

# JERUSALEM

*Caught in Time*



Colin Osman

Contents

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## Jerusalem: Caught in Time

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*James McDonald. The Dome of the Chain. 1864-5.*

The Dome of the Chain is a small dome that lies directly east of one door of the Dome of the Rock. Legend states that a chain once hung there which could not be grasped by anyone giving false testimony.

956.944203



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# MAP OF JERUSALEM



# Preface

Even though the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), from whose superb collections most of the photographs in this book are drawn, is firstly an archaeological society, archaeology is not the subject of this book. Nor does the book concern itself with politics or religion; rather, it is purely and simply about photography.

The PEF has provided us with a large and very fine collection which includes a great treasury of Ordnance Survey photographs. From 1864 to after 1880, Jerusalem, Palestine, Sinai and Transjordan were surveyed and mapped by the officers and men of the Royal Engineers, who received funding from the PEF. Along with the surveyors were two men, Sergeants McDonald and Phillips, who were seconded to photography. Between them they produced the first photographic survey of the Holy Land and a unique record of the country. In later years the survey was to be continued by such notables as Lieutenant Kitchener (who, it has to be said, was a better soldier than photographer) and a certain T. E. Lawrence, also better known for other activities.

The PEF was a part of the Victorian religious zeal that characterized British Protestant activity in the Holy Land at the end of the last century. Founded in 1865 with the aim of promoting research into the archaeology, manners and customs, topography, geology and natural sciences

of biblical Palestine, the PEF now has a history rich in association with the outstanding names of biblical exploration: Wilson, Warren, Conder, Kitchener of Khartoum, Schumacher, Petrie, Bliss, Macalister, Woolley, T. E. Lawrence, Garstang, Crowfoot and Kenyon. The projects on which they worked, such as Jerusalem (1868-9), the Survey of Western Palestine (1871-7), and many others, were commissioned by the PEF and have become famous landmarks in the history of biblical archaeology and the exploration of the Holy Land. The comments of Dame Kathleen Kenyon in her book of personal excavations in the 1950s, *Digging Up Jerusalem*, sums it up well:

‘The middle years of the nineteenth century constituted a period in which the great civilizations of Western Asia were being revealed by the spade of the archaeologist and the interest aroused was very great ... It was in this climate of excitement at the revelation of remains contemporary with the Biblical record of the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel that the Palestine Exploration Fund came into existence ... The objects of the Fund were the “accurate and systematic investigation of the archaeology, the topography, the geology and physical geography, the manners and customs of the Holy Land for Biblical Illustration.”’

Note the importance of the last words ‘for

Biblical Illustration', these should be taken literally. The first committee included an archbishop, four bishops, four deans, two dukes, three earls, three other peers and the Speaker of the House of Commons, not to mention the fact that Queen Victoria was the patron! No wonder they obtained the services not only of the best archaeologists but also the best photographers.

The leading British political figure for 21 of the years that will be covered in this book was Consul James Finn. His task was primarily to look after British subjects but it was government policy to extend Protected Status to Jews who did not have consular representatives in Palestine. That he did this difficult job well is evidenced by the fact that when he was removed from his position, every single rabbi in Jerusalem petitioned Queen Victoria to have him sent back. His wife was very interested in charitable works and outlived her husband by some forty years. She had a keen interest in photography, and though she seems to have taken little active part in it herself, she did own a camera which she loaned to a number of photographers, most notably Mendel Diness, who went on to make a significant contribution to Palestine photography. Mrs Finn also collected

photographs and left her collection to the PEF. She was collecting at a time when no one else was and her contribution to the PEF archives is therefore quite unique.

While archaeological photographs were being sent back to PEF headquarters in London, so other sources of topographical photographs were being added to the archive. Some came from commercial studios but others from enthusiastic amateurs. One such example is James Graham, a brilliant pioneer photographer who was also the local secretary of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews.

Some of the most prolific commercial photographers of later decades were the Zangaki brothers of Port Said, and the PEF received the only known negatives of theirs as part of a donation from an unidentified German in Sussex. He gave his photo collection to a local museum that did not know what to do with them, but they were eventually passed to the PEF who realized their importance.

Another contribution came from John Shaw Smith who, although born in England, lived his life in Ireland. He made a long trip through Egypt, Sinai, Petra and the Holy Land with his wife, who recorded their travels in a diary. He



made early calotypes of his photographs but very few prints were made and, many years after his death, the original prints and negatives were sold to an American university. However, his daughter had modern prints made from the negatives and presented these to the PEF.

Another important source of photographs for this book was the magazine of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews (which utilized the confusing acronym of LJS – the London Jews Society), *The Jerusalem Intelligencia* (called *The Jerusalem Missionary Intelligencia*, or *JMI*, in its heyday). Conversion was one of the Society's aims, but it also founded hospitals and schools which were open to all religions.

The missionaries shared with other evangelists the desire to use images to authenticate the Bible stories. Initially, the magazine, founded in 1835, was illustrated with engravings. It then used engravings made from photographs and then finally, from 1889, half-tone photographs. The monthly issues published in 1904 contained 73 photographs of Palestine. Photographs came from many sources but the *JMI* had three regular 'staff' photographers – Reverend G. Robinson Lees, Reverend Canon J. E. Hanauer and the

layman Charles A. Hornstein. (The latter was Jerusalem-born and perhaps the best photographer of the three.)

My choice from this large and disparate archive has been governed by two ideas. The first was the necessity for good images. Even good photographers have their off-days and fame is therefore no guarantee of inclusion in this book. Secondly, and related to the first notion, was the idea of seeking out less familiar photographers and their less familiar images. Too many histories of photography have concentrated on a handful of individuals, whilst ignoring all others.

In taking advantage of the broad spectrum of the PEF collection, I hope to give a truer picture of photography in Jerusalem than is generally perceived.

COLIN OSMAN  
*London, 1999*

*James McDonald.*  
*General view of the city from the north.*  
James McDonald was a Colour Sergeant with the Royal Engineers who from 1864–5 photographed land being surveyed by his companions. This panorama taken from the north shows the bleakness outside the city walls.





*James Robertson and Felice Beato. St Stephen's Gate. 1857.*

The eastern gate leading to the Mount of Olives, and the real start of the Via Dolorosa. Known to non-Christians as the Lion's Gate because it is said that Sulaiman the Magnificent decided to re-build the city walls after a bad dream about lions.

# Introduction

The invention of photography in 1839 occurred almost simultaneously in France and Britain. In France, the daguerreotype was a silvered metal image which was unique and could only be reproduced indirectly as an engraving. The earliest photographers in the Near East were the French daguerrotypists Jacques Ittier, Pierre Joly de Lotbinière, Horace Vernet and Hector Horeau, but because their images had to be reproduced as engravings, their work falls outside the scope of this book. The British process was the Talbotype or calotype, invented by William Fox Talbot, an English gentleman scholar. His process produced negatives from which multiple pictures could be made and it is therefore the parent of all modern systems. His negative was ordinary good-quality writing paper sensitized and sometimes made transparent by waxing. Calotype paper cannot be compared with modern emulsions. Each sheet was individually coated by the photographer to his own formula, exposed in a camera with no aperture marks, and then developed by inspection, with the photographer again using his own formula. Yet it was the system used by countless amateurs and produced wonderful atmospheric prints. It was to reign supreme until overtaken by the Scott Archer wet collodion process, first seen in Israel on Francis Frith's first trip in 1856.

The wet collodion negatives were coated on

glass and could obviously produce images in much greater detail than the paper negatives. When Francis Frith made his mammoth 16 x 20 inch negatives he produced images that are among the glories of photography. The drawback was that the wet collodion negative actually was wet. A glass plate was coated with wet collodion in a darkroom tent set up beside the camera. It was transferred while still wet to the camera and exposed and then, before it dried, transferred back to the darkroom tent to be developed on the spot. The disadvantages were obvious and many amateurs were slow to abandon the waxed calotypes which could be prepared days or weeks in advance. Even more important was the simple fact that not only was the prepared calotype paper a mere fraction of the weight of the wet collodion glass plate, but it was also unbreakable.

The wet process was to give way in its turn to the dry collodion process, the forerunner of all present-day processes. It came into general use about 1875 and swept the field commercially. Plates could be prepared in advance and developed at leisure. There were some disadvantages: the definition was slightly below the wet process but still far in advance of the calotype. It was also slower than the wet process.

To get some idea of the time involved in taking photographs at the end of the nineteenth

century, it is first necessary to consider the speed of photography today. A modern film today is 100 ASA for definition and 400 ASA for indoor use. In Israel today a 100 ASA film might require  $\frac{1}{250}$  of a second exposure at an aperture of *f*11. Given all the processes involved, nineteenth-century calotype exposures could take anything from one second to an incredible two minutes. Even this was faster than the daguerreotype which could take as long as twenty minutes, thus requiring the well-known head clamp for portraits. Compared to the calotype, the wet collodion process allowed much faster exposures – often four to five seconds and on occasion even as little as  $\frac{1}{25}$  of a second – so instantaneous photographs were possible, even though the problems of manipulating the wet plates were huge. The comparison of film sensitivity was made even more complicated by the fact that after development wet collodion plates usually needed a further chemical treatment to intensify the image. However, the quality of the best of them was superb and even recently the wet process was used in the printing industry because of the high definition obtainable. The later dry collodion process was far easier to operate but was about six times slower than the wet equivalent, so instantaneous photography again became more difficult. The views were not changed by the slower exposure – except that the leaves of the trees became blurry when the wind blew, and the patient donkeys lost their swishing tails. Portraits remained the same – stilted and stationary.

The positive material for making the prints, albumen-coated paper, had been machine-coated in factories even in the 1860s when negatives were

still being hand-coated by the photographer. The improvement in negative material was paralleled by improvements in lens design. The 1886 Rapid Rectilinear lens was a great step forward for exposure times and absence of distortion. The old cameras had no shutters; instead, the lens cap was removed while the photographer counted the seconds. Shutters were now needed for exposures measured in fractions of a second. The biggest change came in 1871 with the development of gelatino-bromide emulsions. These were factory-produced, had a shelf-life of months, even years, and were more sensitive to light. Even if they were still slow by today's standards, they were at least comparable to the materials of today. They were no longer developed by inspection but in darkness, by time and temperature, and the chemicals were often pre-packed in factories. The gelatino-bromide emulsions were exported from factories in Britain, France and Germany and perhaps this partly explains the rise of photographers in Port Said during the 1870s. The commercial market was to be dominated by two of these: Hippolyte Arnoux, who had a floating darkroom on the Suez Canal; and the Zangaki Brothers, whose horse-drawn mobile darkroom can be seen in many of their pictures. Arnoux seems not to have gone north of Port Said but the Zangakis certainly did on what seems to have been an extended tour.

Alexandria as a city on the direct steam boat route to the Holy Land provided a base for many photographers of the area. It was certainly the base from which Luigi Fiorillo made a single tour and it was also a calling place for other visiting



*American Colony Photographer. Grotto of Jeremiah and Gordon's Calvary. c. 1900.*  
 This photograph shows Gordon's Calvary and the adjacent Grotto of Jeremiah. It is the skull-like resemblance to the 'Place of the Skull' (Luke 23: 33) that first led Gordon to his hypothesis.

photographers including Francis Frith and Francis Bedford. The favoured port for those visiting the Holy Land was Beirut, home of the great Bonfils company and of Tancredè Dumas, who became the official photographer to the American Palestine Exploration Society.

The availability and marketing of photographs in Jerusalem was in rather sharp contrast to other areas. Constantinople was a centre for photography and, over the years, thirty photographic studios appeared, many of them in La

Grande Rue de Pera. Their largest trade was probably Turkish costume portraits, a tourist favourite. Few photographers ventured beyond their home town. In contrast to Egypt, which had a thriving tourist trade with every Nile boat or hotel lobby thronging with print sellers and shops for the more leisurely buyers, Jerusalem had few hotels and print shops; the latter were also souvenir shops. Frederick Vester is listed in Black's Guide of 1912 as a photographic print seller, and also as a seller of curios, souvenirs, olive wood carvings,

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*Bazaar beside David's Tower*

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