



MIA GRÖNDAHL

TO JERUSALEM

In the Steps of Eight Swedes and a Finn

*- a thousand years of reciprocal contributions inspired by the cultural,
religious, scientific and political mosaic of Jerusalem/Al Quds*

PASSIA

The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs-Jerusalem

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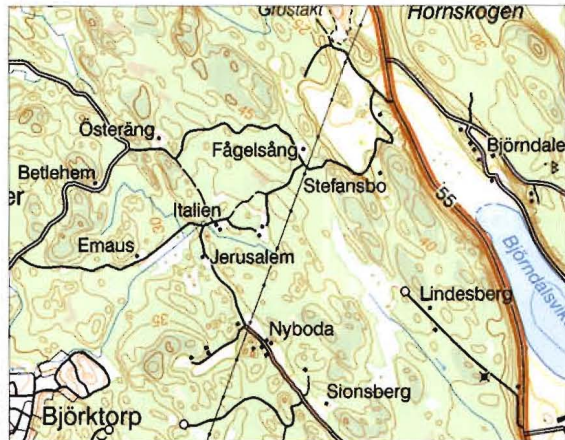
1852
1852



INTRODUCTION

Jerusalem is never far away in Sweden.
In fact, it is just next door for many Swedes.

Our long country is dotted from north to south with villages, hills, moorlands, mills, meadows, and mountains that have borrowed their names from the faraway Holy City. In all, thirty-eight “Jeruselems” are registered in the Swedish Place-name Register. There is even a “Joy of Jerusalem”. And then we have one city, the fifth largest, Jönköping*, which is known as “the Jerusalem of Sweden”, because of its many free churches and reputation as a place largely inhabited by religious people.



Jerusalem in the province of Sörmland, Sweden. The map also shows places called Betlehem, Emaus, and the less Biblical Italien (Italy).

The Jeruselems of Sweden are – with some exceptions – situated in the four counties surrounding Stockholm. A thousand years ago this region, with Uppsala as its centre, was also a battleground for the power struggle between the old pagan beliefs and new Christian teachings. When members of the Swedish nobility embraced Christianity – not firmly established in the whole of Sweden until 1160 - the dream of Jerusalem also came into being.

The most pious among them decided not only to name a Swedish hill or settlement in honour of the Holy City but also actually to visit this cradle of the new religion, and so embarked on the long and dangerous pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

* Jönköping also has a website entitled “Sweden’s Jerusalem”. This site <http://sverigesjerusalem.com> shows that people in the Jerusalem of Sweden are searching for more things in life than just religion. Entertainments and cultural events such as music, theatre, and film festivals, as well as other interesting events taking place here are listed.

THE FIRST TRAVELLERS TO “JORSALA”

In the county of Uppsala rune stones are still in existence, which tell us by means of short but very descriptive wording the stories behind the first known Swedes who journeyed to Jerusalem.

Estrid was a wealthy, first generation Christian woman who lived to the north of present-day Stockholm, c. 1020-1080. In her old age she was able to look back on all the rune stones she and her sons had erected in honour of deceased family members, among them one dedicated to her first husband, Östen. The stone, which can still be seen in a field, is beautifully ornamented with a cross surrounded by a snake band containing runes. This tells us a thousand years after they were cut that “Estrid had these stones erected in memory of Östen, her husband, who went to Jerusalem and died in Greece.” Whether Estrid accompanied her husband on the pilgrimage to

Jerusalem and the tomb of Christ but was the only one to make it back home is uncertain. She may well have been waiting anxiously for Östen at their farmstead when a messenger finally, after months of worry, brought her the tragic news. No-one will ever know.



Detail of the rune stone erected in honour of Östen, who went to “Jursalir” (Jerusalem). Photo by Mia Gröndahl.

It is surprising how many of the Swedes who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem were women. Ingerun was one of those fearless and courageous females who decided to become a “Jorsalafarare”, Swedish for a wayfarer to Jerusalem, and there were two different possibilities for getting there: a southern route that led by sea to Germany and then up the River Rhine to Lake Bodensee and over the Alps to Italy, where pilgrims would be taken by ship from Venice to Jaffa; alternatively, an eastern route down the Russian rivers to the Black Sea, where further transport awaited

bound for Constantinople (at that time part of Greece), and from there on to the final destination of Jerusalem. Ingerun was well aware that she was putting her life at risk by leaving her homeland. Many dangers lurked along the roads and rivers leading to the Holy City.

Like many others before her, however, she was prepared to die in foreign lands, and had the following runes cut into a stone before she left: "Ingerun, the daughter of Hård, had these runes inscribed in memory of herself. She wished to travel eastwards and to Jerusalem. Fot cut the runes." It is also possible that Ingerun never meant to return home, since some pilgrims went to Jerusalem intending to make the Holy City their final resting place.

The county of Uppsala is famous not only for its many rune stones, but also as the birthplace of that extraordinary woman, St. Birgitta, who was to become Sweden's most famous saint, as well as one of the patron saints of Europe.

The rune stone in memory of Östen's pilgrimage to Jerusalem was erected 1030-1050 A.D. by his wife, Estrid. Photo by Mia Gröndahl. ►





SAINT BIRGITTA 1303-1373

Christian mystic in close communion with Christ and the Virgin Mary

When Saint Birgitta arrived in Jerusalem on 13th May, 1372, there was a temporary calm in the city which had so far gone through some forty different wars during its long and bloody history. The threat to peace, however, was always at hand. Christian pirates ravaged the coast of Palestine, hostile Bedouin tribes lurked in the desert outside Jerusalem, and inside the city's half-demolished walls there was growing nervousness between the Moslems, Jerusalem's new masters, and the Christians. The crusaders had been put to flight 200 years earlier, but they had not yet given up their dream of freeing the City of Christ from the infidel. Plans were still being forged in various parts of Europe for new crusades, which would crush Jerusalem's Jews and Moslems once and for all.

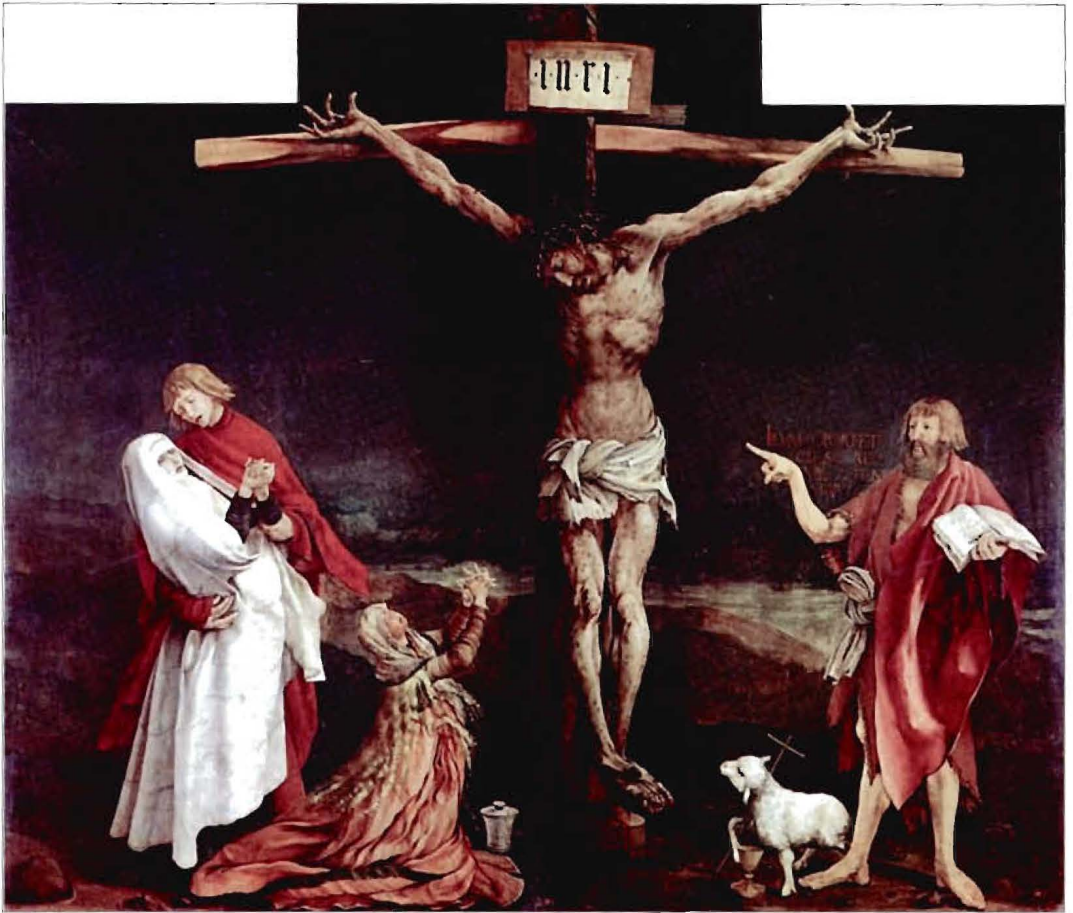
Birgitta's pilgrimage to Jerusalem took place late on in her life. She, who belonged to one of the most influential families in Sweden, was able to look back on many energetic years, first as a wife and mother of eight children, and then, after being widowed early on, as a servant of Christianity, active in both politics and religion. Birgitta had lived in Rome for more than three decades and was the author of seven hundred different religious texts, many of which had their origin in her numerous revelations from the Virgin Mary and from Christ.

During her stay in Palestine Birgitta constantly felt the presence of Jesus by her side and how He guided her to the Holy Places. Even thirty years earlier Christ had appeared to Birgitta and exhorted her to go to the Holy Land. Now this pious Swedish woman had reached the age of seventy, her energy was waning, and even at the beginning of her stay her Saviour advised her "not to visit all the places associated with Him, it would suffice to see the most important of them".



St Birgitta with a book. The sculpture is part of an altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Church of St Olof, Sweden, c. 1475. Photo by Mia Gröndahl.

◀ St Birgitta. Wooden sculpture at Vadstena Abbey Church. Originally from Naples, c. 1390. Courtesy of Sancta Birgitta Convent Museum, Vadstena.



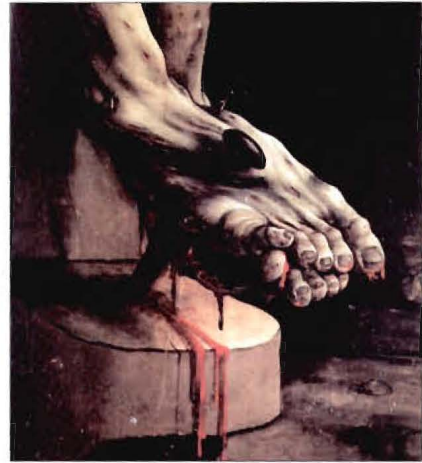
The Crucifixion, central panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece. Painting by German artist, Matthias Grünewald, 1515.

The main aim of every Christian pilgrim was, and still is, to go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, built in several stages over the Rock of Golgotha, where Jesus is said to have been crucified, buried, and resurrected. By contrast with the crusaders, who obtained their religious monopoly over the city with sword in hand, Moslem rule did not forbid the Christian pilgrims access to Jerusalem. Once inside the walls they were even offered guided tours under Moslem protection. The tolerant Moslems, however, demonstrated at the same time with disrespectful clarity what they thought about the pilgrimages to the Sepulchre Church. Through a play on the Arab word for resurrection, *quiyama*, this sanctified place was known in popular parlance as *qumama* – “the dung heap”. The Jews, on the other hand, were content to refer to the church quite simply as the burial place of “that man”.

Already on her second day in Jerusalem St. Birgitta visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. During her three months in the city she became close to her Saviour as never before, and through her visions she was transported to Jesus' own time and became eye witness to his birth, his baptism and his crucifixion. Birgitta seems to have been prepared for the revelations to come thick and fast. With her on her journey she had four scribes who were in constant readiness to note down her incredibly detailed visions, and they needed to work at high pressure as soon as she stepped over the threshold of the Sepulchre Church.

On the site of the crucifixion St. Birgitta's revelations are just as realistic as any of today's live TV broadcasts. We hone in on the crucifixion at the point where Jesus has been nailed up on the Cross and the Crown of Thorns placed on his head:

"His eyes immediately became full of blood which streamed forth, his ears became blocked and his face and beard appeared coated with rose-red blood. The executioners and soldiers then hastily took away the steps up to the Cross, and the Cross itself remained, alone and high, with my Lord crucified upon it. Full of sorrow I observed their cruelty, and then I caught sight of his mother, broken-hearted and lying on the ground, shaking and, as it were, half dead."^{*}



Detail of the Isenheim Altarpiece. The painter, Matthias Grünewald, was strongly influenced by St Birgitta's vision of the crucifixion.

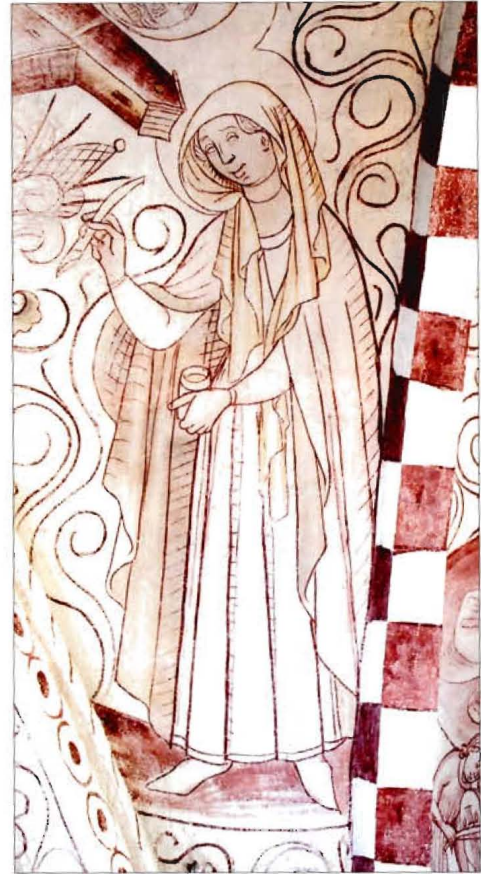
These intensive revelations in Jerusalem were a conclusive affirmation of the unique close communion Birgitta had with Christ and the Virgin Mary. During the Middle Ages many pilgrims also chose to follow in the saint's footsteps. Artists, too, found inspiration in Birgitta's visions, which described people and events down to the last detail, without sidestepping even the most painful moments. The German artist, Matthias Grünewald, c. 1475-1528, was one of the many medieval painters powerfully influenced by Birgitta's visions, which he rendered both on canvas and altar screens. In his most famous work, "The Crucifixion", Grünewald depicts the revelation Birgitta had in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Christ's sufferings, a painting which vibrates with the dreadful pain of the crucifixion and the distress of those nearest Him.

^{*} *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden, translated into English by Dennis Searby and Bridget Morris. Published by Oxford Scholarship online, 2006. www.oxfordscholarship.com*



None of St. Birgitta's revelations in Palestine, however, influenced medieval art as did her vision of Christ's birth. On her visit to Bethlehem in the summer of 1372 Birgitta sees how the young Mary, dressed in a white shift and with her "wonderful shining golden" hair hanging down, gives birth to her child kneeling on the ground in a cave. Joseph, whom Birgitta names as "the old man", has left the crib after lighting a wax candle and fixing it to the wall: "And so hasty and instantaneous was this birth that I could not observe or distinguish how or with what part of her body the Virgin gave birth. I saw, however, immediately the glorious child lying naked on the ground and clearly radiant."

Birgitta, mother of eight children, also notices how the afterbirth lies wrapped up beside the newborn child. Before Birgitta's revelation the Virgin had been depicted as a woman lying in childbed, but when the saint's vision became known artists began to represent her kneeling and with hair hanging down, adoring her naked child on the ground. Shortly after her return to Rome Birgitta died, at the age of seventy-three. But her memory lives on in Palestine. In Bethlehem, in a side street by the Church of the Nativity, is Mary's House*, one of the many nunneries around the world belonging to the Order of the Bridgettine Sisters founded by St. Birgitta.



St Birgitta with a pen. Part of an Al Secco mural in Brönnestad Church, Sweden, c. 1425-1450. Photo by Lars-Olof Albertson.

* *Mary's House can be found at www.brigidine.org, Links: www.sanctabirgitta.com*

◀ St Birgitta's vision at Bethlehem. The painting shows the birth of Christ as Birgitta described it in Revelations VII. Painting by Turino Vanni, Italy, late 14th century.

AMONG MAPS, DRAWINGS AND FLOWERS

Swedish scientists set course for Jerusalem

Jerusalem was seen as the centre of the world all the way through the Middle Ages, and not only from a religious perspective: a map of 1594 sites Jerusalem majestically at the centrepiece between Asia, Africa and Europe. There were, however, no new crusades. The Reformation and ensuing age of enlightenment sent “God’s City” little by little off to an ever more insignificant existence on the periphery of a developing Europe. Luther forbade the worship of relics and journeys of pilgrimage. Protestants would hereafter seek God in their hearts rather than in Jerusalem, and according to the father of Protestantism not even God bothered any more about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: “the grave in which our Lord lay, now in the possession of the Turks, God is as interested in this as in all the cows in Switzerland.”



The Noble Sanctuary (Al-Haram al-Sharif). At its southernmost end is the Al-Aqsa Mosque and at its centre the Dome of the Rock. The entire area is regarded as a mosque and comprises nearly one sixth of the walled city of Jerusalem. The Noble Sanctuary is a place sacred to Jews, Christians and Moslems. Engraved print, early 19th century.



Deigné par B. Picart et se vendent à Paris rue St Jacques Chez N. Bonnart, à l'Égüe.

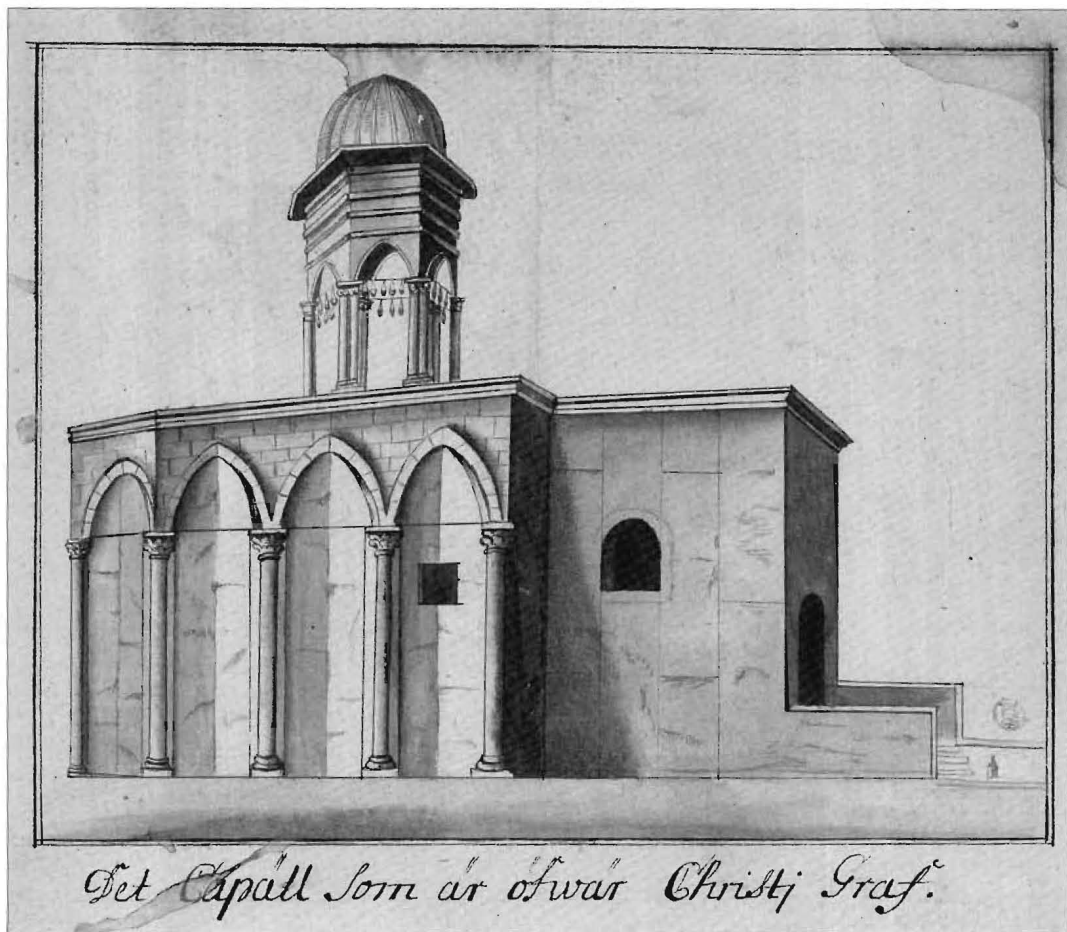
A. P.

CHARLES XII-ROY DE SUÈDE, né le 27^e Juin 1682 fut déclaré majeur avant la fin de sa minorité à cause de ses grandes qualités. Son coup d'essai fut sa descente en Irlande au mois de Septembre 1700 où il obligea le Roy de Danemarck de signer la paix avec le Duc de Holstein. Il tira sur la mer Baltique avec son armée au mois d'Octob. Suivant, battit 8000 Moscovites dans leur retranchement devant Narva le 29^e Novemb. 1700, passa la Duna, et défait les troupes Saxones qui occupoient le riuage opposé le 19^e Juillet 1701. et remporta une victoire signalée sur le Roy de Pologne commandant son armée en personne près de Cracovie le même jour en 1702.

*Charles par cent travaux divers,
De la gloire déjà touche au degré suprême*

*Et sa rare valeur qu'admire l'univers
Estonne la victoire même.*

The Swedish king, Charles XII, sent Cornelius Loos to Palestine. Drawing by Bernard Picart.



Det Capell som är öfwar Christij Graf.

The Holy Chapel of the Tomb of Christ. Drawing by Cornelius Loos, 1710.

CORNELIUS LOOS 1686 – 1738

Engineer and skilled draughtsman

The pilgrimages of old now became replaced by scientific expeditions. Eighteenth century specialists went out to Palestine to study geography, climate, and the communities which made up the country. Sweden, too, tried to throw light on the Holy Land. “Go to Jerusalem and Egypt, examine the rarities and monuments there and make drawings of them!” This was an order given by the Swedish king, Charles XII, in December 1709, to three young officers, Lieutenant Gylenskiep, Captain Sparre, and Captain Cornelius Loos. The latter, although only twenty-four, was in charge of the expedition. Trained as a military engineer, he therefore knew how to make accurate plans, and had already been working with the king on a book illustrating infantry and cavalry drills.

After being defeated by the Russian army earlier that year the Swedish king had fled to the city of Bender, at that time under the Ottoman Empire, which was in alliance with Sweden. The Swedish court stayed in Bender (nowadays part of Moldavia) for almost four years, during which time Charles XII sent three scientific expeditions to explore different parts of his host’s vast empire.

Captain Loos’s expedition was very successful, and coffers full of written descriptions, drawings and maps arrived in Bender to the delight of the king, who studied the material with great care, especially the findings from Jerusalem. Today only a rare map of the Eastern region of the Mediterranean countries and a drawing of the Holy Chapel of the Tomb of Christ is left. Most of the material went up in flames when the Turks got tired of their Swedish royal guest and forced him and his court to leave.



MOLDAVIA

VALACHIA

BULGARIA

ROMANIA

TRACIA

BEGIRRELANDIA

INSULA CRETA

BARCA

PONTUS EUXINUS HODIE MARE NIGRUM

PROPONTIS
MARDIC MARMARA

MARE AEGAEUM
MARE ASIATICUM

MARE MEDITERRANEUM

MARE LYBICUM

BEGIRB MISIRRENSIS

AGYPIUS

CRIMEA

BIGCAPENSIS

BEGIRB

BEGIRB

INSULE
CYPRI

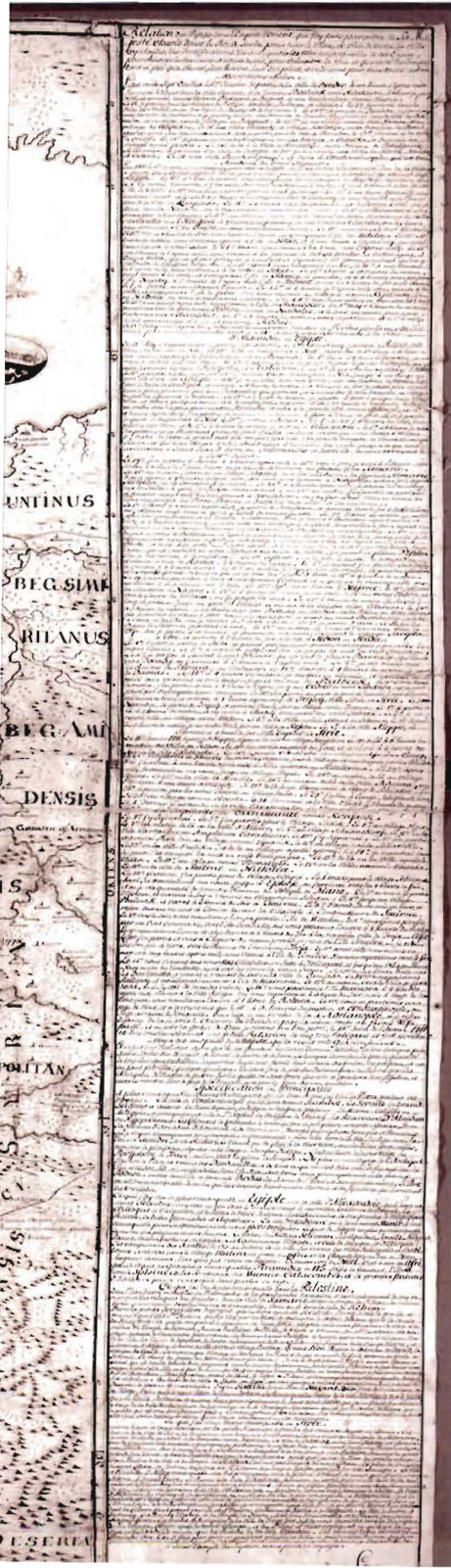
METIA

MARE SYRIACUM

BEGIRBEG
ARABIPY



CART
ORIENT
LAND
AGYPTIUS



◀ Rare map of the eastern part of the Middle East and Asia Minor. Drawing by Cornelius Loos, c. 1710.



Pictorial map of Palestine. Jerusalem can be seen as the circular mound towards the right. Engraved print, early 19th century.

FREDRIK HASSELQUIST 1722 – 1752

A botanist interested in both plants and people

It was to be another five years before the next Swedish scientist, the young botanist and medical doctor, Fredrik Hasselquist, arrived in Jerusalem. Ever since Hasselquist's mentor and teacher, Carl Linnaeus, also known as "The Father of Botany", had told him that "the Holy Land of Palestine" was among the countries whose flora still awaited investigation, Hasselquist had been firmly resolved to be the one who mapped out its plant life. Linnaeus tried to dissuade him, since this young botanist's health was not of the best, but finally the professor allowed himself to be won over by Hasselquist's enthusiasm and persistence, and helped him to acquire funding for the expedition and a ticket free of charge on one of the ships of the Levant Company.

After spending more or less a year in Egypt, Fredrik Hasselquist arrived in Jaffa on 1st April, 1751. He was still just as obsessed by his mission but in declining health, with a single change of clothes, some books to "put the plants in", and his funds getting perilously low: an expenditure of 62 piasters for travel and lodging in Jerusalem is carefully entered in his notebook.

Hasselquist noted on his way to the Holy City that the country was reasonably cultivated, and what people had not managed to do themselves, the moles had completed: "There was scarcely a step between each mole hill they had thrown up." The loosened topsoil created a good breeding ground for all kinds of wild vegetation and the fields shone with "Bupthalmum foliis longis dentalis, (a variety of Oxeye), which made them much yellower than our Swedish meadows in the month of June with *Caltha palustri* (Marsh Marigolds) and *Ranunculus* (Buttercups). In other places the fields were white with *Matricaria* (Mayweed)." When, some months later, he arrived in Cyprus, he described the nature of Palestine in a letter to Linnaeus as "flourishing", not least in comparison with this ravaged island, which he felt was "far more desolate and wretched than the Promised Land, which our priests without reason proclaim as damned."

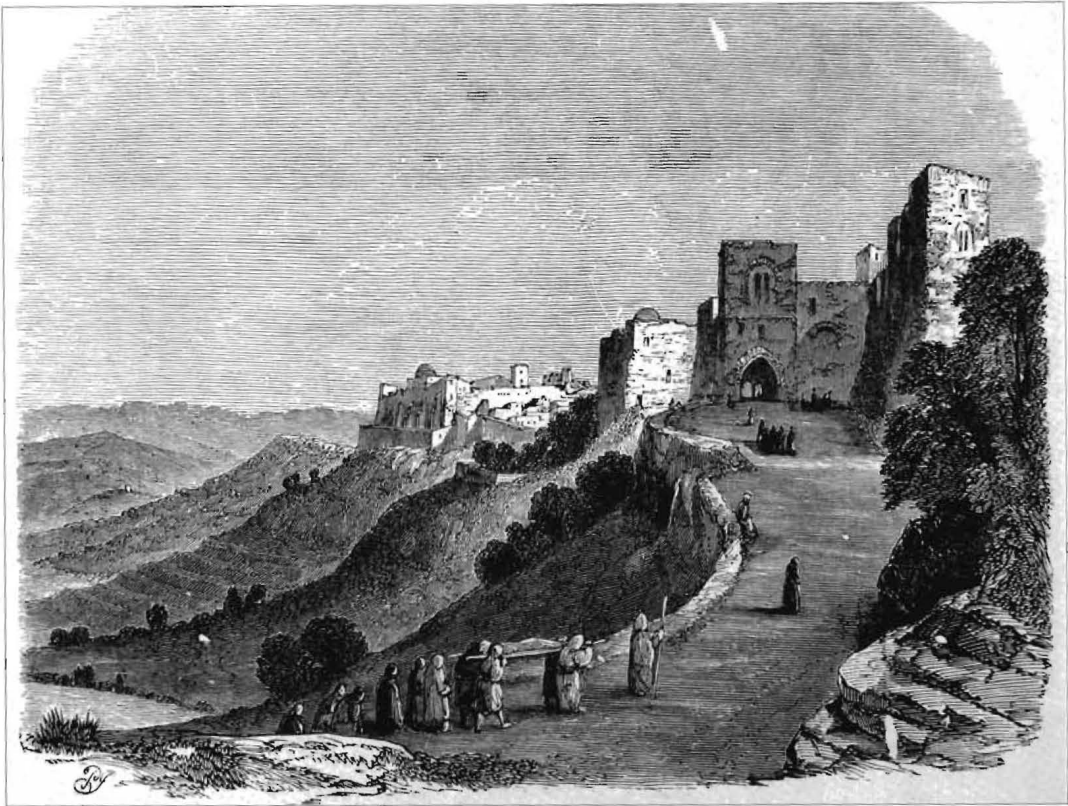
* *Linnean Society of London, L1291.6.367-368 from Fredrik Hasselquist to Carl Linnaeus (15th June, 1751)*



Carl Linnaeus among some of his many disciples.

He spent the night of Good Friday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where some monks invited him to partake of their supper. The food consisted of a cabbage head, “the most miserable meal I have had in the whole of my life,” wrote Hasselquist in his travel account. Quickly he sought out another group of monks, who were feasting on wonderful bread and good Hebron wine. After these meals the poverty-stricken botanist was finally able to observe how the monks of the Sepulchre Church whipped each other “in memory of Christ’s sufferings”. For the remainder of his stay in Jerusalem Hasselquist sought to avoid religion and devote himself solely to botany.

Fredrik Hasselquist made careful notes on every plant and animal he observed during his two months in Palestine. Botanist though he was, he also took an interest in the people he met, and often captured these encounters in detail, as photographers were to do a century later. On Mount



The Gate to Bethlehem. Engraved print, early 19th century.

Sion he registered several common plants such as *Betonica officinalis*, (Betony), *Allium pallens veronense* (a variety of *Allium*), *Biscutella didyma*, (Buckler Mustard), three different varieties of *Trifolium* (Clovers) and *Ephedra Distachya* (Joint Pine).

From Jerusalem Hasselquist made outings to the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and Bethlehem. One night outside Jericho he was glad to have his herbarium to serve as a pillow: "Happy that I had that, since the others in the company, and even the Superior himself, had nothing to lay their heads on other than the bare earth." By the Dead Sea Hasselquist discovered to his great joy a flock of quails: "the Field Hens of Arabia and the Holy Land, a bird which has never before been described, this find alone I saw as being worth my journey to the Dead Sea."



Terra Sancta. Hasselqvist.

Fredrik Hasselquist's travel to Palestine resulted in an outstanding plant collection. Top left: *Delphinium peregrinum*. (Violet Larkspur). The plant was collected by Hasselquist in "Hierosolyma" (Jerusalem) in 1751. Top right: *Arteria Squamata*. (Madonna Flower). Bottom: On the back of the sheet to *Arteria Squamata* is written "Terra Sancta" (The Holy Land) and Hasselquist's name. Courtesy of the Swedish Museum of Natural History in Stockholm.

On his way to Bethlehem he noted tobacco growing and fields of corn. To the northeast of the city Hasselquist visited the monastery of Mar Saba, where the monks suffered from scurvy, since during the long fast they kept within the walls and had to put up with salted fish as their sole fare. For want of scurvy herbs (*Cochlearia*) Hasselquist prescribed a potion of the watercress (*Nasturtium aquaticum*) growing so abundantly in the area. After what he then heard the cress had been a positive addition to the monks' diet.

Hasselquist's diligent labours in Palestine resulted in an outstanding plant collection, which laid the foundation for the botanical work, "Flora Palaestinae", the very first flora of Palestine. Hasselquist had, however, sacrificed his health during three intensive years in the Middle East. He attempted to regain his strength in Smyrna (Izmir), but wasted away with tuberculosis "like a lamp, whose oil is spent", as Linnaeus described this sorry end. Fredrik Hasselquist was buried in Smyrna at the age of thirty. It was only his comprehensive collections and notes that arrived in Sweden, and the first sight of the material made Carl Linnaeus "feel dizzy at witnessing so many remarkable things at once." Hasselquist's travel diary and notes were put together by Linnaeus and published in 1757 under the title, "Iter Palaestinum" or "Voyages and Travels to the Levant". This work was translated into a number of different languages.

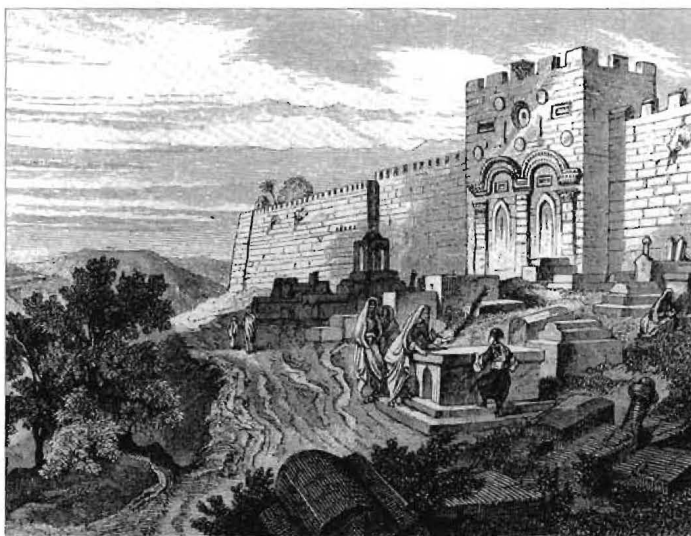


Carl Linnaeus, 1707-1778, also known as the "Father of Botany". Painting by Alexander Roslin, 1775.



THE AUTHORS' JERUSALEM

Pilgrims of the western world made their way back to Jerusalem in the nineteenth century. By the end of that same century it was reckoned that close on a million people had subjected themselves to the dangerous journey between the Continent of Europe and Palestine. No longer were pilgrims of this new era referred to the Bible as the sole handbook on the cradle of Christianity, for now travel books were coming into fashion. The first of these was the best seller, "Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem", or "Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem", by the reactionary romantic, Francois Chateaubriand. A formidable success it was, and sold in mass editions. His triumph tempted a wealth of authors, both known and unknown, to profit by the newly awakened interest in the land of the Bible. In England alone, between 1840 and 1880, more than 1,600 different travel handbooks on the Holy Land were published. All followed more or less the same false concept, the Biblical basis being spiced with exoticism, a picturesque desire for discovery, and sometimes a spatter of the spiritual awakening which was drawing over the western world. But there were exceptions. When Flaubert's American colleague, Mark Twain, visited Jerusalem seventeen years later, he made no bones about his real feelings for the city. "There is not going to be any Second Coming," warned Twain. "Christ has already been in Jerusalem once, why should he sink so low as to return?"



The Golden Gate. Jewish tradition has it that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem via this gate when He came so Moslems during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) sealed this gate to keep Him out. 19th century engraving.



Fredrika Bremer with a globe, 1860. Photo C. J. Malmberg.

FREDRIKA BREMER 1801- 1865

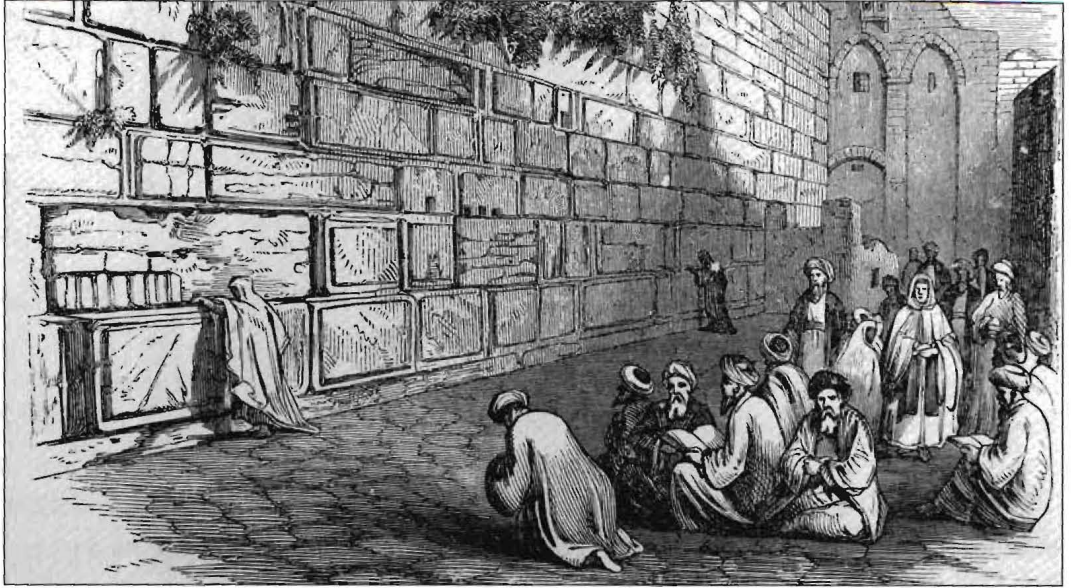
An inquisitive traveller reports from Jerusalem

When Fredrika Bremer rode in through the Jaffa Gate one January evening in 1859, clothed in a white lace cap and black skirts, she had spent ten hours on horseback. By then the Swedish authoress was absolutely exhausted, she had to be helped down from her horse and led to the hotel, “for to begin with I could neither walk nor stand without support”. Fredrika recovered rapidly, however, and next morning found her standing on the roof garden of the Rosenthal Hotel, gazing happily out over the domes, holy places, palms and cypresses of the city. At last she had reached Jerusalem, the symbol of God’s City: “For we all long for a home full of light, peace and perfection, and in every human soul there dwells a voice which cries, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem!”

Fredrika Bremer had long been a well-known writer in the literate world. Already at the age of thirty, when her books were translated into other languages, among them English and German, she had become famous outside Sweden. She was also an experienced traveller, and before arriving in Palestine at the age of fifty-eight, had visited several European countries and crossed the Atlantic to the USA and the island of Cuba, the latter journey taking two years. Fredrika was a pioneer in many fields, an early feminist and advocate of women’s rights – and throughout her life a Christian searching for a tenable philosophy of life. Her journey to Palestine was part of this quest.



Fredrika Bremer's reading glasses and dried leaves from an old olive tree, picked by the author at the Garden of Gethsemane, spring 1859. By courtesy of Årstasällskapet, Stockholm. Photo by Mia Gröndahl.



The Wailing Wall, also known as the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Engraved print from the 19th century.

Fredrika Bremer's Christian faith, however, was not of the naive kind. When she climbed down from the roof garden of the Rosenthal Hotel to the reality of the alleyways, she was quick to register that the earthly Jerusalem felt light years away from the heavenly image. In her travel diary, published under the title of "Livet i gamla världen, Palestina" ("Life in the Old World, Palestine"), she reports during her three months in the city just as soberly on social questions as on the relationship of mankind to God.

Fredrika Bremer was curious about all the Children of Abraham in the city. She visited the Wailing Wall and synagogues of the Jews, spent evenings among different fellow believers in the Christian colony, and interviewed Moslem "harem ladies" on both earthly and heavenly matters: "For my own part I can only praise the goodwill and even cordiality I have experienced during my visits to these women, as well as the understanding most of them showed in their speech and their replies. It is clear to me that with an upbringing in freedom and Christianity they would be capable of equalling the best educated women in Europe." On her visits to wealthy Arab homes Fredrika observed that slavery had not yet been abolished, but "in general it seems to me that the relation of the slaves to their masters and mistresses is vastly more free and intimate here than in the slave states of America. The slaves do not appear to have any fear of their masters."

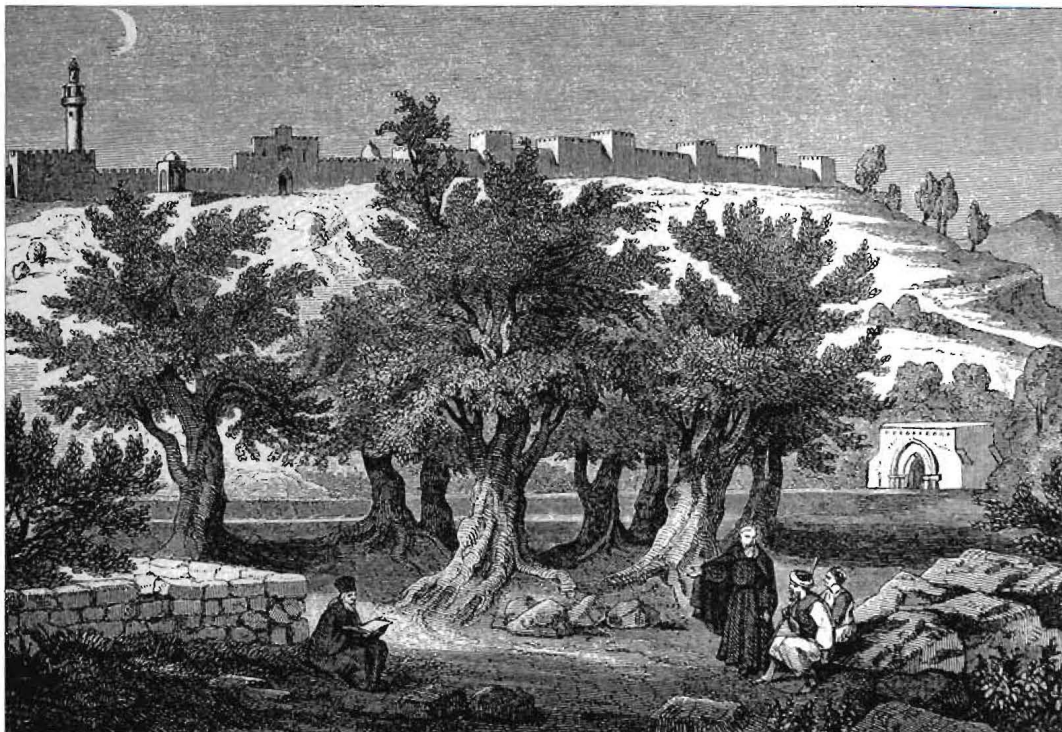
From her high-up roof garden on Mount Sion she had a view of the core sites of the city's three religions, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the great Temple site where Jerusalem had worshipped its gods for 5, 000 years, from Salem, the god of peace, to Baal, Ashtoreth, Yahweh, and Zeus, and since the seventh century, with a short break during the time of the Crusades, the Moslem Allah.

The memory of the crusaders still festered in the Moslem soul. Included among the crusaders' crimes was the fact that they had turned one of the prayer niches into a stinking urinal, and since then no Christian had been allowed to enter the site of the Temple, or Haram Al Sharif, as it is called in Arabic. For safety's sake the Moslems had also walled up the Golden Gate, so that Christ and all who rise again with Him on the Day of Judgement will not succeed in reaching eternity in the Holy City.

Fredrika Bremer, however, was fortunate. Four years earlier specially chosen Christians had once again been allowed in, and Fredrika was the first Swede to set foot in this holy place. "One imagines oneself transported to a new world," wrote Fredrika after her encounter with the Dome of the Rock and its surrounding great, uninterrupted vista. She was not so impressed, though, by the contents, the sacred rock which had been worshipped since the time of Salem: "An unheewn granite rock, they are legion in Sweden."



A Courtyard (bottom) and a Roof Garden (top) in Jerusalem. Engraved print, 19th century.



The Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Engraved print, 19th century.

Neither did the obligatory visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre leave any lasting impression. Fredrika was moved by the intensive prayers of the pilgrims, but when she left the church she thought to herself that it would not do any harm if one were to put up the following notice by the entrance: “He is not here, He is risen!”

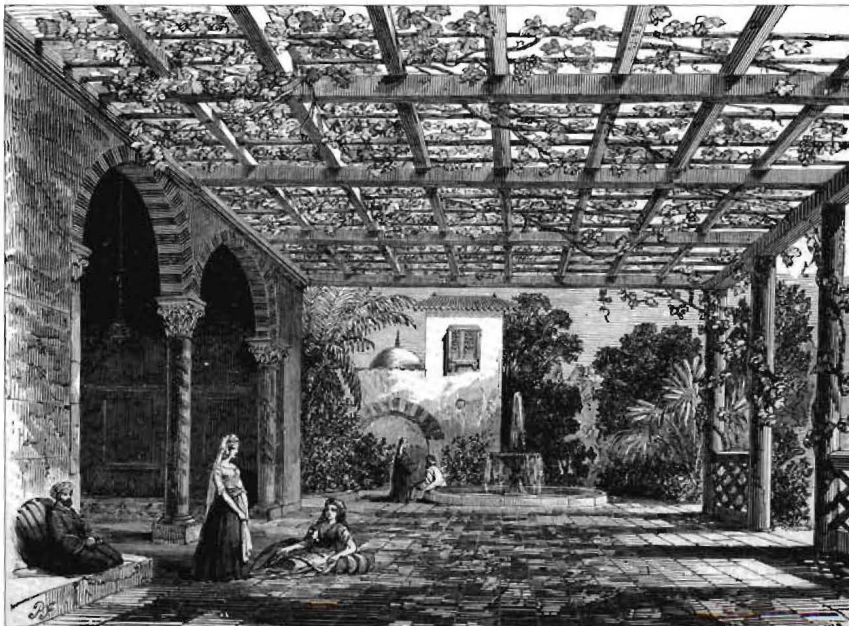
Not until Fredrika left the confusion of the dark alleyways and stepped out into the light and landscape outside the high wall of the city did her soul find what it sought. On the Mount of Olives, among the old, knotted olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, she at last felt herself near her Saviour: “O! these trees! I would have liked to kneel to them, and embrace them with my arms, press their bark to my lips and to my heart.”

And so an ancient olive tree became more significant than all the collected holiness of Jerusalem.

Links: www.fredrikabremer.se, www.fredrikabremer.net



The spring of Silwan. Fredrika enjoyed walking in this lush area with its many small gardens.



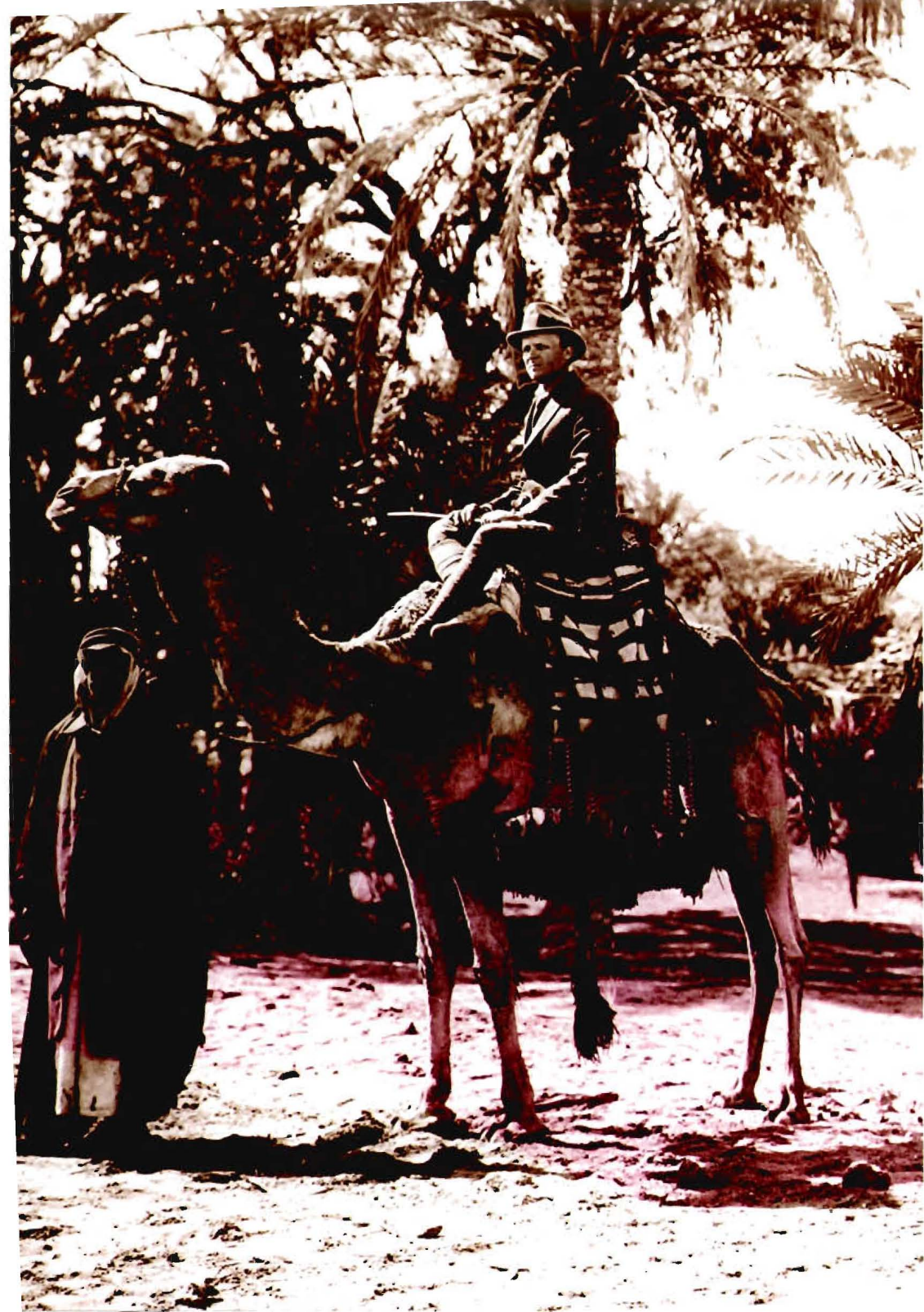
A "hoash", an open summer hall in Jerusalem covered in vines. Engraved print, 19th century.



Anemone flower and almonds collected by Fredrika Bremer in the Garden of Gethsemane, 1859. By courtesy of Årstasällskapet, Stockholm. Photo by Mia Gröndahl.



Fredrika Bremer, 1849. Photo by Mathew Brady.



LEWIS LARSSON 1881-1958

The Swedish farmer's son who became an outstanding photographer in Palestine

Shortly after their arrival in Jerusalem in 1896 the young people of the Colony are gathered together for a group photograph. This is to be taken in one of the open caves of the Tombs of the Kings*, which lie a couple of minutes' walk from the Colony. Fifteen-year-old Lewis Larsson, whose Swedish name was Hol Lars Larsson, seats himself right at the front on the bare ground, and looks straight into the lens. A special contact has arisen between the young Swede and the camera. Behind him, on the steps leading up to the chamber of the cave, the rest of the group, some thirty young men and women all dressed up, take their places. It is an international group, including young people from the USA, the Lebanon, Germany and Denmark, but the majority have their roots in the province of Dalarna in Sweden. Many of these youngsters have been forced to follow their zealously religious parents to Jerusalem, whilst others share the same belief in the Last Judgement and Christ's imminent Second Coming.

Lewis Larsson might well have remained in his home parish of Nås. His uncle, who was a comfortably off farmer but had no children of his own, attempted to persuade him to stay in Dalarna, but Lewis said no. Despite his youth he had strong feelings of responsibility towards his widowed mother, Hol Brita, and his four sisters. Lewis would not risk allowing the women of the family to set off on their own to the Holy Land.

* *The Tombs of the Kings. In actual fact this is the tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene in Mesopotamia, who had converted to Judaism and c. 50 A.D. had burial places made for herself and her sons. The province of Adiabene lies in present-day Irbil, in Iraq.*

◀ Lewis Larsson, chief photographer of the American Colony. Photo by American Colony Photographers.



The young people at the American Colony gathered before the camera, Lewis Larsson at the front. Photo Elijah Meyers, c. 1896.

Once installed in the Swedish-American Colony in Nablus Road, Lewis rapidly became interested in photography, much to the disapproval of his mother. To the very last, she had hoped that Lewis would come to share her religious convictions and believe in Christ's Second Coming.

One of the most interesting and colourful members of the sect was Elijah Meyers, originally the son of the chief rabbi of Bombay. Elijah, who was also known as "Bombawi", was a skilled photographer and with his help Lewis constructed a camera of his own. Working side by side with the young American Furman Baldwin, Lewis became Elijah Meyers' most promising assistant, and already eighteen months later, in the spring of 1898, he was writing the following lines in a letter home to his uncle in Nås:



Lewis Larsson and the Albina brothers rinsing film. Photo by American Colony Photographers.

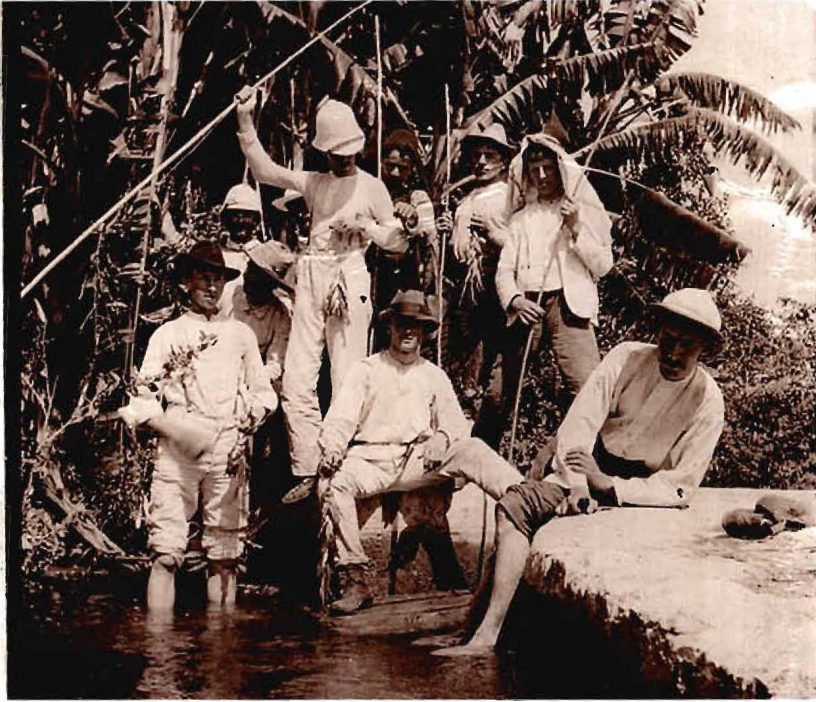
“I am busy with photography work almost every day. This spring we have done one, two, and three hundred photographs every day. We take shots of all the wonderful places here in this country, and sell our pictures to a store down in the city. We have done around five thousand pictures this winter.” Among the assignments for the winter there was also an expedition from north to south to photograph the pioneering Jewish colonies in Palestine. The person who commissioned this was a good friend of Meyers, Yeshayahu Raffalovich, who in the following year published “Views of Palestine and its Jewish Colonies on the Continent” in order to seek funding for the continued colonisation of Palestine.



Jerusalem welcomes the German Emperor, 1898. Photo by American Colony Photographers.

That same autumn of 1898, the photographic studio of the Colony received a great boost. The German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, made an official visit to Jerusalem and its holy places amidst great pomp and state. The young photographers of the Colony worked day and night to develop images, which were then distributed throughout the world, and in the aftermath there was suddenly a huge demand for both documentary photographs and Biblical scenes.

The group involved became known as the “American Colony Photographers”. Some ten young photographers and apprentices, five of whom were Swedes, worked in the studio, and for long periods their activities provided support for the whole Colony and its 120 members. Around 1910 Lewis Larsson became the chief photographer of the group, and among his assistants were the brothers Erik and Lars Lind. Some years later Eric Matson, who was seven years younger than Lewis, followed in the footsteps of the other boys from Näs.



The young photographers on an excursion to Wadi el Kelt, July 1904. Standing, left, is Erik Lind, Lewis Larsson is seated in the middle, Eric Matson is standing on the right, and Algot Setterström – a visiting Swedish artist – has taken up his position by the rock on the right.

The photographs were sold in the Colony's own souvenir shop by the Jaffa Gate. In the early years of the twentieth century tourists had begun to stream into Jerusalem, and in the Colony emporium they were able to choose all kinds of souvenir photographs from the Holy Land: post-cards, stereoscopic pictures and magic lantern slides, hand-coloured photographs, photographs in albums and in beautifully carved olivewood frames.

The rich picture archive of the American Colony Photographers was constantly being expanded with new material from the group's active photographers. Between 1903 and 1910 Lewis Larsson did extensive travels with his camera to all regions of the Palestine of that time, as well as Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. In the interval between two photography expeditions he found time to marry Edith, daughter of Olof Henrik Larsson, the preacher who had summoned the Swedes to Jerusalem. Their honeymoon, though, was combined with the documentation of a Bedouin wedding on the other side of the River Jordan.

Lewis perhaps excelled above all at landscape photography, selecting his motifs with legendary care, and might well wait for hours thereafter to achieve the right light; he was a perfectionist who painted on-the-spot pictures with his camera. He was also a skilled portrait photographer, and captured the many faces of Jerusalem and Palestine in a way no other contemporary photographer had done: Rabbis, Yemenite Jews, Bedouins, Palestinian women, peasants, priests and pilgrims.

Among those who ordered from him were journals such as the National Geographic Magazine, book publishers, foreign universities, and travel agents such as Thomas Cook's. Even well known researchers and explorers turned to Lewis Larsson and the American Colony Photographers. One of them, the Swedish explorer and author, Sven Hedin, worked in tandem with Lewis to produce a work entitled, "Till Jerusalem" (To Jerusalem) . The book, which came out in 1917, contains over 200 photographs with Lewis Larsson's signature, and it is also through Sven Hedin that we become better acquainted with this gifted photographer, who in addition was Hedin's interpreter and guide:

"On all the journeys I did in and around the city Brother Lewis, my friend Lars Larsson, was my faithful companion, and a better guide than he is not to be had anywhere on this earth. He knew every nook and cranny of the city of Jerusalem, and every road, village and ruin in the whole of Palestine and Syria. He had friends among the Bedouin far beyond the mountains of Moab, and he had been long and often in Petra. He had sailed the Dead Sea from shore to shore. He had visited all the coastal towns, and was an intimate of the monks in the monastery on Mount Sinai. It was a joy to wander or travel in his company, for he had information on everything at his fingertips. He was well versed in the varied history of the country and knew his Bible by heart even if only in English, which tripped off his tongue just as easily as Swedish. He spoke German and French without difficulty and Arabic totally fluently. He was also indescribably charming and sympathetic, and, as he himself can confirm, we were never bored."

During the First World War – which led to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and setting up of the British Mandate in Palestine – Lewis Larsson also demonstrated his skill as a war photographer. He alone succeeded in capturing on camera the historic moment on 9th December, 1917, when Jerusalem capitulated and the Mayor of Jerusalem, Al Hussein, handed over the city to the British troops.



Lewis Larsson and his mother, Brita, and four sisters, Anna, Brita, and the twins, Karin and Kerstin.



Lewis and Edith Larsson's wedding photo, 1912.

In 1925 Lewis Larsson was appointed Honorary Swedish Consul in Jerusalem. With the break-up from the Colony five years later, when the sect became split and its assets were distributed among the members, he lost the photographic laboratory and the whole of the photographic archive to his closest assistant, Eric Matson. Together with his wife, Edith, and three sons, Lewis Larsson had already moved some years earlier to a house in Nablus Road within a stone's throw of the Colony, and there he lived until his death in 1958. Lewis Larsson had no longing to return to his old home country, and lies buried in the Lutheran Churchyard in Bethlehem.

Further reading:

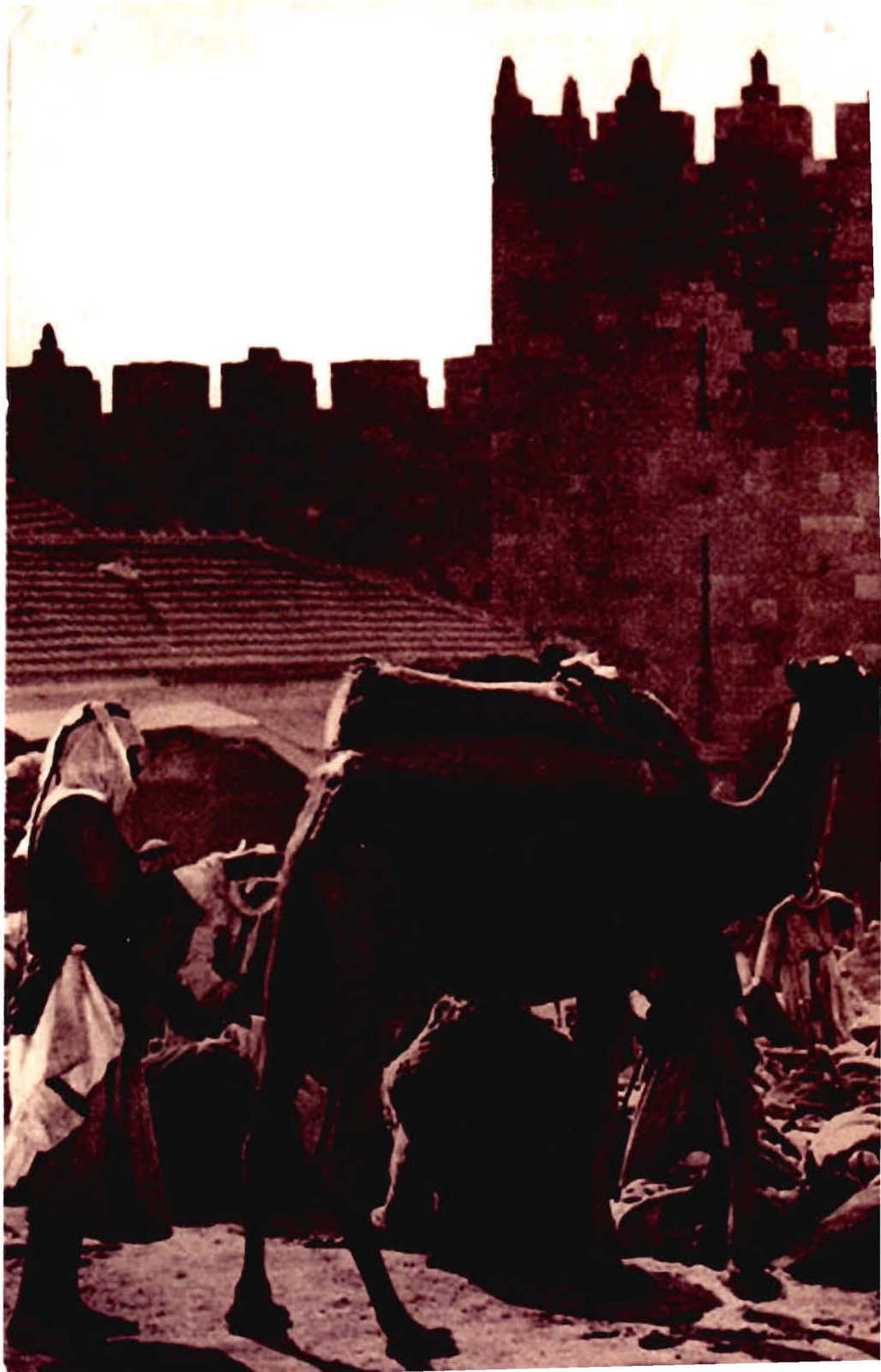
The Dream of Jerusalem, Lewis Larsson and the American Colony Photographers, by Mia Gröndahl, 2005.



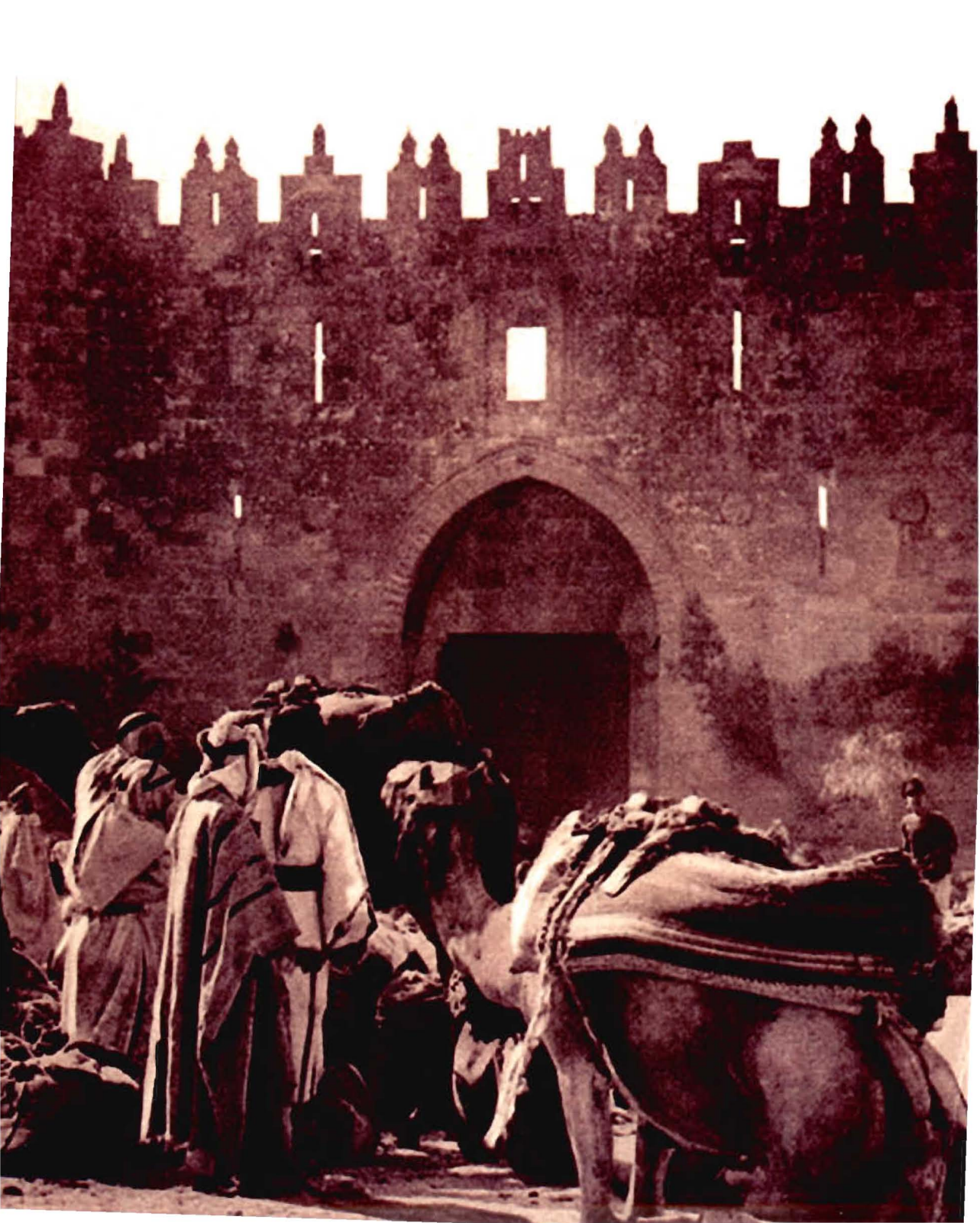
The Swedish Consulate was accommodated within the American Colony during the 1920s.



Lewis and Edith together with their sons in front of "Larsson House" in Nablus Road, which served both as their home and the consulate of Sweden in Jerusalem after the split from the Colony.

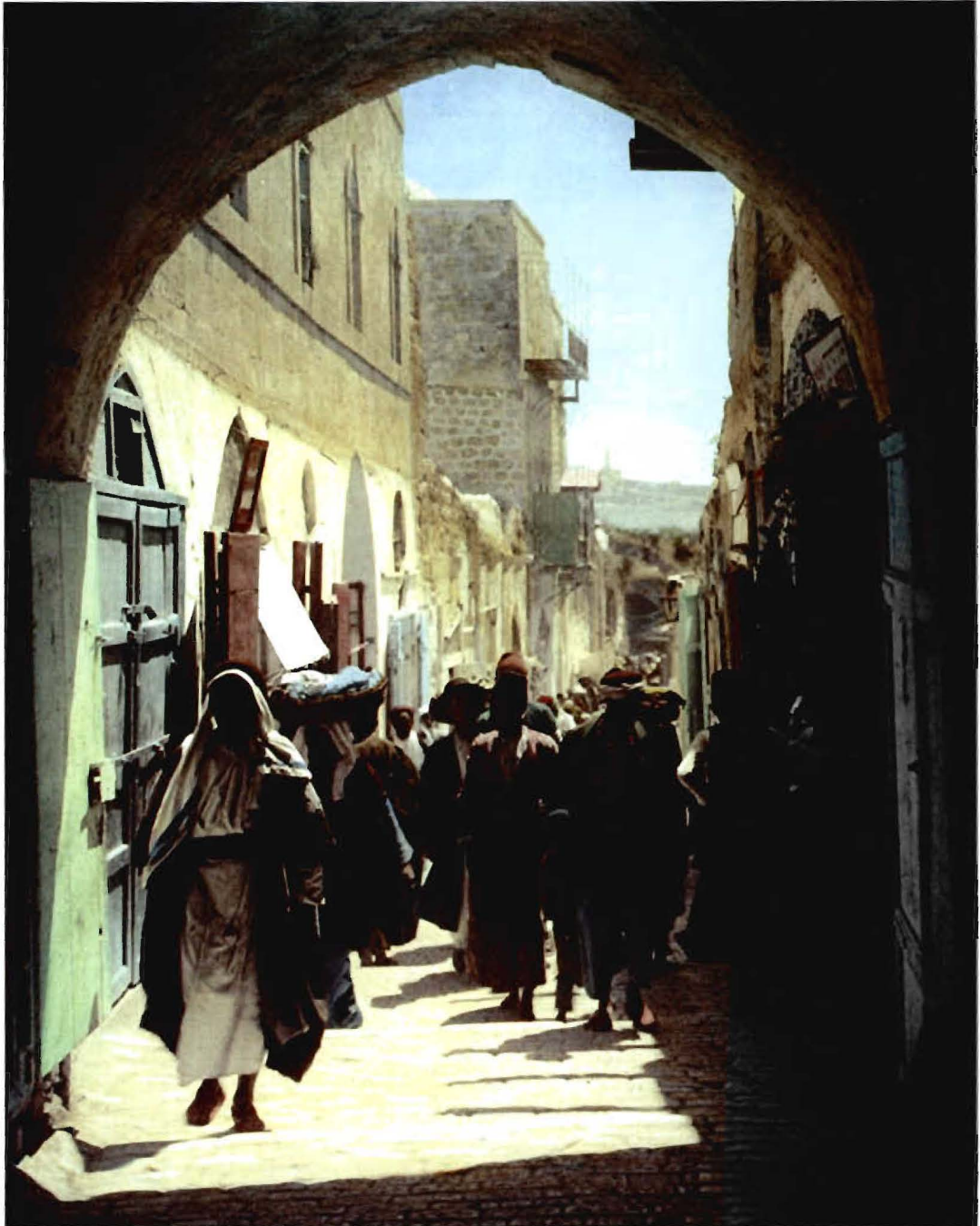


The Damascus Gate. Photo by Lewis Larsson. ▶





Souq Al-Qataneen in the Old City of Jerusalem. Hand-coloured print. Photo by Lewis Larsson.



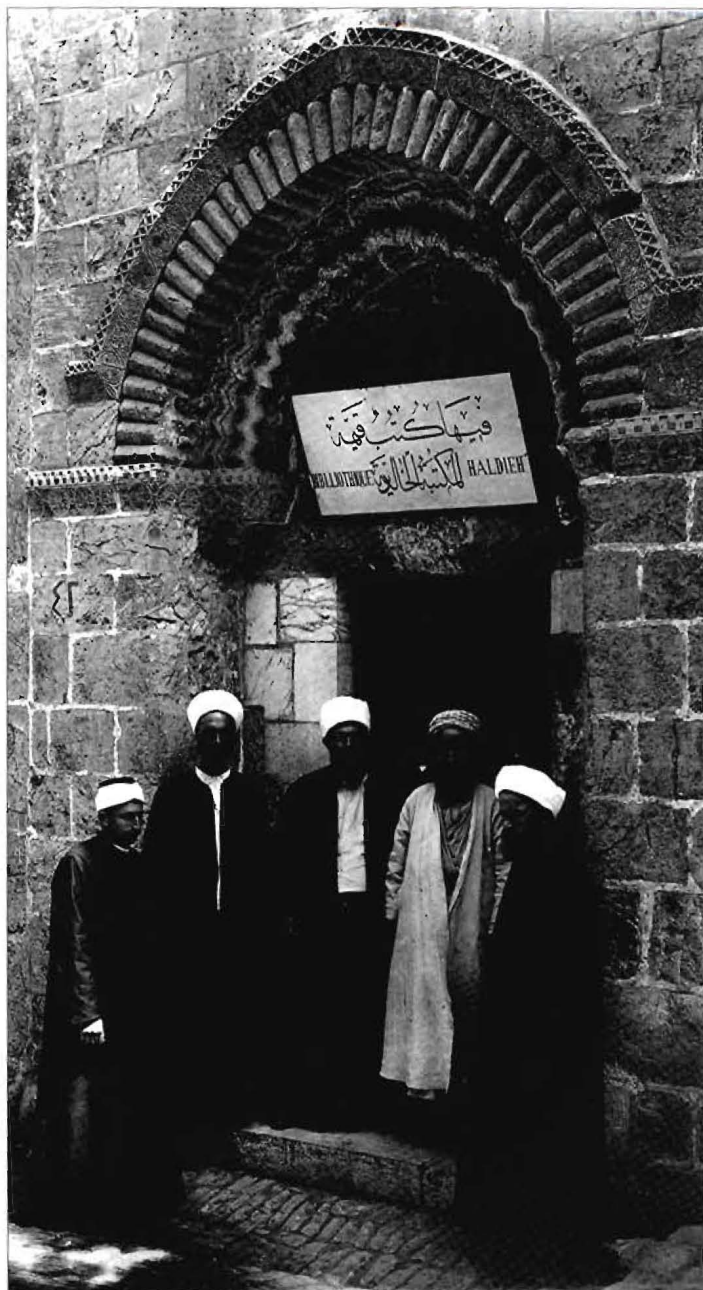
David Street in the Old City of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives can be seen in the distance. Photo by Lewis Larsson.



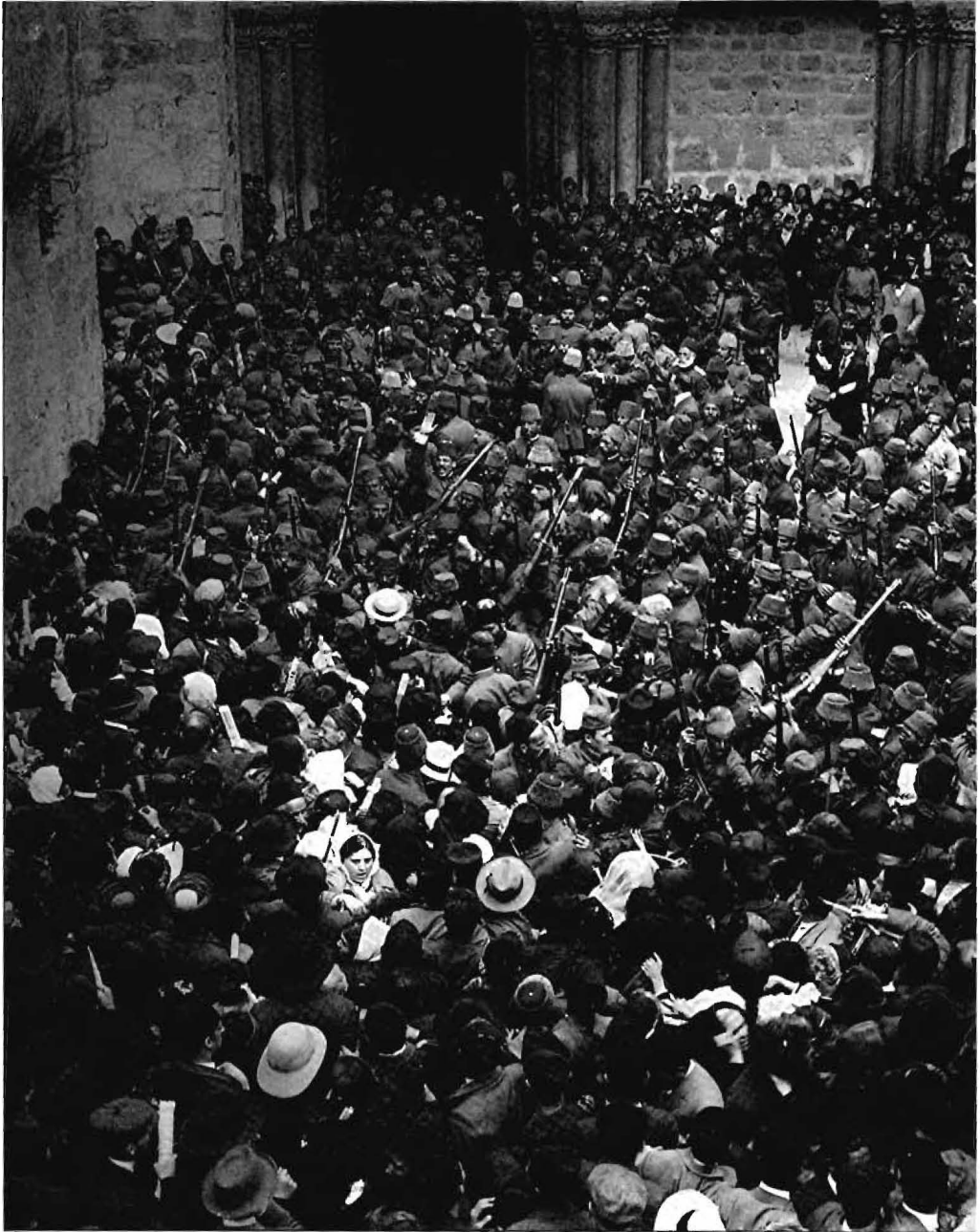
Street scene in the Old City of Jerusalem. Photo by Lewis Larsson. Print from the book, "Till Jerusalem", by Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin.



Via Dolorosa. Photo by Lewis Larsson. Print from the book, "Till Jerusalem", by Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin.



Learned Moslems at the entrance to the Khalidi Library in the Old City.
Photo by Lewis Larsson.



Turkish soldiers disperse demonstrators at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, 1914. Photo by Lewis Larsson.



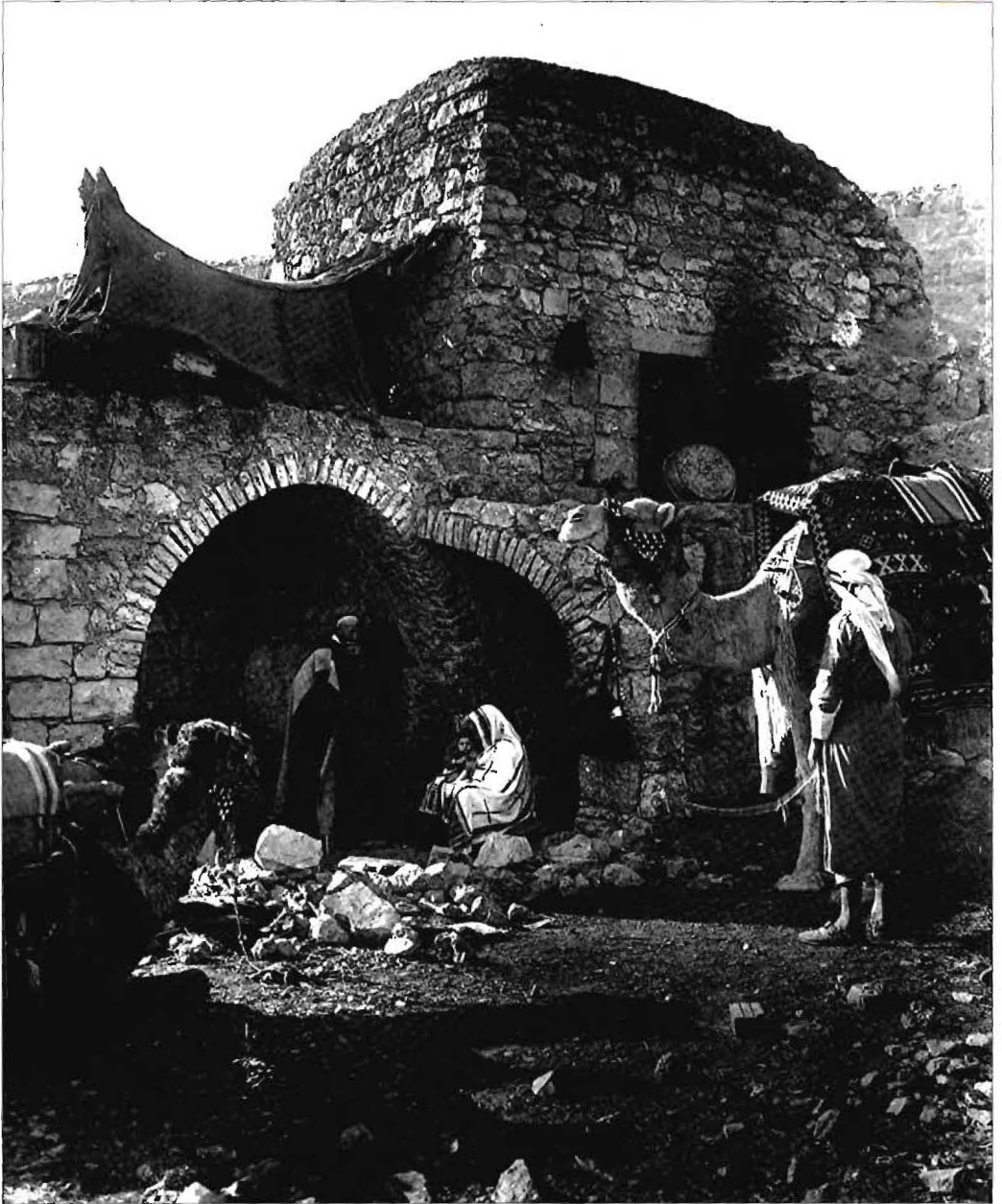
Palestinian farmer spinning wool. Photo by Lewis Larsson/Furman Baldwin.



A Ramallah family. Photo by Lewis Larsson and the American Colony Photographers.



Harvesting a field between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Photo by Lewis Larsson. Print from the book, "Till Jerusalem", by Sven Hedin.



Biblical scene I: A Palestinian family acting as the Holy family in front of an old house. Camels and a newborn baby in the woman's arms complete the scene. Photo by American Colony Photographers.



Biblical scene II: A Shepherd has been hired to bring his sheep to Ein Farah and act as Jesus. Photo by American Colony Photographers.



In March 1915 Jerusalem was invaded by an army of locusts. See also page 59. Photo by Lewis Larsson.





The capitulation of Jerusalem officially took place on December 11th, 1917. However, the city had already been handed over to British soldiers two days before by the Mayor, al-Husseini (under white flag, with walking stick). Lewis Larsson took exclusive pictures of the historical moment, and could thus claim "worldwide copyright"



British soldier at his post on Mount Scopus, north of Jerusalem. 1918. Photo by Lewis Larsson.



Simple lunches available: charcoal grilled "kofta" - minced lamb burgers - served in pitta bread, c. 1910. Photo by American Colony Photographers.



Palestinian citizens outside St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. The "turbush" headdress is of Turkish origin. It gained urban popularity in the 19th century and was replaced in the 1930s during the revolt against the British and Jews by the traditional black-and-white-checked "keffiyeh". Photo by American Colony Photographers.

*Mr. Howean (Platino) Stereograph
C. H. Graves, Publisher, Phila., U.S.A.*



Stereographic card of the Mount of Olives, 1908.



The Universal Photo Art Co.
Philadelphia, Naperville, Ill.

6. Garden of Gethsemane and Mount of Olives. Jerusalem.

Copyright 1908 by C. H. Graves.



A. Blomberg
Stockholm.

Selma Lagerlöf, 1906. Photo by A. Blomberg, Söckholm.

SELMA LAGERLÖF 1858-1940

The author of “Jerusalem” gathers impressions for her novel – and her future is foretold.

On her last evening in Jerusalem Jamil, the dragoman, the Syrian guide from Thomas Cook’s travel bureau, knocks discreetly on the door of author Selma Lagerlöf’s room at the Grand New Hotel.

It is March 1900 and for almost a fortnight the light and airy room with its high ceiling has served as a base for Selma and her travelling companion, Sophie Elkan, she too an acknowledged author in the Sweden of the turn of the last century. The hotel, which is just inside the Jaffa Gate, offers a wonderful view from its rooms, which look over the street and the city wall behind it with its citadel, also known as the Tower of David. In the intervals between outings and the sights of Jerusalem and surroundings, both friends have enjoyed the spring sun on the balcony and photographed each other with the camera purchased on their last day in Cairo, the first stop of their six-month-long journey to the Orient.

The main aim of their travels, however, is neither the Pyramids, nor the Egyptian temples, nor even the Holy Places of Palestine, but what awaits them in a fortress-like, solidly built house of stone outside the old wall, on the road leading northwards from the Damascus Gate towards Nablus. Selma Lagerlöf herself expresses it as follows: “During the whole of this stay in Jerusalem I have really only thought of one thing. I have journeyed here simply and solely to visit some peasants who have migrated here from Nås in Dalarna and with a host of Americans established a colony. I want to see them in order to write a book about them.”

The idea of visiting the thirty-seven Swedes who left Dalarna for Jerusalem had taken root three years earlier, in the summer of 1897. Sophie Elkan had at that point seen a notice in a local newspaper, which informed its readers that the peasants who had left for Jerusalem for religious reasons had now arrived in Palestine. “Here is surely something that will interest you,” said Sophie, and handed over the newspaper. Selma studied the notice for a long time and then turned with a little smile to her friend, saying, “This might well do for the subject matter of a novel. But if I am to write about them, I must first see where they live now.”



Arrival at the American Colony.

On the very first day after their arrival in Jerusalem Selma Lagerlöf and Sophie Elkan take a horse-drawn cab to the Swedes in the Colony. This is to be the first of several study visits to the emigrants who have succeeded in arousing the authors' interest. The question both of them posed then is the same psychological riddle many people wonder over even today: "What is it that makes people abandon their homes and possessions and set off for Jerusalem and an unknown future in a strange land?"

Both authors are given a warm welcome at the Colony. While the lively and extrovert Sophie gets people to loosen their tongues, Selma Lagerlöf gathers material for the novel she is planning; she notices everything she sees and hears among the people in the Colony and jots down reminders in a little book. Sophie, who is a keen letter writer, has promised Selma to be careful and not give away too many of her impressions about the Swedish Jerusalem emigrants – the contents of the future book are not to be revealed beforehand – nevertheless she writes the following observations to a friend at home in Sweden: "They live in a state of socialism and have done away with marriage – but our countrymen appeared very trustworthy and were, as I said, moving to see and talk to and declared that they were happy./.../ the whole thing exceedingly strange and odd. Outwardly a Christian-socialist state – inwardly more difficult to understand."



Authors and close friends: Selma Lagerlöf and Sophie Elkan.
Photo by Anders Wilhelm Karnell.



Swedish children at the American Colony, Jerusalem, dressed in costumes from Dalarna.

The Swedes in the Colony had emigrated to Jerusalem in the belief that the Last Judgement was at hand. Christ's Second Coming had been calculated to take place during the Easter of 1897, and until then one was to live a life of prayer and spiritual preparation in readiness for the Saviour. Even though Easter had passed unnoticed and the Kingdom of Heaven had been shelved, the members of the Colony continued to hold fast to religious notions which were in stark contrast to the Jerusalem of reality. Selma and Sophie, on the other hand, encountered the Holy City in unblinkered fashion. It was a Jerusalem unrecognisable "from the city of legend and childhood memories," writes Sophie in a letter, and continues: "The city is a place of steps with the narrowest and, as far as the Jewish Quarter^o is concerned, dirtiest streets in the world – though they are laid with stone setts. If only it were not for the dreadful smell of Russian pilgrims, who are here in large numbers and constitute the most interesting form of life one sees here - compared with all the others - all fanatics, Greeks, Romans, Armenians, Copts, Jews and Mohammedans. There

* Sophie Elkan was a Jewess with a secularised attitude to all religions, including her own.



Selma Lagerlöf interviewed the Swedish members of the American Colony in the living room.

is such an endless amount to see and think about that we have never experienced anything so taxing. It is quite overwhelming. All kinds of languages are spoken, it is just that there is one word which is never uttered and that is tolerance.”

Selma Lagerlöf and Sophie Elkan questioned much of the spiritual life of the Colony, not least the ban on marriage which had been introduced by “Mother” Anna Spafford, the leader of the sect. Even if, however, the ideology of the sect had succeeded in wringing the sense out of the Swedes, neither of the authors could do anything other than admire their countrymen’s ability to survive in a strange land. After the failure of Christ to reappear the Colony had been transformed into a humming beehive, where everything the peasants from Dalarna had done at home on their farms in Nås was now carried out in Jerusalem, including weaving, sewing, carpentry and smith’s work. Cows were milked, butter was churned, crops were grown, corn was ground, and bread was also baked. A number of the young people, as we have been able to read in the previous section on



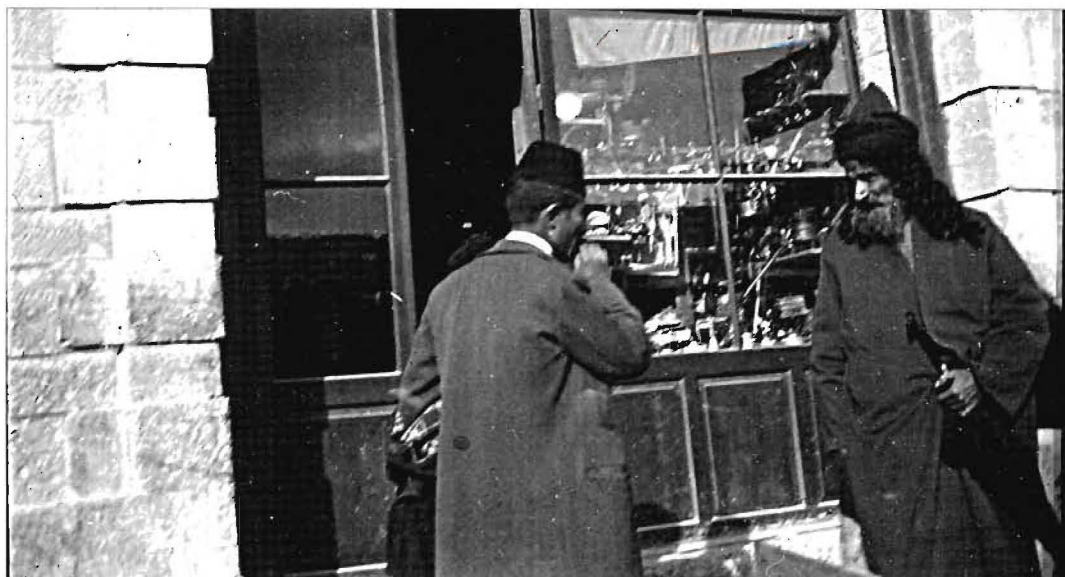


Sophie Elkan watches the street life inside the Jaffa Gate from the balcony at the Grand New Hotel. Photo by Selma Lagerlöf, 1900.

Lewis Larsson, learnt a new profession, that of photography. Every meeting with the Colonists convinced Selma more and more of the justice of recounting this remarkable emigration: “Now I have been with them many times, eaten at their table, visited their schools, seen them busy in their workshops, driven in their homemade carriages, walked on their carpets and sat in the chairs which they have made themselves. I have heard them talk openly of their faith without beating about the bush. I have found nothing about them that is not good, honest and upright.”

Selma feels such strong sympathy for the Swedes that she “burns with desire” to write about them. At the same time, however, she is afraid. She asks herself if she will ever be able to produce such a book. “It is not only fear of my own capability to cope with the subject which makes me doubtful; there are other reasons too. I live each day in a state of doubt and indecision which is almost embarrassing.”

◀ Inside the Jaffa Gate. The Grand New Hotel, where Selma Lagerlöf and Sophie Elkan stayed during their visit to Jerusalem, can be seen on the left of this picture.



The dragoman, Jamil, who guided Selma Lagerlöf and Sophie Elkan in Jerusalem, together with the fortune-teller (to the right) outside the Grand New Hotel. Photo by Selma Lagerlöf, 1900.

Let us now return to the dragoman, Jamil, who stands outside the door of Selma and Sophie's room a couple of floors up in the Grand New Hotel. His knocking is a welcome interruption to Selma, who has been sitting at nightfall, wrestling with her doubts. Jamil has come on a very special errand. Some days ago he had guided the two Swedish women to the Al Aqsa Mosque. On the way they had passed a niche where there was usually a well-known fortune-teller, but on that particular day he had not been there and Selma complained, since she had thought it would be exciting to have her fortune told in Jerusalem. Now Jamil had got hold of the fortune-teller and brought him to the Grand New Hotel and asked whether Miss Lagerlöf was interested. Selma is interested and goes down the steps to the fortune-teller, who is waiting in the vestibule of the hotel. "It is not as impressive to have one's fortune told in the vestibule of a hotel, where staff and travellers stream in and out, as in the El-Aksa Mosque, but I have no choice. All three of us go up to a table standing in a corner. The fortune-teller takes out a bag which he has kept hidden under his robes, unties it and pours onto the table a really thick layer of sand, undoubtedly some sort of sea sand, since there are masses of small crushed shells in it."

The fortune-teller asks Selma to think in silence about the most important thing she wants an answer to just now, and suddenly she feels that the whole idea is a bit idiotic: "What does a fortune-teller know about writing a novel? Imagine if it never gets written? And will anyone

want to read it?” But Selma follows the fortune-teller’s request even so and gathers her troubled questions into a single silent thought: “Am I going to succeed in writing a book on the Swedish peasants in Jerusalem?”

Selma later recounts what the fortune-teller did: “He raised his hand over the sand which he had spread out in front of him, stretched out a thick index finger with a claw-like nail, and made a couple of lines of holes in the sand. The fortune-teller mumbled and counted, and they waited a good while before he said anything. But then he turned to Jamil in Arabic. “The fortune-teller says that the lady is thinking about something she wants to write on paper,” interprets Jamil. “He begs that the lady should not be nervous, for she will make a success of what she is thinking about.” The fortune-teller then went a step further, and according to him Selma was to be successful in all she undertook. He had, namely, seen the signs of both the Sultan Ibrahim el Kalil (Abraham) and Sultan Soliman on her hands, and this prompted him to end the session with the words, “This lady has a very strong star.”

A year later the prediction was already fulfilled. When the first part of the novel “Jerusalem” came out in 1901 it was an immediate success. The second part met with the same enthusiastic reception when it was published in the following year. “Jerusalem” is not, however, a documentary novel. Selma Lagerlöf borrowed the story of the Swedish emigration to Jerusalem in order to handle the great human questions, the conflict between desire and duty, the decisions we make, the wrongs we do, our longing for love and forgiveness. For Selma heaven was to be found on earth, and the meaning of life was to work hard and well and love one’s neighbour. The novel “Jerusalem” was translated into many different languages and gave Selma Lagerlöf an international reputation as an author. It also contributed strongly to Selma Lagerlöf being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1909.

The narrative of Selma Lagerlöf’s “Jerusalem” touches people even today and finds readers in every new generation. “Jerusalem” has also several times been made into a film, most recently in 1996 by the Danish film director, Bille August. And every summer many Swedes make the pilgrimage to Nås, the home parish of the Swedish emigrants, to see “Ingmarsspelen”, a play based on Lagerlöf’s “Jerusalem”, which has been performed ever since 1959.

** The encounter with the fortune-teller in Jerusalem is retold in the short story, “Två spådomar” (Two Foretellings), from 1908, as yet untranslated.*

The novel, "Jerusalem", was translated into many different languages and gave Selma Lagerlöf an international reputation as an author. Here the celebrated author is photographed in her study in Falun. Photo by Birger Nordensten. ▶







Josef Larsson, the oldest Swede at the American Colony, harvesting on Mount Scopus.





The young "artists" at the American Colony.



The Swedish Band at the American Colony.



Swedish women busy at work in the sewing room at the American Colony.



The American Colony gathered for a group photo, c. 1910.



A corner of the huge living room at the American Colony.



Anna Spafford, the sect mother, in the inner courtyard at the American Colony. Photo by Lewis Larsson.



Leaving for Jerusalem, never to return home. Each summer the play, "Ingmarsspelen", which is based on the novel, "Jerusalem", is performed in Nås, in the province of Dalarna. Photo Henrik Källbäcks.





Hilma Granqvist joins the villagers in the harvest.

HILMA GRANQVIST 1890-1972

*Pioneer of folk-life research, who for more than three years lived
Palestinian village life*

A couple of kilometres south of Bethlehem lies the the small Palestinian village of Artas, beautifully situated on the mountainside of a green valley. Here the Finno-Swedish ethnologist, Hilma Granqvist, arrived late one autumn evening in 1925. The elders of the village were still able ten years ago to tell of her dramatic arrival. Hilma was expected, but when darkness fell over the valley and she still had not turned up, the villagers went out as one man with lanterns in their hands and began to search for her. And right enough, one of the village boys found this fair-haired stranger up on the mountain ridge between Bethlehem and Artas, where she had got lost. The then 34-year-old researcher had just come from Berlin, where for some years she had been engrossed in studying ethnology, archaeology, and Eastern religions.

Her journey to Palestine involved stepping out of the world of books and getting to grips with reality – the realisation of a long-cherished dream. At last Hilma was to gather in material on the spot for a doctoral thesis, the title of which, “Women in the Old Testament”, she had already decided. The fact that she chose the village of Artas for her field studies must certainly be connected with the one foreigner who was already here, 65-year-old Louise Baldensperger, who had come to the village with her missionary parents and lived there during almost the whole of her adult life. And then there was also the fact that Jerusalem, to which Hilma was to journey once a week to study Arabic, was at a reasonably comfortable distance.

Hilma Granqvist had chosen a village with old traditions. Some people think the name Artas derives from the Latin, “Hortus”, a garden, and the Biblical tradition indicates the verdant valley with its many springs as the place where David shepherded his sheep when young, as well as being where his son, King Solomon, often escaped from the business of government in Jerusalem. Solomon was to have been so delighted with the valley that he devoted the following lines in the Song of Solomon to it: “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain



Hilma stayed with Louise Baldensperger in the whitewashed house on the hill above the village spring.

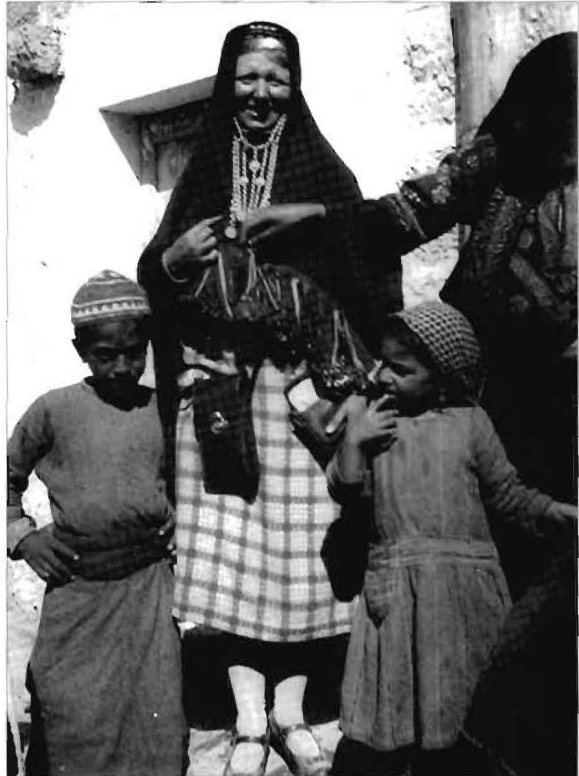
sealed.” The secluded garden, or “Hortus Conclusus”, was also the name of the Italian monastery which had been built in the valley some thirty years before Hilma’s arrival. Hilma Granqvist was not the first Swede to fall for the beautiful Artas Valley, and to her great joy she discovered on re-reading her role model Fredrika Bremer’s travel account of Palestine that she, 75 years earlier, had visited Artas on no less than two occasions*.

Hilma moved in with Louise Baldensperger, and from the terrace in front of “Sitt (Lady) Louisa’s” house she had a fantastic view of the simple stone-built houses of the village, the spring, the mosque, and the monastery dominating the scene down in the valley. More congenial surroundings could scarcely be imagined for a protracted study of the lives of Biblical women.

* In the 1933 issue of “Hertha” Hilma Granqvist recounts her memories of Fredrika Bremer in Jerusalem in an article entitled “Fredrika Bremerspår i våra dagars Jerusalem” (Vestiges of Fredrika Bremer in the Jerusalem of our Day). “Hertha”, the journal of the Swedish Women’s Movement, is published by the Fredrika Bremer Association. www.fredrikabremer.se

Even after only a few days in Artas, however, Hilma felt that she wanted radically to change the direction of her research project. Her meeting with the women of the village seems quickly to have aroused her interest in describing the conditions of living people, instead of, as she had originally imagined, investigating life there eyed through a Biblical filter. "My decision is made," wrote Hilma in her notebook, "and for the moment I am shelving the study of the women of the Old Testament. I am thinking of researching the daily life of my little village instead."

Her landlady, Louise Baldensperger, proved an invaluable help in her new aim of going deeper into contemporary life in the village. "She opened my eyes to what was characteristic of Palestinian folk life, and through her I was able almost immediately to win people's trust and sympathy. I was allowed to be acquainted with everything that happened in the village and nobody had any doubts about answering my many questions." "Sitt Louisa" became Hilma's springboard and interpreter for the whole place, and she, too, saw to it that two of the older women of the village, the blind Hamdiya and the deaf Aliya, were constantly at hand to assist, particularly in contacts with the village women. A more unconventional research team than this had probably never been seen in the academic world, but without the help of these three women Hilma Granqvist's work would never have been as wide ranging or significant as it turned out to be. Together they unearthed material stretching to five volumes, on folk life in a Palestinian village.



Hilma dressed up in a wedding costume from Bethlehem. Note the camera hanging round her neck. Fatme and Khalil, brother and sister, are standing next to her.

In Hilma's time in Artas there were some hundred families living in the village. These people had used the land in the valley, and herded their flocks of sheep on the mountainsides bordering onto the desert for as long as anyone could remember. Apart from the fact that some of the village boys had begun going to school in Bethlehem, this was a community which had, practically speaking, totally escaped devel-



Artas men perform the Sword Dance. Photo by Hilma Granqvist.

opments in the world around. The most important events in life were still the betrothals and weddings, Moslem festivals, births and funerals of the village. In the company of her unusual but capable research team Hilma crossed the thresholds of everyone's homes so that she could record all that happened, both at festival time and in daily life: "When a child was born in the village, I sat with the women, and when a wedding was celebrated, I was there; I even witnessed deaths and funerals. And so I got to know their joys and sorrows: they told me their life stories, past and present, and I made my notes. It was a real unearthing of custom and usage in the village."

Hilma's research became imbued with the motto: "Understand, and don't condemn." As she learnt more about the circumstances of these women and their place in village society, she was able to issue a warning at least as current today as then, not to observe conditions in the Arab world with too Western eyes: "Things that we think of as terribly unfortunate for a woman, like for example polygamy, are seen by the women of the village with a sense of humour that is liberating, and even refreshing, not least bearing in mind how we in the West complain over the oppressed state of the women of the East."

Hilma Granqvist was herself to be affected by such oppression, but then in the West. In 1931, when she returned to Finland, she soon discovered that both her gender and her Swedish origins were to be a handicap to her. Despite the fact that her descriptions of Artas folklife were praised by anthropologists throughout the world, here male colleagues and the Finnish nationalism of the period would never allow her into what otherwise ought to have been an obvious

career at Helsinki University. But Hilma did not give up. She was faithful to her original research, continued to publish her experiences from Artas, and sought high and low for financial support in order to return to the village and continue her studies. It was not until 1959, when she obtained a grant from Elin Wägners stiftelse (the Elin Wägner Foundation) in Sweden* that she was once more able to visit Artas, though by that time much had changed. Louise Baldensperger was now dead, just as were Aliya and Hamdiya, the other two women in the “research team”. The state of Israel had been established and up on the mountain ridge towards Bethlehem there was now a refugee camp called Deheishe with thousands of Palestinians who had been forced to flee from their villages. Hilma stayed for four months, and completed her fifth and last book on Artas on her return to Finland. However, she never wholly left her Palestinian village. At her death in 1972, at the age of 81, she was in the middle of sorting her thousands of photographs from Artas in order to publish them in a book.



The women of Artas went daily to the spring in the centre of the village. Photo by Hilma Granqvist.

Further reading:

Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village I. 1932

Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village II. 1935

Birth and Childhood in an Arab Village. 1947

Child Problems Among the Arabs. 1950

Muslim Death and Burial. 1965

Publications by other authors:

Portrait of a Palestinian Village, the Photographs of Hilma Granqvist, by Karen Seger, 1981

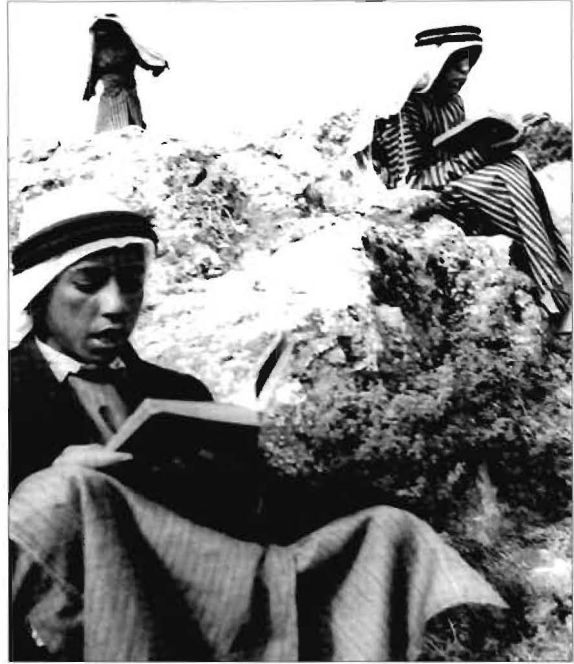
“Edward Westermarck and Hilma Granqvist in the field of Orientalist discourse in Finland”, by Riina Isotalo.

Photo exhibition Portrait of a Palestinian Village, Artas Now and Then - Photographs of Hilma Granqvist and Mia Gröndahl, 2000

* Hilma Granqvist maintained close relations with Sweden and the Swedish women's movement throughout her career, and Swedish was her mother tongue. In 1940 her book, “*Arabiskt familjeliv*” (*Arab Family Life*), which was published in Swedish, was awarded first prize in a competition for the best work of non-fiction in Scandinavia.



Spinning wool.



Hilma Granqvist documented the village life of Artas from the cradle to the grave. Top left: Women washing at the old spring in the centre of the village. Top right: Boys studying the Quran. Bottom: Village men gathered for prayer.



Till M. G. på föreläsningen 1933
från
Pique E.-d.

SIGNE EKBLAD 1894-1952

A Christian teacher with a passion for social justice, and known throughout Jerusalem as “er-Raise” of the Swedish School

In Visby Cathedral on Gotland, the largest Swedish island in the Baltic Sea, is an object a hundred years old, which links the building with Jerusalem: the bishop’s silver crozier, two metres long and gilded at the top. When Bishop Knut Henning Gezelius von Schéele was preparing to journey to Jerusalem in the autumn of 1898, the crozier was to be included as an important part of his luggage. Made in three pieces which fitted together, it travelled to the Holy City in its own leather-covered case with a handle.

Bishop von Schéele had been invited to take part in the consecration of the new German Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem and represent Swedish Christendom.* Kaiser Wilhelm II and his consort, Augusta Victoria, were to host the festivities, which were to last a whole week, since the consecration of this Protestant church was an important element in Germany’s aspiration to strengthen her influence in the Middle East; the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves had not seen such pomp and state since the days of the Roman Empire.



The crook of the Bishop’s crozier.

Bishop von Schéele, however, had higher things to think about while staying in the Holy Land than sunning himself in splendour among the clergy and the mighty, since he also wished to take the opportunity to find out what he could about general conditions in Jerusalem. When the processions in the Church of the Redeemer had died away and the crozier had been returned to its case, dented** after the bishop had dropped it on the stone floor of the church, von Schéele set out into the city and its surroundings on his own, on foot and horseback.

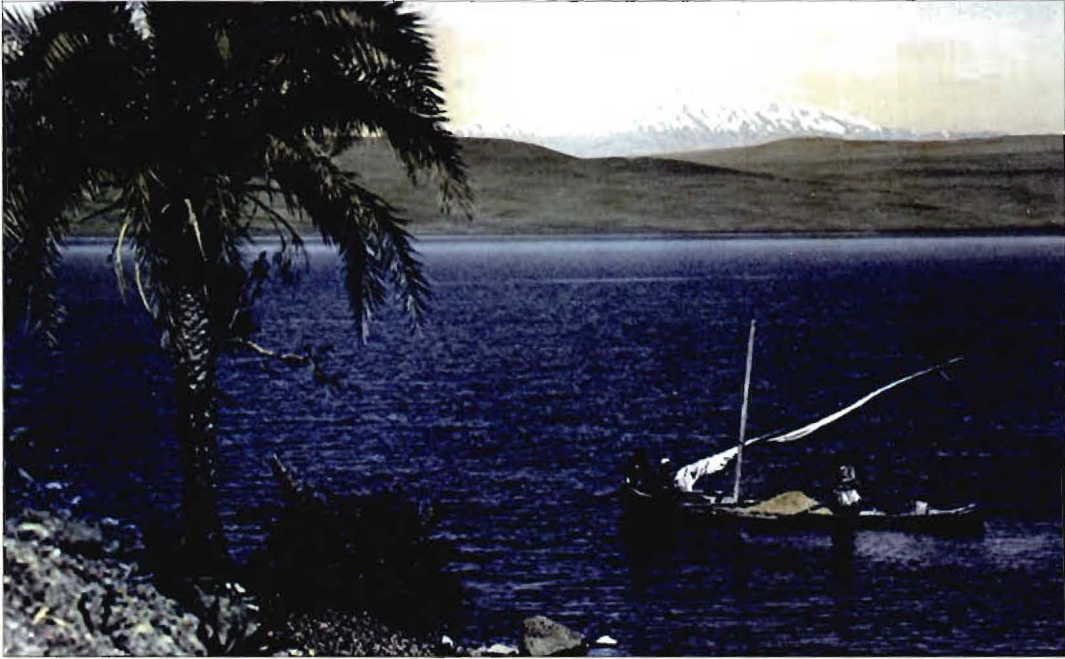
* After the visit to Jerusalem the following inscription was engraved on the crozier: “Carried by Bishop von Schéele on the occasion of the consecration of the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, 31st October, 1898.”

** The damage to the crozier is still known as “the Jerusalem dent”.

The bishop's programme included study visits to model Christian projects like Talitha Kumi, the German approved school for girls, and various children's homes and institutions for the blind and lepers. Beyond the walls of these establishments, however, as von Schéele soon realised, poverty in the community as a whole was such that aid contributions were but a drop in the ocean. It was a deeply shaken bishop who wrote the following lines with the aim of enlightening his countrymen as to the difficult conditions prevailing in the Holy City: "A more shocking sight one cannot imagine than that the streets of Jerusalem offer in terms of dirty bundles of rags, nay, human children, who grovel in the sun and dust with bloodshot eyes. Poor, wretched little things!"

During his long journey home to Visby and Gotland Bishop von Schéele pondered on how Sweden might contribute to alleviating distress in Jerusalem: "Should we not seek to do something to help the people now living in Christ's earthly native country, in gratitude for all we have received from this land?" The bishop was known to be effective in carrying out his ideas, and eighteen months later, on 14th May, 1900, the Svenska Jerusalemsföreningen (The Swedish Jerusalem Society) was established. The Society, of which the king of Sweden was patron, aimed "through welfare institutions and reformatories to work towards winning the inhabitants of the Holy Land for Christ." The "inhabitants" were meant, in the first place, to be the Jews of Palestine, but this mission was a failure. Right from the start it was clear that the Jews were not interested in allowing themselves to be converted to a new religion. The first person sent out by the Jerusalem Society, therefore, the young pastor Henrik Steen, recommended that the focus should instead be on social work among the Arabs of Palestine. Pastor Steen was far in advance of his time and decidedly against the idea that one should use the Society's school and sick-care activities as a bait to gain proselytes to the Christian faith from among the Jewish or Moslem inhabitants. In time this view also characterised the relation of the Jerusalem Society to Orthodox Christians; neither were they to be encouraged to give up their religious communities to the advantage of the Evangelical Lutheran faith. The old concept of mission now gained a new, more equal and humane significance. In future, therefore, the Jerusalem Society would be content to tell of, and bring to life, Christ's words and actions. The work of teaching and care of the sick would in itself be a witness to Jesus Christ and His presence in the Holy Land.

* *Bishop von Schéele donated the whole of his fortune to the work of the Swedish Jerusalem Society in the Holy City and Bethlehem.*



Signe Ekblad compared good people with the Sea of Galilee: Generous, good, and giving, without asking for anything in return. Photo by Lewis Larsson.

One person who succeeded immensely in combining warm Christianity with competent and committed aid work was the elementary school teacher, Signe Ekblad. Throughout almost the whole of her adult life, from 1922 to 1948, she led the school activities of the Swedish Jerusalem Society in Jerusalem.*

Signe always said, “There are two kinds of people: Galilee people and Dead Sea people. Galilee people receive with outstretched hands all that is good and fine, which is given by the Lord of Life, so that they can pass it on to the full. They live rich, fair lives. Dead Sea people, on the other hand, also seek to seize all the gifts they can, but never surrender anything of their own volition.” **

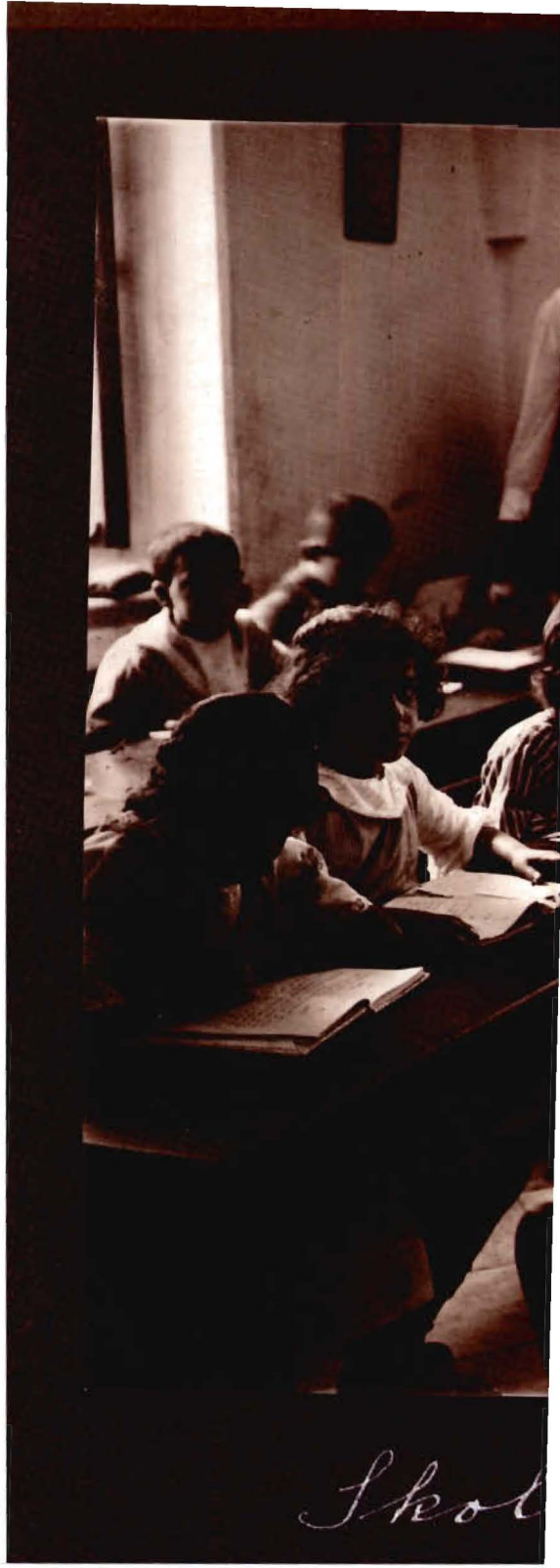
When Signe Ekblad arrived in Jerusalem at the age of twenty-eight, she had for a long time striven to be a “Galilee person”. Here, in the Holy City, she wished to repay something of all the bounty she felt life had so generously given her. Signe’s motto was: “It will probably work out.”

* Dr. Gustaf Ribbing, who developed the healthcare work of the Swedish Jerusalem Society between 1904 and 1914, was just as important in his field during his active years in Bethlehem as Signe Ekblad in her school activities.

** Quotation from Signe Ekblad’s “Lyckliga arbetsår i Jerusalem” (Happy Years of Work in Jerusalem), published in 1949 by J.A. Lindblad, Uppsala.

The Swedish School in Jerusalem went through a boom period while Signe Ekblad was head. Intended for small children, it was situated near the Damascus Gate, and during the twenty years since it had opened in 1902 had achieved a steadily rising number of pupils. There was therefore a great need for new premises. With the support of the Swedish consul, Lewis Larsson, Signe Ekblad succeeded in purchasing a property on two floors with a large plot of ground belonging to it in the Musrara Quarter, not far from the old school. From the balcony on the upper floor one could look down on the spacious garden which was to be the apple of Signe's eye, and beyond this the view continued over the Old City and the Mount of Olives. By the autumn of 1926 the blue-and-yellow Swedish flag could be seen flying over the new school building, which was embellished with a large sign-board bearing the words: SVENSKA SKOLAN (Swedish School). In a letter to Selma Lagerlöf, author of the novel "Jerusalem", who had once been a teacher herself and supported the work of the school, Signe recounted how the children helped with the move, carrying wall charts, chairs and pot plants over to the new building. Signe Ekblad wanted her pupils to feel that they were part of the school and think of it as home.

Headmistress Signe Ekblad and teacher Helene Khalil Suleiman Kassicieh working side by side at the Swedish School, 1923. ►



1923.



sser H. Kassinjen och P. Ekblad.



Gymnastic class in the courtyard in front of the new school building.

The Swedish flag was to fly above the Swedish School for three decades, and from 1925 onwards it received State contributions from the Palestinian education service. The school had a kindergarten and a junior department, and a staff consisting solely of Palestinians. As for the teaching, all lessons took place in Arabic, the children's own mother tongue, apart from when English was on the timetable, while the pupils themselves came from both Christian and Moslem Arab homes, though the majority were Christian. There was a lack of Jewish children in the school, however, a factor questioned on one occasion by the Jerusalem Society back in Sweden. Signe Ekblad had then to enlighten the Society that British-controlled Palestine only offered 41% of all Arab-Palestinian boys and 18% of the girls any form of education, while the developing Jewish community had itself organised schooling for a majority of its children, both boys and girls. To Signe it was obvious that the greatest need for teaching was on the Arab side, and she was particularly involved in seeing to it that Palestinian Arab girls should be given opportunities for education.



Even tables and cupboards were moved by the school children from the old to the new school building.



Småttningarna på grundstenen.

Signe Ekblad together with the youngest children by the foundation stone for the new school.



Story-telling time in the "Sun Hut".

Signe Ekblad was a modern person who applauded equality. In her eyes everyone, irrespective of race, class or gender, was equal and should be treated alike. As a girl in Sweden she had been adversely affected by the sexual discrimination of the time. Signe, who was the eldest of nine, saw how her father supported and encouraged her younger brothers to go on studying while she herself was refused higher education. As head, "er-Raise", of a school in the middle of a community governed by old traditions and conservative thinking she was often deeply disturbed by the very different way boys and girls were treated. In her memoirs Signe tells of a Christian Palestinian mother who came and begged to be allowed to avoid paying school fees for her daughter, Victoria. The family economy proved to be good, and the girl's brothers went to the British school where the annual fees were £15 per pupil. When Signe pointed out to the mother that Victoria's annual fees at the Swedish School were not even £1, she received a reply she was never to forget: "But she is only a girl! There's no point in wasting money on having her at school."



Children leaving school for their homes, 1928.

The Swedish School had greater ambitions than merely being an establishment for learning. Signe Ekblad and her Palestinian colleagues saw the pupils in a wider context, and were attentive to all their needs. The school had a doctor's surgery where children were treated for trachoma, the infectious eye disease which can lead to blindness; and in the autumn of 1937 the idea of a soup kitchen also began to take shape. Apart from the kindergarten and junior school classes the Swedish School had started to take in a new group of pupils, Moslem teenage girls from the very poorest families in the Old Town, who while waiting to be "married off" attended "sewing classes" here. These girls were so undernourished and tired, however, that they hardly had the strength to take part in lessons. "Might we not possibly be able to give them one meal a day?" asked Signe,



Signe Ekblad at the playground. The swings became immensely popular among the school children.

who also hatched the idea that the girls in the sewing classes – as part of their teaching – should themselves make the soup and see to the serving. The soup kitchen, “the Green Hall”, was a success which satisfied more than just the pupils at the school, since the sewing-class girls were also allowed to invite their hungry mothers and small siblings to a nourishing meal every day.

The Swedish School was situated in a mixed Jewish-Arab quarter on the boundary between western and eastern Jerusalem, and even during the unrest of 1936 it had been clear that its geographical position was a problem. When the campaign for Palestine reached its climax in the spring of 1948 the school landed in the firing line and its situation became untenable. As Signe recounts in her memoirs, “The uncertainty, bombing and shooting increased from week to week. The Arabs fled into the Old Town or escaped elsewhere, and nobody walked through the streets of the Arab quarters unless they had to. By the end of February only some twenty children from the very

nearest houses came to the school. Our teaching work and the soup kitchen had been taken away from us, and going visiting was out of the question. We sat in our well barricaded house behind walls with barbed-wire fencing, just waiting and waiting.”

On 3rd March Signe Ekblad received a telegram from the committee of the Swedish Jerusalem Society. She was instructed to close the school forthwith and fly home to Sweden.

Epilogue

After the truce the Swedish School was found to be in the part of Jerusalem controlled by Israel. It had been plundered during the war but Signe Ekblad's portrait remained in place on the upper floor until 1963 when the building was sold. The portrait was taken to Goda Herdens Skola (The Good Shepherds Swedish School) in Bethlehem, where the Swedish Jerusalem Society continued its teaching. The Society nowadays funds some 75% of its activities with money raised voluntarily in Sweden. This is a girls' school with capacity for 400 pupils, starting with pre-school and continuing to university entrance level. The hospital owned by the Jerusalem Society is situated on a neighbouring piece of land, and is leased and run by the Palestinian Health Authority.

Links: www.jerusalemforeningen.se

May 1923.



G. Einsler med



◀ A mixed class of boys and girls playing with wooden blocks in the narrow alley outside the old school, May 1923.

lass



Group of people, possibly a committee or group of officials, standing outdoors. A man in a dark suit and bow tie is prominent on the left.



Group of people, possibly a committee or group of officials, standing outdoors. A man in a dark suit and hat is prominent on the left.



Blommor och bilder bäras till nya skolan



Flowers and wall charts are carried by the school children to the new building, 1928.

- ◀ Top: The Governor of Jerusalem gives his blessing to the Swedish School, its work and staff, 1928
- ◀ Bottom: The foundation stone is consecrated with Signe Ekblad's commemorative words: " Even the very least from God is stronger than anything achievable by man".



FOLKE BERNADOTTE 1895-1948

The first United Nations peace mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, who fell victim to terrorist bullets in Jerusalem

Late on Friday afternoon, 17th September, 1948, a convoy of three cars climbed slowly up Palmach Street on the western side of Jerusalem. In the last car, a shining new Chrysler, sat the Swedish peace mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte. Everything seemed quiet in the divided city, the sound of gunfire from the snipers had temporarily gone silent, and the passengers in the convoy began to calm down.

Folke Bernadotte was accompanied in the back seat by his chief of staff, a fellow countryman called General Åge Lundström, and the United Nations observer André Serot. Serot, a Frenchman, had particularly asked if he could sit beside the mediator during the car journey, since he wanted to thank Count Bernadotte for having saved his wife's life. She had been among the thousands of Jews who had been freed from the Nazi concentration camps through Bernadotte's rescue action in the spring of 1945.

Some minutes later the chests of both men were to be pierced by bullets. None of them wore bulletproof vests. The Jewish terrorists carrying out the crime showed no mercy to the UN representatives: André Serot and Folke Bernadotte were executed in cold blood.

The assignment of the first UN peace mediator in the Middle East had begun four months earlier. Many of Folke Bernadotte's friends had warned him against this difficult and dangerous mission. Six months earlier, in November 1947, the United Nations had approved the plan which prepared the way for the division of Palestine into a Jewish and an Israeli state. Fighting broke out almost immediately, in May 1948, and the Jewish side proclaimed their independent state of Israel. Apart from achieving a cease-fire and peace, the mediator was also to put forward a plan for the future of Palestine. The problems were by and large the same as those of today: Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees and the frontier question. But the 53-year-old Bernadotte had found his mission in life late on; at an age when others were already cutting down their activities he felt ready for new challenges: "Folke realised that he presumably had a hundred to one chance of succeeding, but accepted anyway, just for the sake of this one possibility," said his widow, Estelle Bernadotte, later on.

◀ Folke Bernadotte was the first to practise shuttle diplomacy in his efforts as a UN peace mediator. Here he arrives in Cairo in a Red Cross aeroplane for talks with the Egyptian government.

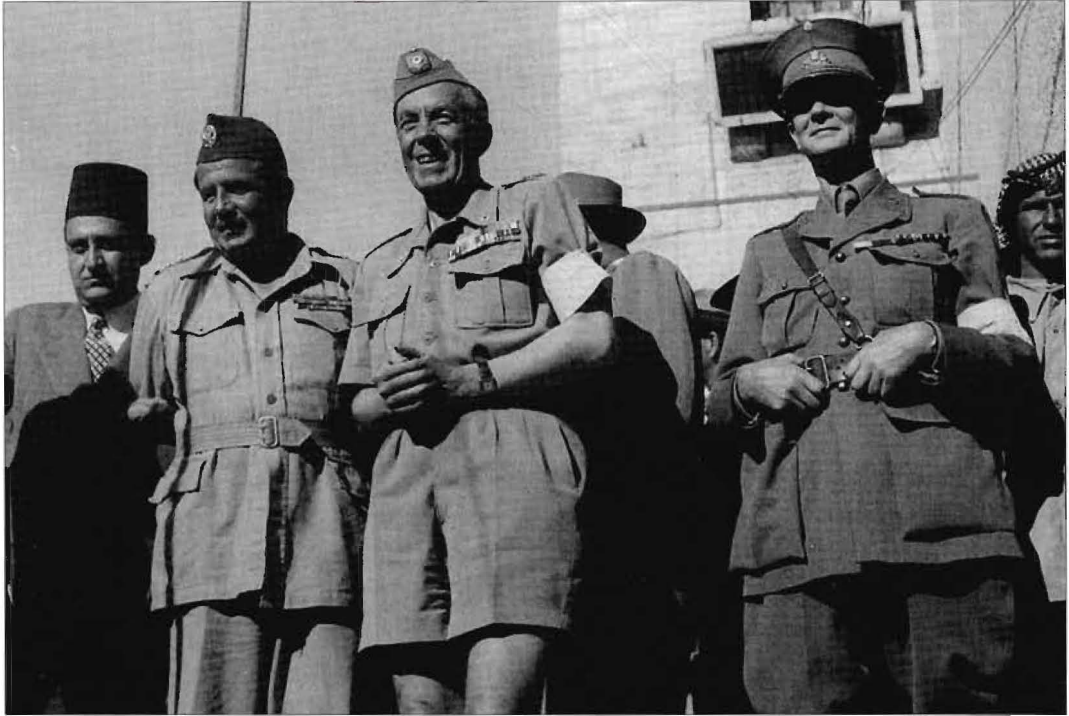
Folke Bernadotte was decidedly a man of action. His background was not academic. He had won his experience of life as a military man and an officer, from the banking and business world and as leader of movements like the Swedish Guide and Scout Association and the Swedish Red Cross. As well as his skill in an organising capacity, his practical disposition, linguistic talents and ability to make quick decisions, one might also add the assurance and knowledge of the ways of the world acquired through his upbringing in the bosom of the Swedish royal family. His paternal uncle was King Gustav V. Despite his royal background, however, Folke Bernadotte was always keen to avoid being addressed as count. Among his colleagues he was quite simply Folke. This name – which is of Old Norse origin and means chief – was one he alone bore within the royal family, but shared with many Swedish boys born at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Folke Bernadotte was well aware of his good fortune in being born with so many advantages. The older he became the more he felt the need to carry out something great and good for his fellow human beings, and sought different ways of repaying the debt for all that life had so liberally given him. The chance of doing something important and courageous for mankind arose in the closing stages of the Second World War, when he was given the task of freeing Scandinavians and Jews from Hitler's concentration camps. This action, so skilfully carried out, saved the lives of some 20,000 people and gave Folke Bernadotte an international reputation as one of the great heroes of his time.

Initially the freedom assignment in the Middle East looked as if it might begin well. Folke Bernadotte and his staff, who set up their headquarters on the Greek island of Rhodes, got off to an excellent start in their negotiations with the parties in conflict via a hectic schedule of flights zigzagging between Cairo, Beirut, Tel Aviv, Amman and Jerusalem. This intensive shuttle diplomacy – herewith used for the first time in international history – resulted within less than ten days, on 9th June, 1948, in the contending parties agreeing to a ceasefire.



The Swedish Consulate at Jerusalem – and also home of Lewis Larsson – suffered a bomb attack in the autumn of 1947 in protest against the Swedish involvement in the plans for division of Palestine. ▲



In the centre the UN negotiator, Folke Bernadotte, murdered by Jewish terrorists in Jerusalem in 1948.

Congratulations streamed in from the whole world. Folke Bernadotte gave thanks to God for the truce agreement, and hugged his second-in-command, the American Ralph Bunche. Now, when one had managed to achieve a ceasefire, the real job of finding a solution to the stumbling blocks of the conflict could begin: Jerusalem, the refugees and the borders. When Bunche, Bernadotte's successor as peace mediator, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in the following year, he described the truce as the result of "the most intensive diplomatic negotiations ever attempted in the history of diplomacy".

But the truce agreement was a beautiful bubble which was soon to burst. In actual fact none of the parties in the conflict was prepared to give up the struggle for more land or create real peace. The Israeli provisional government was very upset over the demands of the truce agreement for controlled Jewish immigration, and had only agreed to the ceasefire in order to appease international opinion and win time to build up and equip their own army. On the Arab side an interval

was also needed in the fighting. Despite this, however, both sides quite unashamedly violated the ceasefire after only a couple of weeks. The few observers whom the UN had sent to the area had absolutely no chance of getting the parties to respect the peace agreement entered into. Folke Bernadotte began also to realise how vulnerable he was as mediator, particularly after having studied reactions to his and Bunche's proposals for a peace plan. The Israelis – who did not wish to stand out as the party which had rejected the plan – did not immediately reveal their true feelings about the peace proposal which went under the name of, “The first Bernadotte plan”, even if most of the ideas for the partition of Palestine came from Bunche.

The plan proposed that Israel should – with the exception of the Negev – keep the area assigned to them in the original partition plan of 1947, as well as western Galilee, which had been captured during the fighting of recent months. It was proposed that the Negev should fall to Transjordan. The idea of Jerusalem as an international zone, launched in the UN plan of 1947, was deemed impossible to carry out in practice. The Bernadotte plan proposed instead that East Jerusalem and the Old Town, which had for the past month been under the control of the forces of the Arab Legion, should be a Palestinian-Arab town and go to Transjordan, though with the proviso that the inhabitants of the Jewish part would have the right of self determination and that special protection would be given to the city's Holy Places. Further, the plan proposed that Israel and Transjordan should form an economic union. Despite the fact that the Palestinians did not participate with a direct representative who could speak on their behalf during negotiations, Bernadotte saw to it that the Palestinian refugee question was not forgotten in the plan. Folke Bernadotte had visited several of the camps and was deeply shocked over the situation of the refugees.

To a humanist like him it was obvious that they should be allowed to return to their homes and regain their property in Palestine, and he did not hesitate in putting forward his views to foreign minister Moshe Shertok on the “harshness and implacability” shown by the newly formed state of Israel towards these people: “It surprised me that these very same representatives of the Jewish people regarded this problem as a purely political matter without taking any account of the humanitarian side of the question.” The creation of an independent Palestinian state – which had been included in the original UN partition plan from 1947, is however no longer mentioned. The Palestinian Arabs were deemed neither to have the leaders nor the organisation to able to lead their own state in an effective manner. The Arab High Committee, which was established in 1936 in defence of the Palestinians, had lost their credibility because of the dealings of their president, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Husseini, with Hitler and the German Nazi regime.



Body search of Palestinians at the Damascus Gate.



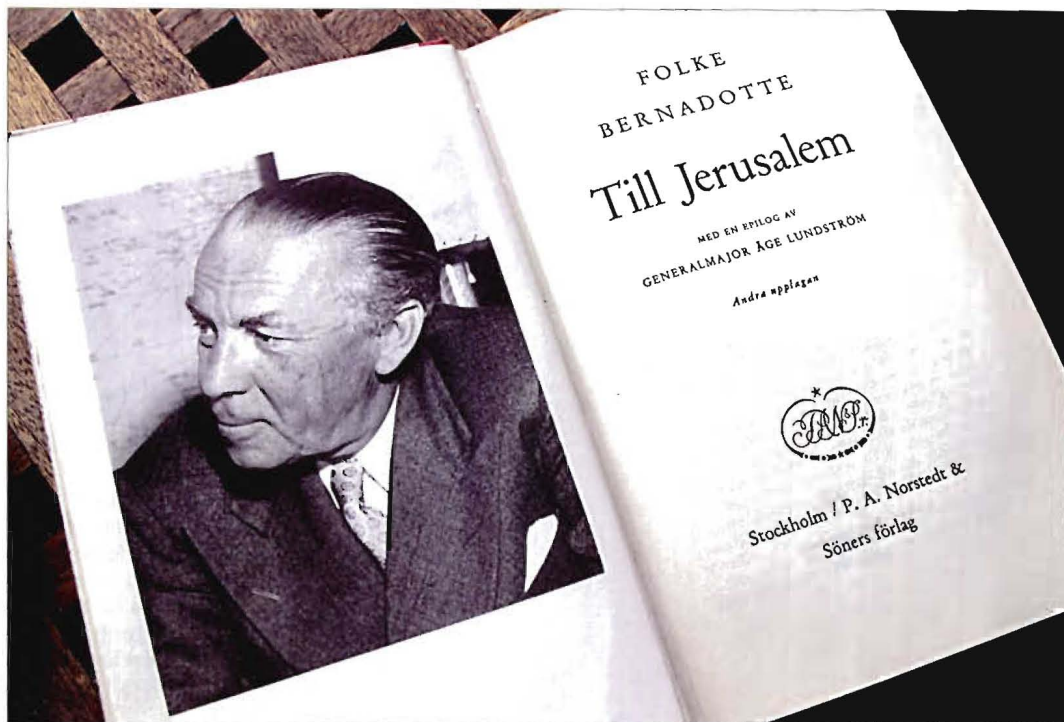
British soldier checks a Jewish inhabitant of the city for weapons.



MINIAN SSR.



◀ Folke Bernadotte appeared before the members of the UN Security Council for the first time in July 1948, at Lake Success. Here he sits between the UN General Secretary, Trygve Lie, and the Chairman of the Security Council, Dimitri Manuilsky.



The book "Till Jerusalem" (To Jerusalem), by Folke Bernadotte, was published after his death. It is based on the diary he kept while acting as the UN peace mediator in Jerusalem. The last entry in the book was made a week before he was killed. Photo by Mia Gröndahl.

Both sides rejected the Bernadotte plan, first the Arabs and some days later the Jews. The Arab States adhered to their refusal to acknowledge a Jewish state in Palestine. Everyone – apart from King Abdullah – was also irritated that the plan favoured Transjordan. In spite of this the UN envoy was still received in a respectful and aimiable way on the Arab side, though Israel's provisional government had no intention of maintaining such a stance. After the ten days' war of July when Israel strengthened its position by capturing important Palestinian towns such as Lydda, Ramla and Nazareth, the new state behaved towards Folke Bernadotte and the UN observers with an ever colder self assurance and hostile attitude. In his diary Ralph Bunche wrote, "Israel bragging. Shertok pompous. Jewish imperialism unrestrained." At the same time Bernadotte became fair game for the Jewish press, which violently attacked the Swedish mediator. Among the worst of these verbal assaults were accusations that he was a British agent and Nazi collaborator. This last lie tormented Folke Bernadotte particularly, since the only object of his contacts with Himmler had been to get Hitler's butcher to open the concentration camps. At a press conference

in Tel Aviv he chose to bring up this question with journalists, “I said that I in no way expected any gratitude for what I had done, but could not refrain from thinking of the fact that it was unjust that this same Red Cross action led by me had been exploited to throw suspicion on me, especially as some 10, 000 Jews had had their lives saved because of it.” Remarkably enough Folke Bernadotte and those around him do not seem to have weighed up the possibility that extremist articles can lead to extremist actions, or that words can be transformed into bullets.

The assassination of Folke Bernadotte was planned in an abandoned Arab house in Katamon, in West Jerusalem. Shortly after its Palestinian inhabitants had been forced to flee, the house was occupied by the Jewish terrorist group, Lehi, the building was stuffed full of weapons, and it was cordoned off with barbed wire. The brains behind the group went by the cover name of Michael, who was later to be known as Yitzhak Shamir and in 1983 chosen as Israel’s prime minister. Lehi was obsessed by the idea that the UN and Count Bernadotte were in process of stealing Jerusalem from the Jewish people. It was therefore that he had to die. On 10th September, 1948, the death sentence was passed. A week later it was put into effect.

None of the assassins has ever been brought to trial.

Epilogue:

In 1991 four of the assassins were able to appear on Israeli TV and with laughter brag about the murder. Folke Bernadotte’s rescue action of 1945, which saved the lives of thousands of Jews, has still not been acknowledged by Yad Vashem. The place where the assassination was carried out, in Palmach Street where it is crossed by Ha’gdad Ha’ivri Street, still has no memorial plaque.

Books by Folke Bernadotte:

Instead of arms, Autobiographical notes, 1949

To Jerusalem, 1951

Last Days of the Reich: The Diary of Count Folke Bernadotte, October 1944-May 1945, introduction by Sune Persson, 2009

Publication by other author:

A Death in Jerusalem – the Assassination by Extremists of the First Middle East Peacemaker, by Kati Marton, 1994.

Links: www.folkebernadotteacademy.se

