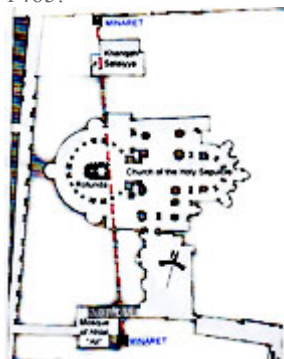


The obsession with Jerusalem has produced such a large number of books and articles that J. Purvis decided to publish a bibliography (Jerusalem, The Holy City, 1988). The book contains almost 5000 titles and references, but surely at least five thousand more have been written since its compilation. Reading Purvis's book, one realizes how meticulously each building and stone in Jerusalem have been studied, and some of the conclusions or interpretations are often interesting and peculiar. A good example is an article by Archibald G. Walls that was published in the seventies in a specialised review.

Walls opened his article with a question: Is there a religious element in the two almost identical minarets standing at the north and south of the Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which seem to watch over Jesus Christ's tomb? Walls noticed that the two minarets are not only very similar in their form and architectural structure, but they were built around the same time, in the Mameluk period: the first one in 1417 and the second one in 1465.



The bases of the minarets are built on two different topographical levels but their summits are the same height, as if the builder of the second minaret had insured it would be as tall

The Mystery of the two Minarets



Walls studied a planimetry of the area and noticed that the imaginary line that unites the two summits of the minarets runs right over the entrance of Jesus Christ's tomb and that the median point of the line is only two metres away from it. Moreover, this imaginary line lies on the Mecca – Jerusalem axis.

Walls wondered if all these discoveries were merely coincidental, or the results of a precise religious and theological decision on the part of the builders. He came to the conclusion that there is, in fact, a connection between the Muslim buildings and the Holy Sepulchre; of all the traditional places connected to Jesus Christ, the Holy Sepulchre is the only one the Muslims do not accept.

According to the Muslim tradition, Jesus Christ was not crucified and thus was alive when he ascended to Heaven. The Romans actually crucified Judas Iscariot, who had received Jesus Christ's appearance.

(According to one of the ancient Christian sects from Syria, Simon of Cyrene was crucified in Jesus Christ's place.)

Murphy O' Connor, author of one of the most important archaeological guides of Jerusalem, suggested that the Muslims were not trying to "protect" the Holy Sepulchre with the two Minarets, but to "annul" it, because, according to their tradition, it cannot be Jesus Christ's tomb.



as the first.