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A Critical Reassessment Of The Spatial And Demographic History Of Old Jerusalem During The Ottoman Period

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Abstract

Jerusalem stands as one of the rare cities in the world that has managed to preserve its religious sanctity and geopolitical significance. Today, as in the past, the city continues its struggle for survival—though the contemporary battle is waged not only on military fronts, but more critically, in the realms of identity and historical narrative. In this context, Israel has adopted a systematic policy of distortion and appropriation aimed at erasing Jerusalem's Islamic and Arab character. A central tool in this policy has been the renaming of geographic locations in Palestine—particularly in Jerusalem—with mythological terms disconnected from historical or cultural reality.

This study examines the Judaization policy in Jerusalem, focusing specifically on the fabrication of a historical narrative around the "quarters of Jerusalem." These fabricated narratives are inconsistent with the city's documented civilizational and architectural history. Within this framework, Zionist-aligned writers and institutions have advanced mythologized accounts of the city, disseminated through media, academic publications, and official reports that claim neutrality and objectivity. Alarmingly, these narratives have found widespread acceptance, even among audiences in the Arab and Islamic worlds—largely due to the absence or marginalization of authentic Islamic and Arab historical perspectives. As a result, the spread of these distortions constitutes a direct threat to historical truth and a strategic erasure of Jerusalem's genuine identity.

The significance of this study—titled "The Quarters of Jerusalem"—lies in its critical and systematic examination of the historical and civilizational development of Jerusalem's Old City. It challenges the widely circulated notion that the Old City is divided into four quarters: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian. The study aims to reconstruct a more accurate historical account by consulting primary archival sources, including Ottoman documents, Sharia court records, and selected travel literature.

Keywords: *Jerusalem, Old City, Jerusalem Quarters, Zionism.*

INTRODUCTİON

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT'S EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION AND HISTORICAL FABRICATION

The Zionist movement promoted itself by exploiting the religious dimension and projecting it onto contemporary history. In an effort to reconcile the biblical narrative with the geographical reality of Jerusalem, the movement systematically falsified historical facts. It placed significant emphasis on ancient Jewish history as the foundational core of Zionist identity, asserting that the borders of the Holy Land were outlined in the Torah. The Zionist logic regarding Jerusalem was thus built on the erasure of Palestinian history and the city's Islamic identity. Beyond mere erasure, it extended to the appropriation and transformation of the region's history into a Jewish historical narrative[1]. One of the most critical foundations upon which the Zionist entity was built is the transformation of Judaism from a purely religious belief system into a modern nationalist ideology. This shift is particularly significant and dangerous, as the nationalist Jewish narrative inherently seeks to eliminate the presence of any non-Jewish identity from the land. The Zionist enterprise in Jerusalem thus began with a premise entirely detached from historical reality. In its early stages, the movement drew full support and protection from the West.

It then initiated what may be considered one of the largest historical forgeries in modern history: the fabrication of a Jewish past in Palestine.

This was carried out through the distortion of historical records and the manipulation of architectural and civilizational evidence. Biblical texts were reinterpreted as literal historical events and employed to justify Jewish claims to the land. Central to this effort was the strategic use of religion to construct and promote a narrative of Jewish entitlement, disseminated vigorously across global platforms. The process amounted to a binary struggle between two identities over the same land: the erasure and denial of the Islamic and Palestinian identity on one side, and the amplification and institutionalization of the Zionist identity on the other[2].

The visual landscape of Jerusalem is overwhelmingly characterized by Eastern—specifically Islamic—architectural elements. A cursory glance at the city reveals its unmistakable identity as an Arab and Islamic urban space. During the relevant historical period, Islamic architectural style dominated the cityscape, with religious landmarks constituting the most prominent and visually commanding structures. Given Jerusalem's deeply sacred status, any claim to historical legitimacy—particularly those rooted in religion—must necessarily manifest through tangible, physical presence in the city.

In this regard, Judaism, which grounds its territorial claims in religious narratives, has sought to assert its connection to the city through material evidence. It is important to acknowledge that Christianity has maintained a visible and historically grounded architectural presence in Jerusalem. However, from a comparative perspective, Islamic architecture remains the most prevalent and defining feature of the city's-built environment.

Zionist claims regarding Judaism's historical connection to Jerusalem have failed to find validation through the city's visual or architectural landscape. These assertions lack substantiated historical foundations, and repeated efforts to demonstrate a tangible Jewish presence in the city have proven unsuccessful. Notably, the archaeological excavations initiated by European powers in the nineteenth century yielded no material evidence to corroborate such claims. Even Meir Ben-Dov, a prominent Israeli archaeologist, affirmed the absence of archaeological proof supporting a physical Jewish presence in the city.

Consequently, Zionist literature that invokes the alleged presence of the so-called Temple as evidence of material continuity remains unsubstantiated—both historically and archaeologically[3] .

Since the emergence of archaeology as a modern discipline, no region in the world has undergone as intensive and sustained a campaign of excavation as Jerusalem. Over the course of a century and a half, numerous sites across Palestine have been subjected to systematic archaeological digging. Beginning with the establishment of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1865, such excavations were explicitly aimed at utilizing the antiquities and topography of the "Holy Land" to serve a predetermined ideological and political agenda. The primary objective of these missions became the search for ancient Israelite origins in Jerusalem and the substantiation of biblical narratives through material evidence. Thus, the excavation campaigns gradually shifted from scientific inquiry to theological validation, wherein archaeology was instrumentalized to legitimize Zionist historical claims to the city[4].

As Keith W. Whitelam observes, all of this effort—carried out by those who wield the Torah in one hand and the excavation pickaxe in the other—has ultimately backfired. The attempt to anchor biblical narratives in archaeological fact has, in many respects, collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. As a result, the biblical storylines have gradually been reclassified from the realm of historical narrative to that of religious literature—a theological recourse taken after numerous historical and material avenues were closed off[5].

The overall outcome of these archaeological excavations came as a profound shock to proponents of the Zionist intellectual project and its adherents. However, faced with the collapse of their central thesis,

they opted to mobilize all available means to impose a biblical presence upon the city—by force, if necessary. Rather than accepting the absence of material evidence, they shifted to alternative strategies aimed at reshaping the city's identity through manipulative and coercive measures aligned with the realities of military occupation and political domination.

This approach reflects a broader logic: the logic of the powerful imposing their narrative upon the weak. As if to say: if the earth beneath us refuses to testify in our favor, then we shall appropriate the surface above it to serve our interests[6].

Imagination was among the key instruments employed by Zionist actors to reshape the reality and identity of Jerusalem. They legitimized their claims by repeatedly promoting mythologized biblical narratives, aiming to render an imagined version of the city as historically and geographically real. Over time, this fabricated image of Jerusalem was etched into the minds of tourists, travelers, and Western researchers alike.

This phenomenon illustrates the persuasive power of narrative and the enduring influence of literary representations in shaping collective memory. Once this imagined version of the city took hold, it effectively eclipsed all alternative historical and cultural perceptions of Jerusalem, marginalizing the city's authentic past and erasing it from public consciousness[7].

In order to achieve high levels of precision and narrative control, full dominance over a "unified Jerusalem" was deemed essential. Such control allowed for the manipulation of the city's image and dynamics with calculated ease, within a structured and methodical framework.

A central role in this process was played by Western powers—particularly Europe and the United States—who helped construct an idealized and often fictionalized cartographic and visual image of Jerusalem. This was especially evident in the early maps and illustrations produced by artists, many of whom had never set foot in the city. Their depictions, often shaped by imagination rather than observation, were divorced from the actual physical and cultural environment. As a result, the representations leaned more toward myth and fantasy than toward reality. What is most troubling is that this imaginary rendering did not simply distort isolated aspects of the city, but rather targeted the historical memory of Jerusalem in its entirety[8].

The formation of collective memory plays a crucial role in shaping how people perceive the past and, consequently, how they interpret the present. Whether individuals read history or not, they inevitably construct a mental image of the past. This image—regardless of its accuracy or correspondence to historical reality—serves as a foundation upon which contemporary social and political views are often built. This principle is particularly evident in the case of Jerusalem. The repeated assertion that Jerusalem's history begins with David, or that Israeli sovereignty over the city has deep historical roots, serves to legitimize current efforts aimed at asserting an exclusive Jewish claim to the city and intensifying policies of Judaization.

What is particularly striking is the dissonance between the image of Jerusalem ingrained in Western collective memory and the one presented by academic and scholarly institutions. Surprisingly, the orientalist approach adopted by Zionist institutions in shaping the historical narrative of Jerusalem has become a source of inspiration for global academic frameworks. Rather than pursuing a critical and investigative approach to historical writing, many academic institutions have, in this specific context, aligned themselves with Zionist perspectives, accepting them as authoritative and guiding.

This suggests that historical research in this domain has not been entirely neutral or objective; rather, it has often been subject to ethnic and political pressures and directives. In other words, it reflects an ideological attempt to construct and solidify a particular narrative until it is perceived by some as an unquestionable truth. A notable historical parallel to this phenomenon can be observed in the 19th-century revival of manuscript heritage among Arabs and muslim[9]

The Zionist movement has spared no effort—material or symbolic—in its endeavor to fabricate a particular version of history while simultaneously erasing alternative narratives. Central to this project has been the strategic deployment of resources to implant its historical account within the consciousness of global societies. Among its most potent tools was the use of propaganda to disseminate its version of history through vast networks of writers, researchers, historians, and research centers across the globe. In doing so, Zionism succeeded in exerting considerable influence over the direction of European and American academic research. By steering scholarly discourse according to its own ideological objectives, it effectively mobilized these academic voices, supplying them with a narrative imbued with myths and fabrications that bear little or no connection to historical reality. This orchestrated effort enabled Zionism not merely to recount a version of the past but to create a past rooted in its own narrative constructs.

Edward Said aptly captured this dynamic when he stated: "The enormous intellectual and material energies that have gone into the search for ancient Israel have not been matched by any comparable effort to recover the Palestinian history of the same period or of any subsequent period." Said's observation underscores the systematic imbalance in academic inquiry and the consequences of allowing political agendas to dictate the contours of historical investigation.[10]

THE IMAGE OF JERUSALEM İN 19TH-CENTURY WESTERN TRAVEL LİTERATURE: BETWEEN BİBLİCAL METAPHOR AND DEMOGRAPHİC EXAGGERATİON

In the nineteenth century, a significant number of travel writings emerged by Western travelers who visited Jerusalem while being heavily influenced by biblical narratives. These travelers interpreted the city's geography through the lens of the Old Testament geography that had been ingrained in their imagination. Thus, whenever one of them encountered a path, stone, or landmark in Palestine, they would immediately associate it with something they had read in the Bible.

One notable example is the English traveler Eli Smith, who visited Jerusalem in 1838. Upon his return, he published a book entitled Biblical Researches in Palestine. As the title itself indicates, the Bible served as both the framework and guide for his journey. In recognition of his work, the Royal Geographical Society awarded him the Royal Gold Medal. In 1852, he undertook a second journey to Palestine, during which he substantially expanded the material collected in his first expedition—particularly concerning biblical topography.

He later documented the outcomes of his findings in another volume titled New Biblical Researches. Smith aspired to write a third book that would systematically address the physical and historical geography of the Holy Land. However, his untimely death in 1857 prevented the completion of that project[11].

In 1847, the British traveler Eliot Warburton published his book The Crescent and the Cross [12],which would go on to be printed seventeen times. Through this widely circulated work, Warburton helped shape British public opinion by cultivating a contemporary familiarity with the names and places of the Holy Land. That same year, another traveler, Lindsay, published his Letters from Egypt and the Holy Land [13], which demonstrated a more explicit engagement with the emerging Zionist project. In his descriptions of Jerusalem, Lindsay referenced the presence of Mount Zion and expressed gratitude to God that Palestine remained sparsely populated—reasoning that such demographic conditions would not prevent the return of its "original owners," namely, the Jews [14].

In addition to these British travelers, the nineteenth century witnessed the arrival of numerous figures from other European nations who subscribed to similar biblically inspired perspectives. Among them were several French travelers and literary figures—including Lamartine, Nerval, Gautier, Flaubert, and Didier—whose writings reveal a strong influence of both biblical imagination and romanticism. For these authors, Jerusalem was less a real, lived city and more a symbolic space shaped by the narratives of the Old Testament. One of the most prominent examples is François-René de Chateaubriand, who authored

Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem, a work in which he sought to trace the geography of the Bible. His journey to the Holy Land was, quite literally, guided by the sacred text in hand[15].

This ideologically driven and emotionally charged momentum—fueled with near-hysteria by Western institutions—ignited the passions of pilgrims visiting Jerusalem. It led to heightened religious fervor, ritual excess, and acts of devotion that bordered on veneration of the city's stones, as though lovers clinging to the ruins of a beloved. At the same time, this symbolic energy served as a powerful source of inspiration for artists, writers, and travelers who drew heavily on biblical themes and imagery from the "Holy Land" in their creative works.

Underlying much of this artistic and literary output was a desire to leave a personal imprint on the imagined landscape of Jerusalem. Some artists went so far as to depict random individuals near Damascus Gate as embodiments of the Jewish people and their supposed ancestral connection to the land. In certain cases, they even employed non-Jewish subjects to visually construct a Jewish presence—an act that highlights the extent to which imagination and ideological commitment overrode historical and cultural accuracy [16].

When artists and travelers visited Jerusalem, they frequently replaced the reality they observed with scenes drawn from their imagination. Rather than depicting the living geography of the city as experienced by its inhabitants, they superimposed their own vision of a "sacred geography" shaped by biblical ideals and distant from contemporary urban life. At times, Jerusalem was represented not as a living city, but as a timeless relic—a static embodiment of an ancient and mythic past.

In this context, Keith W. Whitelam cites a revealing incident involving the publication of a book containing 200 stereoscopic images of Jerusalem. This volume exemplifies how travelers and artists often disregarded the city's present-day realities. In the commentary accompanying an image of the port of Jaffa, for instance, the authors urge viewers to ignore the individuals shown in the photograph—dressed in either semi-European or traditional Eastern attire—and instead to project their imagination two thousand years into the past. They invite readers to visualize Jaffa as seen by Saint Peter, with its people clothed in garments from the biblical era.

Such an invitation to suspend historical consciousness and replace it with a constructed, idealized memory reveals a deeper strategy: the deliberate erasure of the city's modern character in favor of an imagined biblical landscape. By ignoring the vibrancy of the present and retreating into an imagined sacred past, these narratives contributed to the formation of a collective myth that obscured the lived reality of Jerusalem and its people [17].

In this manner, a collective memory was constructed—anchored in a mythologized and biblical imagination—serving broader geopolitical aims. This memory was not formed by accident, but through a carefully crafted narrative designed to obscure historical truth and impose a fabricated reality upon the present. Among the many strategies employed was the deliberate manipulation of demographic data, such as exaggerated claims regarding the population of Jerusalem in the nineteenth century.

These inflated figures did not emerge from empirical observation, but were shaped under the influence of biblical expectations and ideological predispositions. The tendency to magnify the Jewish presence in particular aligned with the theological-political aims of the biblical narrative. Several travelers of the period contributed to this constructed image by reporting population numbers that far exceeded contemporary estimates—serving to reinforce a vision of Jerusalem consistent with scriptural prophecy rather than historical accuracy.

What follows are examples of such travelers who reported inflated population statistics for Jerusalem:

- Constantin Volney, who visited Jerusalem in 1785, estimated its population to be between 12,000 and 14,000[18].
- Seetzen, who visited Jerusalem in 1806, reported that the city's population was 8,774, distributed as follows: 4,000 Muslims, 2,000 Jews, and 2,774 Christians [19].
- The researcher Marwan Jarrar, in a study concerning the Jews in the city of Jerusalem based on the writings of Western travelers, elucidated the estimates provided by some travelers regarding the population of Jerusalem:

a. Thomas Joliffe, who visited Jerusalem in 1819, estimated its population at 25,000 inhabitants, of whom 3,000 to 4,000 were Jews.

b. The traveler Levi Parsons estimated the number of Jews between 1820 and 1822 to be around 3,000.

c. Meanwhile, Pliny Fisk estimated the number of Jews in the city in 1824 at 6,000 out of a total population of 20,000.

d. According to the estimates of the English traveler and missionary Wolff in 1824, the number of Jewish families in Jerusalem reached 700 [20]. These travelers, along with many others[21] who documented the population of Jerusalem, tended to exaggerate the number of Jewish inhabitants significantly beyond the actual figures. Without labeling all these accounts as systematically biased, it can be said that some of these travelers did not distinguish between Jewish pilgrims and Ottoman subjects who adhered to this faith.

Taking these writings as unquestionable facts has occurred in the absence of Ottoman statistics regarding the population of Jerusalem, in addition to the influence of the dominant biblical narrative on academic circles. As a result, the accounts of travelers have been treated as established truths and have become the primary source relied upon by researchers of various ethnic and religious backgrounds—most of whom were proponents of the biblical narrative.

Certainly. Here's a refined version of the paragraph, maintaining academic rigor and coherence without using bullet points:

The uncritical acceptance of these accounts is largely due to the absence of official Ottoman statistics on Jerusalem's population, coupled with the influence of the dominant biblical narrative within academic circles. Consequently, the writings of Western travelers came to be regarded as factual and were adopted as primary sources by researchers of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds—many of whom aligned with the biblical perspective. In the modern era, several Jewish scholars have engaged with this issue, notably Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, professor of geography at the Hebrew University; Shmuel Shamir, also of the Hebrew University; Ruth Kark of Bar-Ilan University; and Arthur Ruppin, often described as the spiritual father of agricultural settlement[22]. These figures, among others, sought to amplify the Jewish presence in Jerusalem beyond its historical reality, relying heavily on the narratives provided by these early travelers.

A significant inconsistency can be observed among the various accounts, particularly with regard to the number of Jews in Jerusalem. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh himself acknowledged that these estimates are unreliable. In an effort to uncover a more accurate picture—and given that the number of Jews in Jerusalem lay at the heart of the issue—researcher Dradkeh conducted a study aimed at verifying population figures, especially those related to the Jewish community. His research was based primarily on Ottoman archival sources, with a particular focus on the records of the Jerusalem Sharia Court, which represent the official documentation of Jewish residents who were Ottoman citizens, as opposed to visiting Jews.

Dradkeh compiled statistical data by collecting the names of Jews mentioned in these court records. He also conducted an inventory of properties and real estate owned or rented by Jews, including

private holdings, waqf (endowed) properties, and agricultural lands. By excluding visitors and non-resident Ottoman Jews, the researcher was able to estimate the number of Jewish males residing in Jerusalem. Through a comparative analysis between the number of adult Jewish males and the housing and property they owned or rented, Dradkeh concluded that the total number of adult Jewish males in Jerusalem was 190[23].

In addition to this finding—which undermines the credibility of travelers' population estimates—the Salnames (official yearbooks) issued by the Ottoman state in the second half of the nineteenth century further support the inaccuracy of those accounts. A comparison between the figures recorded in the Salnames and those reported by the travelers reveals the latter to be grossly inflated, thus confirming the unreliability of their demographic assessments[24].

The figures recorded by foreign travelers—and later uncritically adopted by many researchers—cannot be accepted as accurate, nor do they reflect the actual situation on the ground. When considering the residential space allocated to Jews in Jerusalem, it amounted to no more than a few dunams. Nevertheless, these accounts were reproduced in scholarly works and treated as definitive evidence without proper verification. The more troubling issue is that even Muslim authors and researchers have fallen into this trap, including a number of Palestinians who unknowingly transmitted these narratives—whether population statistics or maps drawn by travelers—without recognizing their fabricated nature or their role in reinforcing the Zionist narrative. This situation stems from the absence of a robust Arab-Islamic, and particularly Palestinian, narrative from the arena of historical representation.

IMAGİNARY MAPS

Following this necessary digression, one of the main motivations behind writing on this subject is the widespread influence of the collective biblical narrative, which has affected many researchers, Jerusalem-focused scholars, and even numerous pro-Jerusalem online platforms. Under this influence, they have circulated certain maps of Jerusalem dating back to the nineteenth century—maps that, in reality, do not reflect historical truth nor align with Ottoman records. These maps, which are largely fictional, divide the city into four nearly equal quarters, each representing a neighborhood assigned to a religious community: the Jewish Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Armenian Quarter, and the Muslim Quarter. This depiction, however, is historically inaccurate and unsupported by authentic Ottoman documentation[25].

At the beginning of the first chapter of his book Jerusalem 1900: The Holy City in the Age of Possibilities, Vincent Lemire cites Adar Arnon, who states: "If today the Old City of Jerusalem is divided into four quarters attributed to the four religious communities—a division invented in the nineteenth century and not based on the traditional local geographic names used for centuries—this is due to the modern frameworks imposed by outsider observers who mapped the Holy City, rather than by its own inhabitants" [26].

When conducting a simple search for a map of the Old City of Jerusalem, one is immediately confronted with hundreds of colorful maps portraying the city as four neatly divided squares. This raises a fundamental set of questions: What is the origin or basis of these maps that have come to be accepted as givens in the geographic understanding of Jerusalem? What are the specifics of these divisions? And to what extent are the boundaries depicted in these maps historically accurate?

To answer these and related questions, the study traces the emergence of these maps, examining their sources and the intentions behind their creation. It then analyzes the details of the divisions they present. In order to assess the validity of these representations, the study carefully investigates the formation of Jerusalem's quarters and neighborhoods through Ottoman and local sources.

In the interest of academic integrity, the issue has been approached through a rigorous and objective methodology, free from bias or hasty judgment when comparing claims to evidence. This effort

seeks to realign the historical narrative with its proper course—for it is unjust to reduce Jerusalem to ink and paper, rather than recognizing it as a living city of people and stones. Today, memories, projections, external fantasies, and imagined histories have become the primary sources of information about the city—an imbalance this study aims to address[27].

Answering the questions raised in this study necessitates an examination of the geospatial reality of the city—an observable and tangible entity that can be subjected to scrutiny and direct investigation. Jerusalem is, by its very nature, a city inhabited by people for millennia. Therefore, treating its geography as mere text on paper, without evaluating its lived reality, stands in stark contrast to sound scientific methodology. The case of the maps that divide the city into four nearly equal quarters, when examined critically through a historical lens, reveals itself as a relatively late invention. These maps emerged in the nineteenth century, shaped by the hysteria of Western imperialism and its sense of superiority over anything outside its own cultural sphere. This mindset reduced other civilizations to nameless entities with no defined history or identity. In this context, the production of maps and explorations became instruments of colonial domination—tools used to assert control and erase indigenous narratives without hesitation or regard for authenticity.

Western travelers and pilgrims arrived in Jerusalem as visitors and pilgrims, often unfamiliar with the city's local realities and divisions. This division was not based on traditional local place names used for centuries, nor were the local inhabitants involved in its formulation. Consequently, the so-called four quarters of Jerusalem did not accurately reflect the city's true demographic and social landscape[28].

Vincent Lemire traced the emergence of these maps and concluded that cartographers did not associate any religious division with the city's four-part layout prior to 1837. Maps of the Holy City before that time primarily highlighted a limited number of well-known sacred sites and buildings. Notably, the practice of mapping Jerusalem as divided into four quarters only began in the 1860s, coinciding with the appearance of certain maps following the opening of the British Consulate in Jerusalem in 1838. Regarding urban planning depictions featuring four distinct colored areas, the earliest known example appears on a German map published in 1853[29].

To answer the question of why these maps were created, it can be said that the travelers and pilgrims who visited the city and drew these maps were influenced by a collective narrative shaped by biblical imaginations. As a result, pilgrims, visitors, and travelers often found themselves caught between the reality of the place and the imagined image ingrained in their memories. Another reason for creating these maps was to assist visitors in their quest to locate the city of the Bible, for which many had undertaken long journeys. Thus, the proliferation of numerous maps of Jerusalem served primarily as guides for visitors seeking to reach and familiarize themselves with the holy sites. Consequently, mapmakers resorted to simplifying the maps to make them easier to read and use.[30] Another reason, as noted by Lemire, is that many of these Western travelers sought to reinforce the Zionist narrative and facilitate the return of Jews to the Holy Land, as the aforementioned study demonstrated. This claim will become clearer when we discuss the Greater Jewish Quarter project.[31]

Western maps of Jerusalem depict four precisely defined quarters that constitute the Old City. According to these maps, the Muslim Quarter is located in the northeastern part of the Old City, encompassing the area of the Noble Sanctuary (al-Haram al-Sharif) and its surroundings. The Muslim Quarter is represented as the largest of the four quarters on these maps [32]. The Christian Quarter is situated in the northwestern part of the Old City, encompassing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre along with several other significant religious sites[33] .

These maps also depict the Armenian Quarter located in the southwestern part of the city, where the sacred sites of the Armenian community are situated. The fourth quarter is the Jewish Quarter, positioned in the southeastern section of the Old City.[34]

This religiously based division of the Old City bears no relation to the actual reality on the ground. The fourfold partition of Jerusalem creates the impression that the city is segmented into religious enclaves—or ghettos—similar to those that existed for Jews in Europe at the time, with each quarter inhabited exclusively by members of a single faith. This, however, is entirely inaccurate in the case of Jerusalem. Several Western scholars, such as William Meredith, Adar Arnon, and others, have highlighted the flaws and limitations of these maps, demonstrating their failure to accurately represent the true social and demographic fabric of Jerusalem[35].

Upon examining the map dividing the Old City of Jerusalem into four quarters, it becomes evident that the Jewish Quarter is bordered on the east by the Western Wall (al-Buraq Wall), which is part of the Noble Sanctuary's enclosure, and on the west by the Suq al-Hasr (the Hasr Market). This means that the Jewish Quarter occupies more than 13 percent of the total area of the Old City[36].

Accepting the accuracy of this map effectively erases the existence of numerous Islamic neighborhoods historically located within the area labeled as the Jewish Quarter, such as the Moroccan Quarter, the Sharaf Quarter, and the Risha Quarter, among others. The same applies to the other three quarters, where the demographic and social divisions depicted contradict the lived reality of the city's inhabitants.

Furthermore, the four-part division maps are not consistent in their representations. While the most well-known maps show the eastern boundary of the Jewish Quarter directly adjacent to the walls of the Noble Sanctuary, Lemire presents a map in his book, dated to 1881, which, despite following the general four-quarter layout, differs in its delineation of the Jewish Quarter's eastern border. Unlike earlier maps, this particular map does not extend the Jewish Quarter to the enclosure of the Noble Sanctuary; instead, it includes an area outside the Sanctuary walls within what is labeled the Muslim Quarter[37].

We have previously discussed the circulation of maps dividing Jerusalem's quarters into four parts, inspired by religious imaginings and created by outsiders lacking full knowledge of the city's local realities. To objectively demonstrate the inaccuracies inherent in these maps, this study will rely on local sources to trace the neighborhoods of old Jerusalem across different historical periods. The focus will be placed particularly on the Jewish Quarter, given its role in the ongoing conflict on Palestinian soil that persists to this day. This conflict partly revolves around the struggle over Jerusalem's religious identity, with both opposing sides striving to assert their historical claims to Jerusalem and Palestine as a whole.

THE QUARTERS OF OLD JERUSALEM İN OTTOMAN DOCUMENTS

The study will endeavor in this chapter to answer the following questions: How many quarters did Jerusalem have, and what were their names? What is the origin of these names? What were their boundaries and locations? And what is the relationship between the historical perception of these quarters and the narrative currently being promoted?

To arrive at a conclusive answer, it is necessary to consult the local historical sources of Jerusalem—namely, archival materials and documents that preserve highly valuable information. These sources reveal the confusion that some have attempted to introduce into the history of the Holy City. Among the earliest figures to document and describe the quarters of Jerusalem was Mujīr al-Dīn al-ʿUlaymī, who did so in the late Mamluk period. This was followed by Ottoman records, especially the tahrir (land survey) registers and the records of the Sharia Court, which serve as the primary sources for identifying the quarters of Jerusalem during the Ottoman era. These records contain precise information and detailed data regarding the number of quarters, their names, and the social composition of each[38].

The Ottoman tahrir (land and tax survey) registers represent the most authoritative source for identifying the names of quarters in the Old City of Jerusalem. Their significance stems from the fact that they were the first systematic method employed by the Ottomans to regulate the population and land after their conquest of Bilād al-Shām in 1516. The work of the tahrir commissions focused on recording the

number of inhabitants, their locations, and their religious affiliations for the purpose of tax collection[39]. Every individual was bound by what was recorded in the tahrir register concerning their residence, occupation, and other obligations, with no changes permitted except through clearly defined legal procedures.

What lends these registers a high degree of objectivity is that the names of quarters and places listed within them were not the result of political or ideological intention, but emerged incidentally through purely administrative functions. The primary purpose of the tahrir registers was financial and bureaucratic in nature—specifically, the systematic collection of taxes. Thus, the place names they contain reflect the local terminology and cultural usage of the inhabitants at the time of writing and documentation. For this reason, these registers serve as some of the most reliable and neutral sources for identifying historical place names in Jerusalem .

One example from these registers involves a case in which an individual was recorded as residing in a particular quarter, while in reality he belonged to a different one and wished to have his registration transferred accordingly. To do so, he was required to provide legal proof and witness testimony to support his claim. This administrative procedure applied uniformly to all population groups—whether in villages, cities, or among the Bedouins.

It is important to emphasize that these sources reflect routine administrative practices. The officials responsible for conducting censuses and surveys selected the names of quarters in a logical manner, choosing terms commonly used and recognized by the residents themselves. These names were therefore likely to be accurate, as they emerged from within the community and had been transmitted through generations until reaching the Ottoman surveyors, who recorded them faithfully—without modification or reinterpretation[40].

As for the boundaries of Jerusalem's quarters, it is exceedingly difficult to define them with precision. This is due, in part, to the architectural continuity of the city—a characteristic feature of urban design in the medieval and ancient periods. Such continuity served a defensive function, minimizing vulnerable entry points in the event of an attack. Another complicating factor lies in the social and economic interdependence among residents, shaped by ethnic and religious affiliations, which blurred the distinctions between quarters.

Many smaller neighborhoods were subsumed under the name of a larger quarter. For instance, Ottoman records mention areas like Ḥārat Banī Zayd as part of Ḥārat Bāb al-ʿĀmūd. These various settlements and districts were typically referred to as either ḥāra (quarter) or maḥalla (neighborhood), adding another layer of complexity to the research. However, through extensive investigation and accumulated scholarly expertise, it can be concluded that no functional difference exists between the two terms. At times, a large quarter was referred to using both terms interchangeably, and the same was true for smaller ones—indicating that both terms served the same descriptive and administrative purpose.

Moreover, the names of these quarters were not fixed across time; they shifted in accordance with changes in ruling powers and administrative systems throughout the city's history [41].

Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, in his work Tārīkh al-Quds wa-l-Khalīl (The History of Jerusalem and Hebron), provides a detailed account of the quarters of Jerusalem during his time. He listed over forty quarters that existed in the city in his era, including: Ḥārat al-Maghāriba (Moroccan Quarter), Ḥārat al-Sharaf[42] Ḥārat al-Ḥayyādira, Ḥārat al-Sulṭīn, Ḥārat al-Rīsha, Ḥārat Ṣahyūn al-Jawwāniyya, Ḥārat al-Ḍawiyya, Ḥārat Banī al-Ḥārith, Ḥārat al-Yahūd (Jewish Quarter), Ḥārat al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Qawmī, Ḥārat al-Ḥiṣriyya, Ḥārat al-Naṣārā (Christian Quarter), Ḥārat al-Raḥba, Ḥārat Bāb al-Nāẓir, Ḥārat al-Ghawānima, Ḥārat Banī Murra, Ḥārat al-Zurrāʿina, Ḥārat Bāb al-Ḥadīd, Ḥārat al-Jawwāliqa, Ḥārat al-Malāṭ, Ḥārat Bāb al-ʿĀmūd, Ḥārat Banī Saʿd, Ḥārat ʿAqabat al-Sitt, Ḥārat Banī Zayd, Ḥārat Bāb al-Zāhira, Ḥārat Daraj al-Mawlawiyya, Ḥārat al-Duwaydāriyya, Ḥārat Bāb al-Qaṭṭānīn, Ḥārat al-Mashāriqa, Ḥārat al-

Ghūriyya, Ḥārat al-Ṭūriyya, Ḥārat Bāb Ḥiṭṭa, Ḥārat al-Qaṣīla, Ḥārat Ibn al-Shantīr, and Ḥārat Marzān—among others[43]. Meanwhile, other sources have mentioned additional quarters, such as Ḥārat Awlād Ḥāmid, Ḥārat Awlād al-ʿIlm, Ḥārat al-Maslaḵẖ (Slaughterhouse Quarter), Ḥārat Dār al-Niyāba, Ḥārat ʿAqabat al-Ẓāhiriyya, Ḥārat ʿAqabat al-Sūdān, Ḥārat Bāb al-Silsila, and Ḥārat al-Khaḍir. What is significant is that all of these areas were referred to by the sources as either ḥāra (quarter) or maḥalla (neighborhood), indicating that both terms were used interchangeably to describe residential areas within the city[44].

By tracing the names of the quarters mentioned by Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī in his historical account, it becomes evident that the Jewish Quarter was nothing more than a small neighborhood, similar in size and significance to many others listed in his work. It is also noteworthy that al-Ḥanbalī made no distinction between larger and smaller quarters in his classifications.

To offer a more precise understanding of Jerusalem's quarters, this study will examine the names and population figures of each quarter as recorded in the Ottoman tahrir registers. It will then address the demographic composition of their inhabitants.

To accomplish this task, we will analyze five tahrir registers that document the city of Jerusalem in the 16th century. According to these registers, the quarters of the Old City of Jerusalem were listed as shown in the following table:

No.	Register 427 (1525)	Register 1015 (1538)	Register 289 (1553)	Register 112 (1563)	Register 178 (1596)
1	Bab Hitta	Al-Sharaf	Al-Sharaf	Al-Sharaf	Al-Sharaf
2	Bab al-Qattanin	Bab al-Qattanin	Bab al-Qattanin	Bab al-Qattanin	Bab al-Qattanin
3	Al-Zarra'na	Bab al-'Amud	Bab al-'Amud	Al-Risha	Al-Risha
4	Al-Risha	Al-Zarra'na	Bab Hitta	Al-Maghariba	Al-Maghariba
5	Bani Harith	Bani Harith	Al-Zarra'na	Bab al-'Amud	Bab al-'Amud
6	Duwiya	Mahallat Bani Zayd	Al-Risha and Ṣahyūn	'Aqabat al-Sitt	'Aqabat al-Sitt
7	Al-Jawaldeh	Jama'at 'Aqabat al-Sitt	Al-Maghariba	Bab Hitta	Bab Hitta
8	Al-Sharaf	Bab Hitta	'Aqabat al-Sitt	Al-Zarra'na	Al-Zarra'na
9	Bab al-'Amud	Jama'at al-Maghariba			
10	Bani Zayd	Al-Jawaldeh			
11	Jama'at al-Maghariba	Al-Risha and Ṣahyūn			
12		Al-Maslaḵẖ			
13		Al-Raysha			

By tracing the names of the old Jerusalem quarters recorded in these registers, it becomes clear that the four quarters referenced in the previously mentioned maps do not appear. Instead, the quarter names listed in the registers do not reflect any religious division of the city on the ground. It is important to note that these were the main quarters from which smaller neighborhoods branched off; however, these names were those officially used by the Ottoman administration to organize the city's social and economic affairs. At the same time, these divisions represent the names that the city's inhabitants had agreed upon and inherited from their ancestors.

Notably, some quarters that appeared in the first and second registers—such as Bani Harith, Bani Zayd, al-Maslaḵẖ (the Slaughterhouse), al-Risha, and al-Jawaldeh—disappear in later records. This disappearance likely reflects administrative changes, whereby these smaller quarters were absorbed into

larger ones. Conversely, certain groups evolved into larger quarters, as exemplified by the case of the Jama'at al-Maghariba (Moroccan community)[45].

Now that the names of the quarters have been clearly established based on the aforementioned tahrir registers, the study will proceed to examine the demographic data and population figures of each quarter, drawing upon the same primary sources. In addition, it will seek to identify the religion or sect of the inhabitants of each quarter individually.

We begin with the earliest statistical register compiled by the Ottoman Empire shortly after its entry into Jerusalem: the tahrir register dated 1525–1526. This document recorded ten Muslim quarters [46], to which the Maghrebi community (Jamaʿat al-Maghariba) was appended as part of the broader Muslim residential structure. However, by the time of the 1553 register, the Maghrebi community had been designated as an independent and prominent quarter in its own right. It retained this status until it was demolished by Israeli occupation forces in 1967[47] .

According to the tahrir register dated 1525, Ḥārat Bāb Ḥiṭṭa was the largest quarter in Jerusalem at that time, comprising 110 khānas (households). Assuming an average of five individuals per household, the population of this quarter would have been approximately 550 individuals. Additionally, the records indicate the presence of an imam residing within the quarter.[48] The second largest quarter after Ḥārat Bāb Ḥiṭṭa was Ḥārat al-Zarrāʿina, which later came to be known as the Christian Quarter. It contained 110 khānas (households) as well, amounting to an estimated population of 550 individuals‹[49]

The third largest quarter was Ḥārat Bāb al-Qaṭṭānīn, which comprised 102 khānas (households), corresponding to approximately 510 individuals. In addition, the register records the presence of one mujarrad (unmarried male) residing in the quarter[50], the quarters may thus be ranked as follows:

Ḥārat al-Sharaf contained 89 khānas (households), which corresponds to approximately 445 individuals[51] . Next comes Ḥārat Bāb al-ʿĀmūd, which contained 78 khānas (households), amounting to approximately 390 individuals, in addition to one mujarrad (unmarried male).[52] Then comes Ḥārat Bani Zayd, consisting of 46 khānas (households), which corresponds to approximately 230 individuals[53] .

Next is the Maghrebi community (Jama'at al-Maghariba), which at that time was part of Ḥārat Bani Zayd and comprised 31 khānas (households), corresponding to approximately 155 individuals[54] .

Then comes Ḥārat Duwiya, which included 24 khānas (households), amounting to approximately 120 individuals[55]. Ḥārat al-Rīsha comprised 15 khānas (households), equivalent to approximately 75 individuals[56]. Ḥārat al-Jawālda included 11 khānas (households), corresponding to approximately 55 individuals[57]. The smallest quarter in Jerusalem was Ḥārat Bani Ḥārith, which comprised only 7 khānas (households), equivalent to approximately 35 individuals[58].

The total number of Muslim households in 1525 amounted to 623 khānas, which corresponds to approximately 3,115 individuals. In addition, there was one imam and two mujarrad (unmarried males) recorded.

As for the non-Muslim population in old Jerusalem, the register dedicated a section titled "The Communities of Jews and Christians." According to the document, the total number of non-Muslim households in the previously mentioned quarters amounted to 318 khānas, equivalent to approximately 1,590 individuals. Of these, Christians accounted for 595 individuals, while Jews comprised 995 individuals[59]. Therefore, it can be concluded that the total population of Jerusalem's quarters was approximately 4,737 individuals, with non-Muslims representing 37.42% of the overall population and Muslims constituting 66.21%. The register further identifies three Christian groups: the Melkite Orthodox, the Jacobites, and the Syrians. Jews are also mentioned collectively as a community but are never recorded as a separate principal quarter in Jerusalem[60].

The second tahrir register of Jerusalem dates back to 1538. According to this register, eleven quarters (maḥallas) were recorded in the Old City at that time. The variation in the number and names of the quarters can be attributed to the differing policies and objectives underlying each survey. It appears that in this particular survey, smaller quarters were incorporated into larger ones. It is important to note that the findings of any given survey may not be binding on subsequent surveys; some may rely on earlier data, others may introduce new information, or they may confirm previous results. This means that each survey reflects the conclusions reached by its respective committee based on its own investigations, rather than simply replicating data from prior surveys—otherwise, it would not qualify as a new survey.

An example of this variation is the case of the ʿUmm al-Sitt community, which was listed in the register as a group affiliated with Ḥārat Bani Zayd. However, in the 1553 register, this community was recorded as an independent quarter[61]. This suggests that the references to the Jewish and Christian communities in the registers did not necessarily correspond to distinct neighborhoods or quarters but rather represented statistical groupings of non-Muslims distributed across several quarters to facilitate their administration and interaction with the Ottoman authorities.

The eleven quarters listed in the 1538 register, according to the order presented in the document, begin with Ḥārat al-Sharaf. This quarter contained 266 Muslim households (khānas), 27 unmarried males (mujarradīn), and 5 imams. This amounts to approximately 1,330 Muslim residents, and when including the unmarried males and imams, the total Muslim population reaches 1,362[62]. Alongside the Muslims, the quarter was also home to a Jewish population consisting of 85 households, approximately 425 individuals, plus 9 unmarried males, totaling 434 Jews in Ḥārat al-Sharaf[63].

Combining these figures, the total population of Ḥārat al-Sharaf was approximately 1,796 individuals, with Jews constituting roughly 30% of the population in comparison to Muslims. This Muslim majority clearly indicates that Ḥārat al-Sharaf, which the city's quad-partite maps place within the Jewish Quarter, was not, in fact, a Jewish quarter.

The second quarter is Ḥārat Bāb al-Qaṭṭānīn, which contained 128 Muslim households, equivalent to approximately 640 Muslim individuals, in addition to 7 unmarried males (mujarradīn) and 3 imams. Thus, the total Muslim population of the quarter amounted to 650[64].

Ḥārat Bāb al-ʿĀmūd contained 101 Muslim households, amounting to approximately 505 individuals, in addition to 14 unmarried males (mujarradīn) and 2 imams. Attached to this quarter was a community called Dukrī (al-Dukrī), composed of Turkmen, which consisted of 15 households, approximately 75 individuals, and 1 unmarried male. Thus, the total population of the quarter amounted to 597 individuals, all Muslims[65].

According to the tahrir register dated 1538, Ḥārat al-Zarrāʿina comprised 159 Muslim households, equivalent to approximately 795 individuals, along with 4 unmarried males (mujarradīn) and 3 imams. This quarter also included the Franciscan monastery (Dair al-Franj), which was home to 19 monks[66] .

Ḥārat Bani Ḥārith was recorded with 9 Muslim households, corresponding to approximately 45 Muslim individuals. Following this, the register mentions Rās Monastery with 3 households, Andreas Monastery with 3 monks, and Mariakō Monastery with 15 monks[67].

Ḥārat Bani Zayd contained 117 Muslim households, equivalent to approximately 585 individuals, in addition to 1 unmarried male (mujarrad) and 3 imams. Affiliated with this quarter was a group known as "Dukrī," consisting of 7 households (approximately 35 individuals), as well as the ʿAqabat al-Sitt group, which comprised 34 households—about 170 individuals—along with 1 unmarried male and 1 imam. This group would later become an independent quarter. Accordingly, the total number of Muslims in Ḥārat Bani Zayd was 796 individuals[68].

According to the register, Ḥārat Bāb Ḥiṭṭa included 166 Muslim households, equivalent to approximately 830 individuals. Additionally, the quarter had 198 unmarried males (mujarradīn), three imams, and eight individuals from the ashrāf (noble families).

Affiliated with this quarter was the Maghrebi community (Jamaʿat al-Maghāriba), consisting of 69 Muslim households, which equals about 345 individuals, along with one unmarried male and one imam. This group would later become a principal quarter in Jerusalem.

The register also noted the attachment of another group known as the Syriac community (Jamaʿat al-Siryān) to Ḥārat Bāb Ḥiṭṭa, composed of 13 Christian households—approximately 65 individuals[69].

The register also mentioned Ḥārat al-Jawwālida, which consisted of 16 Muslim households, amounting to approximately 80 individuals, in addition to the presence of one imam[70] .

Ḥārat al-Rīsha consisted of 81 Muslim households, equivalent to approximately 405 individuals, along with one unmarried male (mujarrad) and two imams. The register also noted the presence of a Christian group affiliated with this quarter, comprising 12 households—approximately 60 Christian individuals[71].

Ḥārat al-Maslakh included 43 Jewish households, amounting to approximately 215 individuals, in addition to 4 unmarried males (mujarradīn).

In Ḥārat al-Rīsha, the register recorded 96 Jewish households, equivalent to approximately 486 individuals, in addition to 6 unmarried males (mujarradīn)[72].

Based on the previously mentioned population figures for each quarter, it can be concluded that, according to the tahrir register dated 1538, the Muslim population in the quarters of Jerusalem amounted to 1,168 households, or approximately 5,840 individuals, in addition to a number of imams and unmarried males. Meanwhile, the number of Christians totaled around 680 individuals, and the Jewish population reached 1,120 individuals.

Accordingly, Muslims constituted the vast majority of the city's population, comprising 76.44% of the total, while Christians accounted for 8.90% and Jews for 14.66%. The total population of the Holy City, based on this register, was approximately 7,640 individuals.

The tahrir register of Jerusalem dated 1553 listed the names of eight quarters that existed in the city during that period. The Muslim population was distributed across the quarters as follows[73] :

No.	Quarter Name	Households (Ḥāne)	Unmarried Males (Mücerred)	Imams (İmam)	Amas	Soldiers (Asker)	Servants (Hizmetli)	Population (Est.)
1	Ḥārat al-Sharaf	340	25	3	1	–	–	1700
2	Ḥārat Bāb al-Qaṭṭānīn	215	16	3	–	2	–	1075
3	Ḥārat Bāb al-ʿĀmūd	429	32	1	–	–	–	2145
–	Doğri Community (Turkomans)	18	–	–	–	–	–	90
4	Ḥārat Bāb Ḥiṭṭa	362	22	1	–	–	–	1810

–	Ayyūbiyya Community	26	–	–	–	–	–	130
5	Ḥārat al-Zarāʿina	280	–	–	–	–	–	1400
6	Rīsha and Ṣahyūn	168	–	3	–	–	–	840
7	Maghāriba	84	11	–	–	–	–	420
–	Shaykh Aḥmad al-Maghribī	32	–	–	–	–	–	160
8	ʿAqabat al-Sitt	39	–	4	–	–	3	195
	Total	**1993**	**141**	**12**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**9965**

It can be inferred from the previous table that the number of Muslim inhabitants in the city of Jerusalem in 1553 reached 9,965 individuals. The number of Jewish residents totaled 1,620, while the Christian population amounted to 1,515. According to these figures, Muslims constituted 76.07% of the total population, Jews made up 12.37%, and Christians accounted for 11.56%.

The Jewish population was distributed across three neighborhoods as follows: 535 individuals (in addition to 3 bachelors) in the Harat al-Sharaf (Sharaf Quarter); 395 individuals and 3 bachelors in the Harat al-Maslak (Maslakh Quarter); and 690 individuals with 7 bachelors in the Harat al-Risha (Risha Quarter).

The data provided by the official Tahrir registers issued by the Sublime Porte in Istanbul indicate that there was no neighborhood referred to as the "Jewish Quarter" in the form presented in the four-quadrant maps. Rather, most of the quarters in which Jews resided had Muslim majorities, with the various religious communities integrated into specific neighborhoods such as Zara'ina (Zarāʿina), Risha, and Sharaf.

According to the Jerusalem Tahrir Register dated 1563, the distribution of the Muslim population across the neighborhoods of Jerusalem was as follows[74]:

Population	**Noble (Şerif)**	**Disabled (Engeli)**	**Soldier (Ama)**	**Religious Officials & Teachers**	**Single Men (Mücerred)**	**Households (Hane)**	**Neighborhood Name (Mahalle Adı)**	**No. (Sıra No)**
1895	0	1	21	19	379	Şeref (Honor)	1	
830	0	1	0	19	13	166	Babü'l-kattanin	2
1930	1	0	1	0	2	386	Ba'bü'l-amud	3
1540	20	0	0	48	52	308	Babü Hıtta	4
95	0	0	0	0	3	19	Eyyübiyye cemati	5
1530	0	0	0	4	306		Zara'ina	6
945	0	1	0	0	0	189	Rişe	7
650	0	0	0	0	2	130	Meğaribe	8
250	0	0	0	0	0	50	Akabetü's-sit	9

9665	21	2	2	88	95	1933	Total	

Based on the figures presented in the table, the number of Muslim households amounted to 1933, corresponding to approximately 9,665 Muslim individuals. In addition, there were 95 single men, 88 officials and teachers, 21 nobles, and 4 disabled persons. The 1563 tax register provided more detailed information on the Christian community, noting that the number of Christian households in Jerusalem was 188, equivalent to about 940 individuals, alongside 18 single men (bachelors) [75].

The register also indicated that the number of Jewish households in Jerusalem reached 237, equivalent to approximately 1,185 individuals, along with 12 single men. The Jewish population was distributed across three quarters: the Sharaf quarter, which contained 146 Jewish households amounting to about 730 individuals, plus one single man. Meanwhile, the Muslim population in this quarter numbered 1,895. This clearly shows that the largest quarter where Jews resided still had them as a minority compared to the overwhelming Muslim majority [76].

The second quarter where Jews resided was the Middle Quarter, which had 40 Jewish households, equivalent to approximately 200 individuals, along with 6 single men [77]. The third quarter inhabited by Jews was the Risha Quarter, which comprised 51 Jewish households, equivalent to approximately 255 individuals, along with 5 single men [78].

This register from 1563 indicates that the Jewish population was distributed across three quarters in Jerusalem that did not bear their name but were part of Muslim quarters. The most prominent Jewish communities were in the Şeref and Rişe quarters, in addition to the Musallaq quarter, a small neighborhood situated between Rişe and Şeref. Most of its inhabitants were Jews. Due to its small size, Musallaq did not appear in the administrative registers as an independent quarter. After 1562, Musallaq began to be referred to as the Middle Quarter, reflecting its central position between the two aforementioned quarters. It was interconnected and overlapped with the neighboring quarters; therefore, it was not identified as a separate Jewish quarter [79].

Regarding the Jerusalem tax register dated 1595, the data on the city and its population were presented following the previous sequence. This register, however, lacks comprehensive information about the Christian population and does not mention the Jews at all. Additionally, it indicates a decline in the population of Old Jerusalem.

Based on the information provided by the previous registers, it becomes clear that there was no administrative neighborhood officially called the "Jewish Quarter." Instead, Jews were mentioned as a community for the purposes of organizing their internal affairs and managing their relations within the Ottoman state.

The division of the city into four quarters (neighborhoods) does not align with the reality depicted by the tax registers. Even if most Jews resided in certain neighborhoods like Al-Sharaf and Al-Risha, this does not negate the presence of Muslim and Christian residents within those same neighborhoods. In fact, in some neighborhoods, Muslims formed the majority. This demonstrates that the so-called Jewish Quarter was not geographically or socially homogeneous as portrayed by travelers' maps, but rather there was significant demographic overlap.

Historian Ruth Kark supports the idea that from the early 19th century until the end of the Ottoman era, Jerusalem was characterized by community neighborhoods that were not distinct administrative districts. Instead, these neighborhoods were marked by local, familial, religious, and ethnic loyalties [80].

In this study, we do not seek to deny the facts or negate the Jewish presence in Jerusalem during the Ottoman era. Numerous documents from the records of the Jerusalem Sharia Court have confirmed the existence of Jews in the city[81]. However, the Jewish Quarter, or the “Middle Quarter” as some

documents refer to it, was not as depicted in the 19th-century maps. It was a small quarter, comprising no more than 5% of the Old City's area until the mid-20th century [82].Nazmi al-Ja'bah mentioned that the area of the quarter did not exceed 5 dunams [83].Therefore, when referring to the "Jewish Quarter," it means that the majority of its inhabitants were Jewish; however, this does not imply the absence of Muslims and Christians within it. Historical documents have demonstrated that coexistence and intermingling were common within the same neighborhood, and sometimes even within the same household. The reality was not as the travelers imagined—where each religious group lived in isolated quarters with no interaction—such as the ghettos in Europe. For instance, a legal document dated 1830 indicates that Muslims and Jews lived together in the same area [84].The records of the Sharia Court identified the Jewish neighborhood as the quarter located in the southwestern part of Jerusalem, lying west of the Şeref (Honor) quarter and east of the Risha neighborhood, meaning it was situated between the two areas. For this reason, it was referred to as the "Middle Quarter [85].Applying this information to the map of Jerusalem, the Jewish Quarter constitutes a very small area that does not even extend to the boundaries of the Moroccan Quarter. This serves as clear evidence refuting what some sources have promoted, which attempted to project such divisions onto demographic maps aligned with Western interests that are religious, political, and colonial in nature.

Researcher Nazmi al-Ja'ba pointed out in his book "The Jewish Quarter and the Moroccan Quarter in Old Jerusalem" that the majority of properties and buildings in what is called the Jewish Quarter were owned by Muslims. Al-Ja'ba stated that 82% of the buildings were Muslim-owned, while Jewish-owned properties accounted for only 15.6%. The author also noted that there was no single block (parcel) in the so-called Jewish Quarter where Jewish ownership formed a majority, except for Block 31. This indicates that Jews primarily lived in rented buildings[86]. A significant portion of the housing in the Jewish Quarter was rented from Islamic waqf (endowment) properties[87].

OLD NEİGHBORHOODS OF JERUSALEM AFTER THE 1967 WAR

Following the occupation of Palestine, Israel sought to intensify its measures and actions aimed at achieving full control over the Old City of Jerusalem. This was driven by the objective of erasing the Arab-Islamic identity of the city and replacing it with a Jewish identity through the expulsion of Muslims, the demolition of Islamic cultural landmarks, and the construction of the Third Temple in place of Al-Aqsa Mosque [88]. The Zionists employed numerous new methods to assert control over the Old City of Jerusalem, with violence and intimidation being among the most prominent. The 1929 clash over the Western Wall stands as a significant example of this. However, the rapid steps toward Judaization of Jerusalem were taken after the Zionists seized the city following the 1967 war. The authority over the management of absentee properties, which had been under Jordanian control, was transferred to the "Custodian of Absentee Property" affiliated with the Israeli occupation, granting them full discretion to manage these assets as they wished and according to their own agenda[89].

The first phase of imposing control and settlement over the city of Jerusalem began just four days after the outbreak of the 1967 war. It initially involved taking control of the Western Wall, expanding the plaza in front of it, and rebuilding the Jewish Quarter. Judaizing the Old City became a geopolitical and strategic goal for both the official and popular Israeli spheres, a reality that continues to this day.

The process of spatial Judaization and the establishment of the "Greater Jewish Quarter" started on June 11, 1967, when the Moroccan Quarter—belonging to the Islamic Waqf—was seized and demolished after giving its residents only three hours to evacuate their homes. The area was then leveled to expand the plaza of the so-called Wailing Wall (Al-Buraq) on one side and to remove the Arab-Islamic landmarks that had acted as a strong barrier preventing the connection with the Jewish Quarter [90].This was carried out through the establishment of a company called the "Jewish Quarter Development Company," which took charge of the process of displacing residents from neighborhoods in the city of Jerusalem. As a result, 135 houses and two mosques in the Moroccan Quarter were demolished, and 650 people were expelled from the area[91].

Following the destruction of the Moroccan Quarter came the demolition of the Sharaf Quarter. The occupation government announced the confiscation of 116 dunams in the Old City, encompassing the Moroccan Quarter, the Sharaf Quarter, the Prophet David Quarter, the Al-Midan neighborhood, the Jewish Quarter (the Middle Quarter), and parts of the Syriac Quarter.

These confiscations included 700 stone buildings containing 437 workshops and stores, as well as 1,048 apartments that were home to nearly 6,000 people, who were forced to leave the Old City. It is noteworthy that before 1948, Jews owned only 105 of those buildings in total[92].

It is noteworthy that the Jewish Quarter, which the occupying state sought to establish after the 1967 war, closely resembles in location and size the Jewish Quarter depicted in the 19th-century travelers' maps—similar to the colonial Saïssian maps. The struggle over the city's identity continues to this day, as Israel aims to erase any presence and identity in the city other than its own.

CONCLUSIONS

The old city of Jerusalem took its social and administrative physical form following its liberation from the Crusaders by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. After the city's liberation, it experienced significant depopulation due to the exodus of various communities. Subsequently, groups from neighboring regions settled in the city, taking advantage of the available housing and the opportunity to live under the rule of Sultan Salah al-Din, which allowed them to enjoy stability and proximity to the Al-Aqsa Mosque after a long period of absence. For example, neighborhoods such as Bani Zeid were named after groups from the northern vicinity of Jerusalem, while others like al-Turiyya, Bani Harith, and al-Mushariqa came from the east of the Jordan River. Each community typically settled in the area corresponding to its place of origin. Over time, these group-specific names gradually faded as the dominant major neighborhood names prevailed, reflecting the historical development and the integration of Jerusalem's diverse inhabitants into a cohesive urban society. This is clearly evidenced by the coexistence of various religious groups within the same neighborhoods, such as in al-Risha and al-Sharaf.

The ideological frameworks promoted by Zionist and orientalist movements aimed to create deep divisions between Muslims and other religious groups, fracturing Jerusalem's historically integrated social fabric. These narratives often wrongly attributed sectarian fragmentation to Islamic or earlier Islamic governance systems, such as the millet system or jizya tax. However, the findings of this study clearly indicate that such claims are unfounded and contradict historical reality.

The names of Jerusalem's neighborhoods were primarily functional and geographic in nature, reflecting administrative and social organization rather than rigid religious segregation. Neighborhoods like Bab al-Hitta and Bab al-Amud, named after city gates, have retained their names across historical periods. Contrary to some modern maps and claims, there is no historical evidence supporting the notion of strictly sectarian quarters.

Throughout history, Jerusalem's diverse religious communities have lived intermingled, sharing streets and even homes, in stark contrast to the segregated ghettos known in European contexts. Archival evidence confirms this inter-communal coexistence, highlighting a shared urban life.

Jerusalem has historically been a center of Islamic civilization, fostering social harmony and religious pluralism. Religious festivals and public ceremonies saw the participation of multiple faith communities together, including city rulers, who actively ensured these events proceeded smoothly and inclusively. This legacy underpins Jerusalem's enduring reputation as the "Gateway from Earth to Heaven," a place of shared devotion and spiritual inspiration for all believers.

In conclusion, Jerusalem's historical, religious, and social fabric demonstrates a rich tapestry of communal coexistence that transcends the externally imposed narratives of division. This reality provides a critical reference point for contemporary identity debates and geopolitical discourses surrounding the city.

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