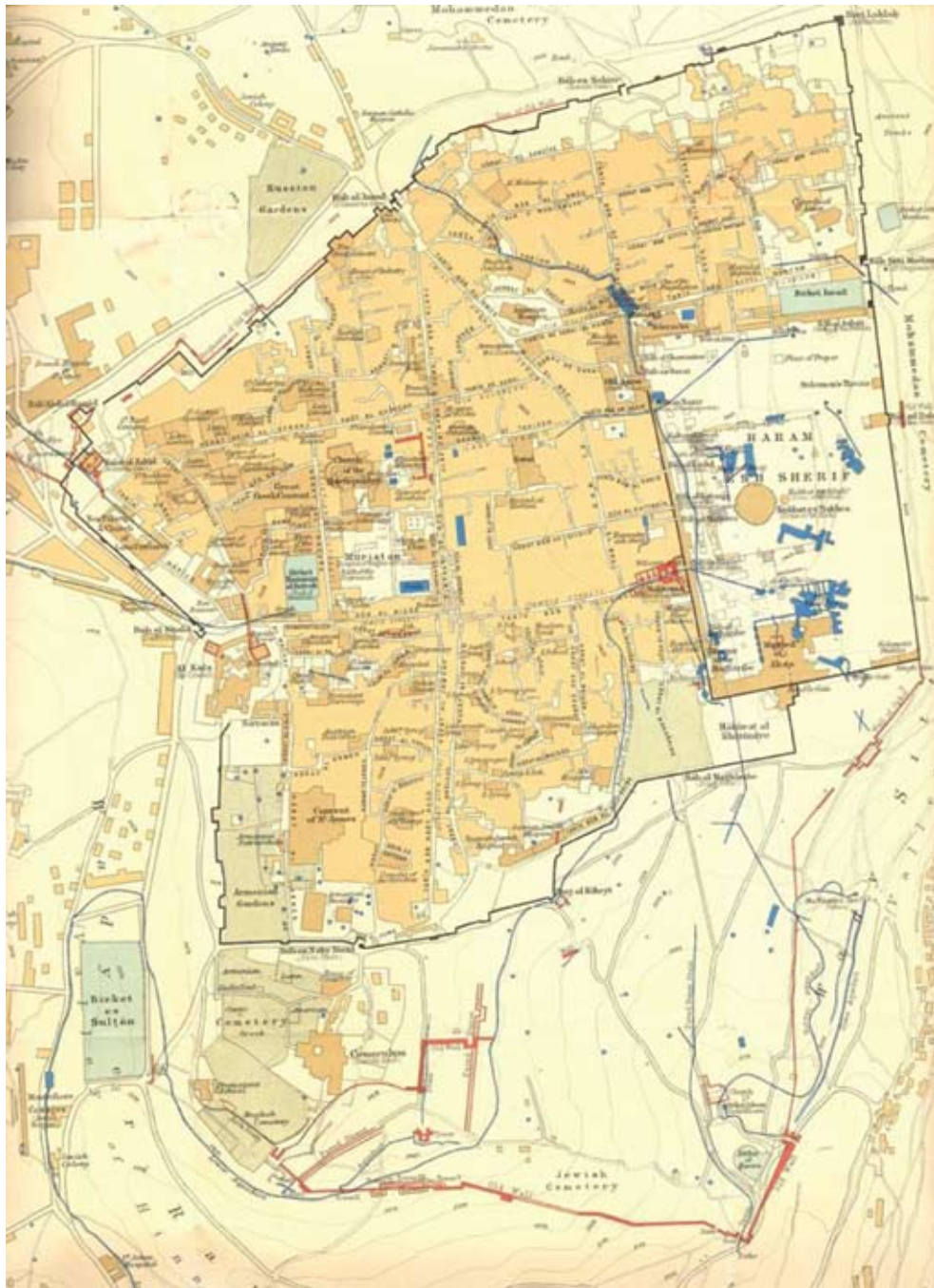


Fig. 2: Map of Jerusalem showing archaeological remains uncovered there in the nineteenth century

the theories and speculations that existed about the internal topography of Jerusalem rested upon mere air” (from a report entitled "Meeting at Cambridge, May 8th 1867" included within PEF *Proceedings and Notes, 1865-69: 5a*). He then went on to list the various controversies that existed at his time including the situation and direction of the ancient city walls and the location of the royal tombs of the Kings of Judah.

Lieutenant Charles Warren was eventually sent out to work in Jerusalem accompanied by Sergeant Henry Birtles from the Horse Guards, and various sappers. With a letter in hand from the vizier allowing him to excavate wherever he wanted in Jerusalem except for within the Haram precincts, Warren arrived in Jerusalem in February 1867 and continued working there until April 1870. Warren's operations were directed mainly towards clarifying the ancient aspects of the Temple Mount, conceding that the exact location of biblical Mount Zion was still a matter of great controversy and debate.

He did however make some investigations in the area of the Gihon Spring and went on to uncover segments of ancient defense walls on the eastern “Ophel” slope. Back in London there was disappointment in some quarters that the discoveries made by Warren did not match the discoveries previously made by Austen H. Layard in Nineveh and Mesopotamia, and that art objects and examples of sculpture and carved friezes were not discovered. Warren



**Fig. 3:** The explorer Charles Warren (far left) and comrades in Jerusalem.

continued to work at Jerusalem with many more achievements and successes, and this caused a certain amount of friction between him and Wilson at the PEF, especially in view of the latter's publication of modifications of Warren's drawings without his permission in an article that appeared in the PEF's *Quarterly Statement* for 1880.

Walter Besant, Secretary at the PEF, described Warren's achievements at Jerusalem as follows: "It was Warren who restored the ancient city to the world; he it was who stripped the rubbish from the rocks, and showed the glorious Temple standing within its walls, 1000 feet long and 200 feet high, of mighty masonry; he it was who laid open the valleys now covered up and hidden; he who opened the secret passages, the aqueducts, the bridge connecting temple and town. Whatever else may be done in the future, his name will always be associated with the Holy City which he first recovered" (Besant 1886: 62). Warren promptly published in 1876 a popular account of his work entitled *Underground Jerusalem* (1876), as well as many articles.

Additional work was undertaken in Jerusalem from the 1870s onwards on behalf of the PEF by Charles Tyrwhitt-Drake, Claude R. Conder, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, and Conrad Schick, among others. They too focused, whenever possible, on the study of the Temple Mount, but more work was now being done elsewhere in the city using the Ordnance Survey

map as the basis for recording observations and finds. Numerous archaeological features in the City of David area were recorded and sent back to the PEF in London. And some of these were referred to in the "Jerusalem" volume of the memoirs of the *Survey of Western Palestine* published by Warren and Conder in 1884. In conjunction with the *Survey* volume, the PEF also brought out a very large companion portfolio of fifty maps, plans and drawings, entitled *Plans, Elevations, Sections, etc., Shewing the Results of the Excavations at Jerusalem, 1867-70* (now known as the "Warren Atlas").

One subject that seemed to evade many of the explorers working in Jerusalem was that of the exact alignment of the ancient city walls as described in the biblical accounts and in the writings of Josephus Flavius, except for the



**Fig. 4:** Portrait of F.J. Bliss (right) and A.C. Dickie in a photograph by G. Krikorian.

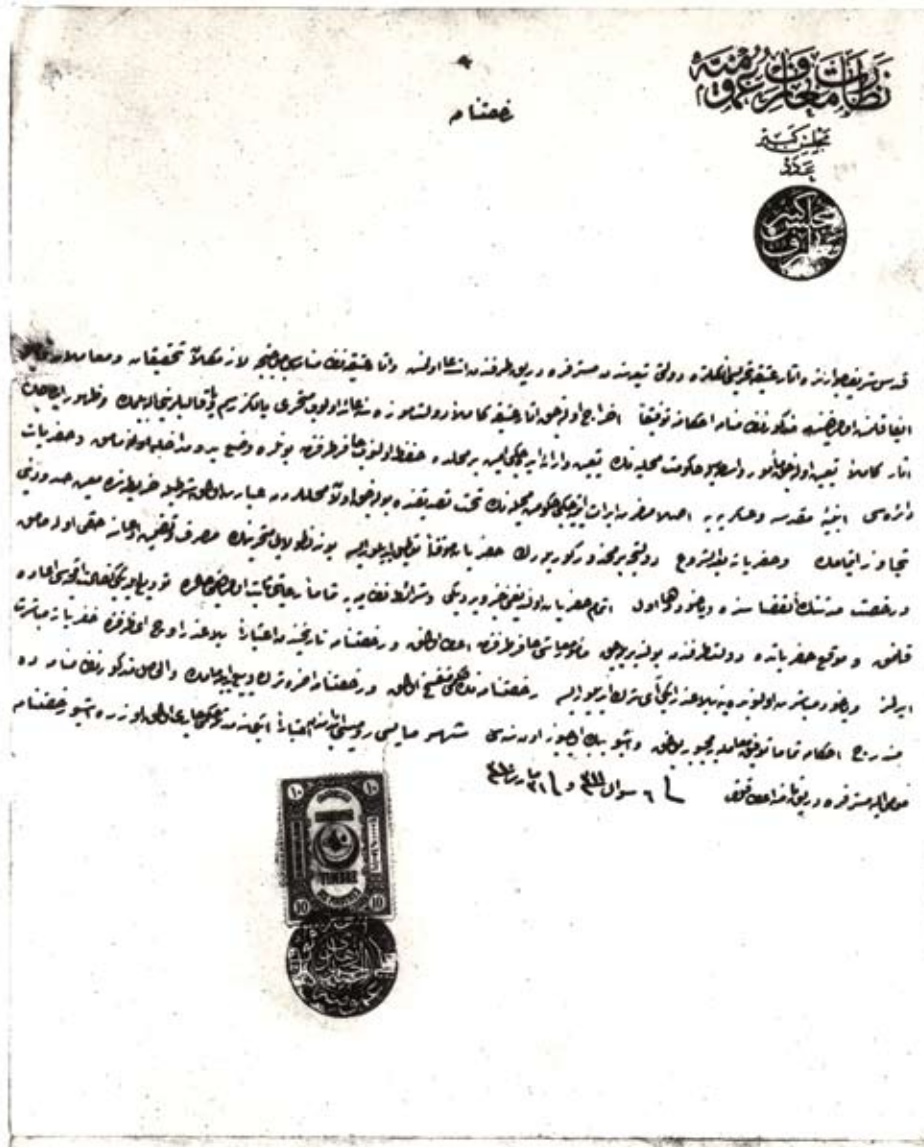


Fig. 5: The Ottoman firman allowing Bliss to conduct excavations in Jerusalem.

small segments of defense walls previously uncovered by Warren on the eastern Ophel slope, by Maudslay near the Gobat School on Mount Zion, and by Hermann Guthe in the lower Tyropoeon Valley. Hence, the Fund decided to mount an expedition to Jerusalem to investigate the south side of the city, from the traditional Mount Zion to the west to the area of the City of David in the east. These excavations were subsequently conducted between 1894-97, using a system of shafts and galleries, and were made under the direction of Frederick Jones Bliss, who had previously taken

over from William Matthew Flinders Petrie at the Tell el-Hesi excavations during 1891-92, and with the assistance of the architect Archibald Campbell Dickie.

Numerous segments of fortification walls, towers and gates were eventually recorded, and the Byzantine Pool of Siloam and its chapel were uncovered close to the southern end of the City of David. Bliss was also the first to record the steps of the Second Temple period Siloam Pool which has recently been uncovered by Reich and Shukron. The results of the work were promptly published by Bliss in a book entitled *Excavations in Jerusalem* (published in 1898).

The vast amount of archaeological work made by British explorers in the nineteenth century laid the way for the major discussions and controversies of the twentieth century, particularly in regard to the location of the original biblical "Zion" (whether it was on the South-Eastern or South-Western hills), and the extent of the Iron Age city and whether or not it included the Western Hill.

The first opportunity to test some of these archaeological questions came about as a result of political circumstances. In 1918 hostilities between the British and Turks eventually ceased, with the result that the British now had firm control of Jerusalem. Professor John Garstang was a pivotal individual during the 1920s in regard to excavations in Jerusalem, first as the

Director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and subsequently as the Director of the Palestine Department of Antiquities. Among his achievements was the setting up of the Palestine Archaeological Museum at Way House (later the collections were transferred to the Palestine Archaeological [Rockefeller] Museum), and the formulating of the Antiquities Ordinance, with a set of laws that also included a Schedule of Historical Sites.

While Garstang did not himself conduct excavations in Jerusalem, in 1922 he urged the PEF to resume archaeological work in Jerusalem, as part of a joint effort with archaeologists from other countries. The focus was the Ophel and the City of David, and the aim was to retrieve further information regarding the perplexing question as to the



Fig. 6: Portrait of R.A.S. Macalister





Fig. 7a and 7b: Macalister and Duncan's "Jebusite Ramp".

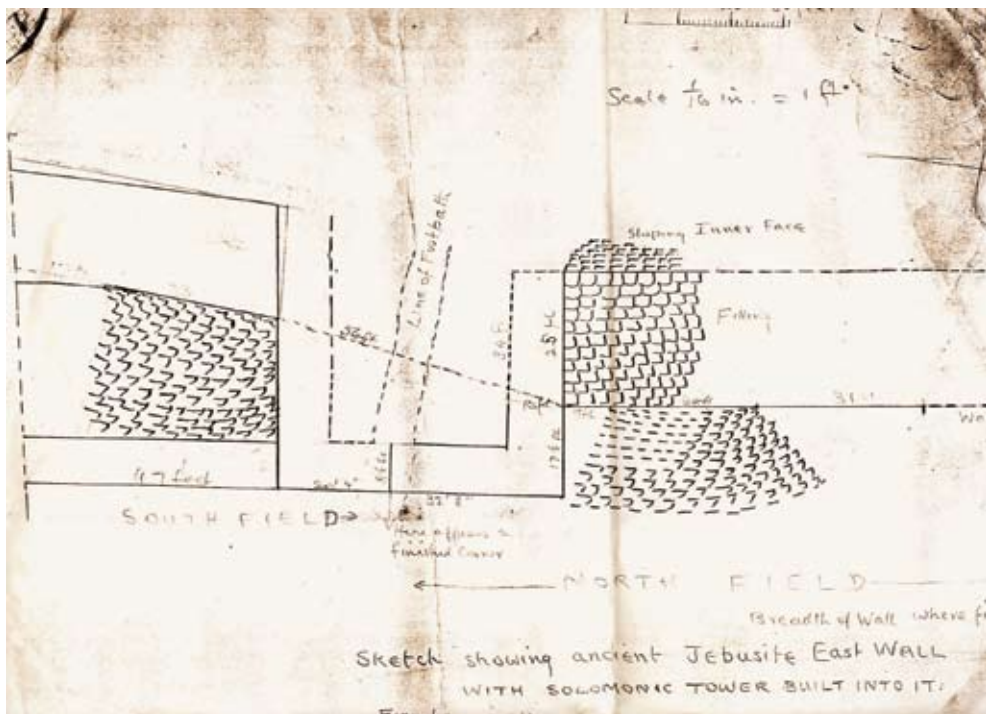


Fig. 8: Sketch-plan of Macalister and Duncan's work in the area of the "Jebusite Ramp" (later Area G)

original location of biblical Zion. The archaeological work was undertaken by Robert A. S. Macalister with Reverend J. Garrow Duncan, the latter actually shouldering much of the supervisory work conducted in the field. Macalister and Duncan undertook the work between October 1923 to March 1924, with the continuation of the work by Duncan alone from March 1924 to September 1925.

An important find during this work was, of course, a fortification line with a ramp-like built-up area, labeled the "Jebusite ramp," which was later re-excavated by K. M. Kenyon and by Y. Shiloh as the "stepped stone structure" in Area G. The accomplishments of this excavation, notwithstanding the disputes between Macalister and Duncan, which effected to some degree the full publication of the excavations, include the confirmation that the Southeast Hill was indeed the ancient Zion and that it was surrounded by a fortification wall.

Another important achievement was a very accurate map of the entire Southeast Hill made by Col. Sir Charles F. Close. The Chairman of the PEF, H. R. Hall, pointed out that "it was not expected that at Ophel treasures of gold would be discovered, nor in Palestine are Tutankhamen tombs likely to reward the spade of the digger. What we have discovered is new light on the building and topography of the most ancient Jerusalem, the little city on the steep hill of Ophel that already existed there in the third millennium B.C..." (Macalister and Duncan 1926: viii). New work was resumed on the Ophel/City of David when in 1927 John W. Crowfoot and Gerald M. Fitzgerald cut a 20-meter trench from the west slope of the hill and across the lower Tyropoeon Valley towards the Southwest hill. A massive gate was discovered. It is thought to be Hellenistic but in my opinion it might go back to a much earlier time, possibly even to the Middle Bronze Age. Clarification regarding the date of this fortification and gate may emerge in the new excavations being conducted by D. Ben-Ami and Y. Tchekhanovetz at the "Givati Parking Lot" compound due north of Crowfoot and Fitzgerald's area.

Between 1961 and 1967, Kathleen M. Kenyon (who was later made a Dame of the British Empire) conducted a series of major archaeological excavations in Jerusalem. In the Preface to her book *Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 Years of History* (1967), Kenyon explains that one major reason behind her undertaking modern excavations in Jerusalem in the first place was that in her opinion her predecessors had dismally failed at their job. She went on to state that since Warren and Bliss and Dickie were unable to date walls, their work was thereby seriously and fundamentally flawed. She is also critical of her more immediate predecessors, working in the early third of the twentieth century (namely R.A.S. Macalister and J.W. Crowfoot, among others) in that they still had not mastered proper working methods, and by that she meant stratigraphic digging procedures. This is somewhat unfair, especially when considering the vast achievements made by her predecessors, Wilson and Warren, and others as we have seen above.

While Kenyon did set out as a major goal of her work to clarify the topography and history of Jerusalem during seven seasons of excavations, there were certain restraints on her work and in the end what she was able to achieve was something much different. Kenyon concentrated most of her attention on the Southeast Hill, in the area of the City of David, though she could have worked more on the western slopes of the traditional Mount Zion had she really wanted to.

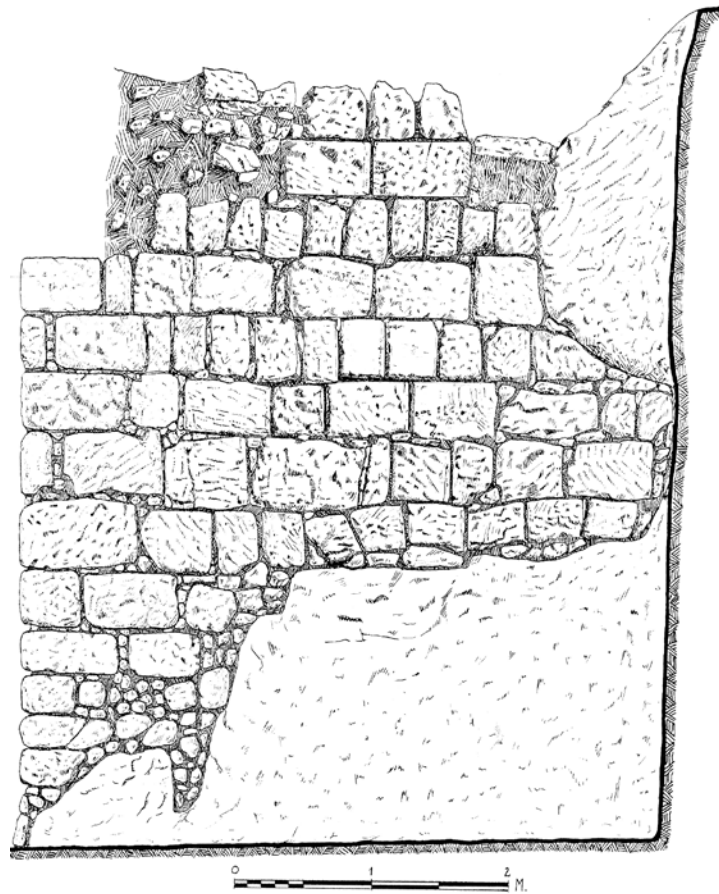


Fig. 9: Elevation drawing of the wall associated with the gate excavated by Crowfoot.

The archaeological work of Kenyon in Jerusalem has received a lot of criticism by fellow scholars and by some archaeologists subsequently working in Jerusalem. Their arguments may be summed up as follows: Her excavation areas were too small; she had an obsession with stratigraphy rather than trying to elucidate architectural remains; she developed major conclusions regarding the expansion and shrinking of the city during various periods based on “negative evidence”; and she had little interest in the Islamic and medieval remains of the city. In addition, Kenyon suffered from serious gaps in her knowledge (or perhaps was just dismissive) in regard to the explorations and achievements of her predecessors, on the one hand, and in regard to archaeological work conducted after 1967 and until her death in 1978, on the other.



**Fig. 10:** View of the south-east corner of the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) in a photograph taken at the time of Kenyon's excavations in the area in the 1960s

Some of these criticisms are unjust. One cannot, in my opinion, criticize an archaeologist for performing what he or she set out to accomplish, and did so successfully. Kenyon had no interest in concentrating her excavations in one single area (in fact, this was largely impossible in some cases in her time, due to land-ownership problems or because of the build-up of modern houses). She also did not want to excavate complete building units, but, instead, she wanted to dig deep trenches and establish good stratigraphic sequences in order to clarify the development of the city through time. Admittedly, there were some crucial aspects of the development of Jerusalem that she got wrong, namely the extent of the expansion of Iron Age II settlement to the Western Hill, which was based on negative evidence (namely the absence of stratified Iron Age II pottery at the bottom of her squares), but Kenyon never held a monopoly on interpretations.

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