

Home in Jerusalem: the American Colony and Palestinian suburban architecture

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SUMMARY: Urban development outside the walls of Jerusalem began only after 1850. These new suburbs embodied the spatial traditions of their different religious and ethnic patrons. Russian, French, English, German, and particularly Jewish émigré complexes have been well researched. Less thoroughly studied are the new Palestinian suburbs. The largest house of the Husseiní neighbourhood is the focus of this analysis. An investigation of the fabric of the building and its written and photographic archive allows a reconstruction of the structure's developmental stages. Its changing form records the cultural shifts in Ottoman Jerusalem affected by the growing presence of Western interests in the region.

*Leave your children either a house of stone or
an orchard.*
Palestinian maxim¹

HISTORY

Palestinian villages and the houses of local land-owners had marked the landscape around Jerusalem since at least the 18th century.² However, significant expansion outside the walls of the Old City occurred only from the middle of the 19th century, after political reforms in Palestine introduced during the Egyptian rule of Muhammad Ali and continued later under the Ottomans during the *Tanzimat*, or Reform Movement.³ Economic stability, subsidized by the improvement of travel and communication technologies, promoted the development of Jerusalem's suburbs. Conrad Schick's survey map documents the extent of construction outside the walls by the 1890s (Fig. 1).⁴

The forms of the buildings in the new neighbourhoods of Jerusalem register the cultural traditions of those who constructed them.⁵ Alien genealogies are revealed in building materials and programmes. The Russian Compound, designed by the Russian architect Martin Ivanovich

Eppinger for Russian Orthodox pilgrims and constructed in the 1860s, merges European classicism with Byzantine domes. Built in the 1870s, Mea She'arim was founded as a cooperative of Ashkenazi émigré Jews and planned by the German architect Conrad Schick. Though constructed by local artisans in local materials, its defensive, inward-oriented design gives the enclave a ghetto-like programme. Also in the 1870s, a German religious group, the Templers, founded the German Colony in Jerusalem, made up of neatly ordered single-family cottages. The Templers' pitched roofs of red tiles, so distinct from the domed buildings of traditional Palestinian construction, marked this community as new and alien. The Palestinian neighbourhoods, at least initially, continued locally established traditions in their programmes and construction techniques: thick-walled, vaulted buildings built with local stone by local master masons. In the Old City, houses tended to have small interior courts. In the suburbs, most homes had a central hall from which more private rooms opened and were set within walled gardens.⁶ These individual houses tended to expand over time, adapting to the growth of the family.

The Jewish and German Colony settlements have been carefully documented and studied.⁷ The

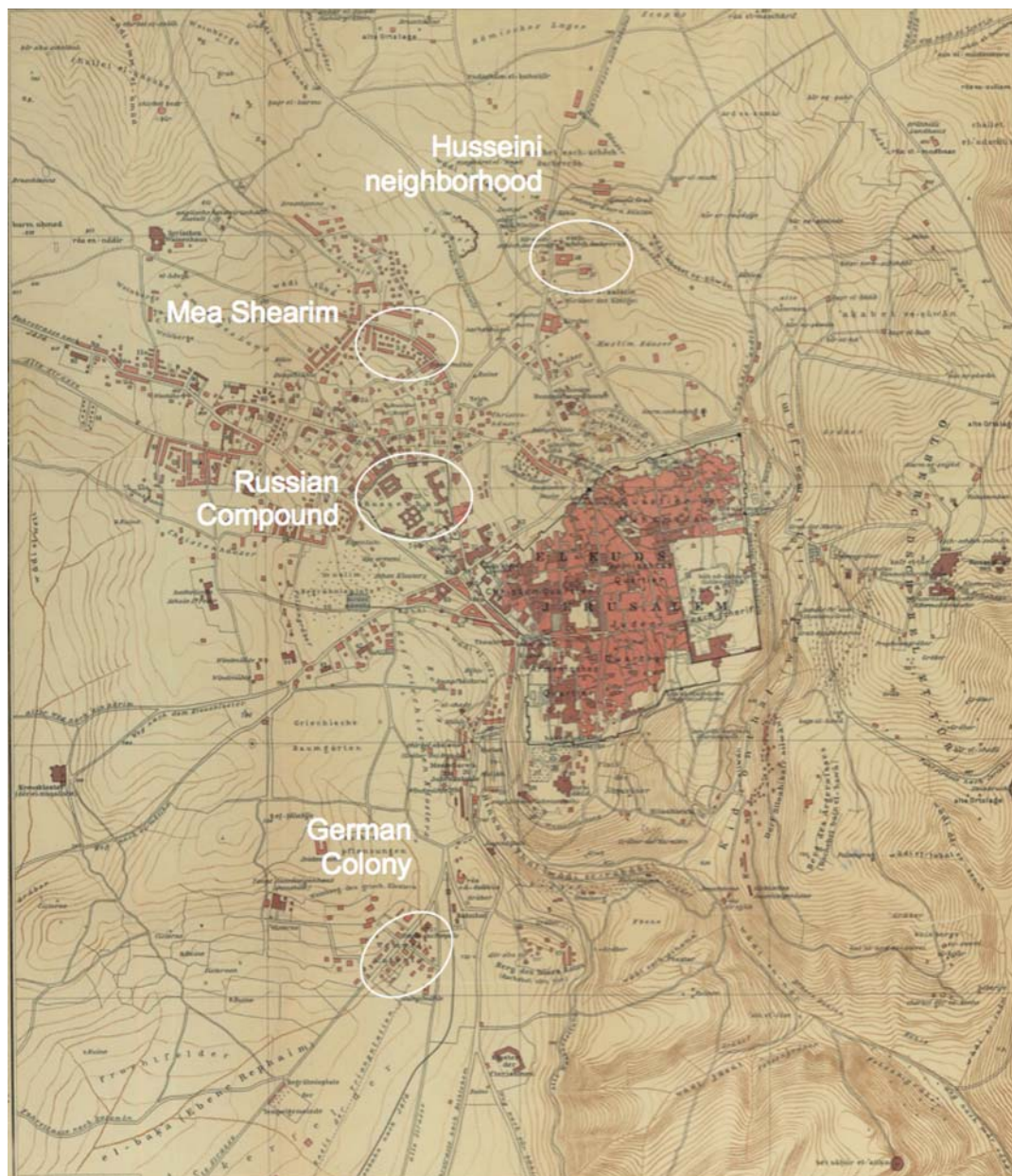


FIG. 1

Survey map of Jerusalem by Conrad Schick (Leipzig, 1894–95; with permission from The National Library of Israel, Eran Laor Cartographic Collection, Shapell Family Digitization Project and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Department of Geography – Historic Cities Research Project; modified by A. Wharton).

same is not the case for the Palestinian neighbourhoods. Old scholarship dealing with Palestinian domestic architecture focused on the village dwelling. Much of this research was based on the

ahistorical premise that, as unchanged traditional forms, these houses reproduced the setting in which Jesus lived.⁸ New scholarship tends towards the social-scientific, making arguments about the



FIG. 2

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: view from the south-west before 1910 (courtesy of the Archive at the American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem).

cultural construction of Palestinian suburbs rather than about their architecture.⁹ This article offers an initial venture into understanding one of those neighbourhoods, the Husseini neighbourhood, by documenting its largest home.

Begun between 1865 and 1876, the house of Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini was among the first generation of buildings constructed outside the walls of Jerusalem in the modern era.¹⁰ Greatly expanded in a second phase of construction after 1876, this family dwelling was large by Jerusalem standards (Fig. 2). It is often referred to as a 'palace', although when compared with the mansions of Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo, this appears to be an exaggeration.¹¹ Located about half a mile north of the Damascus Gate on Nablus Road, the house established the core of the Husseini neighbourhood. Its 19th-century owner, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini, was a member of one of the most distinguished lineages of Jerusalem. Six of the thirteen mayors of Jerusalem between 1864

and 1914 were members of the Husseini family.¹² Members of the family continue to distinguish themselves in political, intellectual and humanitarian arenas.¹³ When Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini died without a male heir, the property passed, following Ottoman law, to male members of the extended family. In 1887, the multiple owners of the house apparently agreed to rent it to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews.¹⁴ Later, in 1896, they leased the structure to another group — a commune of messianic Christians.

This congregation came to be known locally as the American Colony. The sect was led by Horatio Spafford, a prosperous lawyer from Chicago.¹⁵ The Spaffords left the Presbyterian Church to form a millenarian group after they lost their four children in a tragic shipwreck in the Atlantic. In 1881, the Spaffords and their followers settled in Jerusalem in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. The remarkable social history of the American

Colony has been told by members and friends of the commune, as well as by historians: Selma Lagerlöf, in her Nobel Prize winning novel, *Jerusalem*, and its sequel, *Jerusalem II*; Bertha Spafford Vester, daughter of the founder; and most recently by the last of the great matriarchs of the American Colony, Valentine Vester, in her introduction to *The American Colony Family Album*.¹⁶ While the members of the American Colony waited in Jerusalem for the return of Jesus, they spent their time in charitable acts: teaching gratis in Muslim and Jewish schools, operating a soup kitchen, nursing, running an orphanage, establishing a lace factory in which poor women might work.

Following Horatio Spafford's death in 1888, his wife, Anna Spafford, became the indomitable leader of the group. Initially the community had settled in a traditional urban courtyard house just within the walls of the Old City, near Damascus Gate.¹⁷ In 1896, they also rented the house in the Hussein neighbourhood to accommodate the addition to the American Colony of several dozen Swedes. The commune subsequently became a successful farm. The good works and generosity of the American Colonists endeared them to the Muslims and Jews of Jerusalem, but their unconventional lifestyle and their unwillingness to work for the conversion of non-Christians attracted the vicious enmity of some local Protestants.¹⁸

As their wait for the Messiah became longer, the members of the originally celibate group began to marry. The American Colonists also became increasingly entrepreneurial. They established one of the first photographic workshops in Jerusalem and opened a tourist shop in the Old City.¹⁹ In 1910 the group purchased their house in the Hussein neighbourhood from the family heirs.²⁰ Bertha Spafford describes the problems encountered in the process:

Since Rabbah Effendi's death his palace had been roughly used. It was large, and on this account difficult to lease, but it was exactly what we needed. We rented it at once. Nearly all the rooms were enormous and surrounded a beautiful open court. Rabbah Effendi had lived a patriarchal life there surrounded by his four wives and other relatives, retainers and servants. From Hadj Raghib and his son therefore, we rented the present American Colony building in Sheik Harah Quarter near the Kedron Valley, sometimes called the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Renting property in Palestine is not such an easy matter as it sounds. Innumerable heirs who have inherited bits and pieces all have to receive their share of the rent and sign the lease. Later,

when we finally bought the property, we went through the same procedure. Every bit purchased increased the nuisance value of the unbought. The last two shares, from the Mufti of Jerusalem [Kamil al-Husseini] and his brother, whose mother had been Rabbah Effendi's fourth wife before she married the Mufti's father, were acquired at an exorbitant price.²¹

At the beginning of the 20th century, the American Colony became a hostel as well as a commune, when guests were received at the request of Baron Plato von Ustinov (grandfather of actor Sir Peter Ustinov) who owned a hotel for Westerners in Jaffa.²² The effect is described by Theo Larsson, one of the Swedish members of the Colony:

The growing numbers of overseas visitors to the Holy Land introduced the Colony to the business which is its sole function today. In the main, spring season, the Colonists had to move out temporarily to make room for all the guests who wanted to stay there, its charm and fine food being something of a novelty among local hostels at the time. The girls waited on them, and the young men acted as guides on tours around the country. Tourism was behind the development of other sidelines, like the Colony's photographic department, run by my father, which became famous throughout the Middle East and beyond for its views of the Holy Land and hand-coloured slides. Everything the Colonists touched seemed to prosper, but they never neglected their charitable works. Every day at noon a queue of needy people formed in the garden for soup or stew or whatever else the sisters had prepared for them. Colonists nursed the sick and the dying, and provided medical treatment for those who could not otherwise afford it.²³

The hostel has been progressively remodelled into a hotel. In 1996, the hotel joined the Relais & Châteaux Association; now it is part of the Leading Small Hotels of the World chain founded by the Swiss Gauer Group.²⁴ Nevertheless, the hotel is still owned, tended, and administered by descendants of the members of the American Colony. The long practice of unbigoted generosity associated with the American Colony is continued in the cosmopolitan hospitality of the hotel. It now functions as one of the very few places in Jerusalem in which Palestinians, Israelis and foreigners can meet comfortably as equals.

BUILDING PHASES

The reconstruction of the building's timeline offered here depended most heavily upon a close study of the fabric of the building. Also consulted were historical maps from the middle of the 19th century through to the 1950s and aerial photographs taken from the end of World War I in 1918 by retreating German forces. Photographs taken by the photographers of the American Colony itself provided the single most important documentary source. The American Colony had one of the earliest and most productive photographic studios in Jerusalem. The photographic archives in the possession of the American Colony are now partially housed as well in the Library of Congress in Washington DC. Documents, letters and various travellers' descriptions of the structure and its environs were also essential to this study. In addition we interviewed individuals engaged with the building, including its owners, staff members and architect. Published research was, of course, consulted. During this process of investigation, Amiri produced ideograms/sketches of the structure's four elevations (Figs 3, 5, 7 and 9). These renderings were essential to the historical rethinking of the building. By revealing overlooked details in masonry changes and architectural details, drawings invited a reassessment of the structure's fabric. They provided the basis for identifying Phase IIA–B as the mature structure, the stage of the building's growth documented by Amiri's AutoCAD elevations (Figs 4, 6, 8, 10), plans (Figs 11–12) and sections (Fig. 13). The first two construction phases of the house on Nablus Road occurred while it was the Hussein residence. The subsequent phases of the building were initiated after the property was bought by the American Colony in 1910.

PHASE I

The first structure on the property was probably built after 1864 and before 1876. It does not appear on Charles Wilson's survey map of 1864–65, but does on the updated edition of that map published in 1876 (Figs 14:1 and 14:2).²⁵ From the footprint on Wilson's map of 1876, it appears that this structure may have had a small interior courtyard, as do many of Jerusalem's urban dwellings. Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of the first phase of the structure — now integrated into the later building as its east wing — makes it impossible to reconstruct its original plan with any certainty (Fig. 15). Construction is in the vernacular: blocks of local limestone roughly squared and set in uneven courses in thick mortar beds (Figs 16 and

19).²⁶ Windows are single-arched with crude relieving arches in brick-shaped stone. An oblong hall covered with a double groin vault leads to a smaller groin-vaulted room. This vestige shares a number of programmatic features with 19th-century Palestinian domestic structures within the walls of Jerusalem: separate rooms opening into a communal space constructed with thick stone walls with niches for storage and groin- or domical vaults. It also had a cistern, now converted into a wine cellar. The surviving evidence of Phase I suggests that the house began as a modest, single-family dwelling. Possibly it was built by its owner as a semi-rural escape from the city rather than as his primary residence.

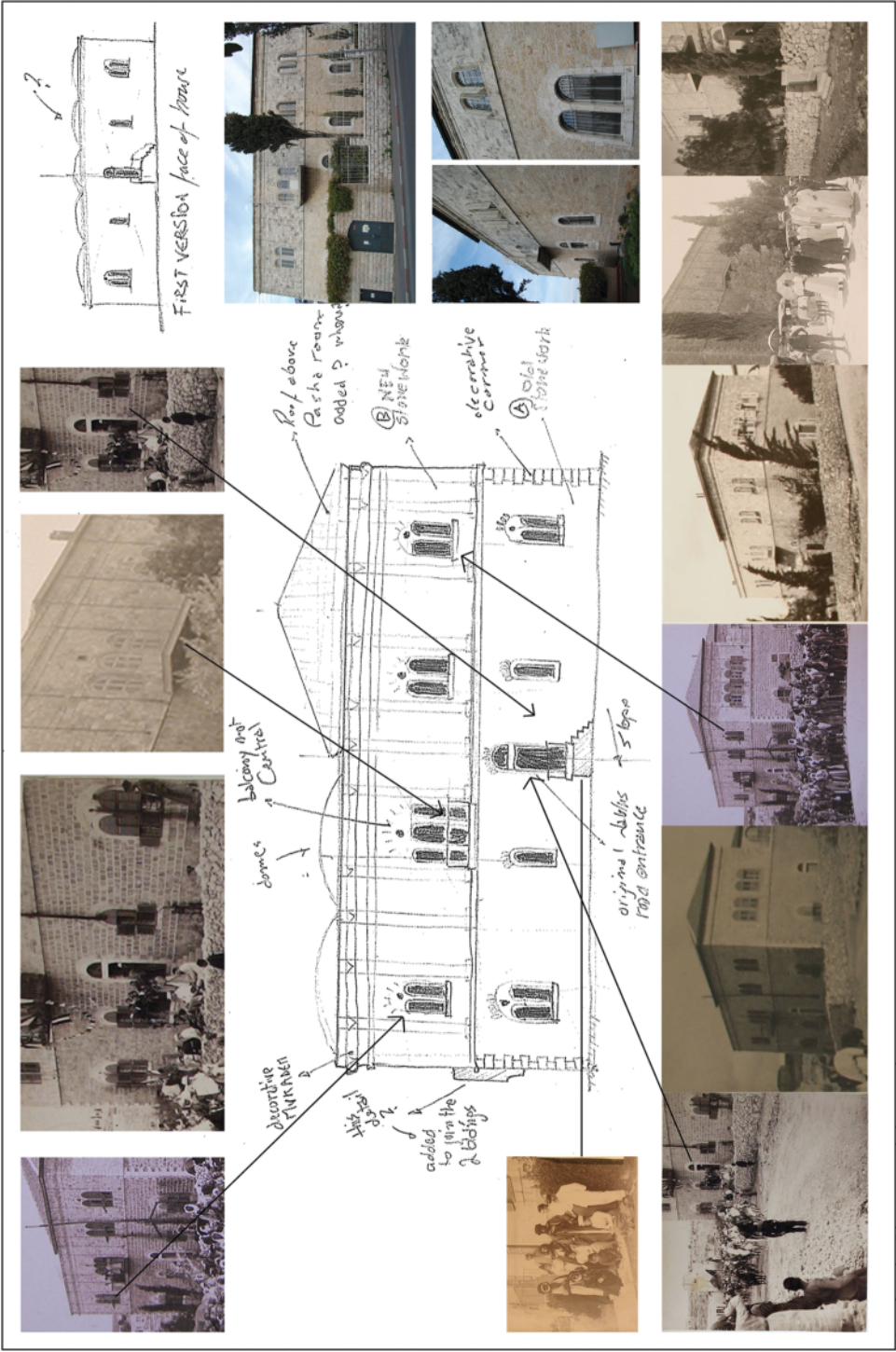
PHASE IIA

Phase IIA dates to after 1876, the year of the Southampton edition of Wilson's survey, and before 1886, the publication year of Henri Nicole's topographic map (Fig. 14:3).²⁷ The distinctive courtyard plan of the Hussein home was realized in this phase (Figs 11, 13 and 15).²⁸ Parts of the Phase I house are incorporated into the larger building as its east wing. New Phase IIA construction includes the three further wings which enclose the generous garden at the core of the building: the substructures and ground floor of the north wing and the ground floors of the south and west wings.

The masonry of Phase IIA is well-squared, but roughly faced, blocks of rosy limestone laid in relatively even courses in thick mortar (Fig. 17, lower level). Corners have quoins; several door and window arches have relieving arches of brick-shaped stone and simple raised frames (Fig. 3). Double arched windows are used in Phase IIA, distinguishing it from Phase I, with its single arched windows. The quoins and surrounds are rendered in a local white limestone; the stone of the surrounds is more highly dressed than that of the wall face (Fig. 17, upper level).

The property slopes away to the north. The three low-vaulted chambers forming the substructures of the northern wing provided the necessary levelling for the ground floor of the building. A cistern had been cut below the courtyard.²⁹

The west elevation of the house, fronting Nablus Road, was its public face (Figs 2, 3, 4 and 18). A simply moulded arched portal with a stoop, accessed by five steps from the south, opens in the centre of the ground-floor façade. The bilateral symmetry of the lower façade was emphasized by the paired double- and single-arched windows flanking the entrance. In contrast to many ancient



West Elevation Ideogram and photographs

FIG. 3

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: ideogram of the west elevation (drawing by A. Amiri, 2008; photographs courtesy of the Archive at the American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem).

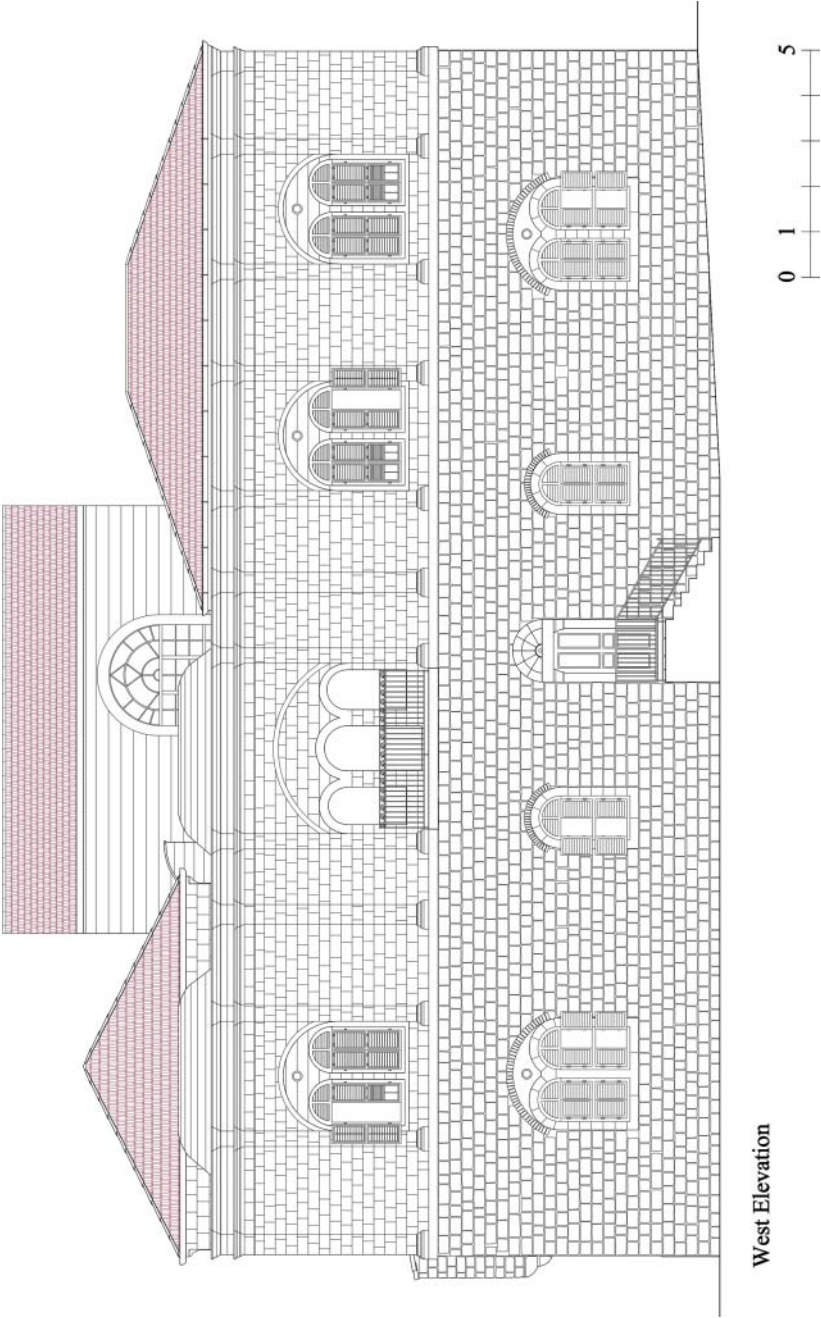


FIG. 4
Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: west elevation (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).

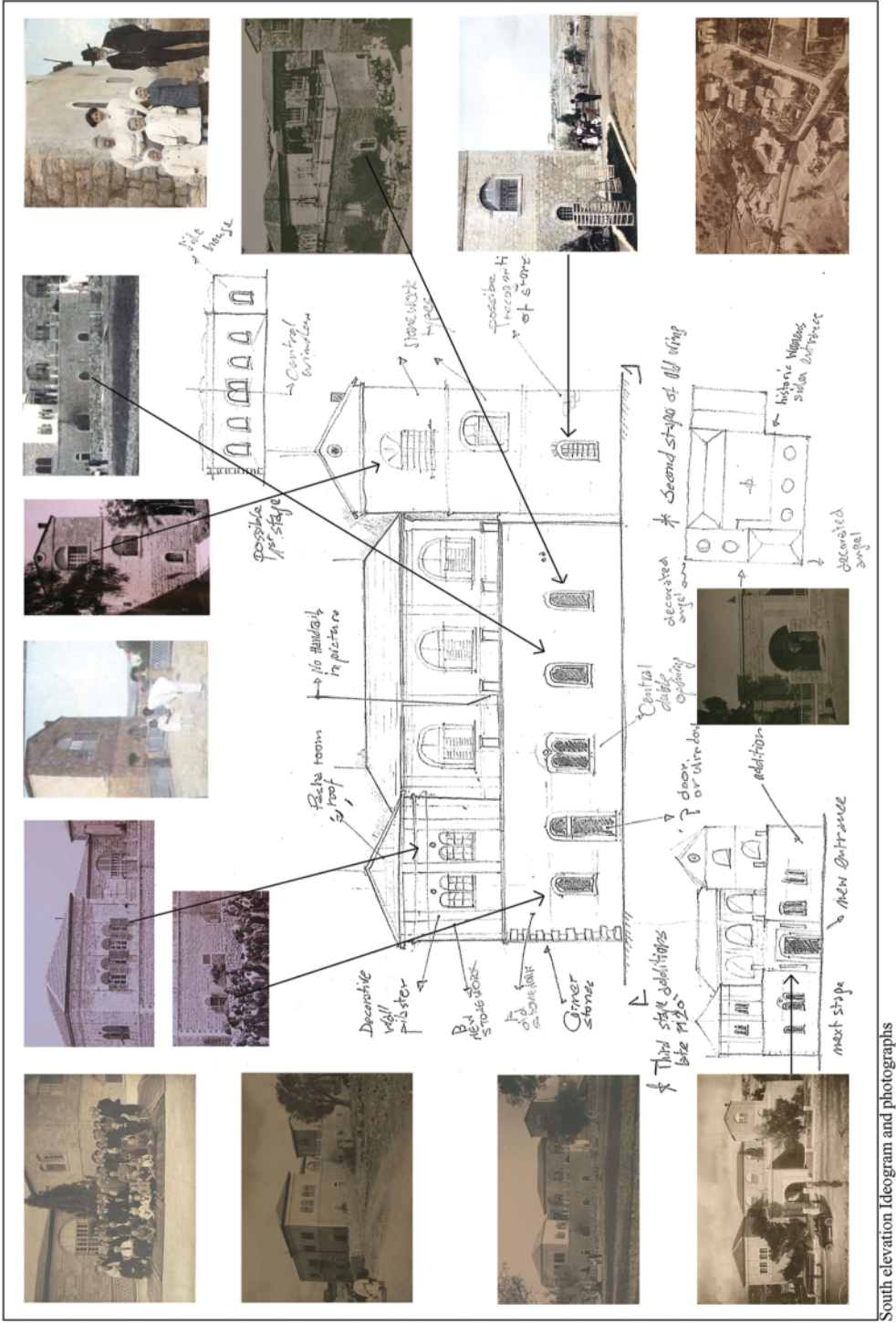


FIG. 5

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: ideogram of the south elevation (drawing by A. Amiri, 2008; photographs courtesy of the Archive at the American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem).

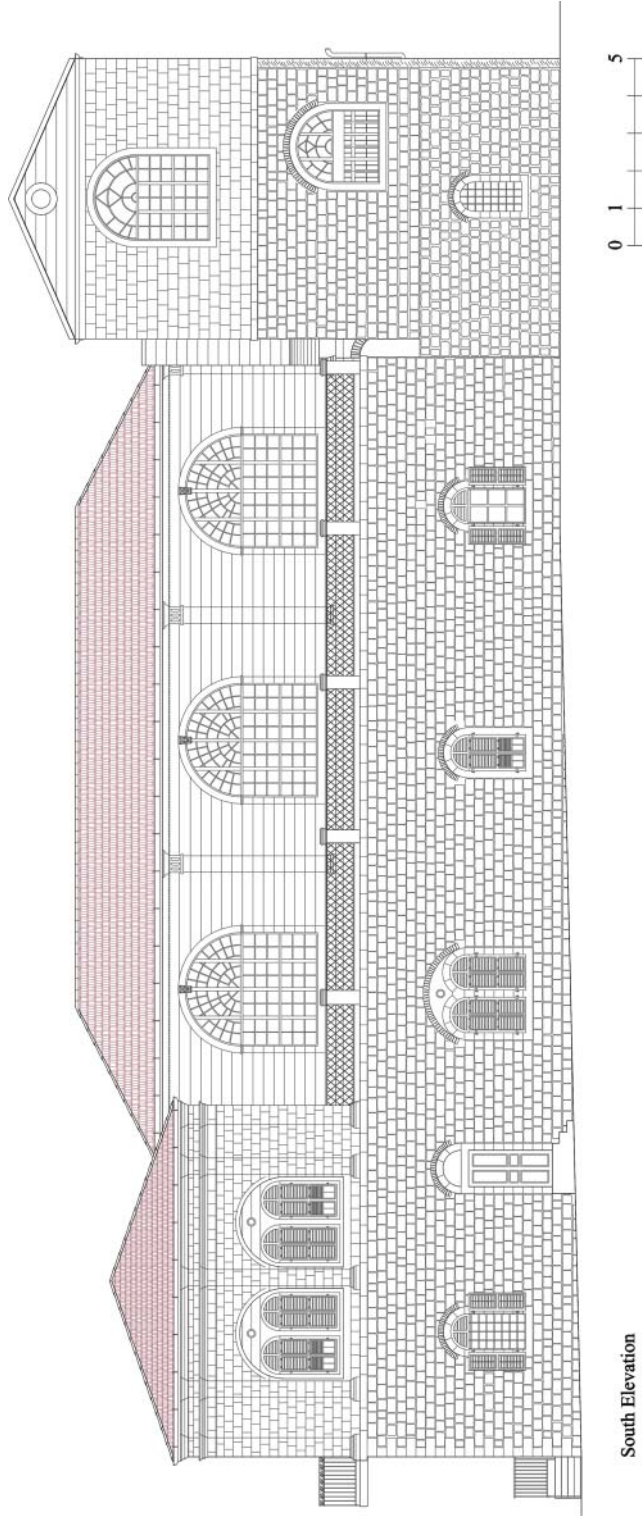


FIG. 6
Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: south elevation (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).

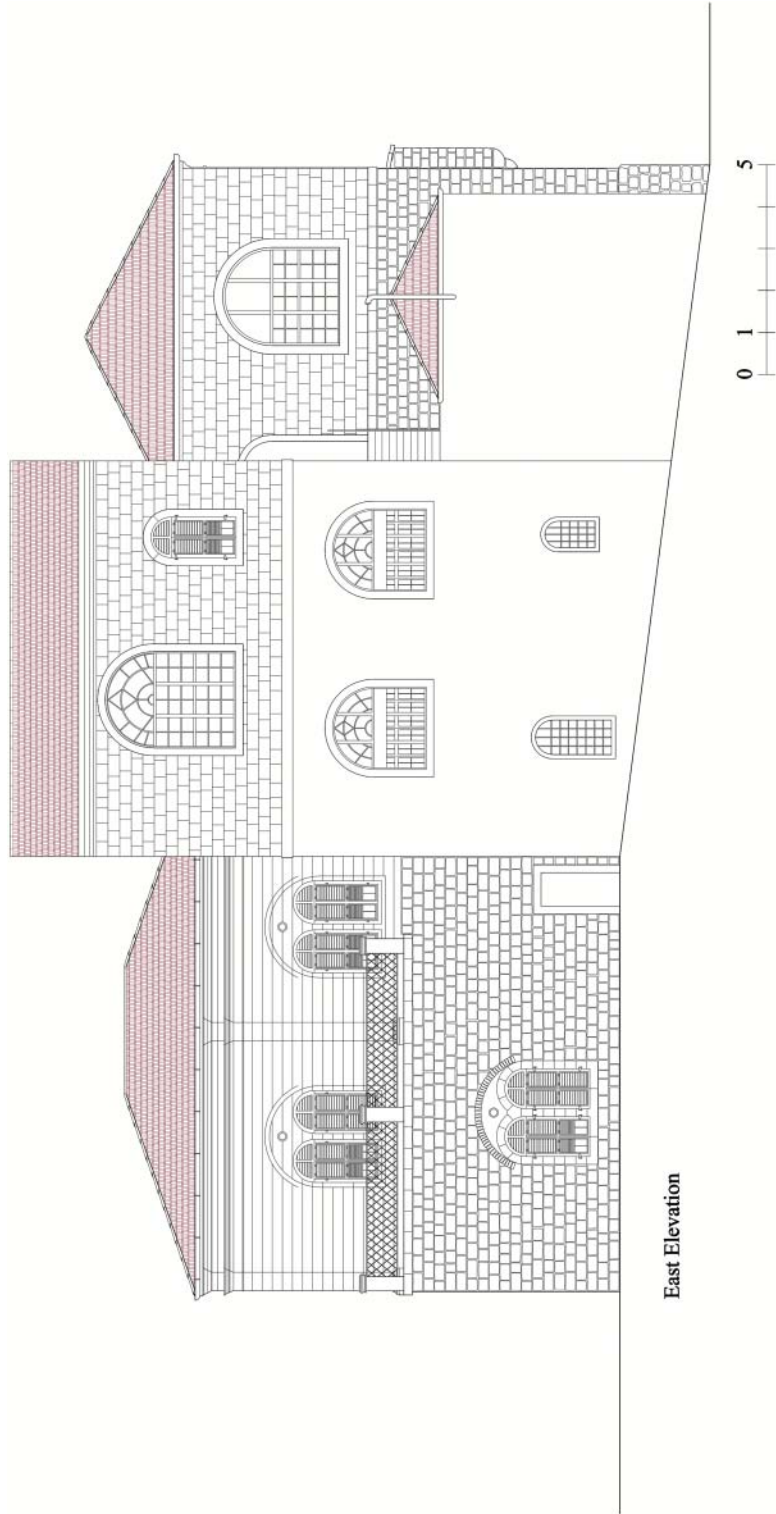
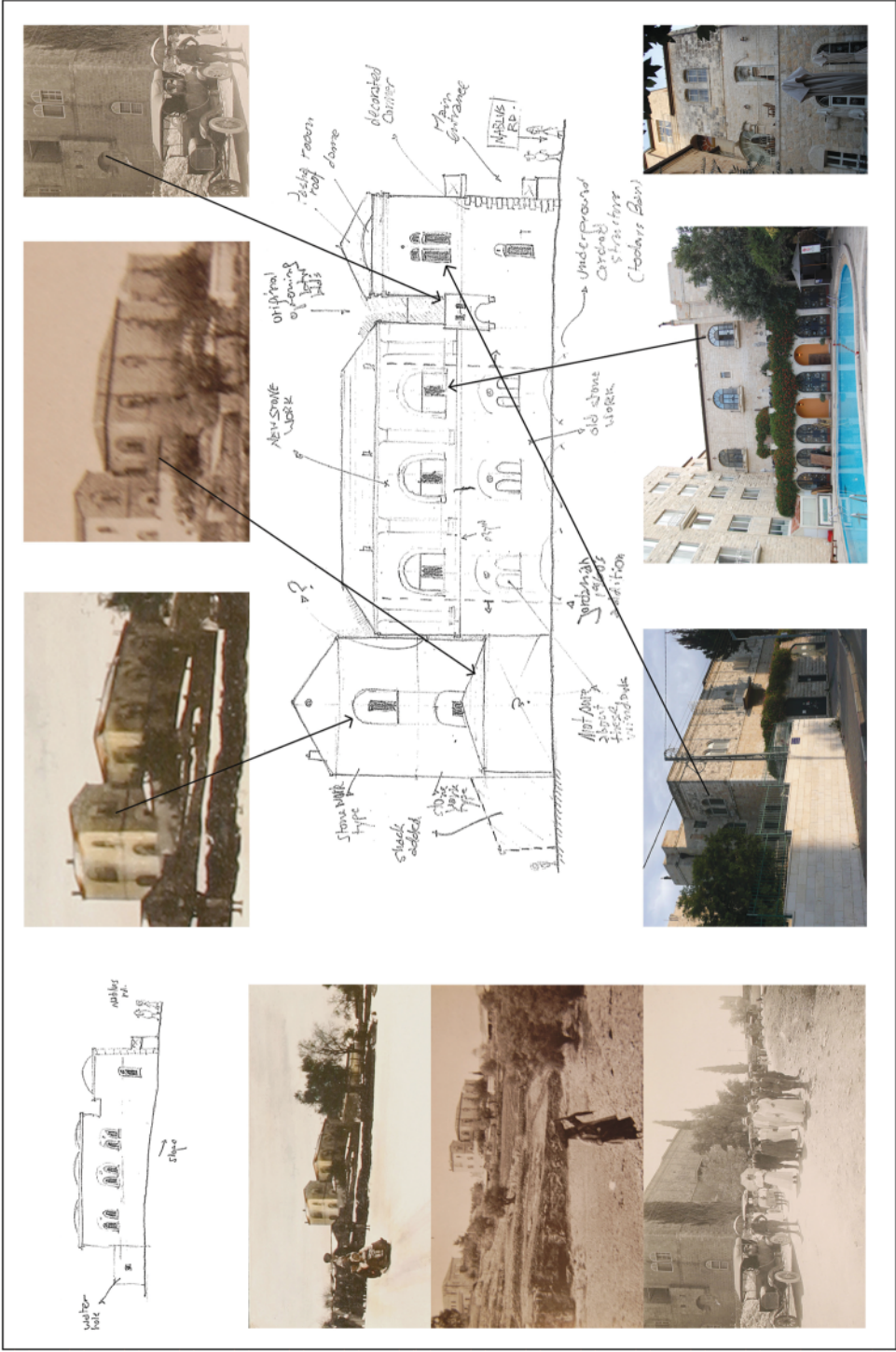


FIG. 8
Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: east elevation (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).



North elevation Ideogram and photographs

FIG. 9

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: ideogram of the north elevation (drawing by A. Amiri, 2008; photographs courtesy of the Archive at the American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem).

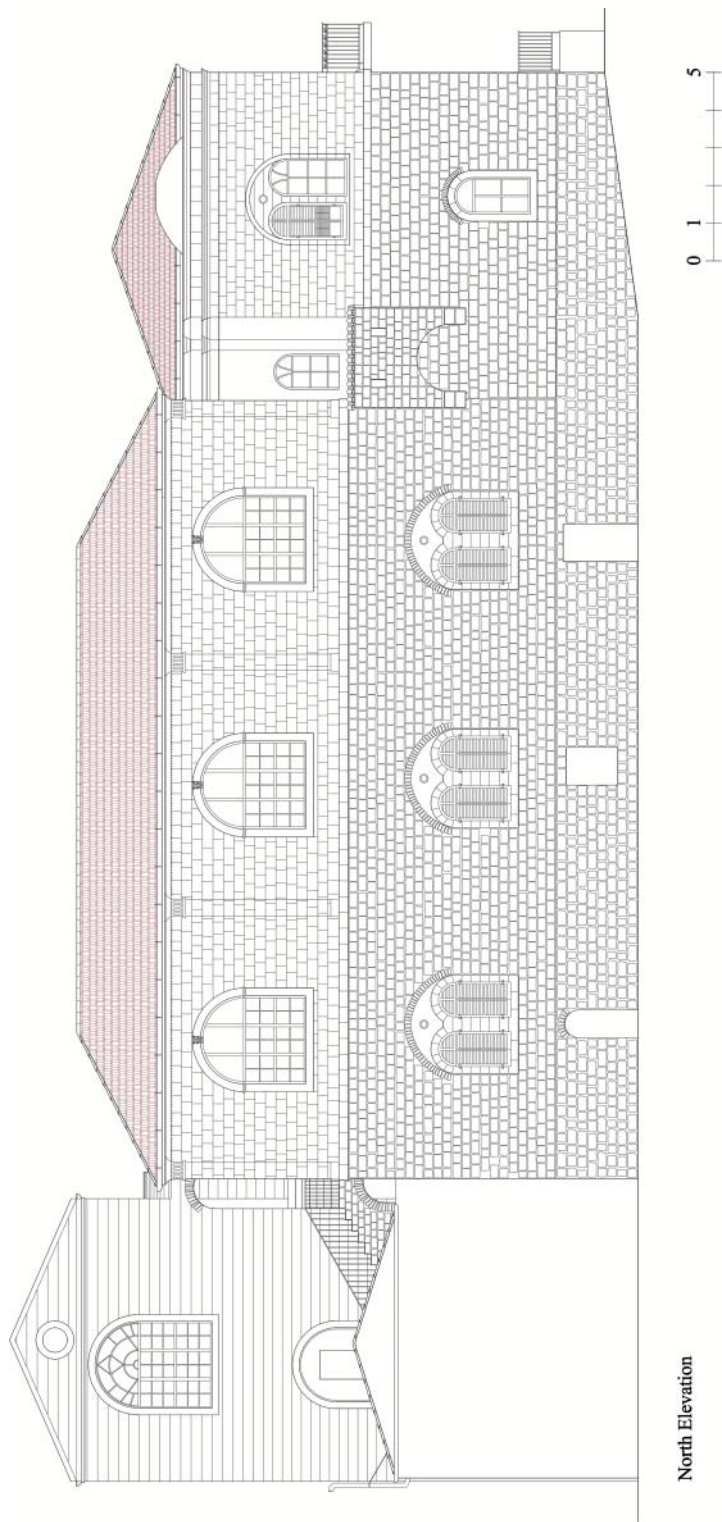


FIG. 10
Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: north elevation (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).

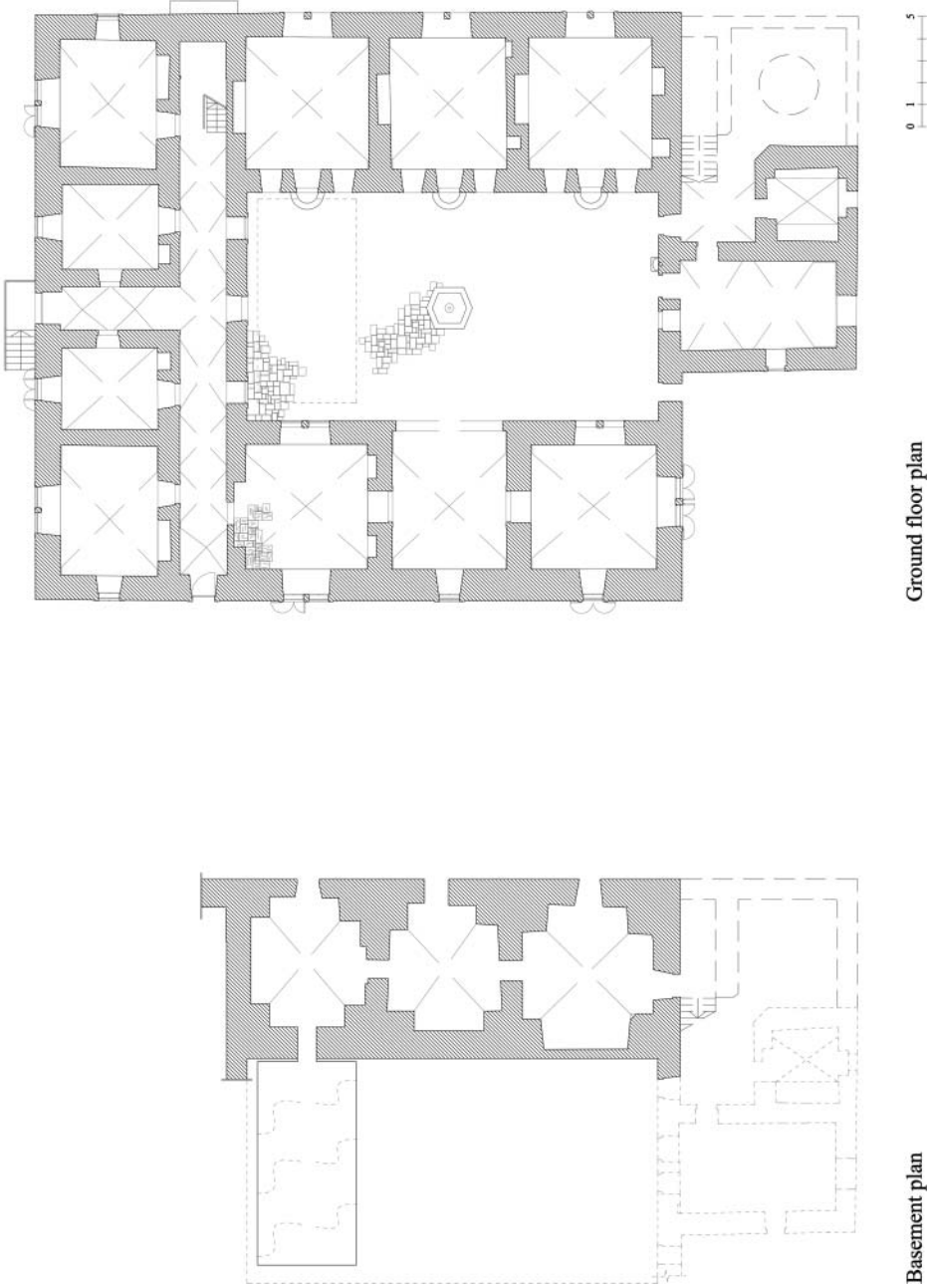
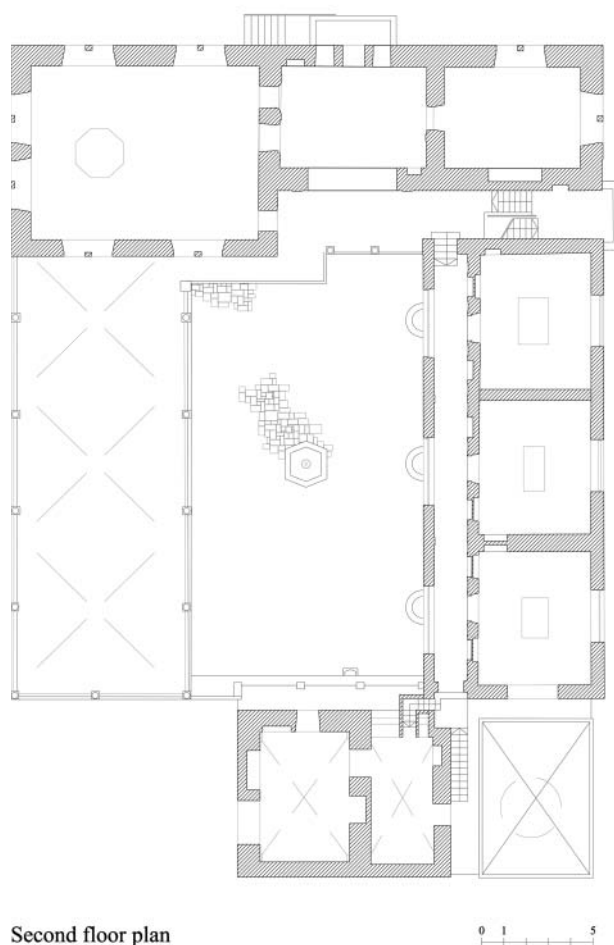


FIG. 11
Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: plan of the ground floor and basement (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).



Second floor plan

FIG. 12

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: plan of the second floor (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).

and modern buildings, the symmetry of the ground-floor façade was the honest exterior expression of the symmetry of the plan behind it (Fig. 11). A corridor bisected the wing, running from the entrance to the central courtyard. This hall also opened through doors into the two equal-sized rooms flanking it. A second corridor, perpendicular to the first, extended the length of the east side of the west wing, providing access to all four of its rooms. The east wall of this corridor separated the west wing from the rest of the house, affording privacy to the interior courtyard. This corridor also opened through a narrow door in the south façade of the house. At the north end of the corridor, a staircase

of cantilevered monolith-treads provided access to the roof top. Rooms and hallways were groin vaulted, although the staircase may have been open.

The incorporation of a long corridor into the programme of the wing suggests that the upper floor of this structure was planned from the initiation of the project. If a staircase was also originally part of the design, as seems likely, it marks the building as notably innovative. Research on Lebanese houses, with which the American Colony shares a number of features, suggests that interior staircases did not become common before the turn of the century.³⁰ The west wing, fronting the main

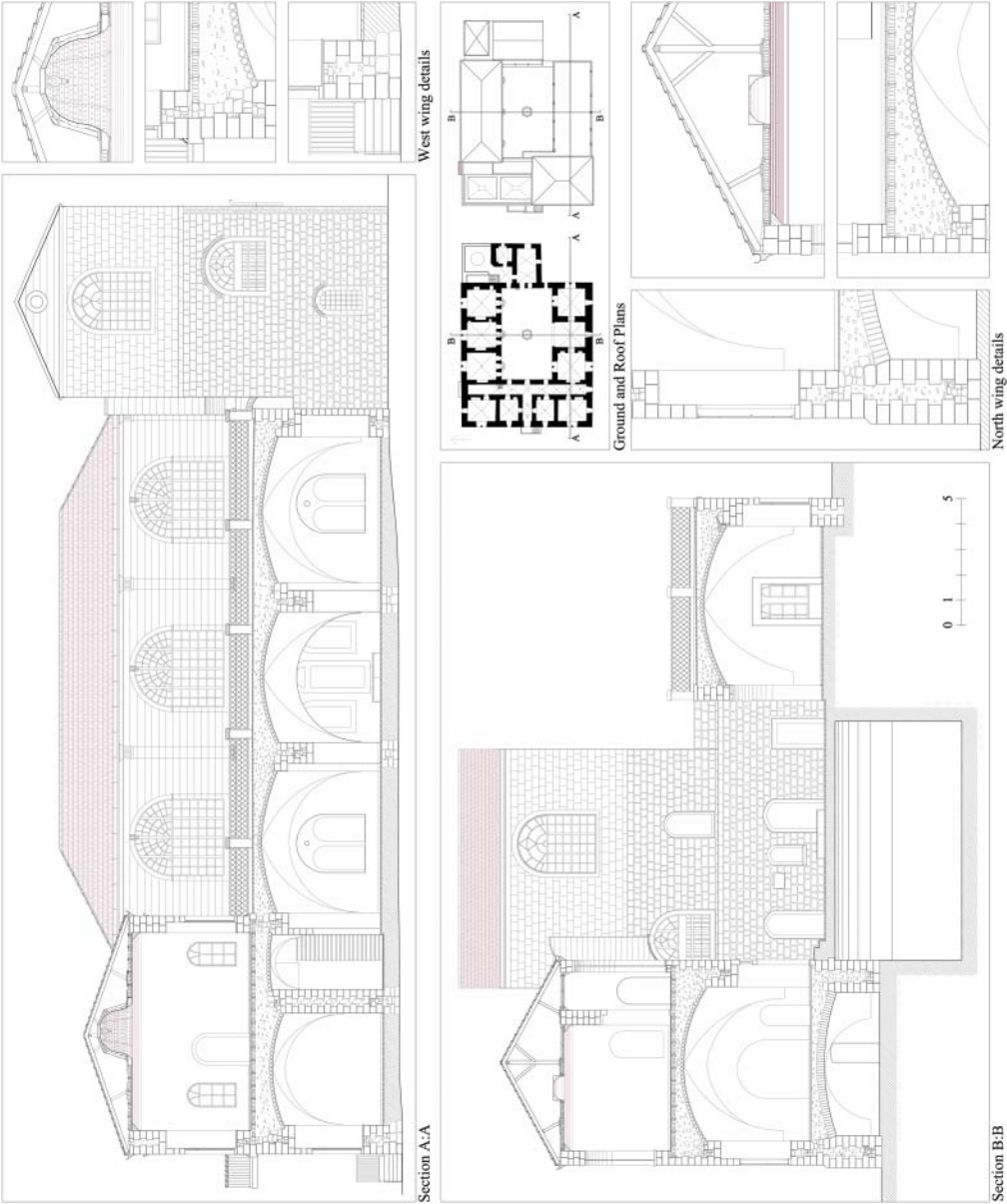


FIG. 13

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: sections of the building and construction details (AutoCAD drawing by A. Amiri, 2008).



FIG. 14

Jerusalem, comparative details of four survey maps (from left to right): 1. survey map by Sir Charles William Wilson (Southampton, 1876); 2. survey map by Sir Charles William Wilson (London, 1865); 3. survey map by Henri Nicole (Paris, 1886); 4. survey map by Conrad Schick (Leipzig, 1894–95; detail from Fig. 1) (all map extracts reproduced with permission from The National Library of Israel, Eran Laor Cartographic Collection, Shapell Family Digitization Project and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Department of Geography – Historic Cities Research Project).



FIG. 15
Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: rough sketch suggesting construction phases: A. Phases I and IIA;
B. IIB and IIC; C. III; D. IV and V [D. is not in scale] (drawing by A. Wharton, 2010).



FIG. 16

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/
American Colony: detail of the east side of the
courtyard, lower level (photograph by A. Wharton,
2009).



FIG. 17

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/
American Colony: Phase IIA (lower section) and IIB
(upper section), north side of the courtyard (photograph
by A. Wharton, 2009).

road from Damascus Gate to the town of Nablus, was the formal and most public part of the home. Following well-established regional conventions in domestic architecture, this wing was also the male domain.³¹

The north wing of the building is composed of three large rooms of approximately the same size. These rooms were identified by the American Colonists as belonging to three of the original owner's wives.³² Each of these gracious, groin-vaulted spaces has an arched entrance flanked by small arched windows opening onto the courtyard to the south, and a large, double-arched window opening to the countryside to the north.

The south wing of the structure could be described as a *liwan*: a vaulted space enclosed on three sides and fully open on the fourth, accessible from two enclosed flanking rooms (Fig. 13).³³ *Liwan* houses are very common in the Levant. The examples we have found that bear the greatest similarity to the Husseini House/American Colony are several large 18th-century homes in the Lebanon published by Ragette.³⁴ This triad of rooms was the shared space of the family.

The east wing, adapted from Phase I, retains something of its autonomous character. It seems to have functioned as the kitchen, with adjoining bathing and washing rooms, all of which typically shared a single hot water source. It is possible, but unlikely, that the bathing facilities took the form of a *hammam*, or heated bath. *Hammams* only very occasionally occur in private homes.³⁵ Spaces associated with dirt and odour — spaces of impurity — were traditionally located at the margins of the domestic sphere when at all possible. Toilets were probably constructed outside the house in a separate wooden structure. In the Levant generally, bathrooms became associated with sleeping areas only well into the 20th century, after the use of modern sewage and plumbing systems had become familiar.³⁶ Any evidence for the introduction of toilets into the Husseini/American Colony house before Phase IV has been eliminated by later 20th-century remodelling.

A large room was added as a second floor of the East Wing in Phase IIA. The stonework relating this space to Phase IIA is evident in views of the building from the south-east, where it appears

below the storey added in Phase IIB (Figs 13 and 19). This structure may have been the room introduced for the owner's fourth wife, as indicated by one of the Colonists.³⁷ It was accessed by a staircase on its north wall.

PHASE IIB

Phase IIB was arguably envisioned as part of the design of Phase II from its conception. This phase includes the upper floors of the north and west wings, which are rendered in a finely dressed, mottled-grey local limestone (Figs 12, 13, 18 and 19). The west wing has an elegant compound cornice. The north wing has a simple moulding with a dentil soffit. The wall surfaces of both wings are decorated with similarly rendered slender pilasters, although the detailing of the capitals differs. All the arches and windows have simple surrounds; the protruding keystones of the main arches are adorned with decorative leaves (Fig. 20).

Phase IIB certainly exhibits remarkable visual refinements. More critically, Phase IIB incorporates new technologies associated with the contemporary expansion of the European community in Jerusalem, notably red roof tiles and iron roof beams. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether or not the marked change in the ornament and technologies between the ground level and the first floor represents a significant lapse of time.

The second floor of the north wing had three rooms corresponding to those below, connected by a corridor to the south which opened to the central courtyard through three broad arches. The entrances to each of these rooms had one or two flanking windows; these south-facing apertures all opened through the corridor to the central courtyard. Each of the three rooms also had a view to the north through a generous, single-arched window. On the north face of the house between the north and west wings, visible now only in old photographs, was a machicolation-like feature which perhaps simply acted as a parapet screen for the staircase landing (Figs 9 and 10).

The plan of the second floor of the west wing could be described as a modified *liwan*. The central space of the three-room wing was a large vaulted hall, entirely open to the courtyard to the east. The western wall of the chamber opened through a triple arch to a porch off-axis above the main ground-floor entrance to the house. Flanking rooms communicated with this central hall through arches adorned in a way similar to those of the façade. To the north was a room about the same size as the hall and similarly vaulted. To the south was the formal parlour of the house (Fig. 21). Two double-arched windows open on the east, west and south sides of the parlour. Its remarkable wood-panelled ceiling is elaborately painted. An ornamented false dome contributes to the lavishness



FIG. 18

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: west façade, general view (photograph by A. Wharton, 2009).

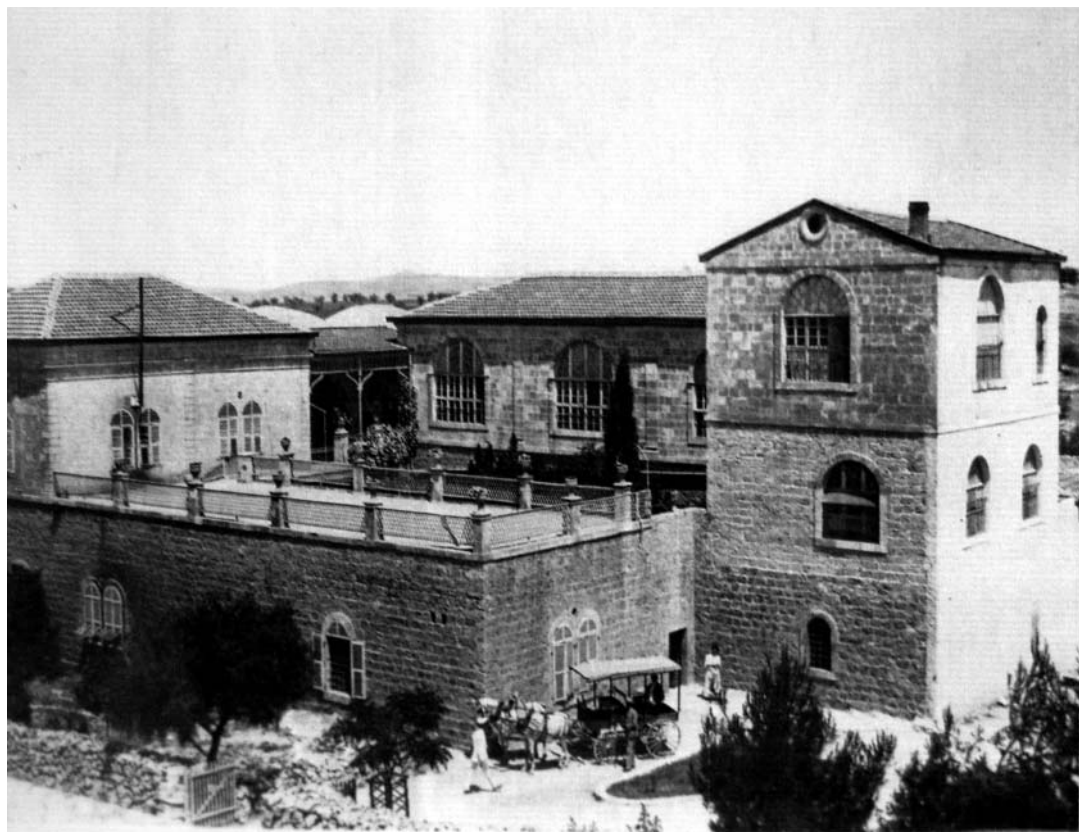


FIG. 19

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: south façade, view from the south-east (courtesy of the Archive at the American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem).

of the space (Fig. 13, detail on upper right).³⁸ The wooden dome is set off-centre towards the south, orienting the room in the same direction as al-Aksa mosque, and suggesting that it functioned as the prayer room as well as main reception hall of the house.³⁹ The American Colonists, who did not attend Protestant church services in Jerusalem, certainly used the room for prayer meetings as well as for entertaining. This room, like the second-floor rooms of the north wing, was covered with a red-tiled, hip roof. Red tile may have been first imported to Jerusalem by German Templers for the construction of their colony to the south-west of the city.⁴⁰ However, red roof tiles were apparently being produced in Jerusalem at the Schneller German-Arab vocational school as early as the 1870s.⁴¹ No second level was added to the south wing. Rather, its roof became an elevated patio, accessible from the west wing's upstairs corridor by an open walkway, supported by corbels (Fig. 19).

PHASE IIC

The east wing's detached character was further accentuated by the addition of a room as a third storey. Though the fabric is similar to that of the north and west wings of Phase IIB, the exterior articulation of this addition is distinct (Fig. 19). It may be of a slightly different date. This room was accessed by a staircase opening from the east end of the south wing gallery.

During Phases IIA to C, the Husseini house remained oriented to the west, toward Nablus Road. The west wing was the space of male business and male entertainment, entered from the street. It was formally separated from the domain of the family, which focused on the garden of the interior courtyard. This more intimate sphere was more informally entered from the east, the side of the house that turned away from the public thoroughfare and toward the interior of the family



FIG. 20

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/
American Colony: central door, north gallery,
ornamental keystone (photograph by A. Wharton,
2009).

neighbourhood. The entrance, identified as the 'women's entrance' by the American Colonists, is visible in the early 20th-century photograph of the house taken from the south-east (Fig. 19). The core of the structure was complete with Phase II; later phases added to that core, reoriented it, and changed its programme without substantially undoing its form.

PHASE III

The American Colonists initially made few changes to the fabric of the building, although the functions served by its various spaces shifted dramatically. Anna Spafford describes the complex which included their new house in a letter dated 5 October 1902:

We fill the new house [new to the American Colony] which contains twenty-two rooms. Besides this we occupy three houses which have respectively five and four rooms each. Then we occupy the lower part of a large

house which contains five very large rooms and two small ones and three rooms for storing our stores. Some of the rooms in the smaller houses are used for Photography and silver plating and school rooms. Five rooms are thus used, leaving the rest for sleeping, parlour or salon as we call it here, and three dining rooms and one kitchen. Then we have added to one home two wooden rooms for cake baking and putting up jams, etc. which we sell. Then we have put up a good sized barn for our three horses and two donkeys and four cows and two calves, which we are raising. Then we have a carpentry shop, where all kinds of carpentry is done. Then we have a little blacksmith shop. So all together we work like a little village.⁴²

The social practices of its inhabitants had a significant impact on the fabric of the house only after the American Colony purchased the structure in 1910. An additional bay was added to the ground floor, filling in the south-east corner of the plan (Fig. 22). More fundamentally, the house was reoriented. In 1926, the old formal (men's) entrance of the house to the west and the smaller, domestic (women's) entrance to the east were blocked up, replaced by a new entrance cut through the centre of the south façade, which was then monumentalized by a porte-cochère.⁴³ A triple-arched separation was also introduced to the west side of the *liwan*, converting it to an entrance hall (Fig. 23). The carefully ordered distinctions between the male and female, public and private domains of the house were erased.

PHASE IV

Bathrooms were added to the three bedrooms at both levels of the north wing some time after 1926 and before 1968, probably in the 1950s.

PHASE V

Between 1965 and 1968, a large addition of five storeys was built adjoining the northern and eastern faces of the house, introducing a new kitchen, dining area and service spaces on the ground and basement levels, as well as administrative offices on the first floor and guest rooms on the first to fourth floors (Figs 15 and 18).⁴⁴ This steel-frame structure departs from the core building in its sensibility as well as in its building technologies. Careful renovations and redecorations of the guest rooms in this block, begun in 1992, have minimized the impact of the addition on the aesthetics of the interior, if not of the exterior of the structure.



FIG. 21

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: formal parlour, second floor, south-west corner, view of the interior (courtesy of the Archive at the American Colony Hotel, Jerusalem).

OBSERVATIONS

The Hussein house is not a typical late 19th-century Palestinian suburban home. It is unusually large for Jerusalem. It is also atypical in its plan. The traditional Palestinian courtyard house was common in the Old City, but rare outside the walls. The other homes in the Hussein neighbourhood were central-hall plan structures, standing within a walled garden, rather than enclosing one. Even when compared with courtyard houses, the plan of the Hussein house is remarkable. As mentioned above, houses of the elites in the Levant commonly have a bilaterally symmetrical arrangement of the public face of the structure, with both the façade and the rooms directly behind it ordered by a central vertical axis. The public front of such a house conforms to the formality of these rooms' functions. But deeper into the Levantine house, rooms are typically more organically arranged. The plan of the Hussein house is uncommon in that the

dominant east–west axis generated by the west wing is interrupted at its core by a powerful lateral, north–south axis. The greater symmetry of the plan and the introduction of an interior staircase, like the use of new building technologies in Phase IIB, perhaps suggest the appropriation of Western forms before the structure was inhabited by Western bodies. Though also very handsomely wrought, the other houses in the Hussein neighbourhood were not built on the same scale or with the same plan as the home that became the American Colony. Most of these homes are central hall structures of a more modest size. The plan of Rabbah Effendi al-Hussein's home bears resemblance to published layouts of a few Lebanese houses; aspects of its order and some of its building materials also suggest the adoption of selected European practices. The house was certainly sophisticatedly cosmopolitan. For now, however, the absence of archival documentation about the home's original owners and builders as well as the limited published research on



FIG. 22

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/American Colony: view from the west through the east bay of the original southern suite into the bay added in Phase III (photograph by A. Wharton, 2005).

19th-century Levantine domestic architecture allow little basis for speculation about the antecedents of the building's unusual form.

Despite the innovations of its plan, the house nevertheless embodies many aspects of traditional Palestinian domestic programming. The domain of the public and the male is separate from that of the private and the familial. Polluted spaces are isolated from clean ones. The space is designed to provide good air circulation — most of the rooms open to fresh air on at least two sides. The kitchen and cleaning area is sited to the north-east where it is most shielded from the direct sun. The plan of the house is efficiently functional. Even more importantly, its basic forms are traditional. The walls and vaults of the building are expressive of the local builders who constructed them, of the local materials of their making, and of the social practices which they initially sheltered. The irregularity of the paved floors, the imprecision of the angles, the subtle inconsistencies of the moulding

profiles all reveal the human labour engaged in the struggle to create a habitat with materials offered by the land. Awareness, conscious or unconscious, of the human touch in the modelling of the space and its details lends intimacy even to the large, communal rooms of the building. Indeed, the power of the Hussein house resides in its vernacular forms. The building provides an important referent for the understanding of the 19th- and early 20th-century Palestinian suburban house.

Finally, the building's evolution between the middle of the 19th century through the 20th century allows its fabric to be read as a historical document of the changing political conditions of Jerusalem. The encroachment of the West in the region, culminating with the British Mandate and continuing with the establishment of Israel, is legible in the structure's early embrace of non-local forms and building techniques, and later its more radical reorientation and related re-functioning, first as a Christian messianic commune and then



FIG. 23

Jerusalem, Rabbah Effendi al-Husseini House/
American Colony: view north from the Phase III
entrance hall through the central courtyard
(photograph by A. Wharton, 2005).

as a hostel and hotel. The patriarchal domestic arrangement so clearly articulated in the separation of spaces within the house was replaced initially by a cenobitic order led by both a husband and a wife, living as celibates: men and women slept separately, but worked and prayed together. With the death of Horatio Spafford, women — Anna Spafford and later Bertha Vester — took on the leadership of the commune. By 1904, marriage was countenanced. Men and women lived and worked together. Gender distinctions within the domestic realm certainly did not disappear — women's spheres included cooking, cleaning and certain forms of production like lace-making and dried flower mounting — but none of these spaces were impenetrable. Again, while there were male domains such as the blacksmith shop and the photographic studio, none were closed to women. Most critically, the west wing, still the area of the house in which its occupants met most formally with visitors, was no longer an exclusively male realm.

The addition of the 1960s was built in response to the post-war influx of tourists from the United

States and Europe. The guest rooms are conventionally commercial — rectilinear, functional, familiarly modern.⁴⁵ That phase of construction may demonstrate the relatively lax building codes of the Jordanian era, but it also indicates the popularization of relatively cheap western building technologies that replaced local construction techniques and, consequently, reshaped West Jerusalem even more dramatically than East Jerusalem.⁴⁶ The evolution of the Husseini home/American Colony from the late 19th century to the present materializes a continuous dialogue between the local and the Western. Certainly, the addition represents the continued force of westernization in Jerusalem. But an aesthetically careful remodelling and restoration of the house and of the other Husseini neighbourhood buildings in the American Colony complex has been undertaken more recently. The privileged place of history in this most recent work demonstrates the continued power of the Palestinian building tradition that these structures embody.

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The map extracts in Figs 1 and 14 are reproduced by kind permission of The National Library of Israel, Eran Laor Cartographic Collection, Shapell Family Digitization Project and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Department of Geography — Historic Cities Research Project.

NOTES

- ¹ Quoted in Canaan 1933, 82.
- ² Silwan and Lifta, for example, are mentioned by earlier travellers. The deed of the Khalidi house, which formerly stood on the site of the Palestine Archaeological Museum, is dated to 1711 and describes the stone structure on the property. For a description of the extramural Arab estates, see Kark & Landman 1980, 117.
- ³ Kark & Oren-Nordheim 2001.
- ⁴ <<http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/maps/jer/html/jer259.htm>> [last modified 17 September 2008].
- ⁵ For still the most convenient source for development outside the walls of Jerusalem, including those structures mentioned in this paragraph, see Ben-Arieh 1986.
- ⁶ For the Palestinian house, see Fuchs 1998a; Fuchs & Meyer-Brodnitz 1989; Fuchs 1998b. For high quality photographs of historic Palestinian houses, see Khasawneh 2001.
- ⁷ Most recently on the German Colony, see Kroyanker 2008. For an introduction and bibliography for the German and Jewish neighbourhoods, see Kroyanker & Wahrman 1983; Ben-Arieh 1986; Kark 1991.
- ⁸ For an early 20th-century account of this persuasion, which includes references to earlier literature of the same sort, see Dalman 1964 (the volume was published posthumously — Dalman died in 1941).
- ⁹ There are, of course, important exceptions. See, for example, references here to Ron Fuchs' work. I (AW) expect to address these historiographic issues in a future publication.
- ¹⁰ For the date of construction, see Kroyanker 1994, 117–18. The dates are, it seems, posited on the basis of the lack of reference to the building in Charles William Wilson's 1865 survey of Jerusalem.
- ¹¹ See, for example, the stunning publication of Bayt al-'Aqqad in Damascus: Mortensen 2005.
- ¹² Nashif 1977, 115–16.
- ¹³ For a brief introduction to the Husseini family, see Rubinstein 2001.
- ¹⁴ Sapir 1998.
- ¹⁵ For a description and contextualization of the religious beliefs of the members of the American Colony, see Ariel & Kark 1996.
- ¹⁶ Lagerlöf 1915; 1918; Vester 2008. For a fine film version of Lagerlöf's *Jerusalem*, see Facchini O.F.M. 1986. Recent publications also include Geniesse 2008; Matsson 1992; Hummel & Hintlian 2005; Ariel & Kark 1996; Dudman & Kark 1998.
- ¹⁷ This structure houses the Spafford Children's Hospital. In the last few years it has been carefully renovated.
- ¹⁸ The graves of deceased members of the group were even violated by their co-religionists. This incident and others are recounted by an outside observer: Ford 1906. A sense of that enmity is also conveyed in a complaint filed by a group of Protestants against the members of the American Colony: Alley 1897, reprinted in Lipman 1989, 151–2.
- ¹⁹ For a vivid description of the American Colony illustrated with photographs from their own studio, see Hummel & Hintlian 2005.
- ²⁰ A photograph of what seems to be a copy of a deed dated 10 March is found in the Library of Congress, 'American Colony Collection' (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1910).
- ²¹ Vester 2008, 175–6. A slightly different version is given by Theo Larson, who names the price of the building as US\$40,000 in gold: Gröndahl & Larsson 2005, 11.
- ²² Gröndahl & Larsson 2005, 14.
- ²³ Gröndahl & Larsson 2005, 15.
- ²⁴ The choice of management company was carefully made; the decision to appoint a Swiss firm rather than a local one was critical politically for maintaining the American Colony's famous neutrality: Vester 2008. On that neutrality, see Feron 1984.
- ²⁵ The expansion of Jerusalem can be followed in a series of topographical maps of the city, conveniently presented for study in high resolution images online by the Jewish National Library and Hebrew University: <<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/maps/jer/>> [last updated 1 June 2005]. Wilson 1865 (Fig. 14:1), <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/maps/jer/images/jer200/Jer200_b.jpg>; Wilson 1876 (Fig 14:2), <<http://maps-of-jerusalem.huji.ac.il/html/jer202.htm>>.
- ²⁶ For an accessible introduction to the geology of Jerusalem and its effects, see Avnimelech 1966.
- ²⁷ Nicole 1886, <<http://maps-of-jerusalem.huji.ac.il/html/jer098.htm>>.
- ²⁸ The courtyard house is a popular, autochthonous form in the Middle East. It has attracted considerable attention from architects as well as historians. See, for example, the typological studies of Petruccioli (2006; 2007). More useful as historical assessments are several of the articles in Edwards *et al.* 2006.
- ²⁹ Another cistern in the complex is now part of Munir Barakat's shop opposite the main entry to Reception and may be visited.
- ³⁰ Ragette 1974, 189.
- ³¹ For example, see Zako 2006.
- ³² Vester 2006, 17–18.
- ³³ Bloom & Blair 2009, 336–9.
- ³⁴ Ragette 1974, especially no. 46.
- ³⁵ Had a *hammam* been part of the structure, it would presumably have been noted by the American Colonists somewhere in their many descriptions of the establishment.
- ³⁶ Ragette 1974, 190.
- ³⁷ Gröndahl & Larsson 2005, 11.
- ³⁸ For an excellent discussion of Ottoman ceiling decorations in Jerusalem, see Sharif 2000.

³⁹ For domestic prayer spaces, see Campo 1991, 32–4.

⁴⁰ Carmel 1997, particularly 44–6; Kroyanker 2008.

⁴¹ Kroyanker & Wahrman 1983, 24.

⁴² Spafford 1902.

⁴³ Vester 2008, 25.

⁴⁴ M. Schwartz, interview 10 November 2006.

⁴⁵ The upgrading of the new structure as well as the continued remodelling and reworking of the other buildings that form the American Colony complex are a tribute to the continued love that the house and its generous history has earned from its worthy custodians.

⁴⁶ For a general discussion of the impact of white concrete and steel-frame construction on the urban landscape of Jerusalem, see Wharton 2001, 120–30.

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SUMMARY IN FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN AND SPANISH

RÉSUMÉ

Maison à Jérusalem: la Colonie américaine et l'architecture suburbaine palestinienne

Le développement urbain à l'extérieur des murs de Jérusalem n'a commencé qu'après 1850. Les nouvelles banlieues incarnent les traditions spatiales des différentes religions et des patrons des différentes ethnies. Les complexes émigrés russes, français, anglais, allemands et en particulier juifs, ont fait l'objet de recherches poussées. Les banlieues palestiniennes ont en revanche été moins bien étudiées. Le sujet de cette analyse est la plus grande maison du voisinage de Hussein. Une étude des maçonneries du bâtiment et de ses archives écrites et photographiques permet une reconstruction des différentes phases de la structure. Les variations de sa forme correspondent aux changements culturels dans la Jérusalem ottomane affectée par la présence croissante des intérêts occidentaux dans la région.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Heim in Jerusalem: Die amerikanische Kolonie und palästinensische Vorstadtarchitektur

Die städtische Bebauung außerhalb der Stadtmauer von Jerusalem begann erst nach 1850. Die neuen Stadtteile verkörperten die verschiedenen räumlichen und religiösen Traditionen der Hausbesitzer. Russen, Franzosen, englische, deutsche, und besonders jüdische Immigrantenzentren sind ausgiebig erforscht worden. Weniger sorgfältig sind die neuen palästinensischen Vorstädte untersucht worden. Diese Analyse konzentriert sich auf das größte Haus der Hussein-Nachbarschaft. Die Untersuchung der Bestandteile des Gebäudes und die Auswertung des schriftlichen und fotografischen Archivs erlauben eine Rekonstruktion der Entwicklungsstadien des Baues. Seine Formveränderungen zeigen den kulturellen Wandel des Ottomanischen Jerusalems beeinflusst durch die wachsende Präsenz des Westens mit seinem Interesse an der Religion.

*RIASSUNTO****Casa a Gerusalemme: la colonia Americana e l'architettura palestinese dei sobborghi***

L'espansione urbana fuori dalle mura di Gerusalemme iniziò solo dopo il 1850. I nuovi sobborghi urbani incarnarono le tradizioni di organizzazione dello spazio di proprietari diversi per religione ed etnia. I complessi residenziali degli emigranti Russi, Francesi, Inglese, Tedeschi e soprattutto di quelli Ebrei, sono stati indagati approfonditamente. I nuovi sobborghi palestinesi sono stati studiati meno dettagliatamente. La casa più grande del vicinato Husseini è al centro di quest'analisi. Una ricerca sulla struttura dell'edificio e sul suo archivio fotografico e di documentazione scritta, hanno permesso di ricostruire gli stadi di sviluppo della struttura. La trasformazione della sua forma documenta il cambiamento culturale nella Gerusalemme Ottomana sotto la crescente presenza di interessi Occidentali nella regione.

*RESUMEN****El hogar en Jerusalén: la colonia americana y la arquitectura suburbana palestina***

El desarrollo urbano fuera de las murallas de Jerusalén comenzó poco después de 1850, con nuevos barrios que reflejaban las tradiciones espaciales de los ocupantes de distintas religiones y etnias. Se han investigado los complejos creados por emigrantes rusos, franceses, ingleses, alemanes y sobre todo judíos, aunque los nuevos barrios suburbanos palestinos todavía están por estudiar en detalle. Este artículo se centra en la casa más grande de la vecindad de Husseini. El estudio de su fábrica junto con su archivo escrito y fotográfico nos ha permitido reconstruir las fases evolutivas de la estructura. Los diversos cambios en su forma son un reflejo fiel de los cambios culturales del Jerusalén otomano, a su vez afectado por la presencia, cada vez más numerosa, de los intereses occidentales en la región.

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