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«This ‹clock› was not made to stand on the wall of a cozy house interior in the Black Forest as a re-assuring keeper of time; it was destined to be placed on tense negotiating tables in the Middle East and to serve as a tool to deal with territorial and religious conflicts.»

A MINIATURE CONFLICT — CONRAD SCHICK'S MODEL OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IN JERUSALEM

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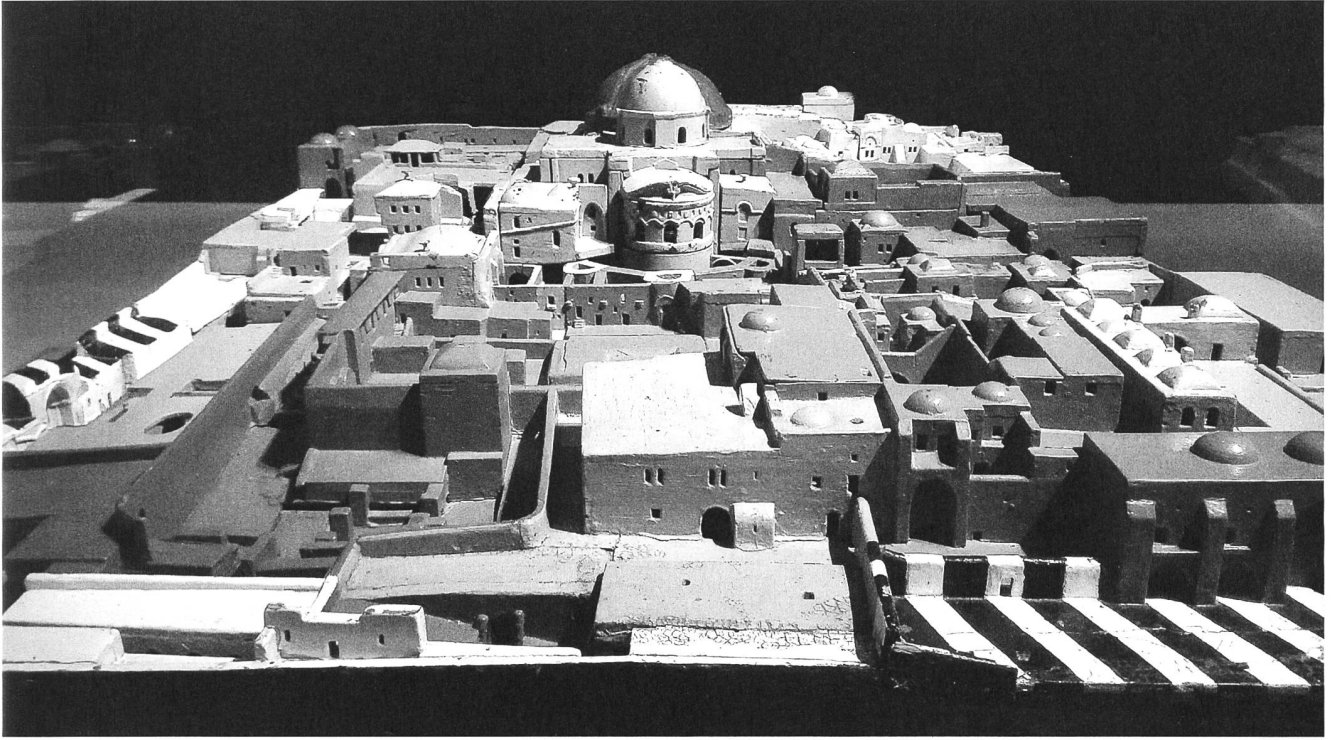
One of the many religious conflicts that troubled the city of Jerusalem in the mid-19th century was the dispute over the ownership status of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its surroundings—a long-standing feud among Jerusalem's Jewish, Muslim and numerous Christian communities. The division of ownership of this and other sacred sites all over the Holy Land was governed by the «Status Quo»: an agreement which had first been made orally between the various religious communities of Jerusalem and later had been consolidated in written form through a series of decrees («firmans») issued by the Ottoman rulers of the city in the mid-18th century. The «Status Quo» dictated to whom the various parts of the major holy sites of Jerusalem belonged and determined who was permitted to use them for their religious ceremonies, and when. It was an attempt to impose order over the Holy Sepulchre by meticulously describing and, in essence, «freezing» the religious rituals taking place in the Holy Sepulchre in a peaceful, repetitive circle. Nevertheless, violent conflicts repeatedly arose over the building's ownership throughout the 19th century⁽¹⁾.

Facing an escalation of these conflicts in the early-1860s, the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem, Süreyya Pasha, decided that the best way to solve the problem was to demonstrate the ownership of the different parts of the Holy Sepulchre through an architectural model⁽²⁾. Commissioning models was a common practice among Ottoman sultans and high-ranking officials, especially when it came to approving new designs or celebrating holy sites. But the Holy Sepulchre was a much more complicated and politically charged case: Süreyya Pasha's aim was to consolidate the textual and oral agreements of the Status Quo into a precise, three-dimensional, architectural diagram of the Holy Sepulchre, in order to solve the conflicts that arose over the religious use, but also the repair and maintenance of the different parts of the complex. The architectural intricacy of these conflicts is exemplified by an incident where Latin and Orthodox monks clashed violently over who was to clean the lowest step of a staircase, since the former owned the staircase and the latter the courtyard it landed on⁽³⁾. Even though this specific incident occurred some decades after the model, it provides a sense of the intensity of the conflict and, more importantly, of the precision that the model had to attain.

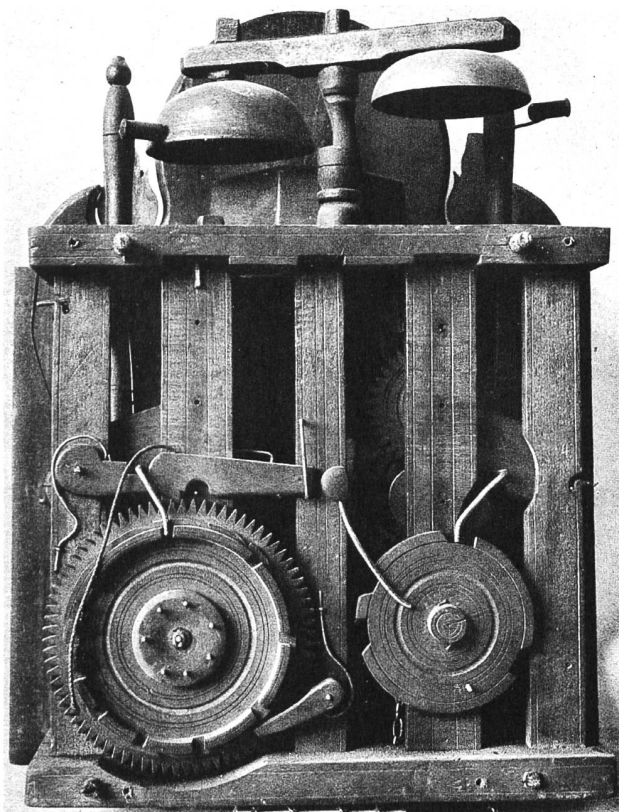
Confronted with such complicated conditions, Süreyya Pasha decided to entrust the construction of this model of the Holy Sepulchre to the «industrious and professional German hands» of a man called Conrad Schick⁽⁴⁾. As a German Protestant living in Jerusalem, Schick was considered relatively impartial to this conflict (that involved mainly Jews, Muslims and Orthodox and Catholic Christians), and therefore suitable for the task. However, Schick had not been trained as an architect. The decision to bestow upon him the construction of such a complex architectural monument came mainly from his local fame as a craftsman and his empirical knowledge of the city's holy sites.

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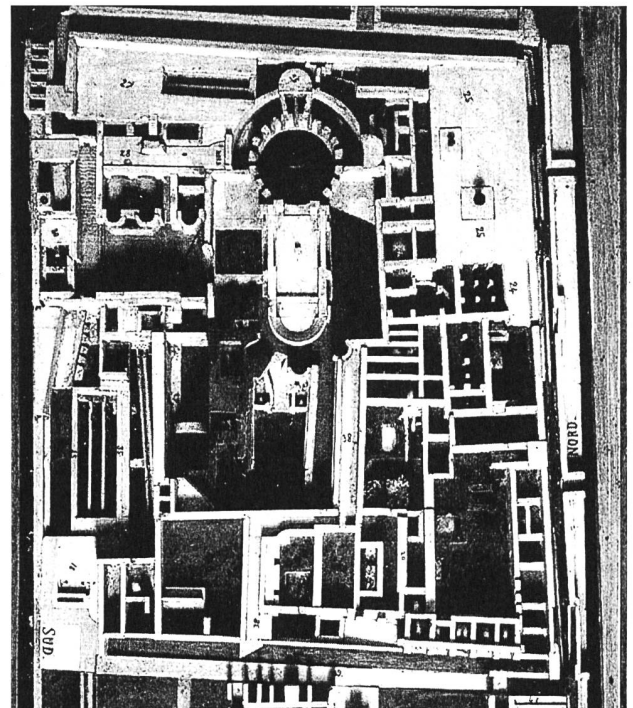
Born in the small town of Bitz, in Württemberg, in 1822, Schick had learned various crafts and mechanic skills from a young age⁽⁵⁾. The religious atmosphere of Protestant Württemberg eventually prompted him to use his craft skills in the name of Christianity: In 1842, he moved to Switzerland and



(Fig. 1) One of Conrad Schick's many models of the Holy Sepulchre, made in 1862



(Fig. 2) Interior mechanism of an 18th-century Swiss clock



(Fig. 3) Another version of Conrad Schick's Holy Sepulchre model, made in the latter half of the 19th century in Jerusalem

joined the St. Chrischona Evangelical pilgrim mission, near Basel⁽⁶⁾. St. Chrischona was organized in the spirit of a «Handwerk-mission»; an educational system that combined the study of the Bible with extensive training in practical skills and craftsmanship. After living for four years in this environment⁽⁷⁾, in 1846, at the age of 24, Schick was sent by St. Chrischona to Jerusalem; the city where he would live and work until his death in 1901.

A few months before he left for Jerusalem, his elders at St. Chrischona advised him to learn the skills of a clock-maker, suggesting that this craft was still unknown in the Middle East and would be highly valued there. So, Schick was sent to the Black Forest, an area of Germany that was then famous (and is still iconic) for its elaborately decorated and mechanically complicated watches and cuckoo-clocks. There, he spent four weeks in the workshop of a local watchmaker learning how to construct clocks and their interior cog-mechanisms. Less than a year later, Schick settled in Jerusalem, where he tried to put this acquired expertise into practice by turning his house into a cuckoo-clock workshop and store. He ordered a number of clocks from Germany and began to repair and set them up. Although Schick managed to sell this first small batch of imported clocks to a handful of interested clients⁽⁸⁾, the lack of further demand and the shortage of proper equipment forced him to abandon the dream of becoming the city's first clock-maker. Instead, he resorted to earning his living by manufacturing and selling simpler objects that were more sought after in Jerusalem, such as olive-wood sculptures⁽⁹⁾.

Despite the initial adversities, Schick's skills as a craftsman were recognized by the authorities of Jerusalem, leading, in 1850, to his appointment as a teacher in (and later director of) the English «House of Industry»⁽¹⁰⁾. Through this position, Schick established a fully equipped and staffed workshop, which allowed him to acquire different types of commissions. Gradually, Schick started collaborating with English and German archaeologists in Jerusalem and surrounding cities, and eventually developed into a famed «connoisseur» of the topography and archaeology of the Holy Land⁽¹¹⁾.

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It was through these conditions that the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem commissioned Schick with the construction of the Holy Sepulchre model in 1862. Within the same year, Schick completed a model that represented only a part of the large complex of the Holy Sepulchre. But this object quickly became so popular that it motivated several other involved parties (the Greek Patriarchate, the Russian Church and others) to commission Schick to make more models that encompassed the entire complex of the church and its numerous surrounding buildings. Hence the German craftsman began a long inquiry into the architectural and territorial complexity of this holy site, constructing and perfecting his idea through numerous models, almost throughout his life⁽¹²⁾. One of these models of the Holy Sepulchre, made in 1862, survives today in Jerusalem [Fig. 1]⁽¹³⁾. The model is entirely made out of wood and its longest dimension is no more than two meters. It is painted in different colors which represent the Christian groups that owned its different parts: Blue for Greek Orthodox, brown for Latins, yellow for Armenians, green for Copts and white for the parts that were communal property.

The model certainly achieves its intended purpose. It gives a rather elaborate image of the complex spatial articulation of the Holy Sepulchre and the division of its property. However, its detailing is not particularly refined for its scale (roughly 1:100) or for the level of perfection that model-making had attained at the time. In several aspects, it appears to be rather roughly crafted; a fact that might appear odd given that Schick was considered a skilled wood-craftsman.

This could be partly explained by the difference in available materials. Schick had been trained in central Europe, where the soft wood of local coniferous trees (such as fir or spruce) allowed craftsmen to achieve a high level of detailing. Conversely, the hard olive-wood which he had to work with in Jerusalem did not allow such intricate, miniature detailing. However, by the time he constructed the Holy Sepulchre model, Schick was already working in Jerusalem for about two decades. The roughness of his model cannot be attributed to a lack of mastery over local timber, or even the limitations of the material itself. It is the result of the intention of its maker and the context of its commission. Schick's miniature of the Holy Sepulchre was not a conventional archaeological or architectural model. Giving a figurative and detailed impression of the monument's architectural form was of minor importance. Instead, the focus was on demonstrating how the building's different spatial components and their ownership were articulated in three dimensions. In other words, Schick's focus was not on the outer surface of the model (which he intentionally left rough and unfinished), but on its inner spatial articulation.

Having already acquired a thorough knowledge of the interior spaces of the Holy Sepulchre through on-site surveys, Schick had to represent them in a concise, miniature form. He manufactured the model as a tightly-packed mechanism of interlocking, but movable parts: Several of its pieces (walls, roofs, cupolas, etc.) could be taken apart, to be examined individually or to allow views into the interior spaces of the labyrinth-like complex. In terms of craftsmanship, what Schick achieved with this model was not the fine carving of its exterior details, but the measurement, construction and fitting together of its different parts in a compact form; a skill that, in lieu of a formal training in architecture, could perhaps be largely attributed to his training as a clock-maker in southern Germany. At first sight, Schick's model of the Holy Sepulchre perhaps bears little resemblance to the decorated outer-cases of traditional German and Swiss cuckoo clocks and their miniature architectural forms. But its inner structure—where the domes, aisles and chapels of the Holy Sepulchre interlock like cogs, axes and barrels—is certainly reminiscent of the complicated mechanisms that can be found inside such clocks [Figs. 2–3].

Employed in a context that was radically different from their origins in central Europe, these clock-making skills were now serving different aims. This «clock» was not made to stand on the wall of a cozy house interior in the Black Forest as a re-assuring keeper of time; it was destined to be placed on tense negotiating tables in the Middle East and to serve as a tool to deal with territorial and religious conflicts. The «cogs» of this clock-like model were not made to move and its tiny doors did not open to let a cuckoo pop out. Schick's model did not keep time; it held it still. It represented a moment

frozen in time, and thus guaranteed the stability of the ‹Status Quo› property agreement. Made by the hands of a locally acknowledged craftsman, its ‹mechanical› perfection was the material guarantee of a geopolitical contract between the Muslims, Jews and Christians of Jerusalem.

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In the subsequent years, and until the end of his life, Schick made many more models of equally contested holy sites of Jerusalem⁽¹⁴⁾. Both for him and for the archeological, political and religious authorities of the Holy Land, the miniaturization of monumental religious buildings appears to have been a favored method for dealing with the conflicts that reigned over them. Through such compact miniatures, the religious and architectural conflicts of Jerusalem acquired a form that was perceived as objective, precise and, most importantly, operable. Schick's models shrank the incredible spatial, historical and territorial complexity of monumental buildings to the size of a table, allowing politicians, clergymen, diplomats and other officials to gather around it, to talk, argue, negotiate, compromise or fall out.

However, miniaturization and miniatures were not practices exclusive to Jerusalem at the time: Throughout the 19th century, Europe was also witnessing a boom in the manufacture of miniatures and models—either through decorative folk-art household objects, or as pedagogical devices and toys. It bears mentioning that, before being sent to Jerusalem (and having to face its territorial and religious conflicts) Schick had been trained as a craftsman in the central-European context that produced all of the aforementioned miniatures. Thus, although his models of the Holy Sepulchre and other holy sites in Jerusalem were tableaux of intense negotiations, their appearance possessed something of the cuteness and playfulness of more decorative or pedagogical European miniatures. And perhaps this is what allowed them to disguise, and therefore perform more effectively their political function: The miniaturization of these heavily conflicted sites—their transformation to toys for adults—rendered harmless (and thus enabled) architectural, territorial and political gestures that would eventually have devastating effects in the full-scale reality.

The starting point for this text was a seminar trip in Jerusalem in March 2019, with the chair of prof. Maarten Delbeke at ETH/gta. I am grateful to my colleagues for discussing Schick's models on site and later in Zurich, and for providing fruitful comments that fed the writing of this text. Furthermore, I am grateful to my colleague at ETH/gta, Matthew Wells, for sharing his expertise on architectural models and for helping me refine my understanding of Schick's work.