

CONFLICT IN CITIES AND THE CONTESTED STATE

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Divided Cities/Contested States

Working Paper No. 6, 2008

Jerusalem's 'City of David': The Politicisation of Urban Heritage

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Conflict in Cities and the Contested State: Everyday life and the possibilities for transformation in Belfast, Jerusalem and other divided cities UK Economic and Social Research Council Large Grants Scheme, RES-060-25-0015, 2007-2012.

Divided Cities/Contested States Working Paper Series

www.conflictincities.org/workingpapers.html

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Editorial note

This working paper relates directly to Research Module J2 - 'Holy Places, Holy City '. It offers a detailed study of the use of urban design in the politicisation of heritage stewardship in the 'historical basin' of Jerusalem.

Biographical note

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Jerusalem's 'City of David': The Politicisation of Urban Heritage

Wendy Pullan and Max Gwiazda

ABSTRACT

This paper explores Israeli settlers' ideological and physical uses of heritage sites in the 'Historical Basin' of Jerusalem. It focuses on the 'City of David' archaeological park, at the foot of the Old City, as a prime example of far right settler associations' increasing influence over the transformation of Jerusalem's dense topography of historic sites. It investigates how the settler organisation El-Ad uses a wide array of tourist and heritage practices as ways of extending the infrastructure of expropriation and occupation in East Jerusalem. The 'City of David' highlights how the instrumentalisation of varied architectural and visual resources are critical to settler's exclusivist and antagonistic heritage stewardship.

Keywords: Jerusalem; heritage; archaeology; ethno-centrism

Introduction

This paper explores how Jewish-Israeli ultranationalist organisations use archaeology and heritage representations as mechanisms of settlement in East Jerusalem. The 'City of David' archaeological park just south of the Old City is the focus of this study, as it represents a leading instance in the growing significance both of far right settlers in Jerusalem and the impact of their heritage stewardship on the city's wider urban conditions. The role of archaeological heritage in laying ethno-national conflicts has a long history in Israel/Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East and has been the subject of a growing academic literature (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1997a, b; Masalha 2007; Meskell 1998; Scham 2001; Silberman 1982; Silberman and Small 1997; Trigger 1984). The much cited study by Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground* (2001), has done most to advance our understanding of the uses of archaeological practice in the formation of a secular Jewish Israeli colonial-national identity and the claims to territory it has served to instate. This paper complements these existing studies by highlighting the politicisation of archaeological heritage in the ongoing settlement and urban redesign of East Jerusalem, specifically through the influence of ultranationalist religious settler associations.¹ The aim is to analyse the increasing importance of heritage as a key factor in rising religious nationalism in Israel/Palestine. Moreover, while archaeological practice has played a key role in this phenomenon,² this paper emphasises how archaeology has been manipulated by heritage practices in the public presentation of

excavations in Jerusalem and draws attention to the importance of the visual design strategies mobilised to this end, leading to a distinctive form of what has recently been termed 'heritage manufacturing' (AlSayyad 2001). As we argue in relation to the 'City of David', it is the takeover of heritage stewardship by a radical settler group in the past fifteen years, and not the hundred fifty years of preceding archaeological work there, which has turned the site into a hotspot of ethno-national conflicts in divided Jerusalem. It is the damaging combination of stewardship of archaeological heritage with urban design, which remains to be studied in greater depth in relation to settlement activity in Jerusalem.³

Heritage here is treated as a problem chiefly of representation and the contesting interpretations of the past in the light of contemporary concerns (Graham et al. 2000; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). As David Lowenthal (1996) has argued persuasively, fabrication is integral to all forms of heritage representation; the concern here is to study the visual and design resources employed in the settlers' heritage fabrications and constructed meanings (Mitchell 2002), and assess their impact on the urban landscape. The paper analyses connections with particular spaces generated by this practice in connection with widespread phenomena of the commodification of heritage sites, nationalist, exclusionary representations of heritage and their varying spatial registers and ramifications. These dynamics are to be found globally, yet as Arjun Appadurai has noted (2001), the particular 'layering' in concrete places, both physical and imagined, as well as the specific relationships between local, national and global dynamics play out differently from case to case and need to be studied as such.

El-Ad's heritage stewardship needs to be seen in relation to the overall pattern of settlement activity in East Jerusalem. Since Jerusalem became 'negotiable' in Camp David II in 2000 (Albin 2005), the stakes for settlers operating in East Jerusalem have risen considerably. The Israeli far right has responded to the uncertainty surrounding Jerusalem's future through intensified, unilateral settlement expansion aiming to make a re-division of the city impossible by fragmenting Palestinian areas and establishing contiguity between settler-controlled sites. It is possible to distinguish between two interrelated yet distinctive arenas within the overall focus of this settlement activity. We can speak of an 'outer' and an 'inner' ring of settlements. The outer ring is made of the newly built, large suburban settlements and their support infrastructure, such as French Hill and Gilo, officially planned soon after 1967 and built from the early 1970s on the metropolitan periphery of the municipal borders expanded into the West bank in

1967 (Weizman 2007). The 'inner ring' consists of the Old City and its bordering Palestinian neighbourhoods enclosed topographically by the surrounding hills; apart from the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter, settlement activities here began in the 1980s and have focused on taking over and re-configuring existing built fabric (Dumper 2002). This area around the Old City is commonly referred to as the 'historic basin', a term central to Israeli planning in Jerusalem. The area of the basin is defined by its visual connections to the Old City walls understood to hold special 'historical, architectural and landscape values' (Sharon 1973). The degree to which El-Ad will succeed in transforming the character and settlement pattern of areas like Silwan, situated in the heart of the historic basin, could have a significant impact on future negotiations over the city.

1. The construction of a national monument: from excavation pit to 'City of David'

The 'City of David' archaeological park is located in Palestinian East Jerusalem. To Palestinians the area is known as Wadi Hilwa, a neighbourhood of the urbanised village of Silwan. Wadi Hilwa lies on a steep, narrow triangular shaped hill perched between the Kidron Valley to the East and the Tyropean Valley to the West. The Palestinian population of the modern neighbourhood of Silwan, which stretches on both sides of the Kidron valley's slopes, is estimated to around sixteen thousand (Khamaisi et al. 2007)⁴ against about seventy families of Jewish settlers, estimated at over hundred people (2008b). Wadi Hilwa has been renamed the 'City of David' (*Ir David* in Hebrew) by Israelis, as archaeological evidence indicates that it is the earliest site of settlement, and therefore the city, which according the Hebrew Bible, King David conquered and turned into his capital of a united kingdom in 1000 BC, inaugurating what is considered a unique Golden Age in Jewish history (Cahill and Tarler 2000; Finkelstein and Silberman 2002). To Christians it is the site of one of Christ's miracles, the Siloam pool, where Jesus returned sight to a blind man. From the Palestinian point of view, on the other hand, the City of David is an area which belongs to Silwan, which is one of Jerusalem's oldest villages with a very long tradition of Arab habitation (Ben-Arieh 1986; Kark and Oren-Nordheim 2001; Le Strange 1890),⁵ as well as a modern Palestinian neighbourhood, which continuous to grow rapidly today.

Despite its claim as the site of the primordial Israelite capital, the popular idea of the 'City of David' is a remarkably recent phenomenon. The last fifteen years or so have effectively witnessed the transformation of a patchwork of excavations pits into a rapidly expanding archaeological park and religious settlement; The City of David is in the process of establishing itself as a major Israeli national monument and one of Jerusalem's leading tourist attractions, drawing in 350,000 visitors in 2007 from only 25,000 in 2001 (Green 2008).

Following the annexation of East Jerusalem after the 1967 war twelve areas of a total of four thousand square meters were declared state lands and slated for excavations. Israeli archaeology in Silwan followed from over a century of successive Western excavations, which had continued through Jordanian rule 1948-67 under the British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon; from the beginning the focus remained almost exclusively on the biblical period (Geva 1993). From 1978-85, Israeli archaeologists identified evidence of twenty-one strata dating from the Chalcolithic period in the fourth millennium BC, right through to the late medieval period in the fifteenth century AD, focusing again on evidence which may be ascribed to events and sites mentioned in the Hebrew bible (Cahill and Tarler 2000). Yet, despite its archaeological importance, the 'City of David' area remained relatively obscure sporadically visited by Israelis or tourists. In fact, the 'City of David' was known primarily among the wider public as a hotspot in the violent controversy between secular Israeli archaeologists defending their right to pursue 'scientific' research against attacks by the ultra-orthodox community opposing the potential desecration of Jewish tombs (Abu El-Haj 2001; Hallote and Joffe 2002). Archaeology and heritage were not yet at the core of the ethno-national tensions in Silwan. Rafi Greenberg, an archaeologist participating in excavations of this period, described the relationship with the residents of Silwan during this period in the following terms: 'understanding was reached with the Palestinians residing near the excavation areas: houses and plots were rented for the duration of the season and there was a degree of friendly – if almost entirely commercial – interaction' (Greenberg 2007).⁶

This site's obscurity did not change significantly after the municipality opened two archaeological sites to the public in 1985, then under the management of the East Jerusalem Development Company. With the onset of the first Intifada, in which Silwanese were known to play an active role, Israeli and tourist visitor numbers dropped sharply and further plans for excavations and park design were temporarily abandoned; the area was no longer considered safe (Killebrew 1999).⁷

It is at this point that a small, private, non-for-profit organisation called El-Ad, took the initiative and filled the vacuum left by the municipality's withdrawal. El-Ad is the Hebrew acronym for 'To the City of David'. Today El-Ad manages and exercises tight control over the park, excavations areas and Jewish settlement. The Palestinian think-tank, PASSIA, estimates that El-Ad's control extends to about fifty to fifty-five percent of the land of what they consider belonging to the 'City of David' (2007a); the official limits of the park are quite consciously left ill defined. While there is a visitor centre there are no visual indications demarcating where the park ultimately begins and ends. Settlers' land claims are based on a combination of limited purchases from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Shragai 2004) and further purchases after 1967,⁸ as well as a series of contested expropriations that have been de facto handed over to El-Ad through complex channels involving a number of state authorities and public organisations in the past twenty years (Margalit 2005; Rapoport 2006). The primary claim is, however, based on the unique biblical significance of the site and the need to salvage its archaeological remains, for which El-Ad has taken quasi-exclusive responsibility.

In terms of modern representations of heritage it is in many respects unsurprising that the promotion of the concept of the 'City of David' has been so successful. It contains many of the most potent ingredients of national heritage, catering tangibly to widespread modern fascinations with origins, antiquity, a nation's glorious past, ethnic continuity (Graham et al. 2000; Lowenthal 1996; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) and the issue of precedence, of 'who was here first', a motif of particular emotional and political poignancy in Israel/Palestine (Scham 2001).

2. The rise of 'The Republic El-Ad'

The settler group El-Ad has taken a leading role in constructing and propagating the popular notion of the 'City of David'. While a small group of critical Israeli archaeologists (Greenberg 2007), as well as members of the local Palestinian community (Green 2008) have made efforts to counter El-Ad's monopolisation of the site,⁹ the radical settler group remains the hegemonic agent in reaching the public and transforming the physical reality of the ground. This development is one of the most powerful current examples of a trend evident since the mid-1980s, which has witnessed the steady consolidation of the settlers' position in Jerusalem's historic basin and the acceptance of their basic aims as

mainstream policies within the Israeli political establishment (Dumper 2002). El-Ad was founded in 1986 with the explicit goal of settling Jews in Silwan, which they understand to be the work of 'returning' the land to the Jewish people. El-Ad is inspired by and has direct connections with Gush Emunim ('bloc of faithful'), the principal force at the heart of the settler movement in the West Bank. A key dimension of settlers' ideology is their neo-fundamentalist, quasi-exclusive focus on territorial sacredness (Sprinzak 1991). The settlers' ultimate goal is to redeem the Land of Israel by returning it to the Jewish people. Reclaiming the Land hastens (and is the pre-condition for) the coming of the Messiah, which will require the rebuilding of the Third Temple in the site of the Dome of the Rock on the Haram esh Sharif / Temple Mount (Dumper 2002; Gorenberg 2000; Lustick 1988).¹⁰ The close proximity of the 'City of David' to the Temple Mount, as well as Silwan's status as a Palestinian neighbourhood has insured that the area is a prime target in the 'Judaization' of Jerusalem by settlers and the right wing establishment (Margalit 2005).

Like Gush Emunim, far right settlers in Jerusalem combine ideological rigidity with a modern, pragmatic and action-based political outlook, which draws as much on intense and highly successful lobbying of the political establishment, as on resorting to illicit and violent actions (Sprinzak 1991).¹¹ The overarching territorial goal of the settler associations in Jerusalem is to achieve spatial contiguity between different settler sites in city, with a particular focus on creating Jewish controlled connections to and from the Wailing Wall and Jewish Quarter area.¹² The related fragmentation of Palestinian neighbourhood serves the further goal of making any type of re-division of Jerusalem impossible (Dumper 2002; Margalit 2005).¹³

An important change from previous settler operations in around the Old City is El-Ad's proactive heritage stewardship. In Silwan El-Ad has pursued its settlement agenda principally through exploiting changes in Israeli heritage and tourist policies. Right from the outset El-Ad has sought to reshape the presentation of heritage sites on an urban scale and co-determine their public reception. The reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter and the creation of the Western Wall Plaza after 1967, for example, were conceived on the basis of an essentially secular ideology, and only subsequently fell under the increasing control of the ultra-orthodox (Ricca 2007). While El-Ad purchased its first houses in Silwan 1991,¹⁴ the decisive turning point came in the mid-1990s when the Israel Nature and Public Parks Protection Authority subcontracted El-Ad to run the 'Jerusalem city walls' park of which the 'City of David' is a part. El-Ad's 'coup' in Silwan

fully exploited the privatisation policies of the Likud government's in the 1980s (Jones and Murphy 2002). El-Ad's heavy emphasis on tourism testifies to their successful adaptation to the shift in policies of the Israel Antiquities Authority since 1990 from research-driven archaeology to large-scale excavations for tourist development (Killebrew 1999; Silberman 1991; Silberman and Small 1997).¹⁵ Global trends toward disneyfication in heritage management, increasingly prominent in Israel and in Jerusalem in particular (Wharton 2006)¹⁶ are clearly evident in 'The City of David'. This comes to the fore in El-Ad's emphasis on a single concept, the general sense of adventure in its multi-media in virtual reconstructions with little historical or archaeological basis,¹⁷ prop like designs at the visitor centre like King David's lyre and the general concern for easy consumption and avoidance of all difficulty or complexity (Urry 1994, 2002).

El-Ad has built up a diverse political and financial support network to sustain its control over parts of Silwan, which is largely similar to those of other settler groups active in the historic basin, such as Ateret Cohanim and Beit Orot (Margalit 2005).¹⁸ Within the public administration, El-Ad has received active, coordinated support from the Israel Lands Administration, the Jewish National Fund, the Office of the Custodian of Absentee Property, the Ministry of Housing and Construction, the Ministry of Tourism, the National Police and members of the Municipal Council (Rapoport 2006; Rapoport 2008b, c). Through a direct allocation of public funds El-Ad, along with the other settlers of the Old City are also provided the services of an elite unit of private security firm (2007b; 2008a). In the private sector, El-Ad benefits from extensive funding from a number of Israeli companies and foreign donors (Margalit 2005; Rapoport 2007); this allows them to commission, fund and effectively control all archaeological work conducted in Silwan.¹⁹ The settlers' support network is to some extent inter-personal, based more on shared tactics and a common ideology or occasional common practical goals than a clear hierarchy or stable political relationships. Their operations and institutional relationships are opportunistic, pragmatic and quite deliberately shrouded in secrecy (Dumper 2002; Sprinzak 1991). Like other settler groups in historic basin, El-Ad takes considerable advantage from partisan planning policies and practice in Jerusalem, which is carried in highly secretive and un-transparent manner involving national, as much as municipal decision-makers (Cheshin et al. 1999). To what extent El-Ad with open or hidden agendas of policy-makers is difficult to establish because of the very secrecy and complexity of the planning process. What is clear and of principal concern for this paper, however, is that El-Ad acts is allowed to pursue its heritage management with a large

degree of impunity, and that they are looking to appeal to a much a wider public, both national and international, than that of their own far right settler milieu. El-Ad benefits from considerable state support, at the same time as Israeli legal rulings that have gone against the settlers are generally not acted upon by authorities (Rapoport 2008b). The two remaining sections of the paper explores the visual strategies employed in El-Ad's representations, their intended audiences and their impact on the urban fabric of the historic basin. The urban development that engendered by these strategies is clearly consistent with, and to some extent an extreme case of what has been termed the 'ethnographic' logic (Yiftachel 2006; Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003) of Israeli planning.

3. Actualising the neo-biblical narrative

El-Ad's presentation of the park to visitors is animated by a single underlying narrative intention. It presents a tale of David's glorious conquest of Jerusalem, the establishment of the city as the unique religious and political centre of a united monarchy and a vast empire. In both the film and the website El-Ad tacitly implies that the current 'revitalisation' of the area and its active settlement represents a sort of rebirth of this golden age. This narrative is clearly instrumentalising the Zionist pedagogic traditions of going back to the 1930s and culminating in the government policies of the 1960s and 70s during which archaeology was promoted as a kind of civic religion (Abu El-Haj 2001; Zerubavel 1995).²⁰ The encounter with the physical evidence of Jews' intimate and age-old ties to the land was meant to bind together a society made up in large part of heterogeneous immigrant communities (Elon 1997).²¹ Through the unprecedented control over large parts of an entire Palestinian neighbourhood in the historic basin by a private settler association, El-Ad has assumed a leading role in settlers' longstanding goal of inscribing their sites outside the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall plaza into Israeli society's historical imagination, as major religious and national sites (Dumper 2002).²² El-Ad's international director of development, Doron Spielman conveys the simple essence of the particular excitement his organisation seeks to instil in the visitors, even beyond the nationalist basis of their narrative: 'this is a biblical Disney World that's actually real. ... You can touch the stones. You can touch the texts. And you can [almost] see the people in front of you. [King] David walks with you through this tour'.²³ What is of particular concern in this paper is the element of 'amnesia', belonging to this tradition, which gains particular force in El-Ad's reworking of the meaning of Silwan. Alternative or pluralistic narratives are discarded entirely as we in this section. These

narrative intentions in many respects reveal themselves most clearly in, and to a large extent are reliant upon, the different visual registers employed in El-Ad's presentation of the site. They also constitute the most significant factor in terms of their urban implications.

The efficacy of the visual techniques is as much based on where they are used as where they remain conspicuously absent. Throughout the park there is a minimal use and distribution of signposts or panels with explanatory text, which would offer historical background on, or even basic identification of, archaeological sites and findings. The existing indications are not even sufficient to offer orientation within the paths through the park; the independent visitor is effectively left to her or his own devices and whatever information can be taken from the single brochure provided in multiple languages by El-Ad. The map of the park within the brochure is characteristically ambiguous; despite its level of detail it is only partly accurate and in many ways misleading, yet indicative of El-Ad's own representational intentions. The plan paints an idealised vision of the park and settlement based on a selective inclusion of existing realities on the ground, as well as projecting an imagined architectural homogeneity and topographic evenness conveyed through the water-colour quality of the drawing. The number and density of Palestinian houses within and bordering the park are grossly understated despite the purported architectural and topographic detail of the map; the extent to which it deliberately falsifies the experienced urban character of Silwan and the stark oppositions embedded within its topography is discussed in the final part of the paper.

In its presentation of the site, El-Ad relies heavily on highly selective storytelling, mediated in the film shown in the cinema of the visitor centre, and by the well-trained El-Ad staff (Yas 2000). El-Ad clearly monopolises the narrative, perfectly aware that the archaeological sites hardly speak for themselves. El-Ad's strategy here is effectively a culmination of the wider collective amnesia, which the popularisation of archaeology has served to engender in the Israeli historical imagination, whereby events of two thousand years ago are remembered more vividly than everything that happened between then and the present. This is particularly evident in the interactive timelines of El-Ad's website, where one can shift exclusively from the biblical 'then' which ends with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 BC to the neo-biblical 'now', which El-Ad begins with the Yemenite settlement of the 1880s.²⁴ The scroll function on the timeline presents what would historically be the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and most dramatically 1400 years of Islamic culture and rule over Jerusalem as a momentary flash, which gets

no visual or narrative mention whatsoever.²⁵ It is needless to say that El-Ad's timeline is selective to the point of delusion, and contrasts sharply with the diverse strata Israeli archaeologists have uncovered in their excavations in 1978-85. At the end of the film shown at the visitor cinema, the narrator exclaims: 'now, after two thousand years, children play again in the streets of the City of David'; implying that centuries of Arab children playing in the streets of Silwan is simply not real, as if it never bore any relationship to the place. This particular strategy of forgetting, here expresses itself as a radical form of 'repressive erasure' (Connerton 2008).

El-Ad treats the real places of Palestinian life, which surround their settlement as temporary glitch or illusion in the face of the exclusive religious-national content of the site. This covert blanking out of Palestinian history, present and future exemplifies the difference that David Lowenthal (1996) has drawn between history and heritage, the latter tending to clarify and ascertain present purposes in conscious avoidance of the opaque, pluralist difficulties raised by the former. El-Ad's particular tie to its present settlement activity leads it to revive the motif 'restoration from desolation' central to nineteenth-century colonial archaeology in the Middle East (Silberman 1991), which El-Ad also links to their own narrative of material progress and regeneration. El-Ad describes Silwan (never mentioned by name) as resembling a wasteland prior to its settlement activities.²⁶ Erasure of Islamic and Palestinian material heritage occurs not only in El-Ad's representation. The excavations that El-Ad sponsors have been subject to increasingly severe criticisms both within Israeli academia (Finkelstein et al. 2007) and the press. Until now even left-wing Israeli archaeologist had rejected much-voiced Palestinian allegations of the systematic and wilful destruction of Islamic artefacts and remains. The recent removal and seeming destruction of fifteenth-century skeletal remains from Islamic tombs (Rapoport 2008a) suggest a return to a type of destructive biblical archaeology at the 'City of David', believed to have gone extinct.

4. Building and inhabiting frontier heritage

The monopolisation of meaning advanced in El-Ad's exclusionary narrative rearticulates the site in spatial as much as in temporal terms (Said 1999). The 'City of David' is formally treated as a settlement; making homes for Jewish people is seen as an integral part of El-Ad's heritage stewardship.²⁷ As the film's motto suggests, 'where it all began... and still continues', the active inhabitation of the site by El-Ad settlers is

seen as a direct re-enactment of the paradigmatic, biblical narrative into which the site's meaning is locked. While visual techniques help to convey the narrative, El-Ad in turn takes their own narrative by the letter as the architectural and urban programme for the park. The character of the resulting habitation is highly ambiguous if clearly identifiable through some overt signs (most prominently of flags), as well as a palette of architectural features, which are subtler in effect. It is these less articulate, often banal architectural strategies, which are addressed in this paper. The nature of such architectural representations and their significance in altering urban conditions in physical and symbolic terms have only recently come into clearer focus (Nitzan-Shiftan 2004, 2006; Pullan 2004, 2006; Weizman 2007).

El-Ad has inserted two distinct types of dwelling in the middle of the archaeological sites, which together compose the neo-biblical city. On the one hand, there are temporary shack houses, similar to the settler caravans in the illegal outposts of the West Bank. On the other hand, there are carefully 'restored' houses. This latter residential type embodies El-Ad's long-term vision most clearly. These restorations draw directly from the architecture developed in the Jewish Quarter (Ricca 2007). What are effectively brand-new constructions are meant to adapt and 'belong' to the landscape through a series of salient features. They are simple, low-rise elevations stepped into the sloping topography of the hill, adopting a typology which Israeli architects extrapolated from the Arab village and systematically reconfigured as 'biblical' or 'Mediterranean' vernacular in the late 1960s (Nitzan-Shiftan 2004).²⁸ Exterior walls are carefully clad with 'Jerusalem stone', first introduced by British planners of the Mandate period, and extended as obligatory from the Old City to the whole of Jerusalem by Israeli building regulations (Weizman 2007). All windows are modestly sized and arched avoiding a strong sense of façade and any modernist references. Close proximity to archaeological sites is actively sought. One of El-Ad's most ambitious plans envisages a synagogue and communal facilities immediately above an excavation area by the visitor centre (Eldar 2008). This physical overlap with archaeological sites leans on the symbolic programme of the Jewish Quarter, in which the insertion of carefully selected and exposed archaeological finds is used as means of authentication, as a form of restoration simultaneously embodying preservation and regeneration of the original and immutable meaning of a primordial relationship to the land established in the biblical era.

The appeal of settler houses work on a number of different registers. On one level, the 'neo-biblical' character of the Jewish Quarter, originally developed in a secular

ideological context in the 1970s to create a sense of 'belonging' for Jewish Israelis (Yacobi 2008), has been readily accepted as appropriate by the religious right, unmoved by the subsequent doubts of its original proponents. The municipality has endorsed the 'neo-Oriental style' as basically desirable (Nitzan-Shiftan 2004) and settlers are pragmatic in subsuming the national mainstream practice into their fundamentalist agenda. By the same token El-Ad is thereby creating more permanent, acceptable dwellings for well to do supporters, especially from abroad, as is increasingly common in the Jewish Quarter (Nachum-Halevi 2008).²⁹ On another level the primitivist aesthetic lends itself equally well as a suggestive backdrop for the theme-park character developed at the visitor centre. Originally borne out of a very specific Israeli strand of post-modernism' search for locale, tradition and 'homeness', the new-old Israeli vernacular serves as a prop in its narrative re-design of Silwan as the 'City of David' with wide-ranging western appeal. International visitors can identify settler houses with the virtual representations of David City in 1000BC of the film and simultaneously take them as evidence of the story of origins and renaissance they are being told.

The spatial character of the 'City of David' is 'post-modern' in one further respect, which problematises its concocted neo-biblical evenness. Provisional shack and restored house both rely heavily on a heavy infrastructure of security arrangements (Deleuze 1992; Marcuse 2006). Security is in fact the only visible way in which the presence of the Palestinian population is implicit in El-Ad's design of the park.³⁰ Watchtowers, tall fences above walls, heavy steel doors and CCTV cameras are ubiquitous aspects of all settlement homes in the City of David. El-Ad's ambivalent 'discretion' in displaying its control over the site is manifested in the fact that the elite private security guards put in their service by the state wear no uniforms or tags identifying them with El-Ad. The level of security stands out even by the stringent standards of West Jerusalem, the Old City and East Jerusalem settlements. Securitisation goes hand in hand with privatisation as a mechanism of control over movement within the park and settlement. Points of access to previously public archaeological areas are increasingly controlled by El-Ad (Greenberg 2007). Since the park is part open to the public, and part Palestinian, the settlement is, however, not so much a homogenous gated community (Soja 2000) as the Jewish Quarter appears today; rather it constitutes a terrain of gated houses and mini-complexes, which dominate and fragment the area through their control of security infra-structure. Security is not concentrated merely along 'hard' borders at the periphery; rather it pervades every alley and path adjacent settler controlled spaces. Yet El-Ad's design strategy also

extends beyond individual houses or visitor centres. El-Ad's representational programme operates at an urban scale on the level of the semi-public space between individual sites.

El-Ad has mobilised elements of urban design in staking out of national-religious territory in a bid to transform the character of the area as a whole (Margalit 2005). In contrast to other areas in the Holy Basin targeted by settlers, El-Ad makes confident claims to visibility at ground level in Silwan. In those places where settlers have made determined inroads into Palestinian neighbourhoods in the historic basin, they have focused on gaining control either of the over ground connections on the level of rooftops, or underground ones through tunnels between the Old City's ancient system of cisterns and channels. In the Muslim Quarter in the Old City, where settlers have acquired control over a significant number of properties, Palestinians have so far remained dominant at street level, Israeli-imposed restrictions on their mobility notwithstanding (Pullan 2006). El-Ad's instrumentalisation of the archaeological park is starting to break with this existing pattern, by targeting the public street.

In its quest to alter the character and meaning of Silwan as a whole, El-Ad again draws on urban design practices developed originally in the Jewish Quarter. 'Jerusalem stone' is not restricted to houses, but is also used to clad sections of walls in the park. As is common in other Jewish or tourist parts of Jerusalem expected to attract tourists, paths and streets within the 'City of David' and between the visitor centre and Jaffa Gate (leading to the Western Wall Plaza) are upgraded by paving with Jerusalem stone equally associated with Jewish Israeli urban redevelopment. Cladding and paving stretch like tentacles from settlers controlled properties and sites into the Palestinian neighbourhood. More explicit signs highlight their identity and significance. Seemingly banal facilities such as municipal bins installed along improved paths through the park, feature the municipal crest with its Lion of Judah; the installation of streetlamps associated exclusively with Jewish and tourist parts of Jerusalem cements the transformation of the urban backdrop. El-Ad has also recently encouraged the municipality to systematically replace existing Arabic street names in Wadi Hilwa with Hebrew names with strong biblical connotations (Hoffman 2008). Installing municipal bins and streetlamps, as well as renaming street signs represent a well-established and contested practice marking out national territory in ways immediately recognisable to both Israelis and Palestinians in the everyday (Suleiman 2004). Finally, great aesthetic care is selectively invested in green areas along excavated areas and El-Ad controlled

terrain. Sprinkled lawns and lush flowerbeds complement the iconography and narrative of rebirth. The deep ambiguity of the gardens' transplanted olive trees, symbolising rootedness as much as dispossession (Alwazir 2002; Nitzan-Shiftan 2004; Pullan 2007a) represent the horticultural pendant to the neo-biblical architecture of settler homes. These instances of systematic beautification again work independently both for Jewish Israeli and international visitors. Israelis are made to feel at home through an environment increasingly bearing the face of the Jewish Quarter. Western tourists can feel less threatened or alienated than they might by the 'messiness' and density of the Old City. They are equally more likely to feel comfortable contemplating a more polished face of heritage characteristic of increasingly homogenous tourist-historic cities across the globe (Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000). These spatial extensions of affinity are in many respects more effective than narrative constructions in cementing connections between Jewish Israeli and global biblical heritage.

However, El-Ad's urban design also deepens the fragmentation and contradictions observed above in relation to the combination of purist neo-biblical architecture and a heavy-handed security apparatus. This is true both within the core area of contestation, Wadi Hilwa / 'City of David' and in the topography of Silwan as a whole. Carefully restored houses are but a stone's throw from run down Palestinian houses and courtyards. El-Ad's shining visitor centre is only thirty yards away from the beleaguered plot of land, on which local activists have set up a tent exhibiting a banner, which states 'to dig a tunnel means to destroy a village' in English and Arabic. The aesthetically 'upgraded' green zone separates El-Ad dominated Wadi Hilwa from the historical and contemporary core of Silwan on the other side of the Kydron Valley. El-Ad's gardens face the uncollected rubbish piled up before the tightly stacked Palestinian houses climbing up the slope of the Mount of Olives.³¹ Silwan also continues to be used as a waste and sewage drainage basin for the city, yet many of its houses continue to lack access to their own sewage systems, as well as proper electricity supply and other amenities (Dumper 1996; Hoffman 2008). Severe over-crowding combined with systematic municipal neglect, which is characteristic of Palestinian East Jerusalem in general contributes to slum like conditions in Silwan. El-Ad is constructing a deeply antagonising topography, a new subtype of 'frontier urbanism' (Pullan 2007b) developed in the settlements of East Jerusalem's suburban periphery, in which heightened visual confrontation is combined with absence of any form of everyday interaction. The settled slope of the disneyfied 'City of David' stares out to the dilapidated Palestinian houses on

the slope across a narrow valley, which cast an inescapable shadow over El-Ad's fervent designs.

Conclusion

The 'City of David' is in many respects a dramatic testimony to the malleability of heritage sites in general, and historic sites in Jerusalem in particular. In the space of a few years an entire neighbourhood has been reconfigured to conform to a very particular hegemonic ideological and territorial project. El-Ad's heritage management is not merely selective; it distorts and confuses the situation to a point, which may be considered extreme even by Jerusalem's levels of contestation. The site's rapid transformation makes it increasingly difficult to disentangle what identifications and material findings are grounded in a degree of archaeological evidence, and what is almost completely fictive. The older and more distant (and potentially paradigmatic) a site the more malleable it seems to become in its contemporary representations. On this level its potency as a heritage site also appears proportional to the negative excesses bound up with the modern cult of heritage, which David Lowenthal (1996) has coined an 'eclipse of reason and a regression to embattled tribalism'. Clearly Silwan/'City of David' is not the only world example to be harnessed and distorted by a nationalistic agenda, but its central place in a bitter and enduring conflict zone makes it especially volatile and worrying. While Silwan had been able to withstand one hundred and fifty years of Christian- and Judeo-centric excavations, far right heritage stewardship combined with a concerted urban design strategy only needed a fraction of this time to threaten its very existence as a Palestinian neighbourhood. This is all the more remarkable given that the transformation of El-Ad was not preceded by a cataclysmic event, like the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter after the 1967 war.

The act of inhabiting, of familiarising through urban design is key to the profounder effect that heritage representation is taking in Silwan. The spatial resources employed by the private fundamentalist association El-Ad show strong elements of continuity with those a secular generation of architects developed for official government-led designs after 1967. In their effort to put its particular concept of the 'City of David' on the map El-Ad has opted for an architectural design strategy both familiar and appealing to a wider Israeli and Western tourist public. The urban design of heritage is both a condition and an opportunity for the settler movement in the historic basin. The fact that visitors from

Israel and tourists from abroad seem relatively blind both to the physical fragmentation of Silwan and the violent territorial project, which underlies it, certainly speaks of the modern power of 'conceived space' (Lefebvre 1991) over lived experience active in urban heritage design. Seen in this light it is perhaps not surprising that the relative shift from secular to religious, and from public to private agency in heritage management in Jerusalem has led to the design of a largely corresponding urban character. El-Ad's 'conformism' in this regard is clearly part of their considerable autonomy and their success in achieving high levels of state support and marginalising opposing representations, even if it does not specifically answer the question of who is in the 'driving seat' between the government and the religious far right. While the religious character of 'the City of David' cannot be stated as its most visible or prominent feature, settlers may well feel confident that ultra-orthodox practice and law will come to dominate it in time just as did at the originally secular conceived Jewish Quarter and Western Wall plaza.

Notes

¹ Interest in far right settler archaeology in Jerusalem has so far principally come from journalists and activists. Meron Rapoport and Nadav Shragai (the latter more sympathetic to settler ideology) of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, the Jerusalem-based NGOs, Ir Amin, ICAHD and PASSIA (all very critical of settlers) have most regularly reported in detail on the activities of settlers groups operating in the historical basin of Jerusalem. The Israeli archaeologist Rafi Greenberg, who heads a group of Israeli and Palestinian activists, is leading the debate among Israeli archaeologists on the political use of their work. Greenberg's group has made important information available specifically on Silwan / 'City of David'; see www.alt-arch.org.

² Abu El-Haj (2001) rightly points to the continuities between seculars' and religious fundamentalists' manipulation of archaeological practice. However, far right settlers' influence and visibility in this area has achieved an unprecedented prominence in Jerusalem in the space of a relatively short period of time. This has led to changes in both the practice of archaeology and heritage representation.

³ recent study of the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter and Western Wall Plaza in the Old City of Jerusalem (Ricca 2007) has brought the importance of urban design in heritage politics to the fore.

⁴ This is an estimate based on data of 2003 from *The Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook*, no.20.

⁵ Historically the inconvenience of the steep and rocky topography was offset by Silwan's proximity to the Gihon spring and the fertility of the Kidron Valley. Houses concentrated along the eastern slope while the valley and Wadi Hilwa area were part of the village's agricultural and pastoral lands. While British and Israeli survey maps have tended to locate the village only on the eastern slope, it is important to recognise that *both* slopes of the valley together constitute the historical village of Silwan and the present urban neighbourhood.

⁶ Greenberg's account is confirmed by a Palestinian resident of Silwan, Jawad Siyam (Hoffman 2008).

⁷ Silwan continued to have a reputation amongst Israelis as a hotbed of resistance during the Second Intifada. In 2003 Israeli authorities carried out house demolitions targeting the homes of alleged Hamas militants (Harel 2008b).

⁸ There were two instances of a Jewish presence in Silwan prior to 1967. Firstly a small group of Yemenite families moved to Silwan in 1882. They remained a small segment of the established, century old-Arab village. The Yemenite community received charitable care initially from American missionary colonisers, and then Jewish philanthropists. The neighbourhood, which was established co-existed with Arab village, even through the Arab riots 1929, but were moved out by the British in 1936. Secondly some lands were bought by Baron de Rothschild at the beginning of the twentieth century dedicated for excavations, planned from 1914; see Yonathan Mizrahi, 'The Yemenite settlement in Silwan', www.alt-arch.org/yemenites.html (accessed 04 June 2008).

⁹ Archaeologist and activist, Rafi Greenberg has played a leading role in the alternative archaeological tours of Silwan; see their website www.alt-arch.org/. The Palestinian neighbourhood organisation is called the 'Committee for the protection for Silwan rights and property'.

¹⁰ The leading figures of settlers in the Old City and Holy Basin are graduates of the leading yeshiva at the heart of Gush Emunim, Merkaz Harav (which was the target of a recent attack in February 2008). David Beerie, El-Ad's founder and director, was a member of Ateret Cohanim ('the priestly crown'), which has targeted the Muslim Quarter; the yeshiva tied to Ateret Cohanim is engaged in Talmudic study of rites to be performed when the Third Temple is built.

¹¹ The roots of the ideology of Gush Emunim and its offspring go back to the 1930s, including Jabotinsky's revisionist Zionsim, Labour Zionist activism and the messianic thought of Rabbi Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (d.1935) centred in Merkaz Harav yeshiva (later popularised by his

son, Zvi Yehuda Kook (d.1982). These ideological currents remained marginal in Israeli politics before and after the founding of the state, until they gained increasing importance from the 1970s.

¹² Written and audio-visual material available on the website of Beit Orot is particularly explicit in naming the first two objectives www.beitorot.org/English/. El-Ad is fairly explicit in subscribing to these same goals (Rapoport 2006).

¹³ See also for example the reports on settlement activity in the historical basin by PASSIA, Ir Amin and the FMEP.

¹⁴ The legality of El-Ad's purchases, and the control they have gained over expropriated properties under the controversial Absentee Property Law are widely criticised, including by a damning governmental inquiry, the Klugman Report in 1992 (Dumper 2002; Margalit 2005).

¹⁵ The focus of archaeological work has also migrated increasingly into contested regions, i.e. the occupied territories in the Golan, West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

¹⁶ Annabel Wharton traces the roots of 'spectacularising' Jerusalem in ways, which share very direct affinities with the phenomenon of Disney and disneyfication back to nineteenth-century British and American Protestants' encounter with the Holy Land and their perceptions of sacrality and city.

¹⁷ Adina Hoffman (2008) aptly situates the character of El-Ad's film between a 'Cecil B. DeMile and Lara Croft Tomb Raider video game'. The music of the film and the wear of the main narrator could equally be likened to the world of Spielberg's Indian Jones, which also drew heavily on biblical tales.

¹⁸ Despite severe criticisms wielded against El-Ad by Israel Supreme Court, no prosecutions have taken place and the level state support has steadily grown. A summary of the court rulings against El-Ad may be found on www.alt-arch.org/settlers.html.

¹⁹ Israeli archaeologist working for the IAA at the City of David dispute that El-Ad interferes with their scientific work (Watzman 2007). Few would, however, dispute that the *presentation* of the sites, which is the concern of this paper, are firmly under the control of El-Ad.

²⁰ The more radical, messianic motivation of El-Ad's members and related settlers groups is not emphasised in the narrative presented to tourists.

²¹ A measure of El-Ad's self-proclaimed dedication to educational purposes is the fact that the Israeli army sends all its soldiers on a visit to the 'City of David', often with significant funding support from settler sources (Freedman 2008; Harel 2008a).

²² El-Ad is pushing its message in an aggressive public relations campaign through radio, TV and the internet (Rapoport 2006). El-Ad's official, English/Hebrew, state of the art website with interactive and multi-media features is an indication of their public relations know-how and ambition; www.cityofdavid.org.il/hp_eng.asp.

²³ Cited in Mitchell (2008).

²⁴ For the interactive map see www.cityofdavid.org.il/hp_eng.asp; for the timeline see www.cityofdavid.org.il/timeline_eng.asp.

²⁵ This does contrast with the timelines presented in the Davidson Centre, for example, which is part of the Jerusalem Archaeological park, managed directly by the Israel Nature and Public Parks Protection Authority; there non-'Jewish' periods of Jerusalem are included, even though they hardly form the focus of exhibits and explanatory panels; see www.archpark.org.il/.

²⁶ www.cityofdavid.org.il/IrDavidFoundation_Eng.asp.

²⁷ Settlement is referred to as 'residential revitalization' and stated as one of El-Ad's core commitments in its management of the site; www.cityofdavid.org.il/IrDavidFoundation_Eng.asp.

²⁸ The appropriation and biblical re-interpretation of Arab vernacular (particularly that of the traditional village in Palestine) was cultivated as early as the 1950s and became influential amongst Israeli architects and planners after 1967, as part of Israel's own adaptation of postmodernist thinking and practice. Well before the rise of messianic settlement in Jerusalem's historical basin, Israeli planners had considered preserving Silwan as part of the green belt (another concept inherited from British Mandate planning) around the city as its 'character gives us a good idea of how the landscapes and villages of Biblical times looked', in the words of a publication by the Ministry of Defence, cited in Nitzan-Shiftan (2004).

²⁹ This is a trend, which is increasingly found beyond the Old City in the historical basin. The website of Nof Zion, a settlement under construction southeast of Silwan in Abu Dis explicitly targets an upper middle class Diaspora clientele; see www.nofzion.co.il/indexp8.asp (accessed 06 August 2008).

³⁰ While El-Ad stresses its 'friendly' and 'professional' relations with local Palestinian residents, the level of security is indicative of El-Ad's actual attitude toward the Palestinians.

³¹ Since the 1990s El-Ad has pursued plans to create 'King David's garden' (a mix of green belt and residential housing) in the al-Bustan area extending the territory currently controlled in the bed of the valley south-eastward (2005). The Kidron valley in Silwan has also been renamed 'The King's Valley' in Israeli planning terminology (Margalit 2005).

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