

Advances in Science, Technology & Innovation  
EREI Interdisciplinary Series for Sustainable Development

Yasser Mahgoub · Nicola Cavalagli · Antonella Versaci ·  
Hocine Bougdah · Marta Serra-Permanyer *Editors*

# Cities' Identity Through Architecture and Arts



 Springer



# Travel Literature Illustrations and Topography and Their Role in Documenting the Islamic Arabic Identification and the Geopolitical Alterations of Jerusalem City

Reem Wagdy Moustafa Kamel Abd El-Raouf

## Abstract

Travel literature book illustrations and topography have greatly contributed with their historical voyages, descriptive maps, by providing us with an essential spatial context, and realization of historical events. They are concerned with description or specific drawing of places and their topographical features, more specifically surveying of cities, monuments, architecture, historical places, and landscapes, specially, what has been executed as an expression of Jerusalem, which has been the subject of study by many artists, orientalists, geographers, etc. Hence, the research problem is determined in response to an important question, what is the extent of the role played by travel literature book illustrations and topography in documenting the Islamic Arab identification and the geopolitical alterations of Jerusalem city? The aim of the research is to emphasize that the role of travel book illustrations and topography was not only to depict the historical and geographical reality of Jerusalem, but also to document cultural backgrounds and historical events, and to reveal the true identity of the city which is the pivot of the Arab–Israeli conflict, as well as biases and geographical and political convictions it has suffered throughout history. The importance of research lies in the fact that these illustrations and topographical maps are considered as scientific, artistic, and aesthetic documents as well as informative profound insights into the history and the identity of Jerusalem. They help to reveal the artistic and cultural convictions and orientations of cartographers and topographical illustrators. The researcher applies here the historical analytical approach to observe this phenomenon and stand on its dimensions. Furthermore, the research found a significant result indicating that these illustrations and topographical maps

were considered as a visual dictionary recording the important historical events in the life of Jerusalem city, the constantly changing geographical reality, and the point of view of artists and illustrators who have prepared it.

## Keywords

Travel literature • Illustrations • Topography • Manuscripts miniatures • Documentation • Islamic Arabic identification • Geopolitics • Alterations • Maps • Jerusalem • City

## 1 Introduction

As a general rule, illustrated books which contain a sequence of images, illustrations, and maps as a visual commentary on text act as a mirror reflecting historical events and social, geopolitical, and cultural changes, etc. are employed in order to serve instructional, documentary, decorative purposes (Harthan 1981, p. 7F). When we discuss travel literature which is concerned with narration, expression of adventures and highlighting of many insights about economic, political, and social nature of a region, and topography literature which concentrates on description or fine drawing of places, and their superficial features and the illustrations and maps related to them, and the atlases and guide books which have emerged from them; it is in the sense that they are a recording of events, personalities, points of view, and feelings of the author during his journey (Porter 1995, p. 132F).

However, the situation is relatively different with the city of Jerusalem, which has occupied a religious status and a particularly aesthetic model over the ages. As a matter of fact, this small, remote city has formed a little attraction for many travelers, authors, and artists. However, the strong religious spiritual longing of its pilgrims is what gave us early perceptions of that city. This religious inspiration has

R. W. M. K. Abd El-Raouf (✉)  
Printed Designs Department, Faculty of Fine Arts, Alexandria  
University, Alexandria, Egypt  
e-mail: reemkhalel@yahoo.com

always had an impact on miniatures, book illustrations, and even scenes of complementary maps. Few artists embarked on a long and perilous journey to Jerusalem during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. On the other hand, the majority resorted to the descriptions of the Bible, historical accounts, and visions and views of travelers and trailers who added their perceptions and observations. Nevertheless, early pilgrimage and migrations from Europe to Jerusalem were in search for rich sources of information about historical events, geography, fauna and flora, various cultures, religious practices, customs, and languages. Unfortunately, pilgrims' and immigrants' itineraries, maps, and guide books were distorted by inaccurate observation, hearsay, deliberate exaggerations or fabrication, or religious preconceptions. Because Muslim and Jewish prohibitions were against engraved images, the majority of maps and illustrations were made by Christian pilgrims. They, nevertheless, provided us with insights into the history and topography of Jerusalem city (Osher 1996, pp. 19–21).

These illustrations and topographical maps are considered a means of documenting the geopolitical alterations that occurred in Jerusalem and a confirmation of its Arabic identity. If we want to define the concept of Arabic identity, it is not considered a religious Islamic identity; because it dates back to the pre-Islamic appearance. Historically, it witnessed the emergence of Arab Christian kingdoms and presence of Arab and Jewish tribes. However, today most Arabs are Muslims with minorities adopting other religions, mostly Christianity (Robinson 1999, p. 76; Berkey 2003, pp. 42–44). This means that Arab Islamic identity is the essence of Jerusalem which adapted Islam, became the representative identity of the origin of its culture. Though the three monotheistic religions unanimously agreed on its sacredness as a historical religious repository, the city witnessed early and still continues to witness conflicts that transcend the political, religious, and national dimensions to deeper and farther conflicts concerning the city's functional significance that are linked to its role as a city with an Arab Islamic cultural stock whose function is to spread the Arab Islamic Message. The location of Jerusalem from Palestine is among the most important reasons for the outbreak of historical conflicts. The Arab-orient and Jerusalem have formed part of it and remained a distinctive geo-strategic and cultural location. The geopolitical conflict over Jerusalem is at the forefront of political, religious, economic, and other cultural conflicts and the like. The geopolitical conflict is the one that is based on grasping the geography of the place because of its geopolitical importance, which ensures the superiority and the predominance of the power that prevails in the same place controlling its distant functions (Murad 2009, October, p. 2). To make this clear, we must recall a historical summary of the political and geographical alterations that occurred in this city as a result of the multiplicity of governments and political forces.

## 2 Historical Roots and Geopolitical Alterations of the City of Jerusalem

The city of al Quds was known as Jerusalem, which dates back to pre-biblical times and long before the Jews settlement around 5000 years BC, long before the Bronze Age. The first mention was made in 2000 BC in the execration texts of the Middle Pharaonic Kingdom under the name Rusalimum, and it was mentioned in the letters of Amarna of the fourteenth century BC as Urušalim. Jerusalem means the place of the god Salem, god of dusk, in the Canaanite religion. The origin of the word came from the letters S-L-M, from which the Arabic word peace or shalom is derived. In Arabic Jerusalem was known as al Quds or the Holly Sanctuary (Millis 2012, p. 6).

### 2.1 Geopolitical Alterations of the City of Jerusalem in Ancient Times

It is believed that the first settlement was near the spring of Gihon. The Canaanites built huge walls to protect water channels in the seventeenth century BC. Between 1550 and 1400 BC, Jerusalem became part of the new Pharaonic state. During the twelfth century BC, a series of attacks on the Egyptian force in the Late Bronze Age known as "sea people" led to the eclipse of Egyptian power. Jerusalem was then known as Jebus and was ruled by Jebusites or the Canaanites 400 years, until it was occupied by King David or Dawood in the Islamic tradition, making it the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel (1003–970 BC) and Judah later. The first temple of the Jews was built by his son King Solomon (died 930 BC) in the tenth century BC on Mount Moriah or Zion and remained established until the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II (634–562 BC) besieged the city between (587–586 BC). This is evident in the miniature "The Siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar" by The French painter Jean Fouquet (1420–1481) from the French translation of the original manuscript of the Roman Jewish Historian Titus Flavius Josephus (37–100 BC) which was executed by Tempera technique between the years 65/1470–1476, see (Fig. 1). He completely destroyed the city and prevented the Jews from entering it for fifty years. In 7/538 BC, Babylon fell in the hands of the Persian King Cyrus the Great (576–530 BC), who allowed the return of the Jews to Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the temple, which was completed in 516 BC, during the reign of King Darius I (522–486 BC). In a miniature of the French Bible, King Cyrus is seen confirming his promise to a group of Jews to build the temple again. The miniature was executed by Tempera in France in the sixteenth century, see (Fig. 2) (Millis 2012, pp. 6–20; Rosovsky 1996, pp. 11–14; Catane 1984, p. 209).