Palestine's Sacred Struggle: The Evolution of International Tourist Guides to the Haram al-Sharif

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The Temple Mount, referred to in Arabic as al-Haram al-Sharif, had become emblematic of the Palestinian struggle against Zionist forces before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. In the following two decades the Haram al-Sharif, as the last vestige of Arab sovereignty in historic Palestine, was heralded as a national symbol of Palestinians. Though venerated as a sacred space for centuries, the Haram al-Sharif was elevated in significance during the twentieth century, becoming central to Palestinian nationalist thought. This evolution was catalyzed by two Muslim councils responsible for administering the Haram al-Sharif as a religious sacred space: the Palestinian Supreme Muslim Council from 1921-1948, and the Jordanian Supreme Awqaf Council from 1951-1967.

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The walls enclosing the Haram al-Sharif reach their highest point (65 meters) at the southeast corner, where there is a clear view of the massive blocks of dressed stone of the Herodian walls and the overlying courses of smaller stones of later restorations. The first kings of Jerusalem resided in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, but later made it part of the Order of the Temple (founded 1149), which took its name from the Templum Salomonis (Al-Aqsa) and Templum Domini (Dome of the Rock). After Jerusalem was recaptured for Islam by Saladin in 1187, there was much further building on the Temple platform, particularly by the Mamelukes. Al-Haram al-Sharif, of course, has historic and sacred significance for all Muslims around the world. But its significance in Palestine and for Palestinians is a matter of national pride and territorial integrity: systematically, consistently, invariably violated by the entire Zionist colonial project from the