Abstract
Bab al-Maghariba or Dung Gate is one of the least photographed gates of the Old City of Jerusalem. Also known as Mughrabi Gate — and not to be confused with its namesake, one of the internal gates allowing entrance into al-Aqsa Mosque from inside the Old City walls — the history of this southern gate can be examined from the few old photographs and maps that are available. The gate’s changing appearance is partly documented, partly deciphered in this photo essay by Jean-Michel de Tarragon, photo archivist for École Biblique.

Keywords
Dung Gate; Mughrabi Gate; photographs; architecture; towers; Old City of Jerusalem.

Sorting through photographs of the Mughrabi Gate (Dung Gate), I quickly realized that its appearance has changed a great deal over the years, and at an accelerated rate from 1940 to 1967. Of all the gates in Jerusalem, it is also the one that has been most often redesigned.

If we compare it to other gates of Jerusalem, since the Ottoman period Bab al-‘Amud (Damascus Gate) has not been reshaped, nor has Bab al-Sahyun (David’s or Zion Gate). Bab al-Zahra (Herod’s Gate) and Bab al-Asbat (Lions’ Gate or St. Stephen’s Gate) were altered by piercing and dismantling the outer walls to leave a straight path instead of the narrow L-shaped entrance on the side of the gatehouse and its meandering passages.\textsuperscript{1} The piercing of Herod’s Gate remains mysterious as we have not found the date of the alteration and, above all,
have no photograph showing the gate without the break. Even the oldest photos already show the straight line inside the door. Perhaps because the gate is not very photogenic, old documentation is rare. Even the reason for the piercing is not obvious, since horse-drawn carriages were not intended to pass through here, given the network of narrow alleys behind the gate. Ancient travelers texts also indicate that Herod’s Gate may have been condemned at one time, and left unused. In the British Mandate period, it underwent major remodeling inside its gatehouse above the entrance.

New Gate has been barely modified since its relatively recent creation in 1898, with the exception of its barbed wire closure by the British during two periods: during the Arab revolt of 1936–39, and during the war of 1948. On the other hand, Jaffa Gate has undergone a well-known remodeling: the piercing of the curtain wall between it and the Citadel, in 1898. It was not, as is too often said, to allow Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany to pass through, whose horse could easily negotiate the inner baffle of the old Ottoman gate, but to allow passage of the empress’s carriage and those of the ladies of the court – and of guests not on horseback.

Mughrabi Gate (Bab al-Maghariba)

Although Mughrabi Gate is not an important door, it is nevertheless well attested. We can recall that it has several names, and that an ambiguity has long persisted because an element of the Haram al-Sharif bears the same name: the entrance to the mosques by the ramp above the Wailing Wall (Buraq’s Wall) on ancient maps is also called Bab al-Maghariba (and also Bab al-Nabi or Bab al-Buraq), for example, on our map of 1912 from Père H. Vincent (figure 1) and earlier in the map of 1888 (figure 2).

Our goal not being the study of toponymy, but of photographs, we recall in passing that in the late Middle Ages, Bab al-Maghariba may have been called Sterquiline Gate, in echo of the Latin stercus (manure), and thus Dung Gate. It was also called Tanners’ Gate, or Gate of the Africans, according to travelers’ accounts. This last name brings us closer to Maghariba, a reference to the Muslim pilgrims from al-Maghrib who, over the centuries, settled nearby, in the neighborhood that was consequently called the Harat al-Maghariba (Mughrabi quarter). It may also have been called Bab Silwan, according to some pilgrims. Specialists in pilgrims’ accounts, mostly in Arabic, will be able to enrich this investigation.

The oldest photograph showing the gate from a distance is from Salzmann, in 1854 (figure 3), on which we have inscribed (in a black oval) the tower of the gate, which protrudes slightly. A photo by James McDonald in 1864–65 also shows the gate.

The gatehouse first had, on the inner side of the city, a guard tower, establishing the baffle route. The Mughrabi Gate, however, has not attracted much attention from researchers and historians, except for the reflections of the archaeologist Meir Ben-Dov. Ben-Dov conducted surveys along the southern wall from 1975 to 1977, published in 1994. However, he did not carry out any actual excavations at the gate – this would have been difficult, as it was in heavy use daily. He made a detailed visual examination of the monument as it is today, and is the only one to have proposed a detailed reconstruction
of the phases of the gate. Ben-Dov rightly proposes what no one else had noted, a small Ottoman tower inside the rampart, protecting the gatehouse with a baffle (figure 4). The chunking of this tower is visible in all the photographs showing the inner face of the gate. This is the case of the known photographs of the American Colony photographers, or with this unpublished 1930 photo, from our collection (figure 5), from 1930, showing the entire height of the wall on its inner face, with the multiple tiers that Ben-Dov is the first to explain by his logical hypothesis of an inner tower, which we adopt.

At an unknown period, which Ben-Dov assumes to be the eighteenth century, the Ottomans added the outer tower, the only one that has survived to our generations, and which appears on old maps and photographs. The inner tower, no longer needed, would have been dismantled before the period of the PEF (Palestine Exploration Fund), whose work is among the first who could have attested to its survival – or the mission of L.F. de Saulcy, whose 1863 map testifies to the disappearance of the inner tower. Similarly, a map of 1886 confirms that the inner tower had disappeared. No old photograph attests to this inner tower. Its dismantling must have occurred early, before the invention of photography. Thus, it does not appear on Bonfils’ photo number 298, whose angle of view could have shown it.

**Dismantling of the Outer Tower**

The third transformation of the Mughrabi Gate is the dismantling of the outer tower, in order to make a straight passage. Here, Meir Ben-Dov’s work is at fault for an oversight that we cannot explain: he writes: “A basic change in the Ottoman Dung Gate was made in the early days [our italics] of the British Mandate, probably in the late 1920s, when most of its construction was removed leaving only an opening in the city wall.” This dating is inaccurate. A 1936 map published by the Zionists in 1947 shows the tower still there. More importantly, many photographs show the tower after the 1920s – including the one taken from the Zeppelin in 1931.

Apparently, the outer tower was dismantled at the very end of the British period. In 1948, it no longer exists. Three photographs taken from the same angle, figures 6, 7, and 8, can be put in dialogue: the first, oldest of the three, by Khalil Ra’d, shows the Tiferet synagogue and the Mughrabi Gate tower; the second, by the Jesuit Institute, displays the same image, but closer to 1948, as we see from the outskirts of the gate; the third, by the Jesuit Institute also, shows the gate without the tower, but with the dome of the Tiferet synagogue still standing (this dome will be dynamited in May 1948).

Two photographs by Khalil Ra’d (figures 9 and 10) are remarkable documents of this outer tower. The first photo shows a strange peculiarity: the tower is detached from the wall. A large slit in the top shows that the tower is not connected at all, evidence that it was added afterwards. It is therefore understandable that its dismantling did not leave any traces of damage on the wall.

The result was, after 1948 and until 1967, the situation that one of our color slides from 1958 illustrates: the Jewish quarter of the Old City in a state of disrepair and the Mughrabi Gate without a tower (figure 11).
Enlargement of the Mughrabi Gate in Two Stages

Once the outer tower was dismantled at the end of the British period, the straight pedestrian passageway shows, on the outer face, a beautiful carving, illustrated here in a picture by the Jesuit Fathers of Jerusalem (figure 12). One can note the wooden door for closure (the right-hand leaf is clearly visible). This carved decoration is from the original, present before the seventeenth century if we follow Ben-Dov’s hypothesis: it would be the external facade of the door at the time of the first tower, the one inside the ramparts. When the Ottomans added a second tower, on the outside, they left this decoration in place, which then survived inside the zigzag passage, in the semi-darkness, fortunately sheltered from the sun and rain. The dismantling of the tower by the British suddenly brings this solid lintel, surmounted by a low-profile arch, decorated with the carved Star of David motif, back into the light. Above, classic elements of Mamluk decoration: a beautiful pointed gadroon arch and, above it, a floral-themed macaroon, or button.

The enlarged opening has distorted this postern by opening it to cars and trucks. The photos show that it was done in two stages: first by the Jordanians, in 1953, then by the Israelis, in 1985. A slide from 1964 (figure 13) shows the 1953 Jordanian concrete lintel that widens the gate; the same device is maintained by the Israelis at the beginning of their occupation of the Old City after the June 1967 war, as shown in figure 14: note, on the left, an Israeli soldier sitting in front of the wooden gatehouse. The Jordanian device persists, for a short time, until the further widening that can be seen today in the many photographs visible on the internet, with an aesthetically improved lintel modified by two lateral curves; the ground had to be lowered slightly to allow the passage of oversized vehicles.

Using the scarce documentation, we are able to suggest an architectural evolution of the Mughrabi Gate, which in our view has witnessed more transformations than did any of the other city gates. The city maintained, through its gates, a global architectural heritage, going back several centuries to the early Ottoman period and earlier. Not many historical cities, in our twenty-first century, can pretend to this achievement. We also note that the many wars the city was subjected to did not significantly alter the appearance of those gates.

The peculiarity in the several transformations of this modest structure can be explained by its location: it is the only southeast gate, with its sensitive surroundings, the village of Silwan and the Kidron valley, and its well-known water resources. The city’s needs were conflicting: the need to protect against enemies was accommodated by the Ottomans with the addition of a second, outer tower. On the other hand, the need to facilitate the circulation of people and commodities towards the south of Jerusalem led to the dismantling of the towers, stage by stage. We acknowledge that we have not found any written records to substantiate this perspective. This article is in large part a reconstruction of possible trajectories, using maps and mostly old photographs.
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Figure 1. Excerpt from a map of Jerusalem, drawn by Father Louis-Hugues Vincent of École Biblique, 1912. The location of the two “Mughrabi gates,” the one to the Haram al-Sharif platform and the one in the southern city wall, are circled. Courtesy of École Biblique library.
Figure 2. Excerpt from a map of Jerusalem, drawn by a French priest in 1888, l’abbé Henri Nicole. Courtesy of Ecole Biblique library.
Figure 3. One of the oldest photos of the southeast city wall, by August Salzmann, 1854, and the only old one showing Mughrabi Gate. From the photo book of Salzmann, courtesy of the École Biblique, scan no. 15746.
Dung Gate: plan of the original stage with the gatehouse built inside the city wall

Dung Gate: plan of the second stage, after the additional gatehouse was built outside the city wall to strengthen the defenses

Figure 4. Archaeological sketch of two phases of the Mughrabi Gate through the ages, as interpreted by Meir Ben-Dov in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Hillel Geva (Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 317–20.
Figure 5. Inner face of Mughrabi Gate, photographed by Fr. Ferrero in 1930. Fr. Ferrero was a Spanish Dominican friar, studied at École from 1929 to 1931. He donated his entire collection of photographs pertaining to the Holy Land to the École Biblique. Courtesy of École Biblique, scan no. 10794.
Figure 6. Mughrabi Gate and tower from a distance, seen from above Silwan village, from east to west. Excerpt of a photograph by Khalil Ra’d, no date, probably early British Mandate period, from a small print in a studio photo album, lent to École Biblique in 2015 by a private collector (two albums, now destroyed in an accidental home fire). Courtesy of École Biblique, scan no. 24004.
Figure 7. Mughrabi Gate with its tower, seen from afar, east to west, the Jewish Quarter in the background. Excerpt of a photo from the Jesuit Fathers of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI) in Jerusalem, no date. The circle shows the tower of Mughrabi Gate, the Jewish Quarter as before 1948 and a few buildings along the path to Mughrabi Gate, which were not existing in the photo of Ra‘d (figure 6). We can estimate the date as the last years of the British Mandate period. Courtesy of the PBI, Jerusalem, paper-print from an album, scan no. 16691.
Figure 8. Mughrabi Gate seen from afar, the Jewish Quarter in the background, east to west. Excerpt of a photo from the Jesuit Fathers of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI) in Jerusalem, no date. The crop shows Mughrabi Gate without the tower – and the Jewish Quarter as before the war of 1948. The date should be the very last years of the British Mandate period. Courtesy of the PBI, Jerusalem, paper-print from an album, scan no. 16801.
Figure 9. Tower of Mughrabi Gate, close up from west to east, alongside the city wall. The black oval on the photo points out the strange slit separating the tower from the wall, no date. Perhaps at the beginning of the dismantling process, a professional architectural photo to document the tower. Original negative probably at the Rockefeller Museum. Courtesy of École Biblique from a print in a private collection lent for scanning, scan no. Ely 10.
Figure 10. Tower of Mughrabi Gate, close up from south to north, no date. Courtesy of École Biblique, from a paper print, issued by the Studio of Khalil Ra‘d, scan no. 24494.
Figure 11. Mughrabi Gate in 1958, from the east. Excerpt from a color slide, scanned in black and white. The black circle shows the place of Mughrabi Gate, seen from east to west, Jordanian period, 1958. Collection of Fr. Giraud-Mounier, courtesy of École Biblique photo archive, scan no. 023.
Figure 12. Close up of Mughrabi Gate from outside the city wall, south to north. No date, but between 1948 and 1964 (see figure 13). The gate is not yet enlarged by the Jordanian Municipality. A Jesuit priest gives a human scale to it. Courtesy of Pontifical Biblical Institute, Jerusalem, paper print scan no. 16804.
Figure 13. The southern city wall of Jerusalem, viewed west to east, with a glimpse of the Mughrabi Gate (black circle and black arrow), showing the widening of the gate by the Jordanian administration, done in 1953. In order to leave way for motor cars, a concrete lintel has been inserted in the city wall, as shown in figure 14. Crop of a color slide from 1964, scanned in black and white, gift to École Biblique from the family of a French pilgrim to the Holy Land.
The Five Transformations of Dung Gate

Jean-Michel de Tarragon

Figure 14. Close up of the outer facade of the Mughrabi Gate in 1967–68. The last stage of the gate before today’s, which is now enlarged and deepened by the street having been lowered. Courtesy of École Biblique from a print in a private collection lent for scanning, scan no. Ely 09.
Endnotes

1 The old condition of Lions’ Gate, on the other hand, is well documented in the oldest photographs. In addition to a Salzmann photo of 1854, there is a J. Roberston & F. Beato photo of 1857 – and Bonfils number 273 – that show the interior of the baffle still in place, with the passage being accessed (from the outside) by turning to the left in the gatehouse. However, another Bonfils a few years later, the new vertical version of number 273, shows the new door pierced. Dozens of other photographers will attest to this novelty, whose origin was the need to allow the horse-drawn carriages, or fiacres, to pass, as the guests of honor of the Austrian Hospice.

2 The gate was closed in 1842, according to W.H. Bartlett, Walks about the City and Environs of Jerusalem, 2nd ed. (London: Strahan, 1850), 127.

3 See “Plan de la Ville de Jérusalem dressé en 1888 par l’abbé Henri Nicole,” Paris (at the École Biblique).


8 Also see the map of 1894 by J. Bliss in A.C. Dickie, Excavations at Jerusalem, 1894–1897 (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1898).

9 Ancient Jerusalem Revealed, 318, right column.