

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN HOLY LAND



In the absence of the bodies of Christ and Mary, architecture took on a special representational role during the Christian Middle Ages, marking out sites associated with bodily presence of the dominant figures of the religion. Throughout this period, buildings were reinterpreted in relation to the mediating role of textual and pictorial representations that shaped the pilgrimage experience across expansive geographies. In this study, Kathryn Blair Moore challenges fundamental ideas within architectural history regarding the origins and significance of European re-creations of buildings in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth. From these conceptual foundations, she traces and reinterprets the significance of the architecture of the Holy Land within changing religious and political contexts, from the First Crusade and the emergence of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land to the anti-Islamic crusade movements of the Renaissance, as well as the Reformation.

Kathryn Blair Moore teaches medieval and Renaissance art history at Texas State University. She received her art historical training at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Fellowships and grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Academy in Rome, and the University of Hong Kong (where she previously taught) have supported extensive research throughout Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa. Her scholarly work explores the intersection of architectural, pictorial, and textual cultures, with a particular emphasis upon larger religious and political contexts, from pilgrimage to religious wars, that shaped the experience of buildings across Europe and the Mediterranean world.

THE
ARCHITECTURE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN
HOLY LAND

Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance



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For Barbara Carter, who taught me Latin, Mary O'Brien, who
taught me close reading, Paul Barolsky, who taught me close
looking, Marvin Trachtenberg, who taught me critical thinking,
and my parents, who taught me in the first place

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PREFACE



This book is about a group of buildings located in the modern countries of Israel, Syria, and Egypt that have motivated countless pilgrims to cross continents and seas and have inspired cataclysmic wars and territorial disputes whose effects reverberate through the present day. And yet why and how these buildings that collectively make up the sacred architecture of the Christian Holy Land first emerged as significant symbolic entities remains surprisingly unexplored. Certainly the traditional building histories of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem or the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, for example, have been told and carefully weighed against archaeological evidence. This study, however, is not conceived as a traditional history of the lives of buildings, but instead proposes to consider how this group of buildings first entered the European imaginary, especially by means of the generative capacity of language, and how symbolic actions of appropriation, re-creation, and destruction came to impinge upon the physical reality of these buildings in the Holy Land.

Since their first creation in the period of Christianity's legalization under Constantine (i.e., in the fourth century AD), the buildings that came to shape the Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land have existed in a charged conceptual space formed out of the opposing impulses of re-creation and destruction. Within this dynamic space the relationships between Judaism, Roman paganism, Christianity, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism have been defined through symbolic acts of architectural re-creation or

destruction, which either reiterated or foreshadowed physical acts. The large historical scope of this book allows us, on the one hand, to trace the differing uses of representational media, from textual description and hand-made drawing to printed images and physical re-creations, in the negotiation of relationships between imaginary and real space, and, on the other hand, to see significant relationships between real buildings across expansive geographies. For example, physical re-creations of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or the Way of the Cross constructed in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, whether in Catholic parts of Italy, Spain, Germany, or the New World, can be seen as engaging with an opposing destructive tendency, which led to the dismantling of similar buildings as part of the Protestant reform movements, or the parallel symbolic erasure of the Christian pilgrimage buildings in maps of the Holy Land published in bibles in the Protestant North. Currently, there are attempts to rewrite the history of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as a purely Islamic structure with no relation to the historical Jewish Temple; in opposition to this are calls for the destruction of the Dome of the Rock and the restoration of the Jewish Temple that have been symbolically enacted in various media, from computer simulations of the Temple to a theme park exhibit in Orlando, Florida. A millennium earlier, in the eleventh century, calls to unite European Christians to take Jerusalem from the Muslim agents of the Antichrist – as they were characterized – engaged with a symbolic act of architectural appropriation and re-creation, by

which the Dome of the Rock was represented in sermons and texts as a Christian building perversely transgressed by Muslims. At the same time, would-be crusaders rallied around the idea of protecting the site of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, whose architecture had recently been destroyed by Muslims. The construction of churches dedicated to the Holy Sepulcher throughout eleventh-century Europe enacted a symbolic reconstruction of the building in Jerusalem, pointing to a future possession of the city and its sacred architecture.

This dynamic tension between re-creation and destruction can be extended back to the first formation of the Christian architecture of the Holy Land in the time of Constantine. The initial creation of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher entailed the dismantling of a pagan Roman temple reportedly dedicated to Venus, whose stones and columns were reused in the new Christian building; the empty Tomb and inscribing Rotunda of the Christian church initiated a new potential symbolic life for architecture, inscribing not an idol but an empty space standing for the absent body of Christ. The apparently anti-idolatrous nature of European churches dedicated to the Tomb of Christ may have been significant in the context of their first creation, as part of missionary activities of the ninth and tenth centuries. From another perspective, we might consider how the symbolic life of the architecture of the Christian Holy Land was at the same time a reaction to the Islamic possession of the region, from the seventh century. The first significant representation of the architecture of the Holy Land as a collective entity was created when Christianity was challenged by the new religion of Islam that denied the divine status of Christ. It took the form of an illustrated book, with descriptions of the features of those distant buildings, related – by the monastic author, Adomnán of Iona – to the primary material traces characterized as testaments to the divinity of Christ. The ground-plans of the sacred buildings defined the contours of the Christian Holy Land at a moment when Islam threatened the Christian identity of the territory. The buildings were imagined as enclosing sanctifying inscriptions, and by extension as composed of inscriptional forms, marking out sites of theophany – where God's presence on earth had been revealed.

Adomnán's book was composed around the end of the seventh century and would circulate throughout Europe in numerous manuscript copies in the following centuries, and then would take on a renewed life in printed books of the early modern period. Significantly, the moment of the book's creation intersected with the construction of the Dome of the Rock over the ruins of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock encapsulated the Islamic challenge to Christianity's presence in the Holy Land, by competitively appropriating architectural forms associated with Christ and Mary in and around Jerusalem. When the crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099, motivated by the recent Islamic destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, they took over the Dome of the Rock and transformed it into a church. From that moment, the building would become central to the Christian conception of the sacred architecture of the Holy Land, and its representation in succeeding centuries would visually articulate the intentions of new crusading movements that hoped to restore Christian possession of Jerusalem's Temple. The overall conception of what constituted the architecture of the Christian Holy Land therefore significantly changed over the centuries, reflecting how the Christian identity of the Holy Land was repeatedly redefined in opposition to Islam.

Studies of the symbolic significance of the architecture of the Holy Land have in the past focused upon the relationship between Christianity and its antecedent religions, Judaism and Roman paganism. The relative absence of attention to the relationship of Christianity to Islam as it informed the fundamental notions of the sanctity of the architecture of the Holy Land could be seen as a product of the history traced here. This book attempts – as much as may be possible – to disregard conceptual boundaries that divide studies of Jerusalem's architecture along religious and national lines. The study also attempts to disregard assumptions about period divisions, particularly between the medieval and Renaissance periods, as well also as geographical boundaries that tend to divide southern from northern Europe, for example. The idea of the architecture of Jerusalem was, and continues to be, both deeply divisive and unifying, and the full implications of this paradox

can only be appreciated with a broad perspective. Although the primary focus of this book is the millennium stretching from the seventh through the seventeenth centuries, the renewed interest in the architecture of the Holy Land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will be discussed in the Epilogue.

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ABBREVIATIONS



BAP	Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris	BSB	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome	BSN	Bibliothèque du Séminaire, Namur
BCR	Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome	CCC	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
BL	British Library, London	KB	Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague
BLK	Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe	NYPL	New York Public Library, New York
BLO	Bodleian Library, Oxford	ÖNB	Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna
BML	Bibliothèque Municipale, Laon	QCO	Queen's College, Oxford
BMV	Biblioteca Marciana, Venice	SB	Stiftsbibliothek, St. Gall
BNCF	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence	VBM	Valenciennes Bibliothèque Municipale
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris	ZB	Zentralbibliothek, Zurich
BRB	Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels		
BRT	Biblioteca Reale, Turin		