

Introduction: Marking 150 Years of the Palestine Exploration Fund

David Gurevich and Anat Kidron

Introduction

In 1867, Captain Charles Warren commenced his pioneering explorations in Jerusalem. Warren's expedition was the first large-scale enterprise of the recently established Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which had emerged in 1865. Notable members of the British aristocracy were involved in establishing the PEF, and Her Majesty Queen Victoria provided the patronage for the innovative endeavour. The PEF's Committee put many hopes on Warren's project as their first step in implementing the principles of scientific exploration on the soil of the Holy Land. Nevertheless, upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Warren encountered severe logistical difficulties in the initial stages of his mission. In his book *Underground Jerusalem*, the young captain elaborated on his correspondence in Jerusalem with the PEF's headquarters in London:

Scarcely a decade of years have yet passed since the Palestine Exploration Fund, with a true sense of mercies of providence, sent out an expedition to the Holy Land, without money or materials, to undermine the Holy City, to survey the country. The conception was grand, but I may say almost unique in the history of scientific societies. The party was to commence operations, and by its researches call the attention of the public work, and thus electrify the scarce breathing body of the little Palestine Exploration Fund, and bring it into life. "Give us results, and we will send you money!" was the inspiring cry which reached me in Palestine; in vain

I replied, "Give me tools, materials, money, food, and I will get you results." The answer was, "Results furnished, and you shall have the money!" (Warren 1876: 3)

A lot has changed since those bygone days: by the time of its 150th anniversary in 2015, the PEF was long-recognized as having paved the way for almost every scientific exploration of the Holy Land; indeed, it is hardly possible to recall the history of research in archaeology and geography of the region without discussing the achievements of the PEF scholars in the first paragraph of such an account. Today, then, the time has come for a retrospective.

The essays in this book are presented in clusters that address the variety of the research themes. Some articles offer an updated assessment of the findings by archaeologists who dig the sites previously excavated by the PEF, while others re-evaluate the PEF's achievement by studying the enormous quantities of information that PEF researchers recorded in reports, letters, and illustrations. Many of these documents are held in the PEF archives in central London and have never been published. The studies in *Exploring the Holy Land* constitute not only a valuable appraisal useful for archaeologists; they also contribute to the history of knowledge about the geography of local human society in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

The first cluster, "The PEF and The Holy Land", provides a general introduction to the PEF's projects. The PEF was unique among the European scientific societies in bonding

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together persons of the scholarly community, military personnel, clergy, and members of the British aristocracy. Its goal was to undertake a systematic investigation of the Land of the Bible by adopting what was perceived as “secular” scientific principles. *David M. Jacobson* analyses the circumstances that led to the establishment of the PEF, against the background of Victorian British society in 1865. His paper traces the events through a study of the campaigning of Sir George Grove, a remarkable figure who was the PEF’s first Honorary Secretary. Grove was a true polymath: a civil engineer specializing in the design of lighthouses, he served as the Secretary of the Crystal Palace, and his name is remembered in an eponymous reference work on music and musicians. Grove was also a scholar of Hebrew, and it is due to his efforts that the PEF was established and set new standards for European works in the Levant.

Sveta Matskevich’s article assesses the archaeological documentation methods which were developed by PEF field personnel, analysing the introduction of accurate measuring equipment and professional draughtsmanship into PEF fieldwork. This development was the product of a unique collaboration between the PEF and the Royal Engineers of the British Army, and of the employment of architects in PEF archaeological excavations.

The second cluster, “Discovering Ancient Jerusalem”, focuses on the PEF surveys and excavations in the city, which was studied by the PEF more than any other site in the Holy Land. The PEF laid the basis for understanding ancient Jerusalem, and many archaeologists have followed their footsteps, often continuing excavations at the same locations. Between 1995 and 2010, *Ronny Reich* co-headed the archaeological expeditions in the City of David, in the Tyropoeon Valley, and in other parts of ancient Jerusalem. His work often took place in locations previously excavated by F. J. Bliss and A. Dickie

on behalf of the PEF between 1894 and 1897, and his essay in this volume aims to reassess their conclusions in light of his team’s new field findings. The Tyropoeon Valley was also the subject of the PEF excavations conducted by J. W. Crowfoot and G. M. FitzGerald in the 1920s. In their article, *Yana Tchekhanovets* and *Doron Ben-Ami*, who lead a long-term excavation in the Tyropoeon Valley, discuss parallels between the architectural remains at their site to earlier PEF findings nearby. The authors demonstrate that Crowfoot and FitzGerald were the first to expose the southern living quarters of Late Roman Jerusalem—Aelia Capitolina, founded by Emperor Hadrian in 132 CE on the ruins of the destroyed Jewish Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, inaccessibility to sites under study is common in archaeological research, because the city is not only a place of antiquity but also a living metropolis, and furthermore often a subject of religious and political sensitivity. Archaeological sites such as the sanctuaries on the Temple Mount are beyond the reach of the spades of archaeologists. The first PEF scholars encountered the same difficulties in the 19th century. In their article, *Frankie Snyder*, *Gabriel Barkay*, and *Zachi Dvira* offer a reconstruction of the Crusader *opus sectile* floors of the Dome of the Rock by a comprehensive analysis of the 19th-century illustrations of Charles W. Wilson’s *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt* (1880–1884). Wilson, who had had an impressive military career in the Royal Engineers, was already well-known by this time as the director of the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem (1864–1865), an enterprise (Wilson 1865) that had stimulated efforts to establish the PEF. A prominent figure in the exploration of the Holy Land, he served as the PEF’s chairman from 1902 to 1906.

The third cluster, “Sites and Excavations”, focuses on sites outside Jerusalem that were explored previously by PEF scholars. Two of the essays provide a retrospective on the excavated

tell sites. *Eric L. Welch et al.*, on behalf of the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project, review the recently revealed fortifications of this tell site compared with the discoveries of the PEF expedition on this site in 1899 headed by F. J. Bliss and R. A. S. Macalister. Bliss and Macalister recognized Tell es-Safi's fortification as dating to the so-called "Jewish Period". However, the modern excavators have reached the conclusion that the fortifications had in fact been erected in the Early Bronze Age.

Macalister was a controversial figure in the history of archaeological research in the Holy Land: unlike other early archaeologists, he succeeded in publishing his field data shortly after the excavations ended, but the quality of his reports is debatable. His field methodology applied at the excavations of Gezer, as well as his contested reputation as an archaeologist, are the subject of *Samuel R. Wolff's* article.

The work of the PEF was not confined to excavations and surveys, though: efforts were also made to reconstruct the historical geography, with the purpose of identifying biblical sites. The article of *Chris McKinny* and *Aharon Tavger* analyses the older arguments of PEF scholars and their cartographic material in relation to recent archaeological findings as regards the identification of two sites: Lebonah of Ephraim (Judg 21:19) and Libnah of the Shephelah (Josh 10:29–31). The authors offer updated identifications for these sites.

The PEF Survey of Western Palestine (SWP) was the first systematic mapping of the Holy Land. The surveyors discovered not only that ancient names were preserved in the contemporary site names of the 19th century, but also that many ancient traditions of worship persisted. Traditions that clung to sacred sites were transferred from one religion to another, crossing the civilizations and empires that controlled the Holy Land. In her article, *Daniella Talmon-Heller* demonstrates how the Muslim

Shi'i tradition of worshipping at the site of Husayn b. 'Ali's relics in Ascalon was adopted by the local Sunni population, and re-emerged as an annual festival which was recorded by the SWP. Her paper is based on the testimony of Nu'man al-Qasatli, a "forgotten" member of the SWP team.

The fourth cluster, "Surveys", discusses surveys conducted by the PEF. *Moti Haiman's* article provides an overview of the development of survey methodology in the Negev desert, comparing the first enterprises conducted by the PEF to contemporary surveys that employ advanced mapping equipment such as Global Positioning System (GPS) devices and computer-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS). *Chaim Ben David* examines the study of the Roman road network from the PEF's SWP to the current Israel Milestone Committee. Ben David's article is also a valuable survey of Roman milestones in SWP reports, and he provides a complete list of references for these, which have been little noticed before now. The closing article of this cluster is authored by *Roy Marom*, who uses *Claude Reignier Conder's* travelogue of the SWP *Tent Work in Palestine* (Conder 1878) to trace social changes during the Late Ottoman period in the Sharon Plain.

The initial ideas expressed in the essays in this book were discussed on the occasion of the international conference *The PEF and the Early Exploration of the Holy Land*, held at the University of Haifa during December 2015. The conference aimed to provide a cross-disciplinary platform for a colloquy on the achievements of the PEF in light of the present state of research. The presenters in the conference devoted attention to various aspects of pioneering PEF activity: archaeological expeditions, surveys, methodology, people and personalities, scholarly publications, and even field travelogues. The successful efforts of the contributors came to fruition with the selected 12 peer-reviewed research articles. It is our

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aspiration that sharing the research with a larger academic public will not merely stimulate further scientific debate, but also extend the knowledge of the archaeology and history of the region.

In conclusion, we chose to return to Captain Warren's remarks in *Underground Jerusalem*: "Those who think and speak of a rapid change taking place in Palestine are considered as dreamers" (Warren 1876: 558). Today, when one recalls the developments of archaeology in the region for over 150 years, from the founding meeting of the PEF at the Westminster Abbey up to now, one is confident that the immense move to study and understand this land occurred due to the work of the PEF and its devoted field personnel.

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