

Jerusalem as Palimpsest

The Architectural Footprint of the Crusaders in the Contemporary City

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Latin Crusaders captured Jerusalem on 15 July 1099, after Pope Urban's call at the end of 1095 for the First Crusade.¹ Latin domination of Jerusalem lasted until 1187 when Sultan Saladin captured the city. Although Latin rule was re-established for short periods between 1229 and 1239, and between 1241 and 1244, it was in the twelfth century that the Crusaders executed an extensive building campaign that aimed at the redefinition of the city's Christian topography.

Crusader architecture is mostly viewed as an isolated phenomenon with distinguishing stylistic and formal characteristics. In the first studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Crusader architecture was typified by French scholars as French Romanesque but, later, Byzantine and local Eastern influences were also acknowledged.² As is often the case in architectural history, research into the Crusader period focuses on the reconstruction of the original shape of buildings and not on their afterlife and continuous transformation. In descriptions of the buildings, later additions and transformations are omitted while the captions of photographs of buildings in their current form mention only the original building dates. In his study on Crusader Jerusalem, Adrian Boas remarks that 'in appearance, the Old City of Jerusalem is still essentially a medieval city[...] with the exception of the Jewish Quarter, which has been largely rebuilt since 1967, the city is very much as it appeared nine hundred years ago and a visitor from the twelfth century would probably not

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- 1 The generic term 'Crusaders' refers to a heterogeneous group of Christians from all over Latin Western Europe and from every level of society who participated in the Crusades. Because knights and soldiers came in greater number from France and Germany than from any other country the contemporary term 'Franks' was used by both Europeans and Muslims for the settlers in the Holy Land.
 - 2 The oldest comprehensive study is by De Vogüé 1860, followed by Vincent and Abel 1914–26; Enlart 1925–28; Dechamps 1964; *Art and Architecture of the Crusader States* 1977 and Pringle 2007.

have too much trouble in finding his way about'.³ Although Boas refers more to the lay-out of the city than to the shape and function of the buildings from the Crusader period, he suggests at least that the latter survived more or less intact.

Buildings, however, although built on specific and fixed locations, change continuously, as does the culture around them. Especially in a city such as Jerusalem, where many buildings are the markers of holy, often contested, places, religious buildings have undergone significant (physical) transformations during dramatic religious turnarounds, including changes of function or patronage, rebuilding and restoration, and neglect or demolition. In the following, therefore, instead of framing Crusader buildings in the time of their conception, the constitution of their architectural layers will be discussed in order to do justice to and acknowledge the processuality of architecture. I will do so by considering the buildings as architectural palimpsests. The metaphor of the palimpsest refers both to the multi-layeredness of buildings as well as to the observation that older architectural layers mix with new layers, as old text shines through the new text of a reused piece of parchment. In the case of buildings this effect can be the result of decay or repair and therefore unintentional, or deliberate as in the case of restoration or rebuilding with the purpose of erasing or re-establishing the old.

The starting point of what follows is the appearance, the upper layer of the palimpsest, of a set of Crusader buildings that are considered to be the best preserved examples of Crusader architecture in contemporary Jerusalem.⁴ The selection includes buildings that were newly built by the crusaders (Churches of St Anne; Church of the Ascension and of St James) as well as older buildings that were substantially rebuilt in the Crusader period (Church of the Holy Sepulchre, St Mary of Mount Zion and St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat). In addition I will discuss the *Templum Domini*, the Islamic Dome of the Rock, which was appropriated by the Crusaders and played an important role in the reestablishment of a Christian Jerusalem in the Crusader period.

3 Boas 2001, p. 3.

4 The descriptions of the buildings are based on my own observations during my stay in Jerusalem in November 2011. Details on the history of the buildings are based on the studies of Vincent and Abel 1914–26 and Pringle 2007, unless otherwise mentioned. In his corpus of the churches of Jerusalem, Denys Pringle mainly compiles the results of earlier studies (see note 1). In particular, the archeological and historical research of the Dominican Fathers Vincent and Abel is still fundamental for our knowledge of Crusader architecture in Jerusalem. The specific pages in the work of Vincent and Abel and Pringle which relate to the buildings discussed in this article are referred to in each paragraph.

Blended Architecture: Church of the Holy Sepulchre⁵

The 'liberation' of the Holy Sepulchre (which turned out to be not only from the Muslims but from the Eastern Christians as well), and visiting the place of Christ's resurrection, the most holy place of Christendom, were the main goals for the Crusaders who joined the First Crusade. The rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which dated back to the time of the emperor Constantine and his mother Helena, was the most important building campaign after the Crusaders had captured the city in 1099. Today it is still the most important Christian pilgrimage site in the world.

The church is located in the Christian Quarter of the Old City, near the Muristan. The south façade is the only part of the church that is not hemmed in by other buildings and that is visible from street level. The façade consists of two stories with a double portal in the first and a double window on the second storey. The most striking characteristic of the façade is the rich ornamental sculpture of the capitals and the voussoirs of the arches surrounding the portals and windows, and of the friezes framing both levels of the building.

Through the left portal in the south façade one enters the south bay of the transept of the church. The enclosure of the nave, which functions as the Katholicon of the Greek Orthodox, blocks the view on the Rotunda to the west of it. In fact, as a result of the division of the church among the different denominations with the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolics and Roman Catholics as the primary custodians, and the Coptic, Ethiopian and Syrian Orthodox as the secondary ones, all views through the building are blocked.

The inconvenient arrangement of space in the current building can only be understood within the context of its history. The building campaign of the Crusaders, which lasted from 1099 until 1170, united different holy sites under one roof: the Rotunda, a centrally-planned *martyrium* with the Tomb of Christ, the rock of Calvary and the cave of the Finding of the Cross. The courtyard to the east of the Rotunda which also dates back to Constantinian times, was replaced by a church with a nave and four aisles, galleries, and cross-vaults. The church had a transept with a dome at the intersection of the transept with the nave, and a choir with an ambulatory and chapels on the east side. Behind these chapels, stairs led down to the Chapel of Helena. The chapel was built on the foundations of Constantine's basilica and contained capitals that were *spolia*, like other pieces of reused architectural sculpture in the church, possibly coming from one of the Islamic monuments on the Temple Mount.⁶ From

5 Vincent and Abel 1914–26, pp. 88–300; Krüger 2000; Pringle 2007, pp. 6–72.

6 Wilkinson 1987, pp. 27–28. Krüger 2000, p. 90, states that the *spolia* in the Chapel of Helena derive from the Al Aqsa Mosque. Ousterhout 2003, p. 18, questions whether it is likely that all

the chapel another flight of stairs led down to the cave of the Finding of the Cross.

On the exterior, the south façade with the double portal was added by the Crusaders, and on the right of the façade a porch constituted an external access to the Chapel of Calvary. Other additions were a bell-tower and a cloister for Augustinian Canons. The first was built over and around the existing chapel of St John the Evangelist on the south side of the Rotunda, while the latter extended over the Chapel of Helena and the cave of the Finding of the Cross.

After the Crusader period the church once again underwent several changes. It is not clear whether the Aedicule with the Tomb of Christ had been stripped of its silver ornaments by the Muslims or by the Christians after Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187 and the church came under Muslim control.⁷ In 1211–12 the Western pilgrim Wilbrand of Oldenburg saw the church with its marble and mosaic decoration intact.⁸ Later in the thirteenth century the cloister of the Augustinian Canons was destroyed. The few remains of it, among which traces of an arch (Fig. 5.1), are incorporated in the Coptic patriarchate and the Ethiopian monastery, which are now located on the roof of the church. In 1555 the Aedicule was completely rebuilt by the Franciscans. In 1719 the timber roof of the Rotunda was renewed and the height of the bell tower, which had been without bells since 1187 and the spire of which had fallen in 1549, was reduced by two stories. After a fire in 1808 the interior of the church was almost completely restored, including the rebuilding of the apse in a baroque style with a new iconostasis in stone. The open conical roof of the Rotunda was replaced by a timber dome and again between 1866 and 1868 by a dome with a steel construction. In the middle of the nineteenth century the porch that gave access to Calvary was renewed, walled up and furnished as what is called the Chapel of the Franks. After an earthquake in 1927 the dome over the crossing of the Crusader transept had to be pulled down and rebuilt, and the Rotunda was also almost completely renewed.

Today, it is difficult to establish to what extent the Crusader church had been a unity. The building brought all the holy places under one roof, and for that purpose both existing and new structures were joined together; but whereas in the Crusader period the interior could be perceived in its entirety

of the reused capitals in the Crusader church came from the same place. He states that 'if the crusader masons were scouring the city for suitable building materials, they could certainly have found better pieces than, for example, the mismatched columns and cut-down capitals in the chapel of Helena'.

7 Pringle 2007, p. 31, with references.

8 Wilbrand of Oldenburg, *IHC*, vol. III, pp. 236–38.



FIGURE 5.1 *Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, remains of the Canon's cloister, looking west towards the apse of the church.* PHOTO: MARIËTTE VERHOEVEN.

from any vantage point⁹, that effect has been obliterated by later alterations and partitions of the interior space. The extensive mosaic decoration programme of the Crusader period must have contributed to the unity, but of that layout only the mosaic of the Ascension of Christ in the Chapel of the Crucifixion on Calvary remains.

This means that although the ground plan of the current church is still that of the twelfth century, only a few parts of the building have been left untouched since the Crusader period. Even the apparently undamaged façade did not survive intact. The decorated marble plaques that were applied to the lintels of the double portal were removed to the Rockefeller Museum in 1927. The mosaics of the tympana above the doors, representing the Virgin and Child on the

9 Kühnel 1994, p. 22.



FIGURE 5.2 *Jerusalem, Chapel of the Ascension, view from the east.* PHOTO: MARIËTTE VERHOEVEN.

left tympanum and on the right Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene, did not survive.

Inside Out: Church of the Ascension¹⁰

In the village of at-Tur, on the highest point of the Mount of Olives, a small chapel lies hidden behind the walls of a courtyard. The chapel is built on the location from which Christ supposedly ascended to heaven.

The Chapel of the Ascension is an octagonal building constructed in yellow ashlar masonry (Fig. 5.2). The first zone, terminated by a cornice, consists of a blind arcade with arches springing from the corner pilasters. Except for the

¹⁰ Vincent and Abel 1914–26, pp. 360–419; Pringle 2007, pp. 72–88.

pair framing the entrance on the western face, each of the eight pilasters is flanked by a pair of columns with finely carved capitals. The abaci on the western face indicate that on the location of the masonry pilasters underneath them there once stood columns with capitals that have been lost. The *voussoirs* of the arches and the abaci, capitals, columns and bases are of blue-white marble.

The second zone of the building, where the masonry is more irregular than that of the lower zone, consists of an octagonal drum supporting a dome. The drum has small windows on four sides.

On the west a low rectangular door gives entrance to the interior of the chapel with its rounded wall surface. It has a *mihrab*, an Islamic prayer niche in the south wall. To the right, on the floor, is a slab of stone with the alleged footprint of Christ.

We know that the Crusaders built a Church of the Ascension in the first half of the twelfth century.¹¹ John of Würzburg (c. 1165) describes ‘a large church, in whose centre, uncovered by a large aperture, is shown the place of the Lord’s Ascension’.¹² The pilgrim Theodoric (1172) gives a fuller description of the building: ‘One ascends into the church by twenty great steps; in the midst of the church there stands a round structure, magnificently decorated with Parian marble and blue marble, with a lofty apex, in the midst whereof a holy altar is placed, beneath which altar is to be seen the stone on which the Lord is said to have stood when He ascended to heaven’.¹³ These descriptions make clear that the building that is now called the Chapel of the Ascension was in fact an aedicule in the central bay of a larger church. The archeological evidence shows that the walls of the courtyard surrounding the aedicule or chapel partly follow the traces of the octagonal external wall of the Crusader church of which only a few remains survive.

What we know of the Crusader building is that it was an octagonal church with an aedicule of the same form in the central bay. Nothing is known about the vaulting of the inner space of the church, including the original vaulting of the central bay. Denys Pringle proposes a rather unlikely reconstruction with a division in nine bays covered by groin-vaults with cross ribs supported by wall

11 On the basis of the accounts of the pilgrim Saewulf (1102) and the Russian Abbot Daniel (1106–08), Kühnel 1994, p. 33, dates the Crusader church of the Ascension between 1102 and 1106–07; Kühnel 1994, p. 33. Pringle 2007, p. 73, concludes, on the basis of the same accounts and other early twelfth-century texts, that the church was not yet rebuilt in the beginning of the twelfth century. According to Pringle the earliest references indicating that the church had been rebuilt date from around the middle of the twelfth century.

12 John of Würzburg, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, p. 126; ELS, 407, no. 635, PPTS, vol. V, p. 42.

13 Theodoric, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, pp. 163–64; PPTS, vol. V, p. 44; ELS, 408, no. 637.

pilasters, four central piers and pendentives supporting a drum capped by a dome over the central square bay.¹⁴ According to descriptions by pilgrims, the interior of the church was defined by a free-standing colonnade.¹⁵ Bianca Kühnel assumes a circular form for the inner row of columns, this in relation to the supposition that the Crusader Church of the Ascension was a replica, both in form and size, of the inner octagon of the Dome of the Rock, or the *Templum Domini* as it was called in the Crusader period (see below).¹⁶

The history of the church goes back to the end of the fourth century when sources already mention a church in that location.¹⁷ The walls of the twelfth-century Crusader church overlay and partly enclosed the foundations of a Byzantine church that was built on a rounded platform. Towards the end of the seventh century the pilgrim Arculf, a bishop from Gaul, described the church.¹⁸

After 1187 the church came into Muslim possession when Saladin established the building as a foundation in favour of two sheikhs. In 1211–12 the monastery that adjoined the church was destroyed and a mosque was established in it. The church was in ruins from the fifteenth century on, but the aedicule in the central bay remained intact.

The aedicule transformed into its current form of an independent building in 1620 when a drum supporting a dome was added to the chapel while the east door was blocked and a *mihrab* was inserted into its south wall. One of the alleged footprints of Christ was removed to the Dome of the Rock. The internal rounded wall surface also dates from this period. The dome collapsed during an earthquake in 1834 and was subsequently rebuilt.

The building that is now called the Chapel of the Ascension is in fact no more than a fragment of the twelfth-century Crusader church. Only the walls, including the architectural sculpture of the first zone of an aedicule in the central bay of the larger church, survived. The walls of the surrounding courtyard give an impression of the size of that church. The Chapel is still in Muslim possession and is a holy place for both Muslims – who believe in the ascension of the prophet Jesus but not in his crucifixion – and Christians.

14 Pringle 2007, p. 79, p. 81 and Plan 9.

15 Kühnel 1994, p. 31, with references.

16 Kühnel 1994, p. 31.

17 Kühnel 1994, p. 30; Pringle 2007, p. 72.

18 Adomnán, CCSL, vol. CLXXV, pp. 199–200; transl. by Wilkinson 1977, pp. 100–01.

Restoration or Reconstruction: Church of St Anne¹⁹

The Church of St Anne is considered to be the best preserved and most representative example of Crusader church architecture in Jerusalem. The church is located to the north of the Temple Mount, near the Lion's Gate and 50 m north of Jehoshaphat Street (Via Dolorosa). Ruins here were identified with the Baths of Bethesda or the Sheep Pool, the location to which both the Miracle of the Healing of the Paralytic and the Birth of Mary in the House of Joachim and Anne are linked. From the sixth to the twelfth century both events were commemorated in one church, St Mary near the Sheep Pool.

After the conquest of Jerusalem the Crusaders dedicated the Byzantine Church of St Mary near the Sheep Pool to St Anne, the mother of the Virgin.²⁰ However, between 1102 and 1165, the Crusaders built a new Church of St Anne at a short distance to the south east of the Byzantine church.²¹ On the foundations of the Byzantine building they erected a small church or monastery dedicated to the Miracle of the Healing of the Paralytic, which is now in ruins.²² Excavations in the 1960s showed no evidence for the presumption that the Crusader church was built upon the remains of a Byzantine predecessor although structures associated with the Byzantine Church of the Sheep Pool would have extended into the area of the twelfth-century building.²³

The Church of St Anne lies in a courtyard in the Muslim quarter, behind the walls of the hidden complex administered by the White Fathers. It is one of few free-standing churches in the 'Old City' of present-day Jerusalem (Fig. 5.3). The building, constructed in lime stone ashlar, is a basilica of irregular measurements with a nave and two aisles, four bays in length, and a dome over the crossing in the first bay. On the east the church terminates in three semi-circular apses, which are polygonal on the exterior. The church is groin-vaulted with barrel vaults over the first bay. The pointed arches rest upon compound piers.

The crypt is entered via a flight of stairs in the central bay of the south aisle. It consists of a complex of several subterranean spaces including a pair of rock-cut caves below the apse that is supposedly the house of Joachim and Anne and the birth place of the Virgin Mary.

19 Vincent and Abel 1914–26, pp. 669–742; Pringle 2007, pp. 142–56.

20 Mayer 1977, p. 248. Pringle 2007, pp. 142–43, supposes that the first St Anne was a smaller predecessor of the Crusader church on the same location.

21 Mayer 1977, p. 248; Pringle 2007, pp. 142–43. According to Vincent and Abel 1914–26, p. 733, the church was built in the first half of the twelfth century. It has also been considered to be a foundation of Queen Melisende in the 1140s; Kühnel 1994, p. 19 and Folda 2008, p. 36.

22 Mayer 1977, p. 249; Kühnel 1994, p. 24.

23 Pringle 2007, p. 145.



FIGURE 5.3 *Jerusalem, Church of St Anne, view from the north-west.* PHOTO: MARIËTTE VERHOEVEN.

The building as a whole gives the impression of having survived more or less intact, but actually how well preserved is this basilica? In 1192 Saladin founded a *madrasa*, a religious school, including a mosque, in the church. The building was in Christian hands again between 1229 and 1244. After 1244 Christians had limited access to the building, but they were allowed to enter the crypt. By the early eighteenth century the building was unoccupied, although the Franciscans, together with local Christians, celebrated mass in the crypt. In 1841–42 the mosque was repaired by the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem, Tayar Pasha. A new *mihrab* was installed and the construction of a cylindrical minaret was started, but was never completed. The base for the minaret was the stair-turret of the bell tower, which stood over the western bay of the south aisle and had been damaged during the earthquake in 1834. In 1856 the building was granted to Napoleon III as an expression of gratitude for French help to the Ottomans in the Crimean War.

The current state of the church, which has been in hands of the Catholic White Fathers since 1878, is the result of the complete restoration of the building between 1862 and 1877. The renewal included the suppression of the *mihrab*, the excavation and reconstruction of the crypt, the reconstruction of a

diminutive bell-tower and the replacement of much of the sculptural ornament. After this nineteenth-century restoration, the church was damaged by an Israeli mortar shell in 1967 after which the dome was partially rebuilt.

The result of the radical nineteenth-century restoration was a reconstruction to the alleged original state of the building. It included the erasure of later layers, more especially the Islamic ones. The only present relic of the building's Islamic history is Saladin's inscription of 1192, recording the establishment of the *madrasa*, set in the tympanum above the entrance door in the western façade.

Commemoration and Context: Cenacle (St Mary of Mount Zion)²⁴

The Cenacle or Last Supper Room is not easy to find in present-day Jerusalem. It is located on Mount Zion on the second floor of a building in the courtyard of a *yeshiva*, a Jewish educational institution for Torah and Talmud studies. The Cenacle consists of a room, measuring 15.3 by 9.4 m, divided in six bays covered by groin vaults carried by free-standing columns and pilasters. A staircase in the southwest corner that leads down to the first floor is surmounted by a baldachin. Stairs in the south-east and north-east corners lead up to doors, the north-eastern one of which gives entrance to a minaret. Other Islamic features are a *mihrab* in the south wall of the room and stained-glass windows and plaques with Arabic inscriptions. Neither from the location nor from the decoration can it be deduced that this was once a space with a Christian religious function.

The Crusaders restored a Byzantine basilica that had been associated with the Flagellation, the Last Supper, the descent of the Holy Spirit and with Mary's Death.²⁵ They incorporated the apse and flanking chapels of this building into a new, vaulted church that was 11 metres longer than its predecessor. It had a nave of twelve bays and double aisles. Within the four eastern bays of the two southern aisles there was a gallery, which commemorated the upper room of the Last Supper (the so-called Cenacle) and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Towards the west end of the northern aisle a square aedicule surmounted by a rounded baldachin represented the place of the Virgin's Dormition. The Cenacle was remodeled in an early Gothic style in a second building phase, probably in the 1170s or 80s. By the 1180s the lower room in the south western corner was identified as the location of the Tomb of David.

24 Vincent and Abel 1914–26, pp. 441–81; Pringle 2007, pp. 261–87.

25 Bede, CCL, vol. CLXXV, p. 258; transl. by Wilkinson 1977, pp. 194–95, pls 3–4.

The church came into Muslim possession after 1187 and was probably in ruins around 1219 when al-Mu'azzam 'Isâ destroyed the fortifications of Jerusalem. Pilgrim accounts from the thirteenth century describe the church as being in a ruinous state, apart from the part of the building that enclosed the Cenacle. Between 1332 and 1336 the Franciscans purchased the Cenacle and the ruined Chapel of the Holy Spirit from the Mamluk sultan. Nicolas of Poggibonsi (1346–50) describes the stations in the ruined church: the place where St John the Evangelist said mass to St Mary; the place where St Mary died; the place where St Matthias was made Apostle; the stone that the angel carried from Mount Sinai to the Holy Sepulchre; the chamber in which the Virgin Mary remained for seven years; the stone where St James the Less was made bishop of Jerusalem; the stone where St Stephen was buried in Mount Zion; the Tomb of David and of Solomon in Mount Zion; the place where the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles; the place where Christ washed the feet on Maundy Thursday; the place where Christ appeared to his disciples in Mount Zion, and the place where Christ had Supper with his Apostles.²⁶ The last is described as a church held by the Friars Minor containing three altars. In 1523 the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman ordered the expulsion of the friars from Mount Zion and a year later the Cenacle was converted into a mosque. The Franciscans retained some rooms in the convent that they had established and one in the Cenacle for use as a chapel. After the city walls were rebuilt between 1536 and 1541 Mount Zion lay outside the city. In 1551 all the buildings of the complex came into Ottoman hands. In the seventeenth century a small mosque, covered by a dome, was built in the place of the chapel of the Holy Spirit, directly above the Tomb of David.

From 1831, the Franciscans were allowed to celebrate mass in the Cenacle on Maundy Thursday and Whit Sunday, and it was only in 1948 that the Muslims were definitely excluded. The Cenacle came under the control of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the present yeshiva was established in the former convent buildings.

Of all the events that were once commemorated in the Church of St Mary of Mount Zion only the commemoration of the Last Supper has survived. The Cenacle retains the memory of the Last Supper but from its original context, the Crusader Church of Mount Zion, only written evidence has survived. Confusingly, the Cenacle is located near the Church of the Dormition, built by the German Emperor William II in 1900. This church was laid out around the remains of a supposedly Byzantine building, identified with the Byzantine Church of St Mary of Mount Zion. The only part that remained of the latter,

26 Nicolas of Poggibonsi, *SBF Coll mai*, vol. II, pp. 35–40.

however, is located under the Cenacle. Here, in an exedra of a chapel of the Byzantine church, stands the so-called Tomb of David, now in Jewish possession.

Baroque Treasury: Church of St James (Armenian Cathedral)²⁷

The Church of St James or Armenian Cathedral is located in the Armenian quarter, near the southern wall of the Old City. The church is hidden behind the walls surrounding the terrain of the Armenian Patriarchate and, apart from its western façade, is enclosed by other buildings (Fig. 5.4).

The Armenian Cathedral is a basilica of three bays, with a dome over the central bay, a walled-in narthex along its south side containing the Etchmidzin chapel and another narthex and gallery along its west side. Four piers, with a projecting pilaster or shaft on each side covered with paintings and tiles, carry the vaults. The church terminates in the east in a central apse and two side apses. On the north side stands the Chapel of St Menas, presumably dating back to the fifth century, with, on its upper level, a chapel dedicated to the Holy Apostles. The chapel of St Stephen, which functions as the sacristy, is built in the angle between the east wall of the Chapel of St Menas and the north side of the church. The building is open to the public for a short period once a day but entrance to the chapels of the church is allowed only to the Armenian community.

The Church of St James was built by the Armenians between 1142 and 1165. According to the pilgrim John of Würzburg (1165) the head of St James the Great, who had been decapitated by Herod, was venerated in the church.²⁸ From the fourteenth century onwards, the patron of the church was identified by pilgrims as St James, brother of Jesus and the first bishop of Jerusalem, who is in Latin Western tradition identified with James the Less.²⁹ In today's church the head of St James the Great is kept in a small chapel in the north wall to the right of the entrance to the St Menas chapel. The throne of St James the Less is attached to the north-eastern pier of the church, and his grave, marked by a low rounded grille, is located in front of it. The throne dates from the seventeenth century, the period in which other works were also executed in the

27 Vincent and Abel 1914–26, pp. 516–61; Armenian Art 1980, pp. 121–29; Pringle 2007, pp. 168–82.

28 John of Würzburg, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, p. 133; PPTS, vol. V, p. 45.

29 Lexikon Theologie und Kirche, vol. V, p. 270; Pringle 2007, p. 170, with references to pilgrims accounts.



FIGURE 5.4 *Jerusalem, buildings of the Armenian Patriarchate with the dome of the Church of St James to the right, from the city walls near the Sion Gate.*
PHOTO: MARIËTTE VERHOEVEN.

church, including the walling up of the narthex and the decoration of the choir with a mosaic floor.

The main part of the decoration, however, dates from the first half of the eighteenth century. In that period the Crusader fabric was covered with plaster, tiles from Kütahya in present-day Turkey, wooden panels and gilded ornaments. The entrances to the chapels of the church were decorated with doors with inlaid work, a new main altar and iconostasis were placed in the apse and the Etchmiadzin chapel was erected in the eastern end of the former narthex. In 1821 the dome was repaired and after the earthquake of 1834 a new narthex and a gallery to the west front were built.

The baroque decoration obscures the view of the architectural form and space which goes back to the time of the Crusaders. From the decoration of the twelfth-century building only a few of the capitals of the piers remain as well as the frame of the portal from the narthex to the church, consisting of a pointed arch of two orders resting on colonnettes.

Crusader Staircase to a Byzantine Crypt: St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat³⁰

At the base of the Mount of Olives steps from the road descend into a square courtyard containing a façade with a portal. The portal is enclosed by a pointed arch of three orders, supported on six colonnettes with Corinthian capitals. A broader arch, supported by a pair of colonnettes, surrounds the recessed portal. Behind the portal a staircase of 47 steps (Fig. 5.5) leads to a crypt with the tomb of the Virgin Mary. The walls and vaults of the crypt are blackened with the smoke from candles and oil lamps. The interior is decorated with altars, icons, and a forest of hanging lamps. The complex is known as St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

The Crusaders rebuilt a church dedicated to St Mary that already existed in 451 and was described by the pilgrim Arculf (c. 685): 'It is a church built at two levels, and the lower part, which is beneath a stone vault, has a remarkable round shape. At the east end there is an altar, on the right of which is the empty rock tomb in which for a time Mary remained entombed. [...] The upper Church of St Mary is also round, and one can see four altars there.'³¹ From the ninth century onward different sources describe the upper church as being in ruins.

The Crusaders rebuilt the upper Byzantine church as a three-aisled basilica with an eastern apse and twin towers at the west end. They also extended the lower church, or crypt, which was built in the shape of a cross. The eastern arm, containing the rock-cut tomb aedicule of Mary, was extended by ca 14 metres and ended, like the western arm, in a semi-circular apse. The tomb aedicule was regularized by a masonry coating, covered in marble and surrounded by an arcade. The southern arm was extended with a monumental staircase which gave access to the crypt.

The staircase is spanned by a transverse arch which must have carried the south wall of the upper Crusader church. The arch touches the Byzantine masonry of the crypt. In 1161, Queen Melisende was buried in an arched chapel (more a niche) to the right of the monumental staircase. In the later Middle Ages she was identified as the founder of the church. Since the fifteenth century the chapel of Melisende has been identified as that of Joachim and Anne. Opposite, a little further down the stairs was another niche, probably the burial place of Queen Morphia, wife of Baldwin II and Melisende's mother, who

30 Vincent and Abel 1914–26, pp. 805–31; Pringle 2007, pp. 287–306.

31 Adomnán, CCSL, vol. CLXXV, p. 195; transl. by Wilkinson 1977, p. 99.



FIGURE 5.5 *Jerusalem, St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, staircase leading to the crypt. PHOTO: MARIËTTE VERHOEVEN.*

was buried in the church in c. 1129. Since the sixteenth century this chapel has been dedicated to St Joseph.

Saladin destroyed the upper church in 1192, when he began to rebuild the city walls. The tomb of Mary, mother of the prophet Isa (Jesus), now became an Islamic sacred place but Christians were not excluded from it. In the sixteenth century, the Ottomans removed the marble covering of the tomb aedicule and plastered over it. In the seventeenth century the altar to the south of the tomb of the Virgin was replaced by a *mihrab*. Another prayer niche was added inside the tomb aedicule. The columns of the arcade that surrounded the tomb, and the ciborium above it (described by the pilgrim Theodoric), were removed but the capitals and bases remained in situ. In 1757 the crypt was taken over by the Greeks and Armenians while the Franciscans, who had been

allowed to say mass at the tomb since the fourteenth century, were excluded from it.

The façade of the upper church and the extensions to the Byzantine crypt, including the monumental staircase, is what has remained from the Crusader complex. It is one of two locations in Jerusalem commemorating Mary's Death, the other one being on Mount Zion (see above).

Creating a Christian Jerusalem: The *Templum Domini*³²

In Early Christian times no attempt had been made to rebuild the Jewish Temple that had been destroyed by Titus in AD 70. After the capture of the city by the Muslims in 638, the Umayyad caliph built the shrine of the Dome of the Rock on what is called Temple Mount. According to tradition it was built on the location of Mohammed's ascension after he made his 'night journey' from Mecca to 'the farthest mosque'. This was supposed to be the Temple in Jerusalem, although Jerusalem is not mentioned in the Qur'an.

In 1099 the Crusaders identified the Dome of the Rock as the *Templum Domini* although they must have been well aware that it was not the Temple of the Old Testament. According to the pilgrim Saewulf, the footprints in the rock that was exposed inside the building were those of Christ.³³ In the 1120s Fulcher of Chartres noted that an altar had been placed over the rock and a choir had been installed for the clergy.³⁴ When the church came to be served by Augustinian Canons is not clear, but a prior of the *Templum Domini* is first mentioned in 1112.³⁵ The pilgrim John of Würzburg (c. 1165) gives a description of the building: 'Now this same Temple of the Lord, which has been adorned by someone both within and without with a wondrous casing of marble, has the form of a beautiful rotunda, or rather of a circular octagon, that is, having eight angles disposed in a circle, with a wall decorated on the outside from the middle upwards with the finest mosaic work, for the remainder is of marble. This same lower wall is continuous, save that it is pierced by four doors, having one door towards the east, which adjoins a chapel dedicated to St James, for on that side he was thrown down from the roof of the Temple and killed with a fuller's club, having been the first high priest under the new law of grace in Jerusalem.'³⁶

32 Pringle 2007, pp. 397–417.

33 Saewulf, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, p. 68; transl. by Wilkinson 1988, p. 105.

34 Fulcher of Chartres, RHC occ, vol. III, pp. 356–57; transl. by Ryan 1969, pp. 117–18.

35 Pringle 2007, p. 401, with references.

36 John of Würzburg, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, p. 92; PPTS, vol. v, pp. 14–16.

John goes on to quote the inscriptions to be seen on the building and describes the sites in and around it, including a stone marked by the Lord's foot when he threw the buyers and sellers out of the Temple. This was joined to a stone marking the spot where Christ was presented. According to the pilgrim Theodoric (1172) this place was enclosed by an iron screen with doors. He is the only one who states that the Temple and its altar were dedicated to the Virgin Mary.³⁷ John of Würzburg mentions that the sign of the Holy Cross, which the Christians had placed on the dome was 'very offensive to the Saracens, and many of them would be willing to expend much gold to have it taken away; for although they do not believe in Christ's Passion, nevertheless they respect this Temple, because they adore their creator therein, which nevertheless must be regarded as idolatry on the authority of Saint Augustine, who declares that everything is idolatry which is done without faith in Christ'.³⁸

With the appropriation of the Dome of the Rock, the most prominent building of the city (Fig. 5.6), the Crusaders established an axis running from the Church of the Ascension via the *Templum Domini* to the Holy Sepulchre.³⁹ While the Islamic Dome of the Rock, now *Templum Domini*, had been built after the example of the Early Christian Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Ascension in its turn imitated the form of the Dome of the Rock (see above). Because of this conscious misconception the octagon became the archetypical model for the Temple in (Northern) Europe during the Middle Ages.⁴⁰

The other Islamic buildings on the Temple Mount that were appropriated by the Crusaders included the Qubbat-as-Silsila or Dome of the Chain, which became the Chapel of St James the Less, and the al-Aqsa Mosque that became the *Palatium Salomonis*.

With the transformation and dedication of the monuments on the Temple Mount, the Crusaders denied the Islamic origin of the buildings. The names of the buildings now referred to an origin in the Early Christian past, the period in which the Temple Mount had not been occupied by the Christians. After the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin the buildings on the Temple Mount were returned to Muslim use and the traces of Christian possession were erased. With that, the conceptual axis of the Church of the Ascension – *Templum Domini* – Holy

37 Theodoric, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, pp. 163–64; PPTS, vol. v, p. 30.

38 John of Würzburg, CCCM, vol. CXXXIX, p. 94; PPTS, vol. v, p. 18.

39 This argument was proposed by Bianca Kühnel in the paper she presented at the expert meeting 'Monuments and Memory', organized at the Radboud University Nijmegen on 8–9 December 2011.

40 I thank Jeroen Goudeau for pointing this out to me.



FIGURE 5.6 *Jerusalem, view of the Old City, from the Mount of Olives, with the Dome of the Rock in the front to the right.* PHOTO: MARIËTTE VERHOEVEN.

Sepulchre was also disturbed. The cross that stood over the dome of the *Templum Domini* was pulled down and dragged through the streets where it was smashed to pieces. Saladin's purification of the building included the replacement of the Latin inscriptions and decoration. The wrought-iron Crusader grille surrounding the rock remained in place until the 1950s. For a short period in the year 1244 the *Templum Domini* was re-occupied by the Latins, who again raised a cross over the dome, but this came to an end with the capture of Jerusalem by the Khwarizmian Turks.

Today the monuments on the Temple Mount are not accessible to non-Muslims. However, anyone can visit the vast platform, where only a few pieces of architectural sculpture serve as a reminder of the Crusader occupation of the area, although they will hardly be recognized as such by most of the visitors.

Conclusion

During the relatively short period of about a hundred years in which the Crusaders occupied Jerusalem, they managed to execute an extensive building

program. It included the re-adaptation or rebuilding of monuments that dated back to Early Christian or Byzantine times, the appropriation of Islamic edifices, and the construction of new buildings. With that they realized their goal of the re-establishment of Jerusalem as a Christian city.

After the fall to Saladin in 1187, Jerusalem became a predominantly Islamic city. To use the metaphor of the palimpsest: a new layer was added to the city, older layers were erased or mixed with the new layer. Especially during the Ottoman period (sixteenth – nineteenth centuries) Islamic features, for example *mihrrabs* and minarets, were added to converted buildings such as the churches of the Ascension, St Anne, St Mary of Mount Zion and St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. In the case of the Church of St Anne these additions have been erased, as happened with the Christian features of the appropriated monuments on the Temple Mount that were returned to Muslim possession. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of St James the Great never came into Muslim use but they had their own history of transformation.

If one compares the current appearance of the Crusader buildings with their original form, one can conclude that only fragments – a staircase, a crypt, a façade, columns or foundations – have survived. Even the apparent authenticity of the Church of St Anne is the result of extensive restorations in the nineteenth century. The buildings can be designated as ‘Crusader buildings’ only when they are framed in the time of their conception.

At the same time, despite – or thanks to – Jerusalem’s history of religious conversions, many of the Crusader buildings stayed in use and are the city’s visible witnesses to this turbulent past. Their different forms and meanings in various contexts were the result of different types of transformation: blending, piling up, erasure, reconstructive interpretation, demolition, isolation, covering up and appropriation. And in the surviving buildings, however much transformed, the continuity of at least a part of Jerusalem’s Christian topography, re-established in the twelfth century, has been preserved.

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Abbreviations

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| CCCM | <i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis</i> , Turnhout 1966- |
| CCSL | <i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i> , Turnhout 1953- |
| IHC | <i>Itinera Hierosolymitana Crucesignatorum (saec. XII-XIII)</i> , ed. by Sabino de Sandoli, 4 vols, SBF, Coll Mai., no. 24, Jerusalem 1978–84. |
| PPTS | <i>The library of the Palestine Pilgrims’ Texts Society</i> , 13 vols, London 1890–97. |

- RHC Hist occ *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux*, 5 vols, Paris 1844–95.
- SBF Coll mai *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio maior*, Jerusalem 1941–

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