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# THE DOME OF THE ROCK AND THE POLITICS OF RESTORATION

BY BEATRICE ST. LAURENT

**F**rom 1990 to the spring of 1996, I was fortunate in obtaining permission to engage in a research project on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the oldest surviving Islamic monument. My project was to determine the extent to which restorations of the Dome of the Rock, from the sixteenth century to the present, were politically motivated at key moments in the region's history. After an initial period of research in Jerusalem during the summer of 1990, I moved to Jerusalem during the summer of 1992 and began the project and remained in the region until the spring of 1996. My research was sponsored by a National Endowment of the Humanities Grant, a Van Berchem Foundation Grant and two successive United States Information Agency Grants.

I lived in East Jerusalem, in al-Ram, a village in the West Bank, and in Amman, Jordan. In order to obtain archaeological field experience, for two seasons I participated in the excavation of Tel Miqne, the ancient Philistine town of Ekron, directed by Dr. Trude Dothan of Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Throughout its Islamic history the Dome of the Rock has been politically and religiously significant; first to its Umayyad patrons, then to its Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottoman, British, Jordanian and Palestinian protectors. Jerusalem's history beginning with the advent of Islam is reflected in the 1300 year history of the Dome of the Rock, and the Dome stands as the symbol of Jerusalem and thus figures prominently in the current peace negotiations.

Shortly after the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty, the Caliph entered Jerusalem and wanted to pray on the site of the ancient Jewish Temple of Solomon and later the second Temple of Herod the Great, which had been destroyed in 70 C. E. by the Roman Emperor Titus. The Dome of the Rock is located on the Haram al-Sharif or the Most Noble Sanctuary, the platform that is the core of the Old City of Jerusalem. Completed in 692 C. E. by Caliph Abd al-Malik, the Dome is the oldest surviving Islamic monument and marks the religio-political presence of the Umayyad dynasty in Jerusalem. It is constructed around a rock believed

also to be the site of Mount Moriah where Abraham, according to the Hebrew Bible, was to have sacrificed his son Isaac, though the Koran, the holy book of Islam, indicates that it was his son Ishmael. Christians decided to commemorate the site of Golgotha, which was nearby but outside the confines of the ancient Temple sanctuary. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built in the fourth century C. E., includes a chapel at the top of Golgotha and the Anastasis or round tomb of Christ. The site of the ancient temple thus lay abandoned until the arrival of the Muslims in the late seventh century. A temporary congregational mosque, which does not survive, was constructed from the ruins of the stoa of Herod on the lower platform of the Temple sanctuary built by Herod. Also, according to Muslim tradition, the rock contains the footprint of Muhammad when he paused to pray in Jerusalem on his way to visit the seven levels of heaven during his Miraj or night vision.

Jerusalem was the first *qiblah* or direction of prayer for Muslims; later, the Prophet Muhammad changed the direction to Mecca, the birthplace of the revelation. Thus, Abd al-Malik constructed his monument as a testimony to Islamic rule in Jerusalem and celebrated Jerusalem's status as the third holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Jerusalem is still the third holiest city of Islam, and Muslims continue to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem along with the official *hajj* to Mecca and Medina.

The Dome of the Rock sits atop the second smaller and higher platform in the northern part of the Haram al-Sharif. The Dome's form is that of a commemorative structure, a double-ambulatoried octagonal structure covered by a double shelled wooden dome, a form utilized in earlier Christian structures in the region of Greater Syria or Bilad al-Sham, buildings such as the Church of the Ascension on the nearby Mount of Olives, just to the east of the platform; or the church commemorating the house of St. Peter in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. The dome was covered with gold, the most precious of materials, to signal the imperial presence of Islam in the city. The Dome of the Rock dominated the cityscape as

the traveler approached from every direction, surpassing in stature and location the formerly dominant dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The commemorative form of the building provides one of the possible reasons for the Dome's construction. The Dome may have been built by the Umayyads in their newly acquired northern territory as an alternative to the Kaaba in Mecca for pilgrimage. The commemorative form of the structure suits the ritual requirements of circumambulation and thus, Jerusalem, already respected as the first *qiblah*, became the third holiest city of Islam and the spiritual capital of the Umayyad Empire.

Both the exterior and interior of the Dome were covered with mosaic decoration. The exterior mosaics were covered over with tiles in a later restoration but the interior mosaics survive in all of their splendor. Mosaics covered the interior of many Byzantine churches in the region and logically became a part of the decorative scheme of local Umayyad structures. The drum of the dome and the upper area of the arcades are filled with delicate vinescrolls spilling out of golden vases, conforming with the dictum against figural imagery in Muslim religious structures. Parallels for such mosaics appear in the fourth century Church of the Nativity in nearby Bethlehem. A long Koranic inscription in gold runs around the base of the arcade of the outer ambulatory and also provides the date of the structure's completion in 692 C. E.

The inclusion of the crowns of the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires in the mosaics prominently situated in between the windows of the drum of the dome provides another possible reason for the construction of the building, uniting under Islamic dominion the two great empires of Byzantium and Sasanian Iran which had previously dominated the region. The Dome thus was a suitable monument testifying to the sovereignty of Islam in the region dominating the cityscape and competing in form with the major Christian monument of the city—the Holy Sepulchre and uniting the three religions of the book (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) on a site sacred to all three. Thus the construction of

the Dome was a strong religio-political statement establishing the city as a center of religious pilgrimage and proclaiming the sovereignty of Islam in Jerusalem.

The late Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties began a long process of major additions and restorations continuing through the fourteenth century Mamluk period. In the eighth century, the Umayyads constructed the Aqsa Mosque, the new congregational mosque of Jerusalem. The Abbasids, the next major Muslim dynasty ruling the region, added new construction to the sanctuary and effected repairs to the Dome, with four bronze plates originally placed on the lintels above each entrance which included inscriptions with Ma'mun's name and the date 831. The Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun laid claim over the site by excising the name of the original builder and patron of the building and having his name inserted into the large Kufic inscription leaving the original date of construction intact. What better way to indicate new imperial sovereignty of the site and the region?

New construction and the many restorations of the Haram demonstrate the desire of successive rulers from new dynasties to mark their presence. The Shia heterodox Fatimid rulers of Egypt, who wrested control from the Sunni orthodox Abbasids, effected many changes on the Haram, including the modification of the Aqsa Mosque, making it smaller and aligning it directly with the Dome of the Rock. In 1022, the Fatimid Caliph al-Zahir rebuilt the dome of the Dome of the Rock after an earthquake, redecorating and gilding the dome interior with the typically Fatimid decor that, though restored, survives to the present. He re-covered the dome, not with gold but with less precious black lead, giving the building a new profile with its black dome, a profile that would endure for 940 years.

In the twelfth century the Crusaders took Jerusalem and drove the Muslims and Jews from the city. During this time, the Dome was converted into a church and paintings were added to its walls. In 1173, during the

Crusader period, 'Ali al-Harawi (of Herat) states that there were two paintings on the interior of the Dome, one of Solomon opposite the stairs leading to the cave and also one of Christ covered with jewels. The Aqsa Mosque was converted into the palace of the Knights Templar and the area under the platform became stables for the Crusaders' horses.

The Ayyubid Kurdish Sultan Salah al-Din, from northern Syria, reconquered Jerusalem for Sunni Islam in 1187, and re-dedicated the Haram by purging all structures of Christian imagery and constructing new buildings and restoring others. An inscription in the cupola indicates that he regilt the interior dome decoration. He also added a new pulpit or minbar to the Aqsa Mosque, which survived, until the 1969 fire in the Aqsa, as a symbol of his reconquest of the city. His victory was not merely over the Christian intruders but rather also in the ongoing struggle for supremacy of Sunni orthodoxy over the Shia Fatimids.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Mamluks of Egypt dominated in what was probably one of the most brilliant periods of construction on the Haram and in the Old City of Jerusalem, establishing a strong regional building tradition and style that persists to the present day. Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad in 1318 sponsored the re-leading of the exterior dome and other buildings on the Haram, and the re-gilding of the dome interior decoration. Sultan Baybars, in the late thirteenth century, restored the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, including those of the east portal. Sultan al-'Adil Kitbughā (1294-97) also repaired the mosaics. In 1318-19, Sultan al-Nā'ūr Muhammad restored and regilded the interior of the dome. In 1447, Sultan al-Zahir Jaqmaq rebuilt a part of the roof over the octagon after a fire started by someone chasing pigeons with a candle. Mujir al-Din reports in 1496 that there were two domes, one on the interior that was painted and gilded and an exterior one that was covered with lead. The final Mamluk renovation was in 1509-10, when al-Ashraf Qānsūh al-Ghūri renovated the lead of the outer dome.

In the 16th century, the Ottomans took control of Jerusalem and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Like the Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk rulers before him, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I embellished the city in small ways by restoring and adding to its edifices. It was in the reign of his son and successor Sultan Süleyman Kanüni, however, that the Holy City underwent renovations on a major scale. Süleyman's symbolic appropriation of Jerusalem for the Ottomans, by redecorating its most famous Islamic shrines in the Ottoman manner and enclosing them within massively rebuilt city walls, is the best known Ottoman contribution to the built form of the third of Islam's sacred cities. Moreover, throughout the entire Ottoman period of 1517 to 1917, there was active Ottoman engagement with Jerusalem and its monuments.

Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, installed stained glass windows and covered the building with a skin of tiles. These tiles, also appearing on buildings in Mecca and Medina, were the stamp of Ottoman imperial identity in the lands of early Islam. Furthermore, the tiles declare Süleyman's [or Solomon in English] connection to the Biblical Solomon and his Temple in Jerusalem. Süleyman is thus proclaiming himself the Solomon of a new Ottoman imperial age in the Holy City. At that time, the Ottomans granted permission for a Christian restoration of the Holy Sepulchre. Süleyman established relations with the French king, granted French subjects religious freedom and the Latin clergy custody of the Christian holy places. Thus began the process of foreign intervention in Jerusalem, a process that escalated during the next three centuries of Ottoman rule.

The period from the late 16th century to the present has been little studied. Western historiography presents the last four centuries of Islamic rule in Jerusalem as an unbroken slide into neglect and decline, broken only by the benign intervention of Europeans, starting in the nineteenth century and continuing with consistent contemporary nationalist attempts to control the Haram and its monuments. My current



*Above: Beatrice St. Laurent on the scaffolding at the top of the Dome of the Rock, at the beginning of King Hussein of Jordan's second major restoration project in 1993. Also in the photograph is the Palestinian Chief Engineer in charge of the project. The process of removal of the old anodized aluminum panels had just begun.*

research on the period from the early eighteenth century to the present proves that major restoration projects continued through those centuries at politically significant moments. By the eighteenth century more concessions were given to Europeans for control over their monuments, and local notables usurped regional administrative power from the central authority, thereby accumulating land and wealth. This resulted in locally sponsored and funded maintenance and restorations of the Islamic monuments of the city—notably the Dome, with partial credit always given to the Sultan. Religious and political control and maintenance of the Dome of the Rock and the monuments of the Haram al-Sharif during the British mandate Period from 1917-1948, the Jordanian nationalist governance from 1948 to 1967 and during the period of Israeli dominance since 1967, reflect the nationalist aspirations of these respective periods of governance.

One of the most significant restorations was that of Sultan Ahmed III in 1720-21, as recorded in a document in the Turkish National Archives in Istanbul. Its importance is reflected by the major positions previously

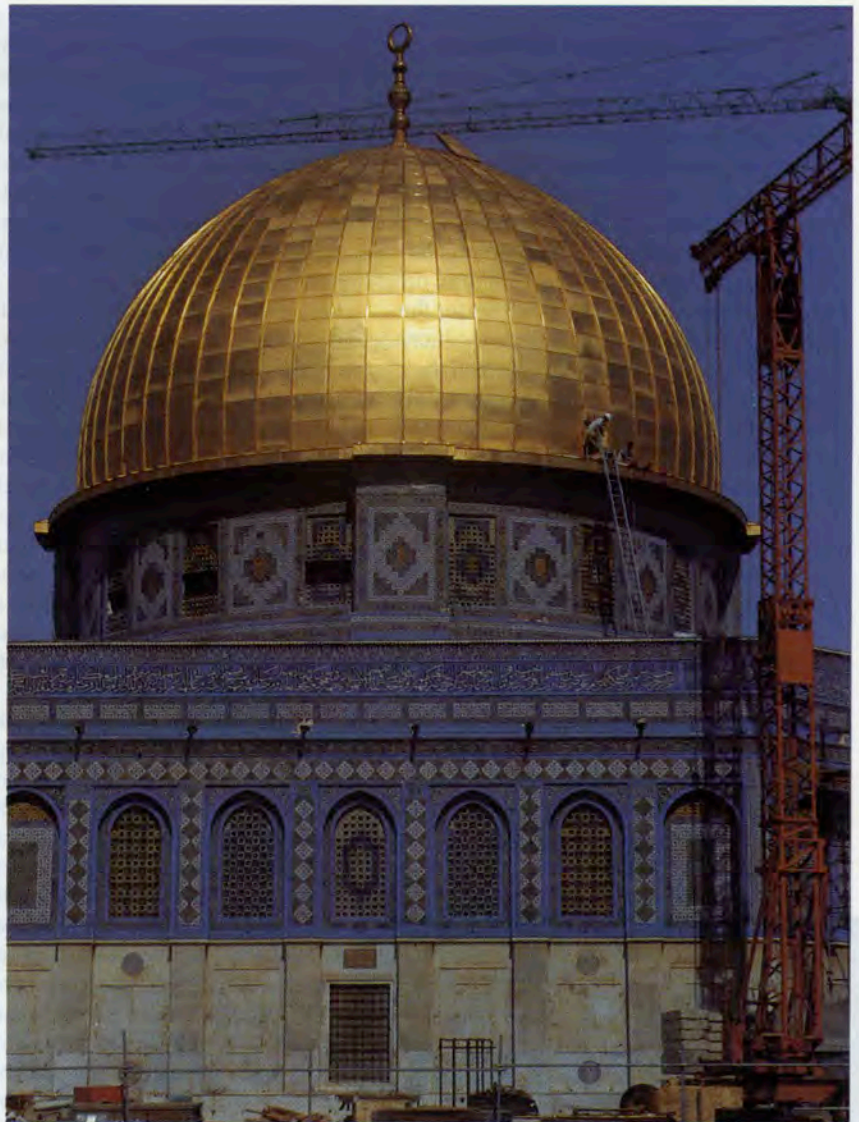
held by the project's supervisors. Tax revenues from Jaffa and Tripoli paid for two-thirds of the cost. The document lists, in painful detail for the translator, all the materials sent from Anatolia and Istanbul. All of the stained glass windows were replaced, using methods and materials that demonstrate European influence, and since a large amount of lead was shipped from Istanbul, the domes were no doubt repaired at the same time. From a later inventory, one can assume that tiles found in storage under the Haram were made on site in Jerusalem.

The restoration coincides with a general tightening of central authority over the province of Damascus, and with increased requests by the European powers for control over the Christian monuments of the city. The contemporary Ottoman historian Rashid discusses the struggle between the French, Austrians, and Russians to control repairs of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. After having made vague promises to the Austrians in the Treaty of Passarowitz, the Ottomans forestalled both the Hapsburgs and the Russians by granting permission to the French, who were their allies.



*Above: the Dome of the Rock, in 1954, with the black lead of the dome clearly visible. The restoration of c. 1000 C. E. replaced the original gold with black lead, which remained for almost 1000 years. The yellow-toned anodized aluminum panels of King Hussein of Jordan's first restoration in 1964 can be seen in the cover photo.*

*Right: the gleaming gold dome of the Dome of the Rock after the completion of King Hussein's recent restoration in 1993-94. The new gilt panels replace the yellow anodized aluminum panels of the 1964 restoration as seen in the cover photo.*



Under the order of Sultan Mahmud II, Süleyman Pasha, the governor of Saida, undertook another major restoration of the Dome of the Rock in 1817-18. The Dome's exterior marble revetment was restored, a new portico was built over the south entrance, and kilns [ovens] for the firing of ceramic tiles were constructed and clay was brought from Hebron and Solomon's Pools, near Jerusalem, for the production of ceramics. The tilemakers' names also appear in a document as do their signatures on dated tiles, examples of which are in the collection of the Islamic Museum on the Haram in Jerusalem, signed Mustafa Ali Efendi. These tiles are not of high quality, and recently similar tiles were found stored under the Haram,

probably placed there for future use. This restoration comes not long after the Russians in 1810 constructed a new closed dome for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, when the Ottomans conceded to pressure from abroad to control Christian holy sites and for the ownership of land. The Europeans continued to vie for power in the Holy Land, this time the Russians winning out, and shortly thereafter, in 1840, constructed the large Russian Compound, which looms grandly overlooking the Old City from outside the walls.

In 1853, Sultan Abdülmecid began yet another major project at the Dome of the Rock, completed by Abdülaziz in 1874-75. It included the repair of the wooden ceiling of the inner arcade, the

stripping the southwest and west sides of the Dome of the Rock's exterior and the replacement of the tiles by ones produced in an Istanbul workshop. In 1876 Abdülhamid II bought carpets for the Dome, and successive Hamidian projects in 1897 included ornamentation of the arcades on the stairs of the Dome's slightly elevated platform and of the facade of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

These restorations all occurred as part of the Istanbul government's centralization of control over the provinces during the Tanzimat period of modernizing reform and reign of Abdülhamid II. The initiation of the large-scale restoration of the exterior tiles by Abdülmecid in 1853 reflects the reinstatement of the Ottomans in Jerusalem after a hiatus of Egyptian

occupation from 1831-40, as well as rejoicing at the end of the Crimean War. The restorations of the Haram monuments, the addition of Hamidian style buildings to the Kaaba in Mecca, between 1876 and 1907, and his assuming of the title of Caliph can be seen as expressions of Abdülhamid II's policy of Islamization of the Empire. The sprucing up of monuments and other urban projects in 1897-1898 for the visit of The Kaiser, reflects the increased strength of the Europeans and the weakening of Ottoman control over the region.

As the British were gaining a stronger foothold in the region, they became gradually impatient with an Ottoman officialdom that they saw as bungling and inferior. The result was Allenby's entry into Jerusalem on 5 December 1918. The British, in conjunction with the Supreme Muslim Council of Jerusalem, undertook a major restoration of Jerusalem and the Haram. The Dome and the Aqsa Mosque were structurally stabilized, the mosaics and stained glass restored. The most important part of the plan,

the restoration of the tiles, was never accomplished. The group of Christian Armenian ceramists from Turkey, brought in by the British, was not accepted by the Muslim Turkish architect in charge of the project, who wanted to emphasize the Islamic qualities of the site. In addition, the earthquake of 1927 diverted funds to other projects.

At that time the British wanted to offer a conciliatory gesture to the Muslim community of Palestine. Written statements about the destruction of the Dome to make way for the re-building of another important religious edifice—namely the third Temple—were beginning to appear [the first reference that I've found is from 1918]. The restoration and preservation of the Dome and surrounding monuments thus became a powerful deterrent to the destruction of the Dome of the Rock.

From 1960 to 1967, the Jordanian government sponsored and supervised a new plan carried out by a team of specialists from Egypt: replacing the interior wooden ceilings of the arcades and the entire wooden rib structure of the outer dome and roof substructure of the octagon with aluminum, painting the interior of the dome, and replacing all of the tiles with new ones produced in Turkey. It was also at this time that the dome obtained its gold color for the first time since the early years of its existence. The dome was covered by large anodized aluminum plates which had been colored gold. Since then, the "gold" dome has become the symbol of Jerusalem. The significance of a major restoration during this period hardly needs explanation. After years of British domination, the Haram was once again under the nationalized Muslim rule of Jordan.

There were major problems with the building, beginning almost immediately after the completion of the restoration. The 1960's restoration made no accommodation for expansion and contraction of the large aluminum sheets on the dome resulting in water leakage, which damaged the interior mosaics. There were reports of leakage beginning very shortly after the completion of the restoration. Patchwork repairs provided only a partial solution to the main problem,

which required the replacement of the dome's covering. There were also major leakage problems with the roof of the octagonal part of the building. These were badly repaired by the addition of 6 inches of concrete over the roof. The restoration method applied was to return the building to its original form with a gold dome and new tiles which matched the original design. Ultimately, the old tiles dating from the sixteenth through the twentieth century were removed without record and an entirely new design created in the workshops of Kutahya Turkey.

This brings us to the most recent restoration of 1993. Though discussions began in the late 1980's, it was not until 1990 that serious debate began as to the nature of the new covering.

Once the decision was made to gild the Dome, King Hussein's Restoration Committee, based in Amman, Jordan, corresponded with experts to determine the appropriate technique of gilding the Dome for the first time since the tenth century Fatimid period. The decision was to employ a brush-plating technique used successfully elsewhere in Europe and Canada and the job was given to the lowest bidder, an Irish company called MIVAN from Belfast. The selection of a European company rather than a Middle Eastern firm resulted from the lack of requisite expertise in the region. Work began by February of 1993.

A new wooden substructure, much closer to the original, replaces the aluminum ribs of the octagon. The concrete was removed with great difficulty and the roof covered with lead. A lining of wood covers the aluminum ribs of the dome over which are two layers of insulation to control heat and moisture, all of which are covered by gilt-plated copper panels. The initial test panels were too bright and needed abrasion to reduce the glare. The process involved plating the brass panels with a layer of pure copper; plating a layer of nickel over this; brush-plating a gold layer two microns thick. Quality control was achieved by computer testing to assure consistency in the thickness of gold. The new plates are smaller, ridged on all sides, and joined by ribs allowing movement, solving the problems of contraction, expansion and leakage.



*A poster purchased in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The image is a clever photo-montage showing a photograph of the old walled city of Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock and all other monuments of the Haram al-Sharif replaced with a model of the Third Jewish Temple. Radicalized right wing religio-political groups constantly seek to begin the re-building of the Temple destroyed in 70 C. E. With the goal of rebuilding, more than forty attempts have been made to destroy the monuments in the Sanctuary in the last fifty years.*



*MIVAN, a Belfast Irish firm, produced gold panels. The workshop was on site beside the Dome of the Rock. This photo shows the pressure plating of 2 micron thickness of gold held in emulsion to panels which had already been plated with copper and nickel. Computer regulated quality control of the thickness of gold took place in an adjoining room.*

The restoration provided the opportunity to examine parts of the building not normally visible. The tile window grilles of the dome drum removed for the restoration exposed the original Umayyad round-arched windows. The existence of holes in the stone on the sides of the arches suggests that, prior to the sixteenth century, there were originally metal, stone or marble grilles.

The question arises as to why the dome was gilded. Current restoration methods would not advocate the return to the original gold, not used since the tenth century, but, rather, since lead had covered the dome for a thousand years, this should have been the material of choice. In the Aqsa Mosque dome restoration, the decision had been made to use lead for the dome, regardless of the original silver of the dome. There were, however, overriding reasons other than purely restoration concerns to utilize gold!

The foremost reason is that gold is the most lavish of materials to adorn the oldest Islamic monument in the third holiest city of Islam. Another reason for the use of gold is that it is the precious material symbolizing sovereignty. This restoration was funded by King Hussein of Jordan but his sponsorship was not without controversy. In May of 1992, Saudi Arabia attempted to contribute ten million dollars directly to the Jerusalem Awqaf or religious

administration through UNESCO for the restoration. Since 1947, the Hashemites of Jordan have had exclusive control over the site and its employees. Normally the moneys contributed would be through the Awqaf in Amman. The Saudis instead attempted to bypass Hashemite authority. This Saudi attempt at intervention created serious repercussions in the struggle for control of the Dome between the Hashemites of Jordan and King Fahd's ruling Saud family. The struggle was both over control of the holy sites and part of the ongoing family rivalry between the Hashemites and the House of Saud, a dispute dating to the early years of this century. Yassir Arafat supported the Saudi offer. Israeli concerns were clearly stated in Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek's challenge for jurisdiction if the Saudis gave the money. The Israelis had, up to this time, stayed out of any major confrontations over the holy sites of Jerusalem, particularly the Dome. In 1967, even Moshe Dayan did not raise the Israeli flag on the Haram. Since then, the Israeli Supreme Court, in the many court cases brought by primarily right-wing Israeli groups, always ruled in favor of the status quo of Jordanian control. Thus, this offer had more serious political implications than were initially apparent. The issue was resolved when King Hussein raised the requisite \$8.25 million by selling a house in London.

A third compelling reason is that the return to a gold-colored dome in the mid-1960's heralded a new era. The gold dome proliferated on tourist posters advertising Israel, on postcards sent home as souvenirs, on Passover cards. There would be such hue and outcry from all parts of the world—not just the Muslim world—but as well the Judeo-Christian world if the dome was not gold. For the gold dome has become a symbol, the symbol of Jerusalem for people all over the world. The flood of tourists that appear each day testifies to the international recognition of this gold-domed structure as central to the issue of Jerusalem.

There exist many strong claims—both religious and political—that challenge Islamic hegemony of the Haram in the twentieth century. There are those who would like to extend Israeli

hegemony over the site. Here we see in this clever photo montage [see illustration], the Third Temple replacing the golden-domed monument, signifying the aspirations of such right-wing religious Jewish groups as the Temple Mount Faithful and the Ataref Cohanim. The former is actively preparing the Temple vestments in a workshop in the Jewish Quarter and their leader Gershon Solomon attempts each year at Succoth to enter the Haram to lay the foundation stone of the third temple.

No less ardent are the voices from the Islamic world. The stress has been to maintain Islamic hegemony of the site. For Muslim Jerusalemites who have made the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca, the Dome usually appears beside the Kaaba of Mecca, the monument toward which all Muslims pray, in the adornment of their doorway once the pilgrim has returned. The image became politicized, used in graffiti of the Intifadah found on the walls of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza; in posters in Iran advocating reconquest of the holy city; in postage stamps in the Arab world promoting the return of Palestinians to their homeland and the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem and the Dome as the symbol of that goal. Thus, over the last decades, the Dome has become the focus of many proposed solutions to the issue of Jerusalem.

The most recent restoration came at a most historic moment, during the initial peace negotiations between the Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Israelis. The Jordanian-funded project was coordinated with the negotiations for peace in the Middle East, with the gold Dome standing as the symbol of that peace. Many speculate that the issue of peace was being discussed long before the news was made public, a speculation now confirmed by the secret meetings in Aqaba at least a year prior to the signing and even before that in London. An institute for social and economic development for peace in the Middle East had existed for a year and a half at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, including among its members Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis and Americans. This group traveled to Syria, Jordan and the Gulf in

February 1993 and met with Arafat in Tunis to polish the wording two weeks before the September 1993 signing of the agreement, suggesting that discussions were indeed underway. Thus Hussein's restoration was timed appropriately to coincide with the peace plan.

The second day after the signing of the peace agreement of September 1993, by Rabin and Arafat, King Hussein proffered a plan to reconstruct the pulpit of Salah al-Din in the Aqsa Mosque, which had been destroyed in the 1969 fire. This pulpit had been brought by Salah al-Din to Jerusalem when he reconquered the city from the Crusaders. We can infer from this that King Hussein intends to exert continued Hashemite control over the Haram in Jerusalem. Palestinian opposition to these claims was clearly expressed two days before the April 1994 dedication ceremonies in Amman in the damaging of the inscription of the blue cover of the dome prepared for the unveiling ceremony and in the destruction with sledgehammers of two dedication inscriptions in King Hussein's name placed to the left and right of the entrance of the Dome. The one to the left of the entrance, put in place by the artisan who carved it not twenty minutes prior to its destruction, documents the most recent gilding of the dome. Interestingly, this incident was not mentioned in the Jordanian or Palestinian press, only in the Israeli press. King Hussein's meeting with Yitzhak Rabin in Washington and subsequent signing of the peace agreement in Aqaba confirms Jordanian interest in retaining control of the Islamic monuments of Jerusalem as well as Israeli interest in support of those claims. Palestinian assertions in this direction have and continue to be discussed as part of the ongoing negotiations for peace.

The creation of a Palestinian Waqf in August and the appointment, in September 1994, of Hasan Tahboub as the new Minister of Waqf in the Palestinian National Authority declares Palestinian goals to establish independent control over the Islamic holy sites of Jerusalem. At the end of September, the Palestinian National Authority



*Painting placed as decoration of a doorway in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem after the pilgrim owner of the residence has returned from the hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. The Dome of the Rock is displayed alongside the Kaaba in Mecca, the center of pilgrimage, suggesting that the two shared equal status in the eyes of the Jerusalem pilgrim.*

(PNA) announced that Waqf employees would be paid by the PNA. When asked the source of funding, one Waqf employee responded that the money would come from the Saudis. The Arab League stressed the need to restore Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty. In mid-October, after the death of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, both Jordan and the PNA appointed new *muftis*, suggesting that this discussion is ongoing. At an October 25th 1994 meeting in his Gaza headquarters, Yassir Arafat reiterated to all of us present Palestinian claims for control of Jerusalem's monuments.

At the signing of the agreement in Aqaba between Jordan and Israel, Jordan reasserted its claims to religious guardianship of the Haram, reinforced by the Israelis. The discussion of Jordan's role effectively raises the subject of Jerusalem in the negotiations, a topic not to be addressed until the final status of the 1993 peace agreement. The issue is Jerusalem as a sovereign capital. Jerusalem is seen by Israelis as the unified capital of Israel, but not recognized as such internationally; it is also seen as the capital of a new state

of Palestine. Feisal Hussein's headquarters, New Orient House in occupied East Jerusalem, is called by some the new government house of the Palestinian state in Jerusalem. King Hussein's agreement with Israel over maintenance of the holy sites of Jerusalem is seen by the Palestinians a sovereign claim supported by the Israelis.

Abba Eban (former foreign Minister of Israel) noted on 27 October, 1994, that "whatever structure emerges in the future, there are always going to be three, not two, parties in the complex equation" between Jordan and Israel. "Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian leaders are climbing a high mountain together inextricably. Geography, history and mutual interest give them no escape from their proximity." In Casablanca, Prince Hassan of Jordan on Tuesday the 1st of November stated that "Jordan will hand over Jerusalem shrines to Palestinians when they reach final accord" on Jerusalem.

In conclusion, the successive restoration projects of the Dome of the Rock from the sixteenth through the twentieth century, sponsored by the Ottomans, the British and the Supreme Muslim Council are part of a continuum that began with Ottoman, and later British, Arab, and Israeli claims on Jerusalem. These restorations demonstrate continuous Muslim maintenance of the site from 692 to 1994. The Dome of the Rock, in line with its early history, continuously has been appropriated as the symbol of sovereignty in the region and the golden dome remains today the symbol of Jerusalem. As such, the Dome figures prominently in the decisions to be made in future peace negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem.

*Beatrice St. Laurent is currently a visiting lecturer at Bridgewater.*