

## Editorial

### *The King's Illegal Journey*

The Israel Museum's current exhibit in Jerusalem on King Herod the Great, "The King's Final Journey," has everything. Walking through its well-curated rooms, one encounters a wealth of stunning artifacts, from fragments of delicate floral murals to a reconstructed Throne Room and Herod's marble bathtub, both from his Jericho palaces, to an astonishingly beautiful mosaic panel from lower Herodium. Panoramic media reconstructions of some of the major sites of this munificent master builder include Herodium (Herodian), Caesarea, Masada, the Jericho Winter Palaces, and Herod's temple in Jerusalem. The exhibit culminates in a *pièce de résistance*, a room containing the three carved sarcophagi discovered in a mausoleum unearthed at Herodium in 2007, now pieced together (and reconstructed) after being smashed to smithereens some 2000 years ago, and shown in public for the first time. And through it all, the tale of Herod's dramatic – indeed melodramatic – life. With all these riches from the most extensive (and expensive) archaeological exhibit ever mounted in Jerusalem, who could want for more?

Once could – in fact and in justice – wish either for less or much more. Less, because many of these important artifacts were illegally excavated and illegally removed from sites in the occupied West Bank. Drawing close to many of the most stunning objects – including the tombs themselves – one finds a discreet acronym, SOAJS, standing for "the Administration of Judea and Samaria," also listed in the catalogue among the lenders to the exhibit, along with more august institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>1</sup> This "lending," we might say crudely but aptly, carries a silent history of appropriation and plain theft.

Although international law prohibits occupiers from any excavation in occupied territory with the exception of “salvage operations,” Israel has not only excavated extensively throughout the course of its forty-five year occupation, but taken advantage of its post-Oslo control over Area C – the 60 percent of the West Bank which conveniently includes Herodium, Qumran and other major sites – to continue to do so with impunity. Although museum officials cite the Oslo accords as allowing Israeli “involvement” in archaeology in the West Bank,<sup>2</sup> the accords, flawed as they are, merely note (in Annex III) that “in Area C, powers and responsibilities related to the sphere of Archaeology will be transferred gradually to Palestinian jurisdiction,” a time that has been infinitely postponed, but which does not negate prevailing international law. The resulting damage is not only to history and heritage. *Ha’aretz* journalist Benny Ziffer aptly calls Herodium “a cultural settlement,” and notes its many disruptions to the lives and livelihoods of surrounding Palestinian villages.<sup>3</sup>

And one could also wish for much more, as the exhibit is full of curious absences, including a sense of a common and complex heritage. Instead it is a show which, as Yonathan Mizrahi of the alternative archaeology organization Emek Shaveh observed, will have “a major political effect on Israeli public opinion about Jewish heritage and will strengthen claims to the land.” Herod himself, with his Idumean paternal relatives, his Nabatean mother and a brother named Phaesal (Faisal) speaks to the mix of peoples and cultures in this sliver of the Eastern Mediterranean that does not fit a monochrome “land of Israel” narrative. (Herod’s propensity to murder family members and assorted others – mostly Jews – also makes him a somewhat strange ancestor to claim). Absent from these rooms are not only acknowledgements of Palestinian archaeologists and their institutions, but the Palestinian “neighbors” of these sites in Jericho, Bethlehem-area Herodium, and Nablus-area Sebastia, who cannot reach Jerusalem to view this celebratory exhibit.

The exhibit also does not stand on its own – it is part and parcel of Netanyahu’s “Landmarks” project delineated in a 2010 plan to develop historical sites linked to Zionism and “archaeological sites marking the Jewish presence in the land of Israel throughout the ages.” The aim as stated in the promotional literature is quite clear, “to breathe new life into Zionism.” In an excellent report, Emek Shaveh notes, a number of the archaeological sites targeted for development, including Herodium, Qumran and Susya, are in the occupied West Bank and chosen for ideological reasons. Indeed, upon the finding of Herod’s tomb at Herodium, the former head of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc proclaimed it as “further proof of the direct connection of Gush Etzion to the history of the Jewish people and Jerusalem...”<sup>4</sup> The Landmarks project’s current plan is to reconstruct the tomb at Herodium as a structure twenty-five meters high which can be easily seen from Jerusalem. As *Ha’aretz* newspaper remarked, “there seems to be no other place in the world where a historical monument has been rebuilt from new materials for tourists.”

It is to this site in the merry, merry land of Area C that the artifacts from Herodium will be returned – a return that Israel Museum director James S. Snyder cites as showing that the Museum is doing “the best and the right thing for the long-term

preservation of material cultural heritage.”<sup>5</sup> But it is the production of a heritage, rather than its preservation that should be the worrying issue. In the words of Tel Aviv University archaeologist Raphael Greenburg, himself a critic of the exhibit and a founder of Emek Shaveh, “Archaeologists are in the business of creating collective memories.”<sup>6</sup> Herod’s final journey has brought him to a dangerous – and illegitimate – resting place.

In future issues, *Jerusalem Quarterly* hopes to invite archaeologists and historians to address these issues in greater depth. In this issue of JQ, we explore decidedly non-royal approaches to Jerusalem and its environs, where everyday life is highlighted. At the age of 100, the distinguished Jerusalemite, Sami Hadawi, gave his intimate and to date unpublished memoirs to friends. JQ is pleased to publish the first of two excerpts describing his childhood and early youth here. Hadawi’s childhood memories are sometimes idyllic – a three-day picnic in Wadi Qelt for example – and replete with Jerusalem “firsts,” from the first plane to the first (contested) cinema showing. But his descriptions of the conditions during World War I, whether lice, locusts, or a loaf of bread stolen by a hungry policeman, bring back a harsher reality, including the death of his father, fighting “in a war he did not believe in.”

Leaving for Amman, his widowed mother and Sami encounter an “infestation of hyenas,” en route, a reminder that environmental changes are also part of Palestine’s history. (He is also frightened as a child by a herd of donkeys in the Old City). Penny Johnson’s essay on the vanishing camels of Jerusalem and Jaffa traces environmental transformations in Palestine’s urban and rural landscapes in the Mandate era by asking “where have all the camels gone? – and when, and why.” While she includes a panoply of camel memories, she also discusses the “repressed camel memory syndrome” among urban Palestinians, and concludes with a contemporary account of the “last camel in Jerusalem” – and his melancholy fate.

Robert Mazza examines the “missing voices” in the historiography of late Ottoman and early British-ruled Jerusalem, particularly in the transitional war years, observing that “the choice to ignore the years of the war clearly shows the lack of attention to the city and its inhabitants.” Indeed, Sami Hadawi’s memoir, cited above, confirms Mazza’s point that “local issues such as the famine of 1915-16, the invasion of locusts, or the militarization of the local environment overrode international questions.” The “artificial and arbitrary” division of the history of this period obscures, he notes, the development of “indigenous modernity” and he provides a useful review of scholars whose works address this key issue.

One of the scholars cited is JQ’s co-editor Issam Nassar who contributes to this issue an essay on war photography in the first of two albums of John Whiting, a photographer in the American Colony’s photo department. The album of 243 photos portrays soldiers and officials on the Palestine and Sinai fronts between 1915-1917. While presenting a case for the importance of photographs in understanding the history of the period, Nassar also argues that the photos were staged to create a “heroic narrative” of the war and soldiers’ readiness for battle: “What we see in the pictures was carefully planned ahead of time for our benefit. Nothing that relates directly to the

plight of the soldiers or to actual combat is presented.” In other words, Sami Hadawi’s father, dying in a war he did not believe in, stands outside the frame.

Finally, Francesco Chiodelli reflects on the “likely urban shape of the ‘new Jerusalem’ over the next decades,” analyzing both official Israeli documents and territorial transformations already under way, such as the building of the Wall and Jewish residential expansion into East Jerusalem. While he argues that planned and on-going transformations signal a “spatial amputation” of Arab Jerusalem, he also notes that these are “potential futures,” presumably unless countervailing forces are brought to bear. A clearer focus from scholars and activists on the everyday lives, actions and experiences of Palestinian Jerusalemites is one important place to start.

And finally, *JQ* warmly welcomes new members of its Advisory Board Yusef Natsheh, Rochelle Davis and Beshara Doumani, and thanks outgoing members Martina Rieker and Shadia Touqan.

With this issue *JQ* bids farewell with much gratitude to two outstanding scholars, for their support over the last two decades: Martina Rieker (Cairo) and Shadia Tuqan (Jerusalem). We also welcome four distinguished scholars as new members of its Advisory Board Yusef al-Natsheh, Rochelle Davis, Beshara Doumani, and Nadera Shalhoub-Kervokian.

P.J.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 *Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey*, edited by Silvia Rizenberg and David Mevorah, Jerusalem, Israel Museum, 2013, p. 4. Artifacts excavated from sites in East Jerusalem (excavations which are equally illegal under international law) are attributed to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).
- 2 See “Correction February 15” to Jody Rudoren, “Anger That a Herod Show Uses West Bank Objects,” *The New York Times*, 13 February 2013.
- 3 Benny Ziffer, “Herodium turns into a cultural settlement,” *Ha'aretz*, 22 February 2013.
- 4 Quoted in Emek Shaveh, “Israel’s National Heritage Sites Project in the West Bank: Archaeological Importance and Political Significance,” 2012. Found at [www.alt-arch.org](http://www.alt-arch.org), accessed 28 February 2013.
- 5 Harriet Sherwood, “Israel unveils Herod’s archaeological treasures,” *The Guardian*, 12 February 2013.
- 6 Reid Singer, “Archaeologists Fear Their Work in Jerusalem May be Tainted by Settler Politics,” *BlouinArtinfo*, 29 November 2012. Found at [www.artinfo.com](http://www.artinfo.com).