



An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict

Daniel Bertand Monk

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In *An Aesthetic Occupation* Daniel Bertrand Monk unearths the history of the unquestioned political immediacy of “sacred” architecture in the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. Monk combines groundbreaking archival research with theoretical insights to examine in particular the Mandate era—the period in the first half of the twentieth century when Britain held sovereignty over Palestine. While examining the relation between monuments and mass violence in this context, he documents Palestinian, Zionist, and British attempts to advance competing arguments concerning architecture’s utility to politics. Succumbing neither to the view that monuments are autonomous figures onto which political meaning has been projected, nor to the obverse claim that in Jerusalem shrines are immediate manifestations of the political, Monk traces the reciprocal history of *both* these positions as well as describes how opponents in the conflict debated and theorized their own participation in its self-representation. Analyzing controversies over the authenticity of holy sites, the restorations of the Dome of the Rock, and the discourse of accusation following the Buraq, or Wailing Wall, riots of 1929, Monk discloses for the first time that, as combatants looked to architecture and invoked the transparency of their own historical situation, they simultaneously advanced—and normalized—the conflict’s inability to account for itself.

This balanced and unique study will appeal to anyone interested in Israel or Zionism, the Palestinians, the Middle East conflict, Jerusalem, or its monuments. Scholars of architecture, political theory, and religion, as well as cultural and critical studies will also be informed by its arguments.

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