JERUSALEM QUARTERLY

HOME AND HOUSE I

MATERIALITIES AND SUBJECTIVITIES

The *Jerusalem Quarterly* (*JQ*) is the leading journal on the past, present, and future of Jerusalem. It documents the current status of the city and its predicaments. It is also dedicated to new and rigorous lines of inquiry by emerging scholars on Palestinian society and culture. Published since 1998 by the Institute for Palestine Studies through its affiliate, the Institute of Jerusalem Studies, the *Jerusalem Quarterly* is available online in its entirety at www.palestine-studies.org/en/journals/jq/about.

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* Peer reviewed article.

House and Home Materialities and Subjectivities

It is a strange experience to write an introduction for the first of two special issues of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* on the theme of Palestinian homes and houses at a time when we are largely confined indoors during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize, of course, that we belong to the privileged minority of people in this world who still have jobs, monthly salaries, comfortable places to live, and resources for working remotely. Like everyone else, however, this pandemic-driven isolation – somewhat similar to long-term involuntary confinements familiar to Palestinians through curfews, house arrests, and military invasions – has deepened our appreciation for the centrality of house and home to Palestinian life, as well as for the generative impact of these two concepts on advancing the field of Palestinian studies.

This is also a strange experience because it was over two years ago, in the spring of 2018, that Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder began organizing the sixth annual workshop of New Directions in Palestinian Studies (NDPS) on the theme of "Palestinian Homes and Houses: Subjectivities and Materialities."[1] The idea emerged from a simple observation Doumani made about the experience of summers in Palestine: everyday conversations between family members, neighbors, friends, and even strangers, disproportionately revolves around house and home. This may well be true year-around, but several factors intensify this phenomenon in the summer. June through August is the wedding season, which unleashes anxieties about the availability and cost of housing. It is also a time of feverish house construction following the end of the rainy season and an all-too-

brief spring interlude. For the tens of thousands of expatriates on their annual visits, summer is a season of mixed emotions about places of belonging. After the usual tense experience of crossing borders, the drive home reveals an estranged landscape where villages, towns, and cities are increasingly suffocated by sprawling Zionist colonies, walls, checkpoints, and the infrastructure that serves them. Entering the family house and reintegrating to "home" is a moment of joy that struggles to remain whole under the grinding stress and survival strategies of life under occupation. Water shortages, electrical power outages, and the relentless litany of house demolitions by the Israeli military are constant reminders that houses also have precarious lives.

At first, the thought was to devote the workshop to the theme of the roof as a liminal space for unpacking the conversations about house and home. The roof is a material landscape where buildings are physically connected to water, electrical, satellite, and cable infrastructures that are so essential to everyday life. Roofs are also an affective landscape of communal sociabilities and private escapes. During uprisings, they are sites of protest and a target of soldiers. After a series of widening discussions, which came to include gardens and domiciles as equally important spaces, the idea expanded to the twin concepts of house (materialities) and home (subjectivities).

The simple binary of materialities versus subjectivities is for heuristic purposes only, as the concepts of house and home are organically intertwined and expansive concepts which enable fresh new perspectives. As the call for papers issued in early fall 2018 articulated, "home" is a vexed concept for those who share a history of displacement, an experience from which few Palestinians are exempt. Home can be seen as a subjective field of memory and loss for a geographically dispersed, marginalized, and largely stateless people. But home is also the primary site of social relations, emotional investments, and aesthetic sensibilities. It is the nexus for quotidian strategies of survival and resistance; and a silent witness to deeply emotional entanglements, secrets, and fissures; as well as the insecurities of permanent impermanence. Whether inhabited, remembered, or imagined, home is the engine room of Palestinian subjectivities.

"House" is the primary site of capital investment for most Palestinians who live within the borders of Mandate Palestine, primarily because their marginalized political and economic position as a people denied leaves them with few other options. The construction of houses and transformation into homes, often a product of a lifetime of work and sacrifice, constitutes the core of the built environment. Houses and the built environment, in turn, are shaped by the power relations embedded in the organization of labor, property, and urban planning regimes; and in the physical infrastructures and networks of energy, water, telecommunications, and the circulation and production of building materials. At the same time, Palestinian houses are inextricably linked to relentless processes of demolitions, evictions, and land dispossession.

The discursive and materialist dimensions of Palestinian homes and houses raise a host of questions about the politics of daily life. How are houses made into homes and vice versa? What can homes tell us about gender and generational dynamics and the production of "Palestinianness"? How are domestic relations and living arrangements

shaped by permit systems that regulate and restrict building, residency, ownership, and marriage? What does home mean in the context of serial displacements, economic insecurity, and the scattering of family? What can we learn from variations in design and building material of Palestinian houses across space and time? What can the notions of homes and houses tell us about consumption practices and class dynamics of Palestinians in a wide range of settings, from refugee camps in Gaza and Lebanon to unrecognized villages in Israel and planned middle-class neighborhoods in Ramallah, and from the Galilee and the Naqab to Paterson, New Jersey, and Santiago, Chile?

This intertwined relationship between house and home is apparent in three articles in this issue (Jacob Norris on the homes of mobile merchant families during the Ottoman period, Kareem Rabie on housing in the post-Oslo West Bank, and Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins on Airbnb in Palestine), as well as in articles slated for the forthcoming issue (*JQ* 84). All of these peer-reviewed contributions were initially presented at the NDPS workshop on "Palestinian Homes and Houses" held at Brown University on 15–16 March 2019. Although they focus on different historical periods and locations, and approach the subject matter from different perspectives (history, anthropology, political economy, and cultural studies), all are characterized by an intimate knowledge of the Palestinian condition based on years of field and archival work. All set forth micro-detailed analysis while addressing larger global and comparative issues.

Palestinian studies is marked by deep ruptures in time and space that make it difficult to see beyond the colonial frame. The pre-colonial period is often imagined as a different country of uncertain relevance to that which emerged following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the imposition of British colonial rule. The *Jerusalem Quarterly*, under the leadership of Salim Tamari, has long dedicated itself to breaking down the barriers separating the last four to five decades of the Ottoman period from the British Mandate and, in so doing, exposing the vitality, contingency, and deep currents of continuity that shaped this tumultuous and transformative period. Jacob Norris's "Mobile Homes: The Refashioning of Palestinian Merchant Homes in the Late Ottoman Period" is a prime example in this regard. An intimate familiarity – gained over years of deep archival and field research on the social structure, political economy, and global mobility of merchant families in Bethlehem – saturates this detailed micro-history of Hosh al-Dabdoub, a building erected outside the entrance of the Old City of Bethlehem in the late 1850s. In a sweeping analysis of patterns of mobility, trade networks, and family relations that crosses generations and continents and that ranges from architectural analysis to reflections on the visual language of "family firm" logos, Norris urges us to reimagine modern Palestinian history from the perspective on how merchant family firms shaped the social relations, cultural sensibilities, and built environment of pre-1948 Palestine in ways that are still with us today.

In a wide-ranging essay on houses as both home and real estate in the post-Oslo Ramallah region, Kareem Rabie directly engages with a central question in Palestinian studies – what is exceptional and unexceptional about the Palestinians condition?

He focuses on housing development as a lens on class formation, homeownership, and private property in relationship to global capital. Unlike most other studies on this topic, Rabie does not dwell on "place-bound" analysis of Israeli government machinations and the collaborative practices of the Palestinian Authority. Rather, he makes a theoretical intervention about global capitalism supported by ethnographic research on middle-class aspirations for normalization and stability through house and land purchases facilitated by long-term debt. Rabie relates both approaches to a critique of dominant modes of knowledge production in Palestinian studies. His ambitious analytical framing is generative for future research agendas and shows that much more work in a similar vein is needed for other places and time periods. To take but one example, the relation between investment in real estate markets and local class formation has a long history in the region and is especially apparent in the European imperial competition over the "Holy Land" during the nineteenth-century and the Zionist colonization efforts that followed it.[2]

The title of Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins article, "Occupied Home-Sharing," perfectly conveys the ironic twists as well as the double-edged sword faced by Palestinians who rent their homes in Palestine through the Airbnb platform. This provocative, innovative, and carefully thought-out essay shifts the analytical angle sideways, revealing channels of capillary flows of global capitalism in local settings that have remained largely out of view despite the enormous literature on the West Bank (including Jerusalem) since Oslo. More specifically, Stamatopoulou-Robbins explores what she calls the "micropractices" of house and home at the intersection where the gig economy of platform capitalism meets the carceral violence of settler colonialism and military occupation. The former's logic assumes freedom of mobility, access to sophisticated financial services, a stable infrastructure of electrical and water delivery, and homogenized space for new social connections that renders invisible relations of power and inequality while simultaneously aggravating them. The logic of the latter creates the many ironic contrasts of "occupied home-sharing," such as restrictions on the mobility of homeowners who serve the needs of the hypermobile occupation tourists. Stamatopoulou-Robbins's fascinating ethnography of hospitality, decor, and intimacy also illuminates the longing for the stability of a normalized middle-class way of life, albeit in the context of a stratified social formation based on a regime of private property in land and housing.

This issue of *JQ* also includes a typically rich trove of contributions beyond the thematic cluster of peer-reviewed articles. Lisa Taraki, "Ordinary Lives: A Small-Town Middle Class at the Turn of the Twentieth Century in Palestine" complements the above three articles by documenting the intense focus of a rising provincial middle class on stone houses and land acquisition as the primary metrics of their social mobility. By focusing on Ramallah from roughly 1850 to 1950, Taraki pushes the spatial boundaries of Palestinian social and cultural history to include Ottoman-era villages that became Mandate-era towns. Hitherto, Jerusalem and Jaffa have been (and will likely remain through the foreseeable future), the uncontested king and queen, respectively, of scholarly research, but interest in Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Salfit,

al-Bireh and, not surprisingly considering its current role as the putative capital of the Palestinian Authority, Ramallah, has intensified over the past fifteen years. Taraki also pushes the envelope by focusing on an internally diverse social stratum that attained middle-class status, albeit, of a parochial low-brow kind; it stands in contrast to the cosmopolitan public personas and personal lifestyles of elite families and upper-middle-class professionals and businessmen in Jaffa and Jerusalem who have been the subject of great fascination to scholars. In an engaging narrative of social biographies spanning three generations, Taraki draws on a plethora of sources – interviews, family trees, newspaper advertisements, municipality archives, and traveler accounts – to reconstruct the social biographies of individuals (mostly men) and families who went optimistically into the world and made a space for themselves. Put side by side with Norris' article, Taraki shows how the differences between the emerging Ramallah middle class and the Bethlehemite family firms of merchants – their socio-economic terrain, the networks in which they were enmeshed, the destinations of their emigrants – produced distinct effects in each location. The contrast between the two towns, both situated in the mountainous region around Jerusalem, shows clearly the significance of such detailed social and economic histories in upending facile generalizations about Palestinian communities based solely on their religious affiliation or geographic location. We are also pleased to include a paper which received honorable mention for the 2020 Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem: Laura Tibi, "The Roots for a Palestinian Nahda": Zulfa al-Sa'di and the Advent of Palestinian Modern Art." Along with another essay by Ruba Totah, "Palestinian Performance: A Struggle of the Collective and the Personal," these two essays address the rich cultural and artistic worlds of Palestinians, with particular attention to the role of gender in the (re)construction of national heritage in the context of modernist cultural currents. Laura Tibi seeks to reintegrate the visual artist Zulfa al-Sa'di into Palestinian art history both as an individual, and in terms of her formal and stylistic contributions which combine nascent nationalism with modernism. The focus on al-Sa'di's exhibition at the First National Arab Fair, held in Jerusalem in 1933, elicited acclaim, but then faded quickly (and nearly entirely) from the landscape of Palestinian art thereafter. Ruba Totah brings to life the story of the pioneering al-Hakawati theatre group, formed in Jerusalem in 1977. Through performers' individual recollections of their experiences, Totah examines the class, gender, generational, and political dynamics of this highly influential experiment in theatre arts.

Three very different takes on Jerusalem round out this issue. In an evocative and moving *Letter from Jerusalem*, "Behind the Big Blue Gate," Mandy Turner reflects on her nearly ten years as director of the British Academy-funded Kenyon Institute in Shaykh Jarrah. Turner's directorship transformed the Kenyon Institute from one of detached knowledge production about the Other to an institution engaged with people-centered cultural and intellectual projects. Turner, an insightful observer of and participant in Jerusalem life, describes the changes wrought on the neighborhood and city, and the complexity and contradictions therein. She writes: "Beautiful and bewitching – cruel and callous. Both are true of the Jerusalem I saw." This is

followed by Roberto Mazza who takes us back to *JQ*'s familiar terrain, modernity and Jerusalem, in his review of Yair Wallach's, *A City in Fragments: Urban Text in Modern Jerusalem.* Finally comes the Facts & Figures section which features the highly informative report by al-Haq: *COVID-19 and the Systematic Neglect of East Jerusalem*. We are also including the map titled "Planned Annexation in Greater Jerusalem" which the Israeli NGO Ir Amim published recently.

Endnotes

1   New Directions in Palestinian Studies (NDPS) provides a platform for rigorous theoretical and methodological discussion of research agendas about Palestine and the Palestinians, and on the spaces of political mobilization that they open and foreclose. An initiative of the Center for Middle East Studies at Brown University, NDPS is dedicated to decolonizing the field of Palestinian studies and promoting its integration into larger streams of critical intellectual inquiry, especially by supporting the work of emerging scholars. For further details on NDPS, see online description at palestinianstudies.org (accessed 26 August 2020).

2   A number of case studies have brought greater clarity to the uneven impact of these capital flows on property relations in Palestine's diverse ecological and social spaces. A case in point is Munir Fakher Eldin's dissertation on the Bisan region during the late Ottoman and Mandate periods. Munir Fakher Eldin, "Communities of Owners: Land Law, Governance, and Politics in Palestine, 1858–1948" (PhD diss., New York University, 2008).

Mobile Homes

The Refashioning of Palestinian Merchant Homes in the Late Ottoman Period

Jacob Norris

Abstract

This article is about movement and the role it has played in shaping Palestinian homes. The article looks at merchants from Bethlehem as a case study of how mobility produced new types of homes in the late Ottoman and mandate periods, both materially and conceptually. It documents how the merchants' newfound economic success transformed Bethlehem's urban landscape and in turn produced a kind of "mobile home" as they adopted increasingly transient lifestyles, moving between multiple locations across the globe. These trends are explained within a framework of nineteenth century globalization, the birth of corporate identities, and shifting gender relations.

Keywords

Merchants; migration; architecture; Bethlehem; gender; globalization.

Palestinian life before the creation of Israel has often been portrayed as motionless. Even Jaffa, the country's biggest port before 1948, where we might expect to find Palestinians on the move, was portrayed as a point of entry for outsiders but not an exit point for Palestinians. "Ships left Jaffa for Europe, taking away oranges, and bringing back Jewish immigrants," writes Adam LeBor in his best-selling history of Jaffa, as if the outside world was something

that Palestinians simply waited to receive.[1] A cast of Zionist settlers, European missionaries, Russian pilgrims, and British colonial officials flood into Jaffa's docks while the Palestinians look on as passive bystanders.[2]

In reality, Palestinians were already moving in and out of Jaffa's port in large numbers by the end of the Ottoman period. Palestinian merchants, peddlers, intellectuals, and clergy had long been circulating the Mediterranean, as well as further afield in Asia and the Americas, by the time the first Zionist settlers arrived.[3] More broadly, Palestinian history is marked by almost constant movement. We are only beginning to understand the extent to which fellahin in the Ottoman period travelled across long distances to buy and sell produce, disrupting a geography organized around cities and their narrowly defined hinterlands.[4] Meanwhile, religious scholars, clergy, ascetics, and mystics routinely journeyed from village to village and region to region, recruiting followers as they went.[5] Marriages were commonly arranged between families from different villages, and even different regions of Palestine.[6] Pilgrims set off for Mecca, Jerusalem, and Hebron, sometimes returning months or even years later. Soldiers, laborers, and entertainers were recruited by governments and corporations that compelled them to work, fight, and perform in faraway lands. Once we begin to look, we find movement defining people's lives across the whole spectrum of Palestine's modern history.

Home, in both its physical and abstract meanings, is continually conditioned by movement. Movements in and out of the home, as well as through it, determine its daily functions and its architectural design.[7] Likewise, social mobility as a form of movement complicates the constitution of homes, producing what Bourdieu famously described as the "cleft habitus" – a kind of split personality where residues of a family's older social status coexist with its newly acquired social milieu.[8] The same bears true of long distance physical movements. It is a basic tenet of diaspora and migration studies that home acquires new meanings when juxtaposed with its antithetical other, "away."[9] This is not a simple process of yearning for a fixed home that has been left behind. Rather, the journey itself transforms the very notion of home, rendering impossible any dream of returning to a place where home and oneself are unchanged. As Stuart Hall reminds us, it is a question of "routes" as much as "roots."[10]

My aim in this article is to explore how a more historicized view of Palestinian movement might affect our understanding of how Palestinians constructed the idea of home in the late Ottoman and early British periods. To do this, I discuss a particular segment of the Palestinian population: merchants from Bethlehem who achieved great economic success trading in mother-of-pearl devotional objects carved in their hometown. These merchants' conceptions of home were transformed by all three types of movement listed above: physical movement within their hometown, social mobility, and long-distance travel. In the middle of the nineteenth century, their newfound economic status allowed them to embark on a significant building spree outside Bethlehem's old town. Then, from the 1860s onward, they began to travel all over the world in an effort to export their products to new global markets. By the turn

of the twentieth century, whole families from Bethlehem were circulating the globe, severely complicating the idea of a fixed "home" and "away." These movements were highly fluid, meaning families frequently shifted between multiple locations.[11]

Bethlehem was the trailblazer for these movements, but the phenomenon quickly spread to other cities, towns, and villages across Palestine, especially in the country's hilly central spine. Living patterns in Jerusalem, Ramallah, al-Bireh, Birzeit, Nazareth, Bayt Jala, Bayt Sahur, and Ramla were all significantly affected by these outward migrations. These areas were in turn part of a broader wave of migration out of Ottoman Greater Syria that saw an estimated six hundred thousand people emigrate to the Americas alone between 1860 and 1914.[12] Most of the migrants were Christians whose education in European missionary schools had equipped them with the languages and business contacts to trade abroad, especially in Europe and the Americas. But as many as 20 percent were Muslim, including from Palestinian towns like al-Bireh, where emigration to the United States in the late Ottoman and Mandate periods transformed patterns of home ownership and land tenure.[13] A close-up study of how merchants from Bethlehem redefined their notions of home is therefore a question that concerns Palestine and the wider region more broadly. Not all Palestinians had access to the kind of mobility experienced by Bethlehemites. But to challenge the assumption that Palestinian homes were fixed in geographical space, it is instructive to begin with those whose lives were most marked by movement.

The inherent subjectivity of home demands an approach that pays close attention to lived experience. For this reason, I have adopted a methodology that draws heavily on the tradition of microhistory and its commitment to studying "normal exceptions" – relatively obscure, small-scale case studies that put the generalizations of macro historical narratives to the test.[14] Using a range of textual and visual sources collected as part of the ongoing Planet Bethlehem Archive project,[15] the paper focuses on a building in Bethlehem known as Hosh Dabdoub. Built in the late 1850s, the Hosh was the first among a new wave of houses-cum-shops that reflected the newfound mobility of merchant families in the town. Using Hosh Dabdoub as a barometer for a wider series of changes in how homes were designed and conceptualized in Bethlehem, the paper is organized into two sections. First, it traces the emergence of a new type of living space outside of Bethlehem's old town that merged commercial and residential functions as a result of the consolidation of "family firms" (in reference to Beshara Doumani's work on Nablus).[16] This involved a distinct corporatization of the family, both in terms of its identity and its living arrangements, as merchants created a web of global trading connections while maintaining a base in Bethlehem. The second section pushes the notion of the family firm in a different direction, examining not the physical structures of home, but the networks of kin and trade that came to anchor Bethlehemites as they lived ever more transient lifestyles. Not needing to be fixed in any one geographical space, I argue the family home was reimagined as a network of partners and clients, represented by new types of branding designed for the global marketplace.

I. Housing the Family Firm

Figures 1 and 2. Hosh Dabdoub, as seen from street level (top) and from the valley to the rear (bottom); photo reproduced in Philippe Revault and Serge Santelli, "Typologie, Espaces et Composition des Maisons Traditionelles," in *Maisons de Bethléem,* ed. Philippe Revault, Serge Santelli and Catherine Weill-Rochant (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1997), 111.

It was movement that produced Hosh Dabdoub in the late 1850s, and with it a new type of merchant home. For the first time in Bethlehem's history, families began to move out of the cluster of buildings surrounding the church, relocating to the top of the hill known as Ras Iftays. For centuries, the track that led down from Ras Iftays into Bethlehem constituted the main route into town. Today the road is known as Star Street and is lined with grand mansions that date from the late nineteenth century. But until the appearance of Hosh Dabdoub, the track was completely devoid of buildings beyond Qaws al-Zarrara – the large archway that once formed part of the Mamluk-era walls. Numerous paintings, etchings, and even early photographs confirm the extent to which Qaws al-Zarrara marked the definitive start of Bethlehem until the 1850s, with no structures existing beyond it on Ras Iftays.

Figure 3. Luigi Mayer's depiction of Bethlehem in the late eighteenth century, as seen from Ras Iftays, roughly at the point where Hosh Dabdoub was later built. The large archway, Qaws al-Zarara, marks the entrance point into Bethlehem.

The construction of Hosh Dabdoub represented a radical break in Bethlehem's urban geography as well as its changing social structures. Standing alone on the steep eastern slopes of Ras Iftays, it sent a clear signal that the Dabdoub family was leaving behind the traditional pattern of living. The immediate motivation for the move seems to have been a desire to obtain a better position for selling souvenirs to pilgrims and

tourists making their way into Bethlehem. The owner of the Hosh, Yousef Hanna Dabdoub, had become well known in Bethlehem as a carver and seller of mother-of-pearl devotional objects. Now he built his new house at the point where travelers rounded the corner at the top of Ras Iftays to catch their first full view of Bethlehem, spread out below in picturesque fashion along the ridge that culminated at its eastern end with the Church of the Nativity. In a town where selling souvenirs to pilgrims was the mainstay of the local economy, Yousef Dabdoub was able to jump the queue and make first contact with any approaching traveler at the moment when Bethlehem conformed most closely to biblical expectations.

Figure 4. Photograph of Bethlehem taken by Tancrede Dumas, probably in the 1870s. The photographer may well have been standing on the roof of Hosh Dabdoub to take this picture. The Qaws al-Zarrara archway, marking the traditional entrance point into the city, is tucked in among the cluster of buildings in the center of the picture.

A description written in the early 1890s by an English reverend named James Kean allows us to appreciate these advantages. Writing in the second person, Kean describes an encounter that quite possibly took place on the roof of Hosh Dabdoub, just past the so-called David's Wells at the top of Ras Iftays:

You step on to the roof of a newly built cottage by the roadside, and sit

down. The back wall is towards the road, and no higher than an ordinary fence: the ground in front is deeper. Conversation on the roof reaches the ears of the inmates, who begin to come out and look up to see what is the matter . . . Seated on this perch, you gaze south across the valley upon Bethlehem, the eye dwelling especially on the vast confused conglomeration of lofty buildings at the east end. These cover and contain the cave wherein our Lord was born. A certain whiteness seems to add majesty to the general aspect of Bethlehem.[17]

Other merchant families in Bethlehem quickly grasped the benefits of being located on Ras Iftays. The Dawid family built their new residence directly opposite Hosh Dabdoub in 1859. They were joined over the course of the next two decades by the Mikel, Batarseh, Abu Jarur, and Sabbagh families, among others. Most of these families hailed from the Tarajmeh clan of Bethlehem – the so-called "translators" who had long since adopted Roman Catholicism and consequently benefited in the souvenir trade with European visitors. But it did not take long before families from other Bethlehem clans set up residence on the road. By the time James Kean made his visit in the 1890s, Ras Iftays had been transformed from a rural track into Bethlehem's busiest shopping parade, lined with new residences that doubled as souvenir shops and warehouses. At the top of the hill, next to Hosh Dabdoub, an enterprising local baker named Abu Fu'ad established a bakery, while the Sabbagh family opened a cafe where visitors could stop for refreshments and be entertained by an assortment of local musicians, dancing bears, and performing monkeys.[18]

Ras Iftays had become a laboratory for Bethlehem's merchant families to test out a new style of living that merged both familial and commercial functions. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the souvenir trade in the town had become increasingly lucrative, producing a new type of family structure that could now be seen more clearly in the residences on Ras Iftays. Resembling in some ways the "family firms" described by Doumani in the context of Nablus, the merchant families of Bethlehem were highly patriarchal, disciplined family units whose revenue was channeled directly into a centralized family treasury controlled by the patriarch. By the middle of the century, the most successful mother-of-pearl carvers had begun to employ local workers in their workshops, allowing them to concentrate on the sale and distribution of their goods. Those who made this switch from artisan to merchant acquired increasing quantities of capital, especially as tourist numbers rose in the second half of the nineteenth century.[19] These merchants were now in a position to expand their trade overseas, finding lucrative markets for their goods in Europe and later in the Americas and parts of Asia.

As Bethlehem's emergent merchant elite became dependent on revenue from overseas, family firms assumed distinct new characteristics. Sons now took on a vital role as itinerant traders who were sent abroad from around the age of eighteen to find new clients and even open stores. Despite a number of studies that shed important light on the vital role played by women in establishing and maintaining migratory

networks in the Syrian *mahjar* (diaspora), it cannot be overemphasized the extent to which the first wave of Bethlehem's outward migration was a man's world, and specifically a young man's world.[20] Sons of eighteen to twenty-five years of age were the cannon fodder in this period for testing out new trading opportunities abroad. Meanwhile, the patriarch remained in Bethlehem to oversee the family accounts and run the central workshop.[21]

This new world of overseas trade produced several changes in the way families organized their homes. First, their structure was less extended than the family firms in Nablus described by Doumani, as well as the older family units in Bethlehem. In the new world of overseas trade, wider networks of cousins, uncles, and nephews retained an important function, but, at their core, the new businesses consisted of a conjugal couple and their male sons. This structure placed heavy emphasis on families producing male children, leading to higher birth rates, lower female age of marriage, and strict separation of gender roles as women became housekeepers while their husbands travelled the world as itinerant traders.[22]

As a result of these changes, homes now performed new functions. Most strikingly, they doubled up as both residences and commercial spaces. In contrast to the cramped conditions of the old town in Bethlehem, the open spaces of Ras Iftays allowed ample space for houses to expand in ways that could incorporate these different functions. In this sense, it is revealing they were still referred to locally as *hosh* (pl., *ahwash*), a word that carries connotations not only of a central courtyard but also some kind of "gathering together" or "piling up." In the case of Hosh Dabdoub, the building was quickly extended to facilitate the new family structure and the need for a workshop and store. A row of adjoining apartments was built to accommodate the various components of the new family structure, doubling the length of the house and giving it a pronounced linear structure never seen before in Bethlehem. Separate apartments for each of Yousef's four sons housed their wives and children while they carried out their overseas ventures.[23] The extended design was completed by the inclusion of a mother-of-pearl workshop and adjacent store at street level to provide easy access to customers and workers. The memoir of Ibrahim Dabdoub (b. 1853), Yousef's younger cousin, describes how Hosh Dabdoub had already become a hub of employment for the souvenir trade in the 1860s:

> When I was about twelve years old, my parents set me to learning the trade of mother-of-pearl carving at our uncle Yousef Hanna Dabdoub's house for two and a half years. I became an assistant in their business selling crafts to tourists and visitors. They were skilled in their work and their politics. They used to bring me the carvings and I would go to "spread out" [sell the goods] at Bab al-Dayr.[24]

Like the mansions built by Nabulsi merchants in al-Salt during the same period, the merchant homes in Bethlehem introduced novel architectural features. In both towns, the merging of commercial and residential functions was vital for merchants who spread their business and family life across multiple locations. Nabulsi families

such as the Abu Jabr and Tuqan dynasties split their businesses across both sides of the River Jordan in the late nineteenth century. In the process, they redefined the old center of al-Salt by constructing spacious shops and warehouses along Shariʿ al-Hammam and Shariʿ al-Khadir, topped by luxurious living quarters.[25] In Bethlehem, a similar phenomenon occurred whereby merchant families competed along Ras Iftays to display wealth earned abroad, to promote their business, and to raise the next generation of sons to continue the search for new markets overseas.
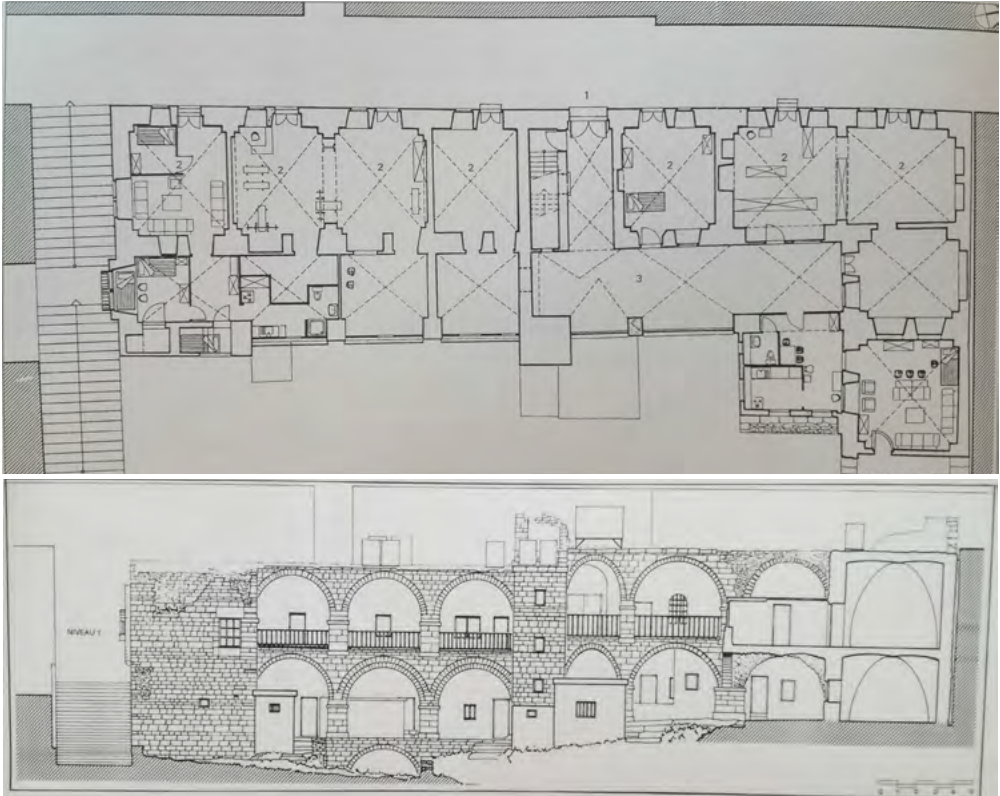
Figures 5 and 6. Scale drawing and room plan of Hosh Dabdoub, reproduced in Revault and Santelli, "Typologie," 110.

In the case of Hosh Dabdoub, the street's location on the side of a steep hill produced a new, linear architectural form characterized by its distinctive *riwaq*: a cross-vaulted covered corridor that connected the various rooms of the house via a series of large, elegant arches. The *riwaq* design was repeated across two floors and then replicated when the house was extended, rendering the house's linear nature all the more striking. The novel architectural design of Hosh Dabdoub clearly demarcated private from public space. Living quarters were located on the lower floor, below street level, and even included a private chapel, suggesting an emergent privatization not just of the nuclear family, but of religious life, too. Meanwhile, the upper floor

of the hosh was reserved for the commercial life of the family firm. Here at street level, an expansive workshop and accompanying store sought the attention of visitors making their way into or out of town.
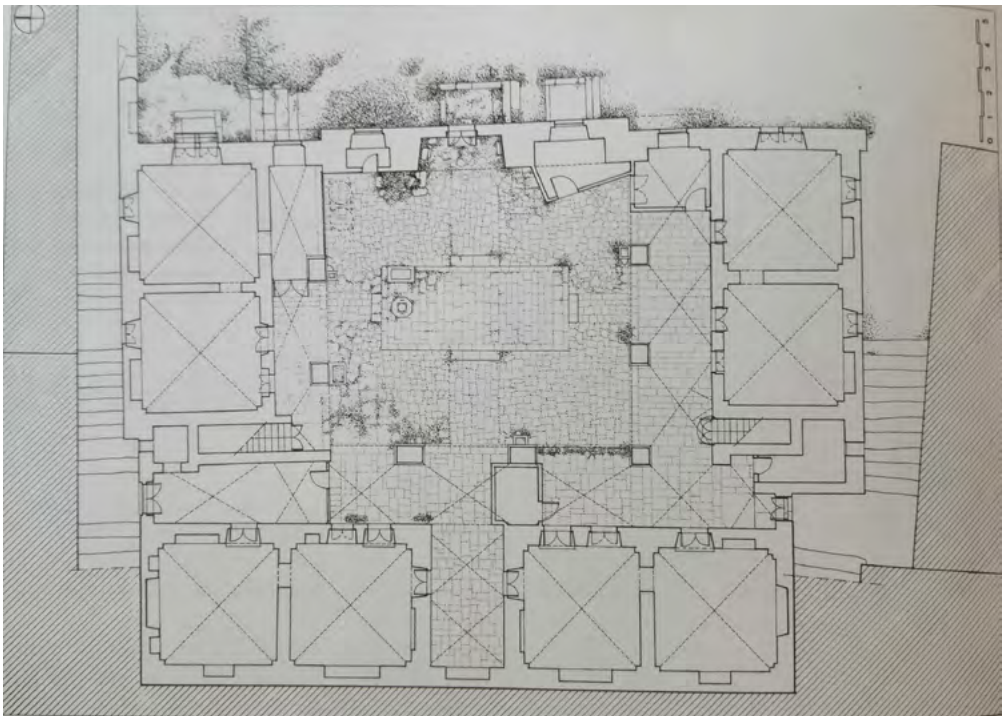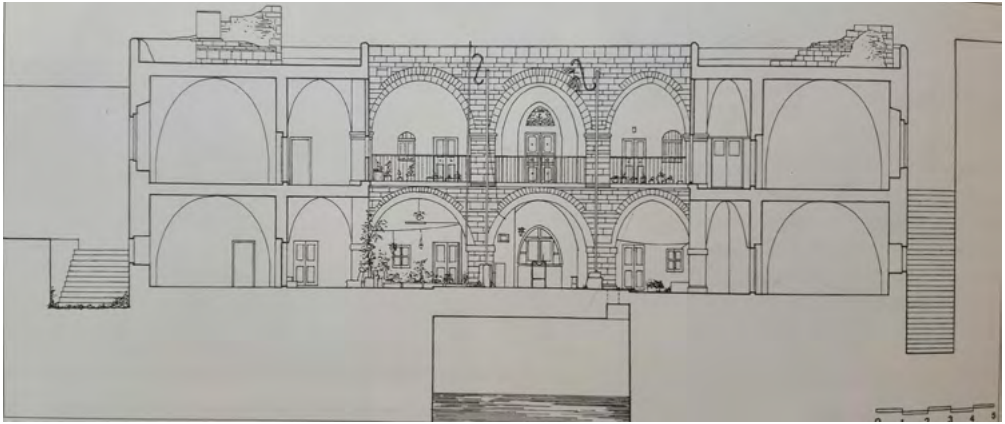
Figures 7 and 8. Scale drawing and room plan of Dar Mikel, reproduced in Revault and Santelli, "Typologie," 114.

Hosh Dabdoub's design was also clearly intended to project the family's newfound status back to the rest of Bethlehem. The graceful arches of the *riwaq* were only

visible when looking across the valley from the old center of Bethlehem, suggesting the Dabdoubs' decision to move beyond Qaws al-Zarrara was as much a product of parochial rivalries as it was an attempt to reach new customers. The message was clearly effective, judging by the number of families who followed them to Ras Iftays and implemented similar designs. Most strikingly, the Mikel residence (built in 1878) directly mimicked the *riwaq* of Hosh Dabdoub, but also expanded the theme to incorporate a grandiose courtyard within a U-shaped design that opened directly onto the valley below.

Inside these new merchant homes, families adopted a range of bourgeois aesthetics that reflected their newfound cosmopolitan identity. A painting from 1900 by local artist (and photographer) Zakariah Abu Fheleh captures Yousef Dabdoub's son Mikhail with his wife, two sons, and an unidentified young girl. Although the picture was probably painted onto a photograph taken in the Jerusalem studio of Khalil Ra'ad, it is nevertheless highly suggestive of the styles pioneered in Hosh Dabdoub. Mikhail was fifty-two years old at the time and had spent long periods of his life trading in Europe and the Philippines. His mode of dress signals a tentative nod to global and regional styles (western jacket, Ottoman tarbush), while still asserting his rootedness in Bethlehem society (the striped *qumbaz* robe and belt). Around him are further clues to the family's evolving cosmopolitan identity and the specific gender roles it prescribed. His wife Maria is dressed entirely in clothes unique to Bethlehem (embroidered dress and *shatwa* headdress), indicating the extent to which migration was still largely a male preserve at the end of the nineteenth century (discussed further below). The children, meanwhile, seem to have completed a full transition to a more Westernized form of dress, whatever their gender. The props in the picture convey similar messages. The distinctly European-style upholstered chairs upon which Maria and the young girl are seated, combined with the luxurious red curtains, announce the family's ambitions to be part of a Western-oriented bourgeois modernity. At the same time, the two tables help anchor the house in the more immediate region of Bilad al-Sham.

The painting projects an image of the residents of Hosh Dabdoub at a time when the house stood as a symbol of the dramatic changes sweeping Bethlehem. But such was the speed of change that just a few years later a new round of building would leave Hosh Dabdoub looking outdated. Suddenly, in the 1900s and 1910s, an altogether more extravagant type of residence began to appear even further from Bethlehem's old center. Built with the distinctive pink-colored *slayab mizzi* limestone, these palaces still stand today as a testament to a period of Bethlehem's history when unprecedented levels of wealth flowed into the town from its merchants' activities abroad.

These new mansions were the direct result of the merchant families' exposure to European bourgeois lifestyles and architectural forms. A key figure in their design was Morcos Nassar, a local man sent to Paris at the end of the nineteenth century to study architecture. Having laid down a marker in Bethlehem with the design of his own family's house in the 'Anatra quarter around 1900, Nassar was soon being employed by the heads of numerous other merchant families to design enormous,

pink-stone palaces, dotted around the outer edges of Bethlehem. These included Saleh Jiries Giacaman (1908), Saleh and Giries Hirmas (1910), Suleiman Handal (1911), the Baboun family (1913), and later the Jaar family (1932).[26] All of these mansions were broadly based on renaissance and neoclassical architectural forms imported from Europe, but they also incorporated Islamic and Ottoman motifs such as pointed archways and Damascene striped stonework to signal the families' rootedness in the local area.[27]

Unlike the earlier houses on Ras Iftays, the pink stone palaces of the early twentieth century were never referred to as *ahwash*. Rather they were *manazil* (s., *manzil*) or, in more grandiose cases such as the Jacir, Hirmas, or Giacaman residences, *qusur* (s., *qasr*). This reflected not only the fact they were built as complete structures in a single round of building, but also a further shift in the structure of the Bethlehem family firms. The old family firm of the late nineteenth century had required adult sons (along with their wives and children) to be based in the same home as their parents, and to carry out their forays abroad as satellite operations within a vertically integrated structure with its base in Bethlehem. In the Dabdoub family, for example, the four sons of Yousef and Rosa retained their own apartments within the single structure that was Hosh Dabdoub. But as these sons became increasingly steeped in a lifestyle of international travel, Bethlehem became just one of several nodal points in their lives.

Figure 9. Zakariah Abu Fheleh's 1900 painting of Mikhail Dabdoub and family in the Hosh Dabdoub, thought to be painted over a photograph taken in the Khalil Ra'ad studio in Jerusalem. Private collection of George al-A'ma.

By the time Yousef and Rosa Dabdoub died (in 1885 and 1878 respectively), their sons were spread out around the world, dividing their time between Manila, Paris, and New York. This produced a more horizontal type of family firm consisting of partnership agreements between brothers living in various locations. The sons of these brothers were then groomed to perpetuate the system into the next generation. Despite the fluidity of their movements, the generation below Yousef and Rosa still wished to retain a presence in Bethlehem. But when it came to building houses to mark that presence, they were now equal partners in a horizontal business structure, each with his own family that had become accustomed to switching locations. This led to the construction of bourgeois mansions with elegant gardens, designed to house single nuclear families, albeit in a highly opulent manner with teams of servants keeping the houses running.

Among this generation of mansions, or *qusur*, the two built by Mikhail and Jubrail Dabdoub (sons of Rosa and Yousef) still stand today in Bethlehem, situated about two hundred meters apart on Hebron Road. When they were completed in 1922 and 1923, very few buildings stood in this part of Bethlehem, aside from a scattering of other new residences such as the towering Jacir Palace, completed in 1914 a little further north along Hebron Road. These homes were powerful statements of the merchants' newfound status, not only in Bethlehem but in Palestine more broadly. As the newspaper *Falastin* wrote in 1913: "Today the visitor is almost stupefied upon entering [Bethlehem] as the lofty palaces and great buildings come into view, the like of which is rarely found in our biggest cities like Jerusalem and Jaffa, and it would not be an overstatement to say Beirut either."[28]

The two Dabdoub residences were characterized by ornate facades that blended European and Islamic motifs. They also featured elegant interiors that included drawing rooms for receiving guests and separate bedrooms for each child of the family. They were fronted by elegant wrought iron gates announcing the name of the inhabitant and date of construction, while spacious landscaped gardens stretched to the rear of the properties. Unlike the older *ahwash* on Ras Iftays, these homes did not include any commercial functions. Instead, they seemed to constitute a more naked expression of wealth, as well as a specifically bourgeois ideal of the nuclear family to which these merchants had been exposed during their travels.

While Mikhail and Jubrail built their new residences in Bethlehem, the old Hosh Dabdoub was parceled up by the brothers and rented out as separate apartments affordable to less affluent families. Among the families living there in the 1920s was that of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, later to become a celebrated writer, but in his childhood belonging to a poor Syriac family recently emigrated from Anatolia. In his childhood autobiography, Jabra recalls Hosh Dabdoub in altogether less glamorous terms than conveyed in the painting of 1900. "Hosh Dabdoub, on the edge of the neighborhood, had many rooms," he wrote. "In each room lived a family composed of old and young, women and children, chickens and rabbits."[29] A far cry from its heyday in the late nineteenth century, Hosh Dabdoub had been usurped by a far more opulent type of residence as the standard bearer of the town's wealth.
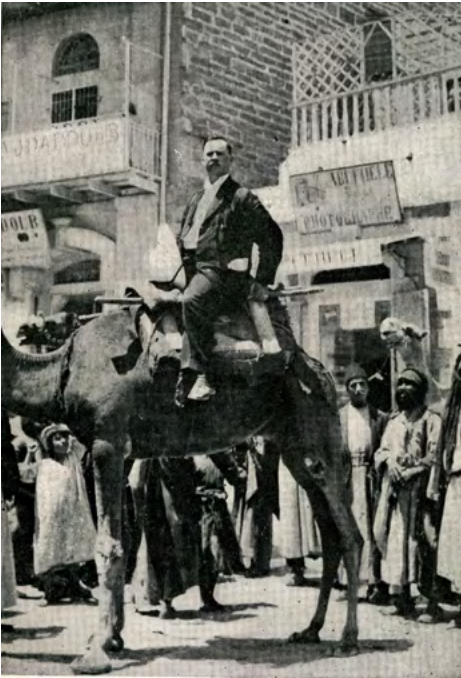
Figures 10 and 11. The houses built by Mikhail Dabdoub and Jubrail Dabdoub on Hebron Road, Bethlehem, in 1922 and 1923.

II. The "Family Firm" as Home

"The effect of migration was clearly visible at the start of the 1920s . . . in the many empty houses and buildings left behind by their owners."[30] This quote from Jabra Ibrahim Jabra confirms that houses in Bethlehem were not always homes. The towering physical structures that cropped up on the outskirts of the town in that period were viewed as much as sites of investment and means to demonstrate socio-economic status as they were places to inhabit on a permanent basis. By the end of the Ottoman period, the lives of Bethlehem families were so infused with movement that it is difficult to pinpoint any particular place constituting a singular home. Consider a hardly atypical page from the unpublished memoir of Ibrahim Dabdoub, describing the movements of his younger brother Anton in the 1880s and 1890s:

> After he got married [in 1887], Anton travelled in the company of our uncle Jubrail and Ibrahim, as well as Abdullah Dabboura, to the exhibition in Copenhagen, where they stayed for ten months and brought back a sum of 1,500 French lira, 250 of which went to Anton because the others took a third. Afterward, Anton travelled for a year in the company of Jubrail and Ibrahim, the three of them earning 150 lira, 35 of which went to Anton. Afterward, he travelled alone to Torino in Italy in 1897, staying for ten months and earning 80 lira. Before that he travelled to Portugal in the company of Yaqub Sabaat and his cousin Bulus, staying for around four years. He earned a sum of 300 lira. Then Anton travelled with our nephew Yousef in 1900 to the Paris exhibition, staying abroad for four years, moving from France to Italy and to Germany, making a loss of 90 French lira.[31]

Given the transient nature of these merchants' existence, it seems equally productive to think of their homes as networks of family and commerce, rather than to focus purely on physical structures bounded within a singular territory. Family remained the key point of reference in a world of uncertainty and mobility. But as discussed above, family structures were in the process of rapid change. In the absence of any territorial center, the family firm became a type of "mobile home" for many Bethlehemites, carrying with it a concurrent set of virtual structures that replaced the stone buildings of their childhood. These virtual structures included an emerging world of branding – logos, insignia, letterheads, shop signs – that became increasingly important in defining a family's identity and can be traced back to the emergence of the first modern shops in Bethlehem. Hosh Dabdoub and the buildings that followed it on Ras Iftays were located along a linear street where the primary goal was to attract the attention of visitors entering Bethlehem. Coinciding with the birth of print culture more broadly in Palestine, as well as telegraphic and postal systems internationally, the souvenir shops lining Ras Iftays began to create storefront signs and logos, and to print company catalogues with highly stylized family letterheads.[32] Because these buildings doubled as residential spaces, a family's sense of "home" became increasingly linked to these designs.

ABRAHIM JOUSSEPH DABDOUB & SONS

MEDALS OF HONOUR AWARDED AT UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS

THE LARGEST AND OLDEST FACTORY
OF MOTHER OF PEARL AT BETHLEHEM
FIRST SHOWROOMS IN THE CITY
FOUNDED IN 1885
CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY SQUARE WHITE HOUSE BETHLEHEM

Manufacturer of all kinds of Articles in Mother of Pearl, Shells,
Paper-Knives, Pen-Holders, Brooches, Chains, Necklaces, Crosses
and Rosaries, Olive Wood goods, Stone from the Dead Sea
and Mecca fruit Beads, Cards of Flowers, Post Cards
and Photographs.

Travellers are respectfully invited to visit my work shop and to see
my artistic work which it is all made by hands.

N. B. In order to avoid any error visitors are requested to note that I have no connection
with any other Firm of the same name and no Branches any where.

Low Prices — Forwarding to all Parts of the World.

Figures 12 and 13. This business card and photograph from c. 1900 show the logos and lettering adopted by Ibrahim (Abraham) Dabdoub, a son of Yousef Dabdoub. In the photograph the shop sign (partially cut out) of Ibrahim's shop (located in Manger Square) can be seen above the camel's neck.

A range of materials donated to the Planet Bethlehem Archive provide insights into the rich visual language developed by these merchant families. The Dabdoub family had its own set of letterheads, business cards, and logos that were disseminated among its clients, but also refracted back to its own members in various locations around the world. Letters and telegrams were the principal forms of communication with siblings and clients. Every time they wrote or received such a communication, they were given a visual reminder of the virtual "home" that bound them together.

Figure 14. Letterhead used by the two eldest sons of Yousef Dabdoub, Hanna and Mikhail (Michel) for their New York branch of the family business in 1910.

Materials from other families in the Planet Bethlehem Archive give glimpses of the care put into the development of family letterheads and logo designs. Two brothers from the Kattan family, Khalil and Habib, forged a new branch of the Kattan family business in Sudan during the first decade of the twentieth century while their father, Giries, ran the family shop back in Bethlehem. By the 1920s, the brothers had made the familiar transition from a Bethlehem-centered business toward a more multi-centered, global enterprise. Dozens in a series of designs still survive from that period, in which they experimented with different logos to use for branches of the family business they established in Omdurman, Manchester, and Chile. These logos were then distributed across global networks, anchoring the family in a strong visual identity as its movements became ever more fluid and transient. Certainly, the various family members continued to inhabit houses which they constituted as homes in a physical sense, whether in Sudan, Chile, or England. But it is striking from their surviving correspondence the extent to which business affairs were intertwined with the family's wider identity and sense of belonging. Letters exchanged between the Kattan brothers in the 1920s continually refer to business affairs conducted across global networks as "the foundation of our family's good name" and "the rock upon which we have built our lives."[33]
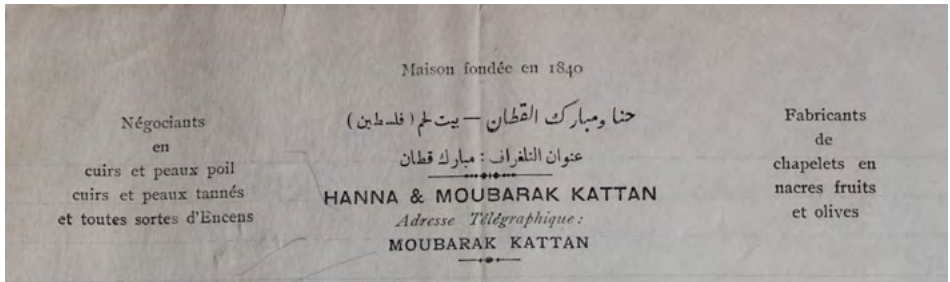
Figures 15–19. Logos and letterhead developed by the Kattan family in Sudan and Bethlehem. The letterhead is from the shop in Bethlehem, whereas the logos date from the late 1920s when Khalil and Habib expanded the business into Omdurman, Manchester, and Santiago, Chile. The full collection will be published online when the Planet Bethlehem Archive is launched in 2021.

This imagining of the family firm as a physical foundation (literally a "rock") is also a common feature of the Dabdoub family letters. In one letter from 1910, Mikhail writes from Paris to his uncle Ibrahim in New York:

> O dear uncle, you've worked so hard and you've immortalized your name by establishing our shop [*mahal*] in Paris. Your hard work is an undeniable favor to all our family. May God save our family! Oh Uncle, you are the rock of our family the way St. Peter was, with God's will and guidance, the rock of God's Holy Church. And as Peter was the rock of the church, so you are the rock of our shop. And just as the memory of Butrus is everlasting, your memory will never be forgotten and shall be carried into the future generations of our family.[34]

The specific vocabulary Bethlehemites used to refer to home is also worthy of attention. When describing the construction of new homes in a physical sense (for example the new mansions built in Bethlehem), the most common word in Arabic was *'imara*, with its connotations of an architectural edifice. At other times *hosh*, *bayt*, and *manzil* might be used, each carrying the meaning of a physical "house." Meanwhile, when home was evoked as a more generalized concept from the perspective of being abroad, a different vocabulary was employed. The most commonly used words in this context were *balad* or *watan* (country or homeland), conveying the sense of distance merchants felt from their town of origin as they imagined it from vantage points abroad. This confirms work by the likes of Nadim Bawalsa, who has emphasized the extent to which experiences of living in the mahjar were vital to the formation of Palestinian national identity.[35]

But there was also a third type of home, this time conjured by the word *dar* – a term that in Palestinian Arabic frequently means "family."[36] In the context of Bethlehem, this assumed a particular significance for families who became accustomed to living transnational lifestyles. Ibrahim Dabdoub initially uses *dar* in his memoir to refer to various physical houses in Bethlehem when describing the location of his own childhood home. But upon his first journey overseas, *dar* begins to be used in a different context: "In 1880 fate decreed I should travel with our brother Anton. Our capital was only the 130 French lira we had from Dar Yousef for goods and travel expenses."[37] From this point onward, there is a clear distinction in the memoir's vocabulary between *dar* (family) and *manzil* (a physical house). Thus, we find here a specific moment in which the notion of a family home becomes de-anchored from a territorial base in Bethlehem. Furthermore, the use of the first name (Yousef in this case) alerts us to the shifting composition of that very family unit. Yousef is Ibrahim's cousin, but he now belongs to a different *dar*, even though they used to live in the same physical house. By defining the *dar* around the male head of a nuclear unit, Ibrahim reinforces the newly emerging patriarchal family firm and presages the later architectural shift toward detached palaces built for nuclear families.

Until at least the 1890s, the exclusively male nature of the Bethlehem migrants meant the mobile home was being imagined in distinctly masculine terms – as seen

with the term Dar Yousef. Women remained fixed in Bethlehem as guardians of the houses built with money earned abroad. As the next generation of men (who had been sent out to explore conditions abroad) assumed leadership of the family firms, the old patriarchal figure who stayed in Bethlehem withered away. Women were now often the sole keepers of households in Bethlehem as their husbands moved across multifarious migratory networks. This gendered experience of home in the late nineteenth century requires further attention and was undoubtedly fraught with tension, as seen in Nazmi al-Jubeh and Khaldun Bshara's descriptions of women in Ramallah mourning their husband's absences and cursing those who had kickstarted emigration from the town.[38]

But so fast-changing were these social structures that by the turn of the century women from Bethlehem were becoming equally involved in the refashioning of home as a mobile, corporate entity. Initially this took place through the arranged marriages of girls, typically between twelve and fifteen years old, who were sent to the other side of the world to marry men they had never met and establish new family bases.[39] A handful of available sources allow insights into how women navigated these upheavals. Margoth Siman wrote a biography of her mother, Miladeh Jacir, who was married in Bethlehem at the age of fifteen and then journeyed to Baranquilla in Colombia. Once arrived in Latin America, the memoir describes Miladeh struggling to create a new family home (*hogar* in Spanish) as they moved between different locations in Colombia and Central America before eventually settling in El Salvador.[40] Another Bethlehem-born woman, Katrina Sa'ade, travelled to Mexico from Bethlehem in 1914 at the age of thirteen to marry a Bethlehemite man she had never met. In taped interviews from the 1970s, she describes the relief of moving into a "beautiful home" in San Pedro de las Colonias, but this was subsequently disrupted by the death of her husband and her subsequent movements between California, Mexico, and Palestine.[41] Meanwhile, the sister of the Kattan brothers (mentioned above), Victoria Kattan, wrote a memoir in which she described the traumatic experience of being uprooted from Bethlehem following her marriage in 1924 at the age of sixteen. "I was thinking a lot about Bethlehem and my family," she writes. "The further away from them I travelled, the more I missed them."[42]

As much as these accounts speak of painful dislocations and the subsequent establishment of new homes in distant lands, the virtual home of the corporate family continued to form an important frame of reference in their lives. Some of the most joyous moments in these sources occur when a letter is received from a sibling on the other side of the world or a community of Bethlehemites is discovered upon arrival in a new country. Katrina Sa'ade recalls enthusiastically her first impressions of Mexico: "We had people from Bethlehem and Jerusalem coming there to enjoy talking to us. I don't remember the names, but they were from Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah, I think."[43] Likewise, Victoria Kattan describes her arrival at the train station in Santiago, Chile, at the age of sixteen:

> We reached Mapocho station after nightfall. A lot of people there were hugging me, greeting me with signs of affection. I hardly knew anybody .

. . . A gentlemen hugged me, and though I did not recognize him, I found out he was Antonio Salame, my cousin, son of a brother of mother, of the same name. I felt very happy when I found out who he was. I felt welcomed; it was like seeing a part of my family I had left behind so far away in the Middle East.[44]

Increasingly, these women learned not only how to cope with the effects of relocations outside their control, but also how to be active players in the forging of the family firm as a virtual home, bound together across transnational spaces. Victoria Kattan's elder sister, Josephine, played an instrumental role in the 1910s and 1920s in setting up branches of the family business in Egypt and Italy.[45] The regular letters she wrote to her brothers in the 1920s, preserved today in the Planet Bethlehem Archive, are a testament to the vital role she played in connecting and strengthening the networks that bound together the Kattan family firm. As one typical extract from a letter she wrote to her brothers in 1921 reads:

No one has written to me from Palestine, while I have written four times to them. If you have news from our parents, tell me about them. I've received a postcard from our brother Habib from every country he's visited. I've received the fifty pounds from Nicola Basil and the second twenty was freed up for you by our brother Habib. You need to keep the twenty with you [in Sudan] because after the revolution that took place in Egypt between the people and the Europeans, no one has the stomach [literally, "the heart"] to work in business.[46]

Here we find a young woman living in Alexandria, demanding information about her parents in Bethlehem while simultaneously updating and advising her brothers on recent business transactions that spanned Egypt and Sudan. Extracts like this confirm the extent to which the formerly central role of Bethlehem in the family business was now receding from view, while the younger generation constructed a more horizontally aligned family firm that was as reliant on women as it was on men.

Katrina Sa'ade, meanwhile, became so proactive in her own family's merchant business that she was even prepared to defy the authority of both her father-in-law and husband, eventually opening her own store in San Francisco once her husband began divorce proceedings against her.[47] As Katrina recalled when describing her earlier years living and trading between Mexico and southern California:

In Mexico [Hermosillo, Sonora] we had a store; we buy the merchandise and everything. He [Katrina's husband] did not know what to do. I would go to buy the merchandise from the people at the border and bring it in. The customs people would ask me: "Why are you doing this? It's the man's job to do that." "Well," I say, "I have to do it because there is nobody else to do it for me." And I would not have the proper papers, but they would take pity on me and let me bring it in anyway.[48]

Conclusion

Bethlehemites' construction of "mobile homes" in the late Ottoman period is striking in the way it foreshadows the contemporary preoccupations of life in the Palestinian diaspora. Today, Palestinians the world over struggle on a daily basis to construct a sense of home amid lives marked by exile, dislocation, and longing for the old country. But there are also important distinctions that mark Bethlehemites of the nineteenth century as belonging to a vastly different era. The most significant of these is freedom of movement. From the restrictive British citizenship laws of the 1920s through various rounds of Israeli colonization after 1948, Palestinian mobility was progressively shut down as the twentieth century wore its course. Viewing these restrictions within a longer historical framework helps reveal how dramatically they have affected Palestinian life and the constitution of Palestinian homes. In the late Ottoman and early British periods, movement permeated every aspect of life in Palestine. Peasants moved between villages and regions, pilgrims travelled hundreds of miles, and merchants traded across continents and oceans. This is before we even begin to consider non-human movements – of goods, ideas, texts, and many other things besides. These movements constituted a key factor in how Palestinians constituted their homes, whether material or imagined.

Bethlehem's merchant families were exceptional in the mobility they experienced. Many Palestinians did not have access to the capital and connections required to undertake such journeys. But the extremity of the Bethlehemites' mobility forces us to rethink categories of "home" and "away," "insider" and "outsider." A close-up study of Hosh Dabdoub and the family that inhabited it reveals radically new trends in architecture, interior design, and urban geography. It also shines light on a more abstract way of conceptualizing home that emerged as a direct result of movement. The familiar story (told most frequently about Jerusalem) of a new type of bourgeois house appearing outside the old city walls in the late nineteenth century can be retold as a story conditioned by movement and a need to combine residential and commercial functions. Furthermore, these merchants' letters, memoirs, and business transactions reveal entirely new ways of thinking about home that revolved around corporate family identities connected by virtual networks that included Palestine as just one of many nodal points.

The apparent readiness of Bethlehem merchants to fold their town of origin into a multicentered, more mobile sense of home was not necessarily a universal experience of Palestinian migrants. It should not be forgotten how painful the experience of dislocation can be. Famously, Khalil Sakakini was intensely *home*sick during his stay in New York in 1908. His diary and letters from that period express constant yearning and nostalgia for Jerusalem and its surrounding villages.[49] Accessing the emotional worlds of Bethlehem merchants is a more difficult task as they rarely wrote ego-documents of the type Sakakini penned. But what we can glean from the sources they did leave behind is a switch to a lifestyle conditioned by mobility and an accompanying corporatization of family identity.

The large merchant houses that today still dominate the urban environment in parts of Nablus, al-Bireh, Jerusalem, Bayt Jala, and al-Salt are testament to the extent to which the movement of merchants redefined many Palestinian towns and cities in the late Ottoman period. Uncovering their multiple functions, both as physical homes and as ones imagined from afar, is an important part of understanding how Palestinians constituted their homes in the era before their freedom of movement was brutally curtailed.

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Endnotes

1   Adam LeBor, *City of Oranges: An Intimate History of Arabs and Jews in Jaffa* (London: W. W. Norton, 2007).

2   Much of the recent historiography on Jaffa in the late Ottoman and British periods emphasizes the participation of local Arab society in the city's modernity. But movement and migration are still the preserve of outsiders in these works. See for example, Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Ruth Kark, *Jaffa: A City in Evolution, 1799–1917* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1990); Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Hebron* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65–68; as well as LeBor, *City of Oranges*.

3   For a study of these circulations in the pre-nineteenth-century era, see Bernard Heyberger, "Chretiens orientaux dans l'Europe Catholique (XIIe – XIIIe)," in *Hommes de l'entre deux. Parcours individuels et portraits de groupe sur la frontiere mediterraneenne*, ed. Bernard Heyberger and Chantal Verdeil (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2009), 61–94. For the larger scale migrations of Palestinians in the nineteenth century, see Jacob Norris, "Return Migration and the Rise of the Palestinian Nouveaux Riches, 1870–1925," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 2 (2017): 60–75.

4   Susynne McElrone, "Villagers on the Move: Re-thinking Fallahin Rootedness in Late-Ottoman Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 54 (2013): 56–68, online at (IPS) bit.ly/3hBwDkb (accessed 27 August 2020).

5   James Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 62–84.

6   Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 476–83; James Reilly, "The Peasantry of Late Ottoman Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 4 (Summer 1981): 82–97.

7   A theme explored in Judith Flanders, *The Making of Home: The 500-Year Story of How Our Houses Became Homes* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014).

8   Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (London: Polity, 2004), 111–13.

9   See for example Seforosa Carroll, "Homemaking in the Diaspora: From Displaced Guest to Responsible Host," in *Home and Away: Contextual Theology and Local Practice*, ed. Stephen Burns and Clive Pearson (La Vergne: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 124–36.

10 Stuart Hall, "Diaspora Cultures: Roots and Routes," keynote address at the Conference on Caribbean Culture, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, March 1996.

11 See Jacob Norris, "Exporting the Holy Land: Artisans and Merchant Migrants in Ottoman-Era Bethlehem," *Mashriq&Mahjar: Journal*

of Middle East Migration Studies 2 (2013): 14–40.

12 Kemal Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 2 (May 1985): 185.

13 See Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Landed Property, Palestinian Migration to America and the Emergence of a New Local Leadership: al-Bireh 1919–1947," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 36 (Winter 2009): 13–33, online at (IPS) bit. ly/31x3Fwl (accessed 27 august 2020).

14 The idea of the "normal exceptional" comes from Edoardo Grendi, "Microanalisi e storia sociale," *Quaderni Storici* 35 (1977): 506–20.

15 Information about the project "Merchants and Miracles" and the Planet Bethlehem Archive can be found online at www.sussex.ac.uk/ history/bethlehem/ (accessed 1 August 2020).

16 Beshara Doumani, *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 234–38.

17 Rev. James Kean, *Among the Holy Places: A Pilgrimage through Palestine* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1895), 114.

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22 Based on detailed study of the Latin Parish Archives in Bethlehem. For example, an exhaustive study of the Dabdoub family

records between their start point in 1682 and the end of the British mandate in 1948 shows that the number of children per family reached its highest point in the first half of the nineteenth century at 5.34, compared to an overall average of 3.12. Meanwhile, the average female age of marriage reached its lowest point in the second half of the nineteenth century, where it stood at 15.63 compared to an overall average of 17.24.

23 Based on interviews with various descendants of the Dabdoub family members who lived in Hosh Dabdoub, in particular author interviews with Dr. Michel Abdallah Dabdoub, Bethlehem, 15 and 17 March 2011; and Paulette Tissaire Dabdoub, Bethlehem, 14 August 2015.

24 Ibrahim Yuhanna Dabdoub, *Mukhtasar tarikh 'illat al-marhum Yuhanna Yaqub al-Dabdub* [A Brief History on Behalf of the Late Yuhanna Ya'qub al-Dabdoub] (unpublished memoir dated 1923), 2.

25 Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95–102.

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27 The most famous of the new wave of mansions, the Jacir Palace, is discussed in Diala Khasawneh, *Memoirs Engraved in Stone: Palestinian Urban Mansions* (Jerusalem: Riwaq, 2001), 23–28.

28 "Bayt Lahm wa qusuruha" [Bethlehem and Its Palaces], *Falastin*, 27 August 1913, 2.

29 Jabra, *al-Bi'r al-ula*, 84 (author's translation).

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32 For the explosion of print culture in Palestine in that period, see Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900–1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

33 See Habib Giries Kattan to Khalil Giries Kattan, Frankfurt, 10 October 1921. These letters will be published online when the Planet Bethlehem Archive is launched in 2021.

34 Mikhail Dabdoub to Ibrahim Dabdoub, 22 March 1910, Peter Dabdoub family collection.

35 Nadim Bawalsa, "Palestinian Migrants and the Birth of a Diaspora in Latin America, 1860–1940," (PhD diss., New York University, 2017), 51–73.

36 As discussed in Doumani, *Family Life*, 270–71.
37 Dabdoub, *Mukhtasar*, 4.
38 Nazmi al-Jubeh and Khaldun Bshara, *Ramallah: 'Amara wa tarikh* [Ramallah: Architecture and History] (Ramallah: Riwaq, 2002), 39–44.
39 This is borne out strongly in the Bethlehem parish records. To give a single example from the characters referred to earlier, Mikhail Dabdoub's two sons Abdallah and Khalil both married fourteen-year-old girls before going to live abroad with them in Paris and New York respectively.
40 Margoth Siman Jacir, *Una Mujer Llamada Natalia* (San Salvador: Minos Tercer Milenio, 2006), 9–18.
41 Taped interview with Katrina Sa'ade by Mary Farhat and Henry Bond, Durango, Colorado, 11 July 1978. These interviews will be published online when the Planet Bethlehem Archive is launched in 2021.
42 Victoria Kattan de Hirmas, *Mis 100 años de vida* (Santiago de Chile: A and V Comunicaciones, 2015), 42 (author's translation).
43 Taped interview with Katrina Sa'ade, 1978.
44 Kattan de Hirmas, *Mis 100 años*, 44–45.
45 Josephine Giries Kattan was married to an Italian engineer, Nicolo Barbagallo, whose business interests in Egypt and Italy allowed the Kattan family to expand its merchant activities into those areas in the 1910s and 1920s. Josephine played a central role in this process.
46 Josephine Kattan to brothers, 6 July 1921. These letters will be published online when the full Planet Bethlehem Archive is launched in 2021.
47 As described in Kathy Kenny, "The Power of Place: Katrina in Five Worlds," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 2008): 5–30, online at (IPS) bit.ly/2YCaMll (accessed 27 August 2020).
48 Taped interview with Katrina Sa'ade, 1978.
49 Salim Tamari, "A Miserable Year in Brooklyn: Khalil Sakakini in America, 1907–1908," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 17 (Winter 2003): 19–40, online at (IPS) bit.ly/3jdXEug (accessed 27 August 2020).

Housing and Generality in Palestine Studies

Kareem Rabie

Abstract

This paper argues that housing in Palestine might both require and productively enable wider analytical approaches in Palestine studies. Drawing on ethnographic material on privatization and state building in the West Bank, this paper raises questions about the local and more general meanings of class, homeownership, and private property. It discusses some changing ideas of the land in Palestine that can be blurred by place-specific approaches to real estate development. This paper proposes to make a method intervention and to add a more processual understanding of political economy and geography to academic work on housing and on Palestine. It expands outward to argue occupation is not only present through the physical, visible state apparatus, but functions to invisibly and mutually orient Palestine's relationship to capital, to the rest of the world, and to Israel. Occupation is a matter not just of closure but of unequally distributing openings in ways that affirmatively produce and reconfigure the relationships between Palestine and Palestinians, and possible futures. Thus, present forms of building are not simply about emulating a coherent structure and imposition. Instead, housing appears as an outcome of larger processes through which different classes of Palestinians are implicated with international actors and phenomena. Housing is a realization of uneven, generalizing material processes that inform contexts and social relations, and continually shape political economic interventions.

Keywords

Housing; capital; neoliberalism; real estate; development; Palestine.

Almost as soon as large-scale private and public-private developments became visible in the West Bank during the period of Salam Fayyad's premiership, academic work emerged to try to understand this new issue and new problematic within the contemporary context. In a situation largely determined by struggles over land, scholars have paid significant attention to landholding and the fight against displacement and dispossession. In the last decade, with foreign aid and Palestinian Authority (PA) priorities increasingly oriented toward the private sector through legal reform, eminent domain, and national planning, the West Bank has been moving in the direction of large-scale development. Chief among these developments is the famous new city of Rawabi that is being built about nine kilometers north of Ramallah at a cost of over one billion dollars, largely coming from the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar and with millions from the PA and development agencies for offsite infrastructure and for mortgage loan guarantees to its current and future residents.

In its short time on earth, Rawabi has accrued huge amounts of press attention; it is also the site for a burgeoning critical academic literature that analyzes its form and vernacular, the forms of power emanating from it, and its complementary or mimetic relationship to the occupation.[1] The new literature tends to see Palestine and investment in it as specific and shaped by the occupation today. As an exemplary piece posits, "that Rawabi's planning, financing, and architecture are shaped and molded in the image of the occupier begs the question of what implications it carries as a symbolic space."[2] In many ways this assertion is true; geographies, class politics, and possibilities in the West Bank have been greatly and obviously constrained by the occupation. Yet the implicit assumption is that the occupation is clear, and the rest is about implementation and cooptation, or aesthetic and symbolic "emulation" that "reproduces the occupation" as it orients Palestinians toward modernity and away from a consistent national politics around *sumud*.[3]

This new work does an admirable job describing and situating present conditions and affirms local conceptions of change and experience. It engages a kind of visible common sense about the specificity of capital once it enters the conflict, the specificity of place, and deeply rooted ideas about the land and national politics. My approach in this paper is a bit different. I attempt to analyze the occupation not only through the present as a physical, visible, state apparatus, but as something that invisibly and mutually orients Palestine's relationship to capital, to the rest of the world, and to Israel. Occupation is a matter not just of closure but of unequally distributing openings in ways that affirmatively produce and reconfigure the relationships between Palestine and Palestinians, and possible futures. In order to generalize my approach beyond the present condition, I attempt to incorporate analysis of changing historical forms of market and land defense, Palestinian relationships to land and ownership over time, and the continual process and change inherent to Israeli control of Palestine.[4]

Part of the context in Palestine today is due to the unevenness produced through dynamics of global capital and their impact on the West Bank. Here is how the scholar of land defense Paul Kohlby puts his critique of the way capital relations are mobilized in scholarship on Palestine:

While this body of scholarship has done a great deal to illuminate aspects of military occupation and state-building, it often rests on a problematic, essentialist set of binaries. On one side are occupation and neoliberalism, the latter defined by individualization, privatization, and marketization. On the other is Palestinian society (often represented by the village), defined by solidarity, collectivity, and commons. I find this framing unsatisfactory: since it only partially accounts for the long-standing and complex uses that Palestinians have made of private property, and the extent to which capital constitutes a multitude of social relations, it risks narrowing our understanding of the present and idealizing the past.[5]

Society and relations of production are historical and reflect rather than determine one another. Housing is important analytically as a form of place that combines social relations and allows us to uncover Palestine's relationships to the world via capital, and consequently to make links with other contexts of dispossession. New forms of housing development represent and materialize the efforts and attention of international, government, and capitalist actors. No matter the specifics of intentions and plans, practices and priorities are meaningfully and physically manifested in the landscape through large infrastructural projects such as housing developments. It may seem paradoxical, but academic work that emphasizes worldwide links beyond Palestine – the social relations that impact both everyday life and the occupation – can help uncover the mechanics and productive aspects of how Palestinians abroad, aid, investment, political ideologies from all over the globe, and class relations and aspirations come together productively in Palestine and Palestinian places. Housing can provide a lens and an opportunity to demystify Palestine, and to raise questions about how it might be exceptional, but also ways it might be unexceptional.

One of the primary approaches to analyzing Palestine in the world, especially after the Oslo accords, has been to look at foreign aid.[6] It has long been understood that aid priorities have material effects on the state, Palestinians, and NGOs through practical orientations and consensus that come along with aid capital. Palestine is, needless to say, not a passive recipient; people's ideas, forms of value, and everyday practice are shaped alongside capital and continually reproduce the places where aid lands and subsequent directions it goes.[7] But capital investment, too, presents a structured and unequal link between Palestine and the rest of the world. Part of how this works in everyday life is that, given the global distribution of production, and as local production and social reproduction are decoupled (as neoliberal state politics or otherwise), human social reproduction nevertheless must occur. And it must happen in those places people find themselves.[8]

Palestinian capitalists' investment in residential place-making and finance is part of a class and state project, but not a directional imposition. Housing is a fundamental aspect of contemporary state-scale political economy and mode of production, and it depends as much on state legal reform and foreign aid to banks and the public sector as it does on debtors and other people who can afford new housing. Mundane, everyday

qualities of life are produced through wider political economic and social relations – housing is as much a commodity and vehicle for accumulation and circulation as a place for people to live.[9] Developments become important sites of much wider class reproduction – place, container, and site of social relations. Mode of production and social reproduction are inseparable, and they are place-dependent despite the ever-increasing mobility and speed of fleeting capital.[10]

Private developers in Palestine, like capitalists everywhere, have needs for accumulation, so they are driven to locate new markets and access to new products and vehicles to circulate capital. In a television interview, one of our most famous developers today describes his return to Palestine from diaspora in the United States to set up business. At first, he wanted to do something in manufacturing, but quickly realized that assembling finished goods would be prohibitive if they had to be disassembled at a checkpoint. So, he decided on real estate. If economic initiatives and private developments aim to turn the West Bank into a market and ensure ongoing accumulation, they use the only thing they really have available: the place they stand. Through the real needs for land defense and the existence of land markets, national symbols around the land and landholding become added values, and the scale of development ensures a large footprint that can generate political and economic energy, and greater and more stable access to the land through ownership.[11] Yet how much of this is unique to Palestine, and in what ways?

Adam Hanieh has argued that housing and real estate in the Middle East and in Palestine – local vernacular, land tenure, and forms of building – drive planning and foreign investment. They are not the sole form of economic and spatial development, but they are large and foundational.[12] In the case of a Palestine that has seen its various capacities for production, labor, and access to goods and markets compressed by colonial rule, real estate finds itself in a vacuum and with a proportionately greater impact than it might have in other states or state-scale markets. Housing is a political economic problem: "The shape of housing is always the outcome of struggles between different groups and classes. Housing necessarily raises questions about state action and the broader economic system" because the contemporary contours are of "a conflict between housing as *home* and as *real estate*."[13] Issues in housing – distribution, physical placement, and so on – are related to the contours of class society, political organization, and polity, as well as to capital circulation, fixity, and accumulation everywhere.

The everywhere part is relevant because "the built environment cannot be exported; capital must come to it – in amounts of increasing size, enmeshed in cross-border flows, and mediated through neoliberal regulatory change."[14] Part of the reason those aspects of housing are difficult to see is that capital is abstract *for a reason*, and it developed historically through specific types of production in order to obfuscate social life within it and as a mechanism for exchange, surplus, and perpetual growth. Looking at housing as a general category enables questions about how it utilizes international development and aid – no wonder planners and NGOs cultivate it as a method of economic and social stabilization. It is real, solid, and generates possibilities for labor

and circulation and accumulation that are not otherwise available in an occupied market or territory.

In what follows I attempt to demonstrate why housing might require a less place-bound analytical approach, and what that approach can do. I begin from field research on privatization and state building in the West Bank I conducted on and off between 2007 and 2017, and with some exemplary interviews about how Palestinians interested in living in large scale developments conceive of the move and of their future. I use those interviews to raise questions about the local and more general meanings of class, homeownership, and private property. Next, I briefly discuss some of the changing ideas of the land in Palestine that can be blurred by narrow approaches to real estate development. Finally, I end with a more speculative section on some of the productive consequences of looking at housing differently.

My goal in this article is simple: to make a method intervention and ask if it might be valuable to add a more processual understanding of political economy and geography to academic work on housing. I suggest that doing so clarifies how present forms of building are not simply about emulating a coherent structure and imposition. I argue that housing appears as an outcome of larger processes through which different classes of Palestinians are implicated with international actors and phenomena. Housing is a realization of uneven, generalizing material processes that inform contexts and social relations, and continually shape political economic interventions.

Potential Buyers, Debt, and Politics

One potential buyer I interviewed in the early stages of the project to develop Rawabi was gung ho from the start. He became an active participant and informal booster since he met market researchers in 2006 or so at one of the upscale supermarkets in Ramallah and participated in their studies every few months. He is an IT specialist with an NGO and is well-versed in housing politics and homebuyer education initiatives. He explains: "It all comes down to the necessity to own . . . to stop renting," which he understands as an indicator of, and contributor to, his personal instability. For him, in the West Bank owning is "essential" both because rents in Ramallah are high and because he wants to stabilize as many aspects of his life and work as possible. He tends to work in three-month, project-based contracts, and he believes that newly available loans will give him, his wife, and his six children the ability to immediately occupy and eventually own a home, which, in turn, will insulate them from economic instability and rapid changes in the rental market. Borrowing gives him immediate stability that would otherwise come at the end of years of saving.

Despite his short-term contracts, he barely mentioned the potential complications that could emerge from taking on massive debt; he wants a change that is both immediate and lasting, and a mortgage gives him both. He sees debt as an opportunity within the political situation, one he chooses willingly. He feels it is time to move out of Ramallah and away from "no system and chaos" into a "new, modern" house

in a place without Ramallah's disadvantages. Ramallah, he says, has not been able to cope with growth after Oslo, with the proliferation of NGOs and PA ministries and in-migration of Palestinian workers like him. A move to Rawabi will be a move away from crowds and to good, functioning services in a "neighborhood." At the time of our interview, he was renting an apartment in a building with five floors and twenty units. It was large and cumbersome, on its own almost like a severely underserved neighborhood. It was built in an area "without planning and zoning," and the roof leaks. He endures these conditions because finding another rental in the current market would be "a financial catastrophe."

He continues: Rawabi will give him a bigger, cheaper place with a "modern layout," public space and greenery for the kids, strong IT infrastructure, schools, hospitals, easy movement, and "calmness and quietness." His neighbors – and the prospective consumers for Rawabi – will be engineers, doctors, and others in the middle to upper classes. And the infrastructure will be superior to Ramallah's: the transportation and the streets will be better, and there will be better distribution of services *within* Rawabi; developers claim that it will have functioning water, sewer, electrical, and communications systems. And, while there are "a lot of obstacles," "if it is done as planned, it will be just delightful." He is already thinking about the potential for change, the potential for a different life, and Rawabi is giving him a framework to imagine it. He is so enthusiastic about Rawabi that he "plans" to move even though he had yet to visit the site when we spoke in 2010. He knows the political climate is uncertain, but he insists that Rawabi is humanistic and, as a private initiative, apolitical.

According to one young marketing engineer and former Rawabi employee I interviewed, Rawabi will provide "the most current thing" in terms of services. And it will help toward the political goal of "saving the hilltops" from settlements. But she is clear: "This generation's requirements are high," and Rawabi must meet them. No one, she says, would move there solely for national or anti-occupation reasons; politics are a secondary motivation to developers and potential buyers alike.

She became visibly emotional when describing the project and Bashar Masri, the lead Rawabi developer and owner, its public face, and her former boss. His perfectionism and strength of vision reflected in Rawabi "is like a dream come true." If it works out, there will be "no disadvantages" to the project. She is not only a supporter, she loves the idea and clearly imagines a Rawabi-inspired future for herself: a normal, well-provisioned new lifestyle in Palestine. Ideas of individual normalcy contribute to and are shaped by the dynamics of capital accumulation. Palestinians are said to desire certain kinds of services that do not yet exist there (3-D cinema, American franchises). For her, given the political instability and disorganization in the West Bank, the building and central control of services and distribution systems is a benefit of privatization.

The first buyer is a bit more cautious in that regard; he is "politically neutral," but nevertheless has worries – will he be an "ongoing customer" rather than an owner? Will the Israelis stall the project? But in the end, the desire to extract individual

stability from an unstable situation, overrides those concerns. He imagines Rawabi will be durable, wealthy, and part of the nature and specific character of Palestine. He believes that it offers potential buyers an alternate future. Or at least it offers them a long-term commitment and an orientation toward politics of the future by ameliorating the conditions in the present through non-political means.

The economics invoked is local and specific: the marketing engineer told me that for Masri, "the return will be huge . . . not twice, not triple, even more"; but it will also be a "good investment" for buyers, and prices will only go up. She believes – contrary to the firm's surveys that I had access to – people are relatively stable and do not *need* to move to Rawabi; rather they will come to desire it. "People will come to prefer Rawabi" because "it will look like a new place like in Dubai." "*Anyone* would prefer a good environment . . . and would like to have buses, public Wi-Fi, parking. Just look at the UAE [United Arab Emirates]." It will be so successful that it will prove a new model for building in Palestine. She is certain that there will be "a Rawabi 2, 3, 4."

When I tried to expand outward from Masri and asked the employee about the critiques of Rawabi both generally and in terms of normalization, the former employee said, "Palestinians only like whining," suggesting that, instead, they should "go and do something" rather than criticize. For her, the national dimensions of the politics in Rawabi are about the ability and individual responsibility to do something, not to acquiesce. Yet, the wider occupation does not necessarily play a role in the development: Masri "doesn't care about [Areas] A, B, C." Masri is presented as a hero in ways that make sense given the individualist ethic that emerged out of the real lack of capacity in the PA, the dissolution of the national movement, and the absence of cohesive politics within the West Bank (let alone between the occupied territories, Palestinian citizens of Israel, or Palestinians in the diaspora). The scale of figures like Masri makes it difficult to look past him toward the wider context. Thus, the cultural changes that developers invoke, and potential buyers seek, are tied to investment alongside forms of situated cultural change. Buyers are making logically coherent decisions about – and help shape – the opportunities that target them, within a context of capital investment that combines aspiration, security, personal politics, and family life and comfort.

Large mortgage funding programs emerged through large-scale developments like Rawabi, because such projects enabled titles clear enough to be used for collateral, a built-in population of people who need mortgages, and were otherwise lender friendly. Housing debt is a temporal relation, but it is also geographical: it is a form of aspiration and deferral that is also about forms of stability in new spaces.[15] It is, as Christopher Harker suggests drawing on David Graeber, an attachment and a promise quantified, and it can bring aspiration to bear quickly, especially through new developments and apartments entering the market.[16] Moreover, tying Palestinians to new developments changes spatial relations and regional distribution in terms of work, family, and place in the West Bank. For example, debt may make it more difficult to travel back to home

villages on the weekend or debt payments may take the place of remittances.[17] (It also enables legal solidification of land tenure through development that might not be possible elsewhere, especially in areas in closer proximity to Israelis and settlements).

Regional variation in the West Bank is marked and produced by cultural difference, as well as patterns of displacement and class stratification that manifest in terms of stable access to land and property. Today this happens through development and debt. But it not new, as demonstrated by Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman's demographic surveys of West Bank urban life.[18] Taraki and Giacaman propose a tentative history of ethical commitment and cultural change, and the structural conditions that enable "modernity" in Ramallah and something more "inward" in Nablus and Hebron, raising valuable questions about the relationship of history and culture to the distribution of labor across the West Bank region. Combining work in geography on region and scale with Beshara Doumani's "social space," they demonstrate how difference is produced and lives along cultural lines – and can be traced through things like homeownership.[19] In contemporary housing, difference does not emerge solely out of preexisting cultural relations; culture and labor are mutually produced with occupation and the uneven development of place, labor, and market.[20] It also shapes opportunities for investment in physical space and aspiration. Large-scale housing is quite clearly a part of the regional distribution and redistribution of settlement patterns and economic migration in the West Bank, within the occupation.

So, putting these thoughts into conversation with one another, the question that emerges is: what do private development and property, central dynamics for social stratification in Palestine as everywhere, have to do with everyday life under occupation?

From the perspective of many potential buyers, debt is an opportunity for stability; for developers it is a requirement in order to fill the apartments they are building. But not everyone is as willing to take on family debt. Lenders told me that long-term loans have been difficult in Palestine for reasons related to occupation. Political and economic instability makes Palestinians reluctant to tie themselves to loans; social preference is to save and to build on existing houses. Moreover, land tenure is complicated, and plots of land can be held collectively and without clear title, meaning that land cannot easily be used for collateral. But clear titling is difficult: PA law, Israeli civil or military law, Jordanian law from 1967, or Ottoman law can govern what happens in certain places. Moreover, banks view existing law as quite tenant friendly. Thus, lenders and developers believe they need and are successfully pushing for legal change, eminent domain, and so on. They also, along with their peers in the UN and World Bank, carve out a role for private development in the government's national planning. They articulate a convoluted mathematics demonstrating a housing shortage that only they can fill. They create a demand for homeownership that is less about Palestinians and houses, and more about accumulation through big investment in big real estate.[21]

Class, Culture, and Debt

In order to make mortgages appealing, banks are working to, as one loan promotion NGO told me, "teach people to accept" long-term loans. Social change at the base is necessary for accumulation at the top, and this social change must happen by targeting potential buyers' ideas of their material conditions and class, but also their political conceptions about life and property. If the political situation is understood as fundamentally unstable, the bankers argue, people do not think in terms of a stable future and long-term debt lasting ten, twenty, twenty-five years is undesirable. So, they work to produce the conceptions we see among my interlocutors – personal calculations about their own lives and capacity to take on debt, based on the existence and availability of projects at a large enough scale to enable feelings of stability and cultural appeal.

A "cultural shift" is required to get Palestinians into new housing developments that are big enough to generate changes in land tenure and contain apartments expensive enough to generate profit for developers. This process is not always clear, nor is it uniformly successful, but it is important nevertheless. Jamil Hilal, a sociologist of the Palestinian middle class, told me that the middle class is characterized in part by the diversity of positions within it. Middle-class Palestinians are part of the PA, of political parties, of NGOs, of the private sector, and hold a wide number of political affiliations: national, pan-national, socialist, liberal.[22] The development of a middle class can only occur through the development of *shared culture*.[23] Forms of shared culture change over time and as the Rawabi case shows, they can be encouraged, targeted, and potentially cultivated.

The "middle class" being brought into existence and invoked via development comprises people who mostly live in Ramallah and are educated workers in the PA or development sectors (or potential employees of the high-tech sector long-desired by the same classes and actors brought together in the Rawabi project). Despite barriers imposed by current iterations of Israeli settler colonial imperatives, the middle class that is emerging in the present is bound – and to the extent possible, unified – by dependence on "installment aid" such as PA wages.[24] Perhaps more importantly, developments are targeting a potential or aspirational middle class, people with the desire to orient themselves, their families, and their lives in relation to the political, economic, and consumerist promises such developments make. The idea of something like Rawabi as a private form of governance, and the fact of its existence, provides a site for the spatialization of a middle class defined through it.[25] Hilal's idea of class as a unity of cultural values is important to understanding housing and aspiration, precisely because they are not fixed entities acted upon or compelled to emulation. They shift in relation to wider social and political economic changes in Palestine, via personal calculations, and through interventions like housing developments that presuppose, need, or cultivate and instantiate certain forms of class cultural values. For real estate developers, the middle class means single family homebuyers *and* urbanization and vernacular.[26]

Paradoxically, because of political instability and lack of production, in an environment where public sector employment, remittances, and foreign development aid/wages are foundational, local labor, taxation, property, and other internal matters are not determinative in the ways they might be under different state-scale political economies. The cultural conception of how political economy exists in Palestine is a crucial corrective to understanding how outside capital investment, the emergence of new places, cultural affinity, and changing social relations are mutually constituted.

Localization is sometimes articulated as a solution to this kind of problem, given the necessities for social reproduction and the reality of occupation. The notion of a "resistance economy" that emerged during the first intifada has been popularized recently. Its adherents tend to focus on localizing production, perhaps collectivizing it, and building local markets for Palestinians that can help minimize dependence on Israel.[27] It appears in some of the Rawabi work as an articulation of resistance to private development at scale.[28] There is nevertheless a question purposefully left open about how to expand that approach toward a broader analysis of capital, motion, and connection. With regard to the circuit of capital, production often receives disproportionate attention at the expense of circulation. This makes it difficult to visualize the ways to create political capacity out of productive capacity, and greater sufficiency in a context where so much energy and attention is being pushed towards capital growth in fields like service and tech that can function under a border, standards, and customs regime that enables the movement of capital and information, but not people and goods. This is without mentioning that Palestinians are limited in their capacity to provision or produce without investment in fixed capital for production or access to raw materials, given the historical fact of uneven geographical development and dependence on an aid apparatus that increasingly funds privatization.

Land and Homeownership

Those Palestinians I interviewed understood homeownership as a mechanism for security, a type of land defense and protection against the vicissitudes of both settler colonial domination and class-based appropriation and dispossession. Ownership is in part a set of ethical and political questions around the unequal distribution of possibility and security, and the absolute need for both. And it is shaped by market and private property relations.[29]

For many, ownership is a strategy to protect against dispossession and expropriation; what Kohlbry calls "land defense."[30] The term has been used as far back as the 1920s and 1930s in the Galilee and more widely in 1970s and 1980s in the West Bank.[31] Kohlbry proposes it as an alternative to *sumud* that illuminates the relationship between property, capital, and land, as well as a concrete point of comparison to other situations of colonial control or dispossession. Thus, ownership is not only a way to keep land and guard against dispossession, but it is a market logic that has changed over time. And in Palestine, homeownership and landownership has been just as much

a calculation about currency fluctuation and regimes' historical legal reforms as a vehicle for anti-occupation steadfastness.[32]

Market mechanisms to exclude Palestinians and their consequent use of private property as security go back at least to the Ottoman period. For rural Palestinians, land holding and asset accumulation were forms of protection not just against colonial dispossession, but from fluctuations of markets, season, and currency. And when Ottoman reforms enabled consolidation and large landlordism, it was a way for agricultural laborers to remove themselves from exploitative sharecropping arrangements with Palestinian owners. Ownership was a form of resistance to colonial encroachment but also to economic exploitation.[33]

Yet, ownership did not ameliorate class and political disadvantage; Palestinian labor and capital was subordinate and excluded from Zionist markets, and localized or household production stopped being viable for reasons including but not limited to colonization.[34] Economic dislocation of laborers from their land through predatory purchasing and other legal mechanisms was part of what generated displacement and the need for return. Political economy and long histories of colonial domination have resulted in Palestinian displacement, but they are often absent from the national imaginary around return.[35]

Once again, capitalism is not a specifically local matter, and Palestine has been subject to piecemeal and ongoing processes of differentiated separation rather than absolute exclusion. Historians have long since overturned the conviction that Palestine only became capitalist through British colonialism or Zionism.[36] Sherene Seikaly clearly demonstrates how conceptions of politics and accumulation – and class stratification and stability – have long been intertwined with shifting conceptions of Palestinianness, colonization, and return.[37]

A more contemporary category of homeownership found worldwide purchase through the post-war "consensus" that emerged as a liberal political project and through international development projects. As the historian Nancy Kwak has shown us, this happened through projects to create and encourage a "very specific, 'modern' version of debt-driven, state-regulated ownership that gave at least the illusion of growing affluence and security."[38] Work in and through that consensus "could help governments court international aid and navigate domestic political pressures while wooing foreign investors and seeking competitive advantage in a global marketplace.[39] The same is true in Palestine today.

Landholding and distribution have meaningful impact on the political system and everyday life today. Class, international ideology, geographical differentiation, and state planning as a form of development are tied together and to capital as forms of management. Hiba Bou Akar historicizes the mutual emergence of development and planning and asks what can happen when planning narrows and "loses its ethical basis in socioeconomic development" –

> that is, in efforts to address social inequality, poverty, spatial justice, and the redistribution of resources . . . it becomes little more than a tool for

ordering space in the interest of those in power, devoid of the normative attributes of equity and social justice that are usually attributed to planning practice.[40]

State-scale planning through privatization occurs in a context where private property has long served multiple roles for different Palestinians. Today, that means ideas of equity are already structured by class and aspiration. Political economic stability gets distributed by the private sector; inclusion is structured by housing markets and housing types. Homeownership can be many things at once: a vehicle for capital accumulation, a mechanism for state-scale and personal stabilization, a way to self-provision, and on and on.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor describes "predatory inclusion" of Black Americans in which planning for finance and privatization meant granting certain kinds of access in order to generate new sales and new payment vehicles.[41] She describes a form of abstraction that is also a real, material process: tiered inclusion was premised on disinvestment and predation; real estate practices represented the political economy generated out of, in the United States, residential segregation. In the West Bank, they emerge in the subordinate and suspended West Bank market within Israel. For example, villagers who had little political capacity to use their land were forced to sell land to developers at market prices pre-development, thus denying them the opportunity for accumulation and a different role in the circuit of capital.

Generality and Diaspora

If political economy and market relations are fundamental elements in how land and politics are conceived and meaningful within Palestine, land and class are parts of how Palestinians relate to one another wherever they are. Those more general relations are difficult to apprehend through approaches that take the stability of the existing context as their origin. Analytical emphasis inward and on locale (or locatedness) has deemphasized the ways Palestinians everywhere have been shaped by occupation, and how they are not exclusively determined by it. The occupation has bound Palestinians to one another wherever they are. Accounts that place undue burden of structure on the present forms of post-1967 occupation or within the contemporary West Bank cannot capture our "present actuality" as a people, "the story of [our] existence in and displacement from Palestine, later Israel," as Edward Said put it.[42]

That experience of displacement has largely been structured by the demographic and territorial imperatives fundamental to settler colonial power, a scale of semi-permanent displacement without assimilation that necessarily requires the question of Palestine to exist beyond its borders. As Doumani argued more than a decade ago, the denial of existence to a Palestinian political community and tension between identity and territory meant that localizing Palestine or struggle inward toward the state was inadequate and happened within the asymmetric power manifest as an "iron

cage."[43] Scholars have still only provisionally heeded Doumani's call for sorting out the politics around "Palestine" and "the Palestinians."

Oslo brought a significant cultural and spatial reorientation, and one way to view it is as shifting the center of gravity of the worldwide Palestinian diaspora and bringing institutions and aggregating authority to the narrow enclave of PA Palestine. (It also diluted the Arab boycott and eased capital circulation into Israel.)[44] It was an incomplete project of diaspora organizing for return. In shifting attention toward the West Bank and, initially, Gaza, it weakened diaspora-scale politics in favor of piecemeal access to return. Most Palestinians did not or could not return through it. Nearly three decades on, the material effects of Oslo have also rendered many Palestinians living outside of the West Bank outside of analysis. There are few scholars and activists, with Noura Erekat a notable exception, working to bridge this framework, and in general academic work reproduces a dichotomy in which there is *sumud* in the West Bank and international law for the diaspora.[45]

Inside of Palestine, the possibilities for "normal" life are highly structured by Israeli state control alongside social relations and class power, defined with reference to the abroad, and increasingly limited to the West Bank and to Ramallah (with all of its spatial and class and vernacular and ID questions and on and on and on), something Ghada Karmi has written movingly about as a kind of striving for ever diminishing Palestinian place in Palestine.[46] Colonial settlement by primarily Jewish people of European origin with ambitions toward generational remaking means both consequent generational displacement, and generational social reproduction in places outside Palestine. The diaspora includes Palestinian voices who are absent – who have been made absent – from Palestine, precisely due to Zionist settlement and colonization, demography, and elimination of Palestinians *as Palestinian* in Palestine. For many in the diaspora, asserting and maintaining Palestinianness is a generational struggle. In a very real sense, Palestine remains home – and not merely national identity – because of the fact of displacement from it.

Oslo was not about the absolute right of return, but it did shape access to return and forms of possibility among Palestinians. Among diaspora Palestinians, not everyone has the desire or capacity – the family situation, the privilege, the money, the papers – to live or return there; it is ironic and undeniable that in a situation in which so many Palestinians are trapped and subject to Israeli and Palestinian state violence, one dimension of the structure of possibility for return is class. (That very same class dynamic is important for the vernacular, amenities, image, aesthetics, and potential success of new upper middle-class housing development that needs to be filled with residents). Exile has structured relations, links, and disconnections between Palestinians. And it has oriented Palestinians' ideas and relationships to Palestine via practical differences related to access, class position, and place of exile.

Life for Palestinians outside is easier for many in most ways. But it is also hard in different ways – it is not as though the iron cage of Palestinian history, politics, subordination, and identity suddenly reverts to the saint's light cloak upon exiting Palestine. Histories and forms of settler colonial power undergird our diaspora and

define us everywhere we are. So too does another phenomenon brought to bear everywhere – worldwide capitalism. Moving outward and relinking Palestine might help us to analyze the relationships between colonial origins and – to join Rashid Khalidi and Doumani in thinking through iron cages – the ways we are forced to comport with the tremendous cosmos and conditions that emerged around them.

Here is another way of putting it. Analyses of Palestine too often assume the shape of occupation (and Palestinian life before it), rendering too much about life there as particular to it. E. P. Thompson showed us that people do not just reflect superstructure; they think and experience and practice and shape it.[47] Categories are not pure, and consciousness is historical. A general approach to Palestine emphasizes the continual production of its relationships to Israel and the rest of the world, and the local environment in which abstract political phenomena are formed and reformed continuously, though not always coherently. This is not meant to be complicated or obscure: the idea that categories for understanding and organizing the world are not pure or discrete, that people are not merely local subjects, simply tells us that global economic phenomena and place are bound with and inseparable from social life.

Conclusion

The primary question left is, I believe, how much is the situation of Palestine about its absolute separation from rather than its uneven incorporation into the world? Much of what keeps Palestine suspended vis-à-vis Israel depends not only on military occupation but also on Palestinian-led class projects to enhance global investment and aid, and accumulation. Housing is valuable as a site for analysis because it materializes funding and ideology in the landscape and between classes of people, the state, and international actors. These projects are simultaneously about aspiration, private property, accumulation, and scales of political stability.

It would seem the settler regime is quite comfortable with a form of governance that does not affect the sovereign state, allows territorial and practical control, creates new opportunities for accumulation, and does not incorporate any of the native population as it consolidates and limits their space and capacities directly but also indirectly through credit and debt. Today in Palestine, forms of housing and housing development can tell us a great deal about the economy, accumulation, and processes that regulate and instantiate Israeli control over territory. The editors of this issue have asked, what does housing have to do with the "twin engines of the conflict – territorial appropriation and demographic displacement" and simultaneous international development and capital investment initiatives?[48] What does it have to do with structural change and forms of management over territory? This paper proposes that in answering these questions, a large-scale methodological approach can help us understand how historical relationships between land, capital, occupation, and social life are part of the context in which occupation operates and life is lived and conceived. Moreover, the specific nature of housing as a context for social reproduction, and

the forms of investment and activity it requires, makes wider phenomena uniquely visible. The case here might provide a rough example of the validity of more general, less geographically particular, analysis of Palestinians and Palestine.

To many, talking about worldwide productive relations and capital will surely seem needlessly abstract for analyzing a situation of such pressing, visible dispossession. But capital and markets are not immaterial or distant. This is perhaps a vulgar gloss on some of the least vulgar Marx, but abstraction is the process by which material things, social relations, use values, human labor, and so on are translated into universal forms that can circulate and be exchanged with one another to generate surplus value. Capital is then, in David Harvey's formulation, value – human labor – quantified and abstracted and put into motion.[49]

Rigorous attention to specific aspects of the post-1967 occupation skews analysis inward and toward experiences in the present. For housing, that means a logical structure in which new urban trends are either deemphasized or flattened into questions of conflict.[50] Such approaches have a geography to them. They are oriented toward locale, and to area literature, and thus overprivilege investment as directional imposition. They are interested in intention and specificity over process and structure. Moreover, implicit assumptions about the totalizing qualities of occupation can have the unintended secondary effect of dehistoricizing its changes over time.

In their excellent paper in defense of the critical framework of planetary urbanization, Hillary Angelo and Kian Goh make a case against work that articulates narrow particularity as the solution to supposed problems of large-scale method:

> [In positing] a manner of *difference* against a mode of *abstraction*, [critics] conflate two sets of questions: an ontological question of *scale* (how do we understand the relationship between small-scale, often local, and large-scale, often global, processes and phenomena?); and an epistemological question of theory-making (how and when do we move between the abstract and concrete in our analyses?). For Type 1, this takes the form of empirics against grand theory; for Type 2, situated, embodied, or positional knowledge against supposed objectivity.[51]

In work on Palestine, an additional problem emerges – it becomes difficult not to see social production as narrowly confined, and "social difference" becomes limited to occupation (and, perhaps, resistance to its aesthetic qualities or forms of investment). Instead, the approach to housing here offers an attempt to link scales, to see social difference as produced and practiced alongside phenomena and ideas that may not be narrowly or visibly present in occupied Palestine. The occupation framework has oriented discourse on Palestine largely toward analyzing it through opposition and separation.[52] The overt violence of occupation and its fragmented geographies obscure Palestine's links to the rest of the world, but that does not mean those links are irrelevant. But colonization by a modern settler movement of European origin that conscripts Jewish people throughout their diaspora, and long histories of foreign presence, trade, aid, regional capital investment, and so on are not local questions or

received in any consistent or predetermined way.

The case of capital investment in housing shows Palestine's uneven and unequal global integration. From Adam Smith's waterways to Marx's "Chinese walls," through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC, now the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, DFC) support of private developers, capitalism has from its inception been geographical, about movement and circulation, growing markets and arbitrage. It has always been premised on enhancing and strengthening forms of violence and inequality, including by race and private property relations. It presupposed and produced planetary spread and differentiation. In this understanding, colonialism was not an epiphenomenon, nor did it simply localize capitalist forms of production in new places: it created a mesh network that consolidated the whole.

Perhaps most importantly, a general approach enables political questions around solidarity beyond local subjectivity. The social historian Rana Barakat has written compellingly on narrative and against the ham-handed and unidirectional ways the framework of settler colonialism has been applied to Palestine. She reproaches non-specialist academics for working within a form emphasizing "settler triumph" and "native defeat," and consequently flattening the native to a symbol.[53] The mode of operation that Barakat describes derives partially from the practical aspects of occupation and movement to which most of us are subject, but also, significantly, from assumptions about the visibility and cohesiveness of occupation. It is an analytical framework in which the occupation is visible and immediate, and can comprehensively be experienced, witnessed, and described (and that seems to generate expertise out of commitment). It also, perhaps, partially accounts for critiques of housing and the wider situation that begin with aesthetics and allow them to stand in for wider phenomena. It is a way of understanding Palestine that proposes site and method, and subsequently enters into description and theory where it is validated and reiterated.

Endnotes

1   See, for example: Tina Grandinetti, "The Palestinian Middle Class in Rawabi: Depoliticizing the Occupation," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 40, no. 1 (2015): 63–78; Arpan Roy, "Reimagining Resilience: Urbanization and Identity in Ramallah and Rawabi," *City* 20, no. 3 (2016): 368–88.

2   Grandinetti, "Palestinian Middle Class," 68.

3   See Roy, "Reimagining Resilience."

4   Put another way, other approaches to contemporary Palestinian housing tend to emphasize categories in Lefebvre, over the ways he puts them in relation and sees process or dialectic.

5   Paul Kohlbry, "Owning the Homeland: Property, Markets, and Land Defense in the West Bank," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 4 (Summer 2018): 30–45, quote at 31.

6   See, for example: Toufic Haddad, *Palestine Ltd: Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016); Mandy Turner, "The Power of 'Shock and Awe': The Palestinian Authority and the Road to Reform," *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 4 (2009): 562–77; Mandy Turner, "Completing the Circle: Peacebuilding as Colonial Practice in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," *International Peacekeeping* 19, no. 4 (2012): 492–507; Alaa Tartir, "Securitised Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism under Fayyadism," *Conflict, Security, and Development* 15, no. 5 (2015): 479–502; and Linda Tabar and Sari Hanafi, "The Intifada and the Aid Industry: The Impact of the New Liberal Agenda on the Palestinian NGOs," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 23, no. 1 (2003): 205–14.

7   Julia Elyachar, *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

8   As Cindi Katz writes: "Social reproduction is the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life. It is also a set of structured practices that unfold in dialectical relation with production, with which it is mutually constitutive and in tension. Social reproduction encompasses daily and long-term reproduction, both of the means of production and the labor power to make them work. At its most basic, it hinges upon the biological reproduction of the labor force, both generationally and on a daily basis, through the acquisition and distribution of the means of existence, including food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare." Cindi Katz, "Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction," *Antipode* 33, no. 4 (December 2001): 709–28, quote at 711.

9   Madden and Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing.*

10 Katz, "Vagabond Capitalism"; Tithi Bhattacharya and Lise Vogel, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (London: Pluto Press, 2017). Although he favors particularity and is critical of approaches from "on high," Harker (2011), argues for the necessity of not narrowing the scope of occupation to the occupation itself, and demonstrates how financial calculations are part of "debt ecologies," combinations of spatial arrangements, topographies, and relations that co-constitute debt and are "entangled with other geopolitical, economic, and cultural processes." See Harker, "Debt Space," 614; also Christopher Harker, "Geopolitics and Family in Palestine," *Geoforum* 42, no. 3 (June 2011): 306–15. Khatam and Haas propose an intermediate step in their comparative work on Palestine and Iran, with the goals of understanding the complex ideological, political, cultural, social, and capital logics mobilized at the local scale. See Azam Khatam and Oded Haas, "Interrupting Planetary Urbanization: A View from Middle Eastern Cities," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36, no. 3 (2018): 439–55. I build on that broader entanglement; I argue cultural conceptions of history and class, and local housing debt, are linked to the movement of capital far beyond Palestine or its economy. "The economy" is generally shorthand for the national economy, and part of the work it does is to make itself intelligible as specifically national and foreclose and obscure possibilities for understanding its geopolitical and global links. It is a body of knowledge that obfuscates; the autonomous economy is itself a form of representation. And common sense around the economy – or anything, really – as local and coherent makes it hard to see processes of dispossession that are indirect, invisible, or processual, economic, and political. See: Hannah Appel, "Toward an Ethnography of the National Economy," *Cultural Anthropology* 32, no. 2 (2017): 294–322; and Timothy Mitchell,

"Fixing the Economy," *Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 82–101

11 As it manifests physically, the scale of building, site, and investment is important for its potential to incorporate and help shape a polity. Large-scale building does not negate the existence of the small-scale, but it operates in different ways to incorporate cultural effects (perhaps of "depoliticization" or contra *sumud*) and big capital, and to realize them in ways that are widespread, potentially productive, and meaningful. As Fredric Jameson writes: "Of all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic, with which, in the form of commissions and land values, it has a virtually unmediated relationship. It will therefore not be surprising to find the extraordinary flowering of the new postmodern architecture grounded in the patronage of multinational business, whose expansion and development is strictly contemporaneous with it . . . these two new phenomena have an even deeper dialectical interrelationship than the simple one-to-one financing of this or that individual project." But those relations are manifest physically in the landscape *as* politics, the superstructural expression of worldwide politics. And, "as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror." Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 5.

12 Adam Hanieh, *Money, Markets, and Monarchies: The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

13 David J. Madden and Peter Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis* (New York: Verso, 2016), 4.

14 Hanieh, *Money, Markets, and Monarchies*, 150.

15 Christopher Harker, "Debt and Obligation in Contemporary Ramallah," *Jadaliyya*, 19 October 2014, online at (jadaliyya.com) bit.ly/32vJu16 (accessed 27 August 2020)

16 Christopher Harker, "Debt Space: Topologies, Ecologies, and Ramallah, Palestine," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35, no. 4 (2017): 600–619.

17 Harker, "Debt Space."

18 Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman, "Modernity Aborted and Reborn: Ways of Being Urban in Palestine," in *Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance, and Mobility under Occupation*, ed. Lisa Taraki (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 1–50.

19 On "social space," see Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

20 On the impact of the fragmentation of the Palestinian territories on labor migration and markets, see Leila Farsakh, *Palestinian Labor Migration to Israel: Labor, Land, and Occupation* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

21 Kareem Rabie, *Palestine Is Throwing a Party and the Whole World Is Invited: Capital and State Building in West Bank* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming in 2021).

22 Pamela Ann Smith, "The Exile Bourgeoisie of Palestine, *Middle East Report* (*MERIP)* 142 (September 1986): 23–27.

23 Jamil Hilal, *al-Tabaqa al-wusta al-Filistiniyya: bahth fi fawda al-hawiyya wa-l-marjaʿiyya wa-l-thaqafa* [The Palestinian Middle Class: A Study in Confusion of Identity, Authority, and Culture] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2006); Jamil Hilal, "Palestinian Class Formation under Settler Colonialism," paper presented at the New Directions in Palestinian Studies: Political Economy and the Economy of Politics workshop, Brown University, 28 February 2014.

24 Hilal, *al-Tabaqa al-wusta*; Hilal, "Palestinian Class Formation."

25 For a comparative example of this process at work, see Li Zhang, *In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

26 Jamil Hilal and Abaher el-Sakka, "A Reading on the Socio Urban Changes in Ramallah and Kufur Aqab" (Birzeit: Center for Development Studies and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2015), online at hdl.handle.net/20.500.11889/210 (accessed 17 June 2020).

27 Alaa Tartir, Sam Bahour, and Samer Abdelnour, "Defeating Dependency, Creating a Resistance Economy," *al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network*, 13 February 2012, online at (al-shabaka.org) bit.ly/3lkysnP (accessed 27 August 2020). Dana and Arafeh view it as potentially, if not fundamentally, revolutionary, an elaboration of historical forms of development under occupation,

resistance, and land defense. See: Tariq Dana, "Localising the Economy as a Resistance Response: A Contribution to the 'Resistance Economy' Debate in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (May 2020); and Nur Arafeh, "'Resistance Economy': A New Buzzword?" *Journal Für Entwicklungspolitik* 34, no. 1 (2018): 91–102.

28 See, for example: Grandinetti, "Palestinian Middle Class."

29 Once again, ideas around the ethics of landholding are not a recent phenomenon. Ideas of development and land improvement have been a fundamental aspect of capitalism since it emerged. See: Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (New York: Verso, 2002); Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Within a system of colonial domination in historic Palestine, Bhandar demonstrates how such logics of improvement enabled property by title and culminated in a practical and juridical system of racial ownership. Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

30 Kohlbry, "Owning the Homeland."

31 Munir Fakher Eldin, "Communities of Owners: Land Law, Governance, and Politics in Palestine 1858–1948" (PhD diss., New York University, 2008); Kohlbry, "Owning the Homeland."

32 Kohlbry, "Owning the Homeland"; Salim Tamari, "The Dislocation and Re-Constitution of a Peasantry: The Social Economy of Agrarian Palestine in the Central Highlands and the Jordan Valley, 1960–1980" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1983).

33 Tamari, "Dislocation and Re-Constitution."

34 Tamari, "Dislocation and Re-Constitution," 13–14.

35 See, for example: Ted Swedenburg, "The Peasant as National Signifier," *Anthropological Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1990): 18–30; Lisa Taraki, "The Development of Political Consciousness among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, 1967–1987," in *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads*, ed. Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock (New York: Praeger, 2006); Salim Tamari, "Soul

of the Nation: The Fallah in the Eyes of the Urban Intelligentsia," *Review of Middle East Studies* 5 (1988): 74–83.

36 See: Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*; Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic, and Political Development* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993); Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993).

37 Seikaly, *Men of Capital*.

38 Nancy H. Kwak, *A World of Homeowners: American Power and the Politics of Housing Aid* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 2.

39 Kwak, *World of Homeowners*, 212.

40 Hiba Bou Akar, *For the War Yet to Come: Planning Beirut's Frontiers* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 147.

41 Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

42 Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," *London Review of Books*, 16 February 1984, online at (lrb.co.uk) bit.ly/3jkca3P (accessed 27 August 2020).

43 Beshara Doumani, "Palestine Versus the Palestinians? The Iron Laws and Ironies of a People Denied," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 49–64; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

44 Adam Hanieh, "Class, Economy, and the Second Intifada," *Monthly Review* 54, no. 5 (1 October 2002), online at (monthlyreview.org) bit.ly/3lqoiSD (accessed 27 August 2020).

45 Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).

46 Ghada Karmi, *Return: A Palestinian Memoir* (New York: Verso, 2015).

47 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

48 Doumani, "Palestine Versus the Palestinians?" 50. See also "The 2019 Workshop: Palestinian Homes and Houses," online

at (palestinianstudies.org) bit.ly/3hzcDyI (accessed 27 August 2020).

49 David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (New York: Verso, 2006).

50 Marco Chitti and Sarah Moser, "Emerging Trends in Urbanizing Palestine: Neglected City-Builders beyond the Occupation," *Urban Geography* 40, no. 7 (2019): 1010–17.

51 Hillary Angelo and Kian Goh, "Out in Space: Difference and Abstraction in Planetary Urbanization," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (May 2020): 6.

52 Social historian Rana Barakat has critiqued ham-handed, unidirectional applications of the settler colonial framework to Palestine that emphasize "settler triumph" and "native defeat," and consequently flatten the native to a symbol. The mode of operation that Barakat describes derives partially from the practical aspects of occupation and movement to which most of us are subject, but also from assumptions about the visibility and cohesiveness of occupation. It is an analytical framework in which the occupation is visible and immediate, and can comprehensively be experienced, witnessed, and described (and which seems to generate expertise out of commitment). It may also partially account for critiques of housing that begin with aesthetics and allow them to stand in for wider phenomena. It is a way of understanding Palestine that proposes site and method, and subsequently enters into description and theory where it is validated and reiterated. A general approach, by contrast, enables political questions around solidarity beyond local subjectivity. Rana Barakat, "Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History," *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (2018): 349–63.

53 Barakat, "Writing/Righting Palestine Studies."

Occupied Home-Sharing

Airbnb in Palestine

Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins

Abstract

If home is the engine room of Palestinian subjectivities, what does Airbnb do to the functioning of that engine? What do the experiences of Palestinian hosts demonstrate about the logics, presuppositions, and effects of Airbnb as a technology of platform capitalism? This essay makes two arguments: First, in enrolling people into new relations with their homes and the homes of others, Airbnb shapes and is shaped by socialities, modes of exchange, and material conditions. Second, encoded within Airbnb's operation are assumptions that users are located in benevolent, democratic states with functioning infrastructures. An analysis of the platform must thus take politics, history, and culture into account. Part I introduces the concept of "occupied home-sharing" for understanding Airbnb's manifestation in Palestine. Occupied home-sharing highlights that Palestine's hosts are incarcerated and host unfreely. It also helps reframe occupation and settler colonialism as forms of coerced hosting that allow intrusions of violence into home spaces. Part II examines four different aspects of hosts' experiences of the platform: 1) property as flexible infrastructure, 2) gifts, family, community, 3) rejections, and 4) exclusions. The conclusion considers what these help us to understand about the relationship between Airbnb and precarity in Palestine. Airbnb is both a result of existing forms of precarity born from occupied home-sharing and an instrument for mitigating and making worlds within them.

Keywords

Airbnb; sharing economy; infrastructure; home; hospitality; precarity; platform capitalism; kinship; community; sovereignty.

> [I]t is as though the laws (plural) of hospitality, in marking limits, powers, rights, and duties, consisted in challenging and transgressing the law of hospitality, the one that would command that the "new arrival" be offered an unconditional welcome.
>
> Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*

If you are planning to visit a West Bank Palestinian city, one of your options is to stay at an Airbnb. Airbnb.com has something for everyone, from rooms in shared homes to entire apartments or villas. Prices vary between eleven dollars (bedroom in a Ramallah NGO) and four hundred dollars (Jericho villa with a pool) per night. Most listings are concentrated in Ramallah and Bethlehem, with others scattered in Jericho, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Zababda, and Jayyus. Airbnb is an online "aggregation" platform that facilitates so-called "home-sharing" by connecting producers and consumers, similar to the way Facebook, Amazon, and Uber do.[1] It was established in San Francisco in 2008 and now operates in over 190 countries, with over seven million listings in more than one hundred thousand cities. It is worth an estimated thirty-eight billion dollars.[2]

In many ways, Palestine's Airbnbs look a lot like those anywhere else. A few, like one Ramallah property I rented, are more bohemian, featuring pop culture-based wall art like skateboards and cannabis posters, secondhand mid-century modern furniture, colored walls, and mismatched nightstands. Others promise luxury, like a private room in a "palace" in Nablus ($15 per night) or like the "Industrial-style Designer Penthouse" in al-Tira ($185 per night). A few listings are rooms in guesthouses, hotels, and hostels. For a prospective guest from outside Palestine, the experience of booking is also like it would be elsewhere: you browse photographs and amenities, choose your listing and dates, and click the iconic red "reserve" tab.

Yet in other respects, ranging from the aesthetics of properties to experiences of hosting and being hosted, Airbnb is an altogether different beast in Palestine. Forget IKEA furniture, for example. Elsewhere in the world, IKEA is the easiest and most affordable way to furnish Airbnb listings. In the words of *Travel and Leisure* magazine, "Airbnb and Ikea Should Just Go Ahead and Merge, Already!"[3] But IKEA lacks stores in the West Bank and Israel's restrictions on Palestinians' movement make a trip to IKEA's Rishon LeTsiyon, Netanya, Beersheva, and Amman locations difficult, dangerous, or impossible.

Most interiors of Palestinian Airbnbs are instead decorated in the style of an upper middle-class Palestinian household. Furniture looks set for a post-Airbnb, domestic Palestinian future. It is immaculate, colored in earthy creams, browns, and maroons. Seemingly ready for owners to move in, they feature desks and single beds, cartoon-themed bedspreads in children's rooms, and full-scale kitchens. Living rooms feature formal, imposing sofa and armchair sets arranged around heavy wooden coffee tables. Floor-length taffeta curtains frame windows and veranda doors. Plasma screen televisions are standard. Bedrooms boast built-in closets and matching vanities.

More significantly, the conditions under which Palestinian hosts live prevent them from having the imagined host experience advertised by Airbnb. They lack access to payment technologies required by Airbnb, undisputed property ownership, a distinct currency with which to transact, as well as protection from use of Airbnb by people (such as Israeli soldiers or settlers) who might seek to harm them or their guests. They are sometimes denied the ability to list a property at all, purely due to its location in the West Bank.[4] Hosts cannot guarantee that amenities – like electricity and running water – will function. Experiences of hosting are also shaped by Palestinian obligations of kinship, norms of appropriate comportment, and dilemmas posed when platform-mediated hospitality and politics chafe against one another.

This essay asks a two-tiered question: First, if home is the engine room of Palestinian subjectivities, as the conveners of the 2019 New Directions in Palestinian Studies workshop "Palestinian Homes and Houses" suggested, what does Airbnb do to the functioning of that engine? Second, what do the experiences of Palestinian hosts demonstrate about the logics, presuppositions, and effects of Airbnb as a technology of platform capitalism? I draw on fieldwork I conducted among Airbnb hosts in the West Bank cities of Ramallah and Bethlehem in the past two years, virtual research on the websites of Airbnb and AirDNA (a private company that collects and sells global short-term rental data) between 2018 and 2019, as well as my own experiences as an Airbnb guest in Palestine since 2014. I found hosts to interview through friends and other contacts in Palestine whom I had known since 2007 from conducting long-term fieldwork there for my first book. I chose this route rather than "cold" messaging hosts through the platform because Airbnb host research involves delicate relations of trust. I pursued a few long-form, life history-based interviews rather than a larger number of less in-depth interviews because I was as interested in the stories of how people became hosts (and how these stories were narrated) as I was in hosts' everyday practices. Airbnb listings from across the West Bank supplemented and gave context to my interviews and guest experiences. Airbnb.com offers a rich archive of information about hosts through profiles in which they describe themselves, through guest reviews to which they sometimes reply, as well as through amenity, location, and space descriptions and photographs. Together these "live" and virtual methods serve to make my broadest point: that drawing attention to what the platform presupposes helps us understand Airbnb as a form of soft infrastructure articulated specifically in specific places, and that an analysis of the platform must thus take politics, history, and culture into account.

I. Chromatography and Occupied Home-Sharing

Airbnb as Chromatography: What Does It Do?

This essay makes two arguments: First, that in enrolling people into new relations with their homes and with the homes of others, Airbnb consolidates and sometimes

transforms socialities, modes of exchange, and material conditions. It shapes the infrastructures of everyday life and tweaks people's senses of futurity. Second, that attending to everyday practices of Airbnb use reveals the platform's logics. For example, Airbnb's use in Palestine reveals that encoded within Airbnb's operation are the assumptions that hosts and guests are located in benevolent, democratic states, that those states have functioning infrastructures, and that "users" are subjects of democratic governance.

I develop both arguments by examining micropractices of hosting in Palestine. Airbnb requires the ability to be paid electronically, ideally with a credit card or a PayPal account, for example. How do people for whom occupation makes access to both difficult become hosts? The ideal-typical Airbnb user is both guest and host. What does that mean for people whom occupation prevents from traveling? What does renting out a property to strangers nightly do for people who have been rendered precarious by decades of intergenerational dispossession of land and property? What does stranger hospitality look like for those accustomed to home invasions? How do colonial subjects view the fact that a foreign company mediates transactions with guests? What, in other words, does what we might think of as "occupied home-sharing" look like?

Ample scholarly and media attention over the last decade has been devoted to Airbnb, but rarely highlighting hosts' experiences. Most observers have focused on the scales of states (for example, regulation) and cities (for example, housing supply), and on guest experiences. Some have argued that platform-mediated economic exchanges (including ride-hailing platforms like Uber) are generating more "authentic" travel experiences, what Derek Thompson calls "superior simulacra of the local experience for leisure travelers," generating new social relations and companionship among people who would otherwise not have met.[5] Others see platforms like Airbnb and Uber transforming the nature of work, blurring the line between the personal and professional and between home and work, and requiring affective labor for capitalist profit.[6] Some, though fewer, have analyzed forms of resistance to Airbnb's perceived negative effects, Airbnb's legal implications, and the impact of Airbnb on dwellings themselves.[7] But analyses of the platform have thus far been polarized: We are shown Airbnb's corrosive capacities (its role in gentrification, segregation, discrimination, dispossession, and displacement, and in the "touristification" and "disneyfication" of cities, as well as its tax evasion and "data hunger"),[8] or its redemptive possibilities (bringing owners higher rents and real estate prices and allowing struggling long-term renters to supplement incomes by subletting parts of their homes).This essay builds on the less-developed scholarship that focuses on how Airbnb reshapes people's definitions and experiences of home to ask what Airbnb generates, or makes possible.[9]

My premise is that context matters for how Airbnb affects lifeworlds, thereby challenging the presumption of Airbnb's universality.[10] Both proponents and critics tend to argue that the platform's effects are universal. With the exception of some studies on its effects in the Global South or the diverse regulatory responses it has prompted, Airbnb is seen as part of a globally conceived "sharing economy."[11] Airbnb

is viewed as democratizing (turning anyone who uses it into an entrepreneur guest/ host who can, according to its motto, "belong anywhere"),[12] or it is neoliberalizing and anti-labor.[13] Airbnb's image of universality is built on the idea that the platform hovers above states. It appears to be extraterritorial. In some ways, *it is universal*: The platform can be accessed from anywhere in the world (with internet) and the basic formula for becoming a guest or host is the same wherever one decides to do it. All you need is a (free) account. In these senses, Airbnb seems to bypass dominant administrative arrangements that govern territories, for example, by enabling hosts not to declare their incomes to tax authorities. Its collaborative consumption model and use of mobile applications implicitly challenge borders and territorially-fixed power structures. But how does Airbnb function, and with what effect, in places whose undemocraticness is the most acute – in carceral, colonized, militarized, and war-ravaged places? What is revealed about the platform by how it functions in such contexts?

I propose that we understand Airbnb as a social, economic, and political chromatography paper. Chromatography paper is a technique to analyze the chemical composition of substances that we might remember from high school biology class. It can come in thin rectangular, white strips. When dipped vertically into a solvent, the paper absorbs the chemicals present in that solvent as the solvent ascends the paper strip, creating a watermark. The paper diffuses the various molecules in the solvent according to the polarities of the molecules and the solvent. If the strip reveals more than one color, that means the solvent must have more than one kind of molecule. When the platform goes live in a territory, Airbnb is "dipped" into that territory to varying effects; these effects reveal something about the molecular components of the place into which it is dipped. Chromatography paper changes colors when dipped, revealing its propensity for change. So, too, Airbnb's effects on a place reveal something about the platform itself. Chromatography paper also displaces water as it is dipped, causing the water level in a glass to rise. The volume of the water in the glass remains the same but its relationship to the glass, its distribution (some is absorbed into the paper), its appearance to the human eye, and its movements, are all changed. What does Airbnb similarly transform in appearance, distribution, movement, and experience?

One of the most obvious senses in which Airbnb is chromatographic is as the largest publicly available archive of homes and interiors in the world. It renders visible that which had been visible to only few. Take the case of Ziad Alwan, a Palestinian from 'Ayn Yabrud, a West Bank village. Ziad moved his family to Chicago, where he works as a truck driver to make a better life for them after the Israeli settlement of Ofra seized his family's lands. In 2018 he was "stunned to see images" of his father's lands posted online "in a listing for a luxurious bed and breakfast run by settlers."[14] The platform gave a newly visual dimension to Ziad's dispossession. It offered an intimate, if virtual, way for Ziad to experience the domesticity, including the decor and view, of his dispossessors.

Airbnb's visualization of Ziad's dispossession motivated him to become more politically active. His decision had far-reaching ramifications. After criticism of

Airbnb's listing of properties on West Bank settlements – with their location listed as "Israel" – mounted, a coalition of groups including Human Rights Watch and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement formally called on Airbnb (and booking.com, a similar site that lists both hotels and private residences) to delist West Bank settlement properties. They argued that the hundreds of Airbnb listings in West Bank settlements discriminated against Palestinians because Israel prohibits West Bank Palestinians from entering settlements (unless they work there). This means those listings are closed to Palestinians who technically reside on the same territory. The listings allowed Airbnb to benefit from Palestinians' dispossession since the listings are located on land taken by force from its owners.[15]

By November 2018 the groundswell of international support for the campaign compelled Airbnb to state that it would delist roughly two hundred settlement listings. In response, dual-citizen (Israeli-American) settlers, whose listings were to be removed and who were potential renters, filed a lawsuit against Airbnb in Delaware, claiming discrimination. Airbnb reversed its decision to delist the two hundred properties in April 2019. Ziad Alwan and other Palestinians on whose land the relevant listings were located, along with two Palestinian villages, filed counterclaims against the settlers. Represented by the Center for Constitutional Rights, they argued that the settlers' listing of properties constituted war crimes, crimes against humanity, and discrimination on the basis of religion and national origin. They also brought claims of trespass and unjust enrichment against the settlers on their lands.[16] The countersuit drew further attention to the issue of settlements and became the basis for an international campaign in which tens of thousands of people pledged to deactivate their Airbnb accounts on 15 May 2019 (Nakba Day) to protest the platform's profiting from illegal settlements.[17]

Occupied Home-Sharing

To share can mean to divide an object, distribute it in shares, apportion it, and transfer use or possession of that object or part of it, as for example when someone cuts open an orange and distributes pieces of it to friends. Another definition signifies joint use, participation in, enjoyment, or receipt of something. An instance of this is the joint use of a room by two siblings. A third definition describes the action of one party, where that party takes part in something, enters a field of play, to enjoy it – thereby *becoming* a party. If I see you laughing at a joke and smile in your direction, I am sharing in your pleasure, taking some for myself without diminishing the amount that you possess. This sharing-as-receiving inverts the first definition of the term, which signifies giving to others as letting go. This sharing is a kind of gift-giving. It is assumed that the gift is freely given. The person giving it is free to give and the thing given is hers to give.

As a form of exchange, sharing is a key element of what we think of as socialization and social solidarity, and as such has been paid much attention by anthropologists and other scholars including Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille, and Marilyn Strathern. To be social – to be of society – is to know how to share. If the home is a primary site of socialization, it is also the ultimate site for learning about and through sharing.

How a home is shared can instantiate and help reproduce society, as Pierre Bourdieu observed.[18] If to share is to divide something by breaking it down, for example, breaking (re)generates a social whole.

Yet definitions that positively moralize sharing assume that the social is good, or at least whole. What if the social is broken, hostile, or exclusionary, or was never whole in the first place? Are colonized people obliged to share with their colonizers? What if sharing is coerced? What if one shares an object that is not one's own, as Israeli settlers do when they list properties on Airbnb, or an object that substitutes for an absent object, as when Palestinian refugees list homes in refugee camps? Can refusing to share be a moral good?

The term occupied home-sharing helps us think both about how political conditions intervene on Airbnb's much-touted ideal of "sharing" and about Palestine, at multiple scales. It is most obviously helpful for framing the intersection of platform capitalism and military occupation by highlighting the fact that the people who host the listings with which I began this essay are occupied – incarcerated – hosts. Their daily lives are structured by occupation. As the hosts of one listing, "Private, Ensuite Room in Dheisheh-Bethlehem" in Dahaysha refugee camp, explained: "Because we can't travel the world we like to invite the world to our house." Occupied home-sharing helps us foreground that listings are on occupied territory. The term is helpful also for juxtaposing listings in Palestinian cities and on Jewish-only settlements to reveal hosts' uneven positionalities.

Moreover, occupied home-sharing helps us reframe familiar experiences of occupation. Palestinians are forced to "share" their homes with soldiers during military raids. They are forced to "share" their homes with Jewish settlers at gunpoint.[19] During evictions-as-sharing, the home-ness of a home is deconstituted, broken down into component parts (shelter, furniture, memories), some of which can move with the people evicted and some of which cannot. When Israel demolishes Palestinian homes, families are forced to ask to share the homes of neighbors, many of whom are refugees already living in tight quarters because *their* original homes are also occupied. This is coerced sharing; it allows the intrusion of violence into the space of a house.

Settler colonialism can also itself be understood as occupied home-sharing – a gift coerced out of the giver and a territory apportioned and enjoyed jointly but unevenly. Calling it "home-sharing" signals the colonizer's felt entitlement to enjoy shelter, to make home, on the territory, to develop intimacies with and on it and to invite others to do the same, as a kind of proliferation of occupied home-sharing ad infinitum.

The hosts in this essay demonstrate that the different scales of occupied home-sharing are related. Their relationship is productive. As a specific *iteration* of occupied home-sharing, Airbnb is both a result of existing forms of occupied home-sharing and can mitigate them and make worlds within them. The remainder of this essay explores social, affective, and political possibilities that Airbnb opens up and forecloses. It offers a way to think about the fact that there are also listings in Gaza and other occupied territories like Kabul, Baghdad, Kashmir, Mogadishu, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Northern Cyprus, but also in settler cities like Manhattan and Canberra. What

socialities are made possible, and what political logics are furthered, as occupied home-sharing proliferates? To set up preliminary answers to this question, I begin by introducing Palestine's Airbnb hosts.

Who are Palestine's Hosts?

I was provoked to consider the question of context when I first searched for a Ramallah Airbnb in 2014. I typed in "Ramallah" and discovered that Airbnb's algorithms make no distinction between a listing on an Israeli settlement and one in a Palestinian city. Booking thus requires the ability to differentiate Israeli settlement names from Palestinian locales and Israeli from Palestinian hosts, and to recognize and situate local landmarks. You would need to know that being "a two minute walk from Bethlehem University and a five minute walk from the Nativity Square" means that "Bright Shine" listing is in Bethlehem. Further evidence of the platform's poor (or negligent) geolocation system is the fact that when you type "Bethlehem, Palestine," its location is listed as "Ari'el," a settlement that is closer to the northern West Bank Palestinian city of Nablus than it is to the southern city of Bethlehem, whose nearby settlements include Har Homa, Gilo, Efrat, and Beitar Illit,

I decided to learn about the Palestine-based hosts who were managing to offer hospitality under these conditions. I draw on conversations with Munadil, a host in Bethlehem, and from Sarah and Iyad, both hosts in Ramallah. Munadil is a refugee from al-Malha (Jerusalem) who works as a journalist. He has listed an apartment on Airbnb.com for four years. Sarah is an American married to a Palestinian in Ramallah. She has been hosting one of her husband's family apartments on Airbnb since 2012. Iyad is a foreign-educated Palestinian techie who had just begun hosting his sister's apartment when we met.

Only a small number of residents in West Bank Palestinian cities and villages are Airbnb hosts. Compared to nearby locations like Tel Aviv and Beirut, the number of hosts per capita is miniscule. Most have probably not heard of the platform. Those who have may know more about the international campaign critically examining Airbnb's collusion with occupation than about how to use it. Yet, at least before the Israeli military placed West Bank Palestinian cities under total closure following the coronavirus pandemic outbreak, the number of Palestinian Airbnb listings had been growing. In August 2019, AirDNA calculated that Ramallah alone had 124 active rentals. That number marked a steady increase from 2016. Listings have been satisfying guests, with 85 percent receiving at least 4.5 stars out of five. Most are booked at least one and up to ninety days a year (38 percent average occupancy) and make hosts an average of $603 monthly (July 2019).

Palestinian Airbnb hosting seems to be a middle- and upper middle-class practice, and thus it offers a window onto how certain strata are making and experiencing property, home, kin, and technology. This is, first and foremost, because a hosting prerequisite is having extra space: an extra room in one's own home or a property one is not using. It would be nearly impossible, for example, for my friend Mustafa to rent out a room, let alone an apartment, on Airbnb. He grew up and lives in a four-

story building in the densely populated al-Am'ari refugee camp beside al-Bireh where the apartments are inhabited by his parents, his own six-person family, and his two brothers' families, and where he periodically houses his sister and her family when they visit from Germany, and his other sister who has had to escape a family feud in Jerusalem.

Hosts tend to be cosmopolitan. Many have experience living or traveling abroad and most speak English and other foreign languages (such as French or Hebrew). One of my hosts responded to an early message to tell me that she was in Canada (getting a law degree), so her father would give me the key. Her sister had a master's degree in climate change policy from a Spanish university and had prepared the unit's information booklet in perfect English. Yousra, host of Tulkarm's only listing, studied in France for two years and her host profile says that she speaks fluent French and English. Jalal, host of the flashy "Rozana Penthouse" listing in al-Zababda near Jenin, has lived in Paris and Amman. Karam, host of an apartment in Rawabi, Palestine's first planned city, is an academic at the New School in New York. He speaks English, Spanish, and French.

Some have experience as Airbnb guests. Iyad, in Ramallah, had thought to host an Airbnb after staying at a friend's Airbnb in Germany. Yousra had stayed in Airbnbs in Spain and Italy. Leena, a Ramallah host since 2012, had stayed in Airbnbs in Jordan and the United Kingdom. Many have long-term exposure to, and relationships with, foreigners in Palestine. As a journalist in Bethlehem, a major international tourist destination, Munadil has been working with foreigners throughout his career. Jenin's listing is a room in a cultural center that hosts international volunteers. A few hosts, like Sarah in Ramallah, are non-Palestinians. Listings' interior designs also mark hosts as people with resources. Much of the furniture looks expensive. Occasionally it looks like it was purchased outside the West Bank. The "Industrial-style Designer Penthouse" in al-Tira, for instance, features an unmistakably IKEA item: a turquoise RÅSKOG caddy. Even at the relatively low price of $34.99, this IKEA caddy adds cosmopolitan flare in the Palestinian context. The issue here is less the cost of the item than it is physical access to it.

Though elite, Palestine's listings are not professionally managed. Hosting is an amateur practice. Most hosts seem to be property owners or their family members, not property management companies, which have taken over Airbnb management in other places like Athens, Barcelona, and London. The poor lighting and less-than-flattering angles and the presence (in a few cases) of a used toothbrush and fridge magnets suggest nonspecialist photographers for Palestine's listings. These homegrown initiatives are reliant on people who do other things for a living, in this sense living up to Airbnb's original conceit that one does not need training to be a host. Palestinians have had an active tourism industry for centuries. But through Airbnb, people employed as journalists, web developers, engineers, academics, consultants, teachers, cafe owners, aid workers, artists, and lawyers are entering tourism, many for the first time.

Part II examines four different ways in which Palestine's hosts experience

the platform. The conclusion considers what these help us understand about the relationship between Airbnb and precarity in Palestine.

II. Hosting's Socialities

Property as Flexible Infrastructure

Airbnb is what infrastructure studies scholars call "soft" infrastructure, a system of technology services that supports economic and social standards and functions, such as transmission of information. It requires, and also facilitates, use of "hard" infrastructures like buildings, roads, and electrical wires. Through its "soft" and "hard" features, it transforms infrastructures of daily life like housing and property.[20] It intervenes on existing layers of precarity caked onto Palestinian life by dispossession, exile, and debt. It transforms properties into temporary homes, for example, allowing properties to serve multiple purposes simultaneously. It renders properties into what we might think of as "flexible infrastructures" by committing them to be specific kinds of infrastructures under specific conditions.

Roughly 30 percent of Palestinian Airbnb listings are entire homes.[21] Many are homes that people have inherited, bought or built and that were being kept empty, in reserve for future habitation, sale or rent. Munadil, the journalist, grew up in Bethlehem's 'Ayda refugee camp with two brothers, two sisters, and their parents, who were both United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) employees living on modest salaries. By the 1980s, his parents had saved enough money to buy land outside the camp. By 1990, they had saved enough to build a two-story house there, with one ground-floor apartment into which the family moved and two second-floor apartments, which stood empty.

When Munadil married Majd, an engineer, they moved into the larger of the two upstairs apartments, where they continued raising three children. His brother Hani moved into the smaller apartment with his Ukrainian wife a few years later. After four years in the smaller apartment, Hani's wife became pregnant with twins and they decided to move. Munadil and Hani's father died soon thereafter. Munadil inherited the apartment in which he and Majd were living; Hani inherited the apartment that he and his wife had left. Munadil decided to buy Hani's apartment from him as an investment for his own children.

Munadil did not have the money for the purchase, but the idea of securing housing or an investment-in-property for his children was too appealing to pass up, even if it meant straining his finances. For Palestinians, as for populations across the Global South, investing in real estate has long been considered more reliable than other forms of investment, likely made appealing for that purpose by privatization of land. Munadil and Majd already owned a small piece of land in Bethlehem that they could sell to buy Hani's apartment. But Majd argued against selling that land, preferring to

take out a bank loan. "Better that we be in debt to a bank but have the land than to lose the land," she argued. Munadil took out a seven-year loan, selling his car to secure a down payment. Majd pitched in from her savings. Their newly purchased apartment sat empty, furnished (Hani had left the furniture) and ready for a future when the family would need it.

Soon the loan became onerous. Munadil's media company was in the red and his two daughters had started private school. He needed money. But the thought of finding a long-term renter was unappealing. Palestinians often keep homes as reserve properties, or reserve wealth, empty for years. Renting to locals can yield relatively low rents, and rental laws offer tenants strong protections, including by keeping rents down for "rent-controlled" properties at a symbolic amount.

Sarah, a Ramallah host I have known since 2014, lives in a small building her husband owns. The building has a cafe downstairs and three apartments. Sarah, her husband, and her son live in one apartment. They rent out the other apartment (where I stayed) on Airbnb. The third apartment has been rented out to a (now) elderly woman for decades for a very low rent. Not only is it nearly impossible for Sarah and her husband to ask the woman to leave; the tenant can also legally pass the apartment on to her children when she dies. The elderly woman was ill when I recently saw Sarah and her husband. They were stressed that the tenant's son would move in during her last weeks of life to take over tenancy upon her death. The downstairs neighbors of Iyad, another Ramallah host, had been paying fifteen dollars monthly rent for the past thirty years. Before her death, Iyad's aunt had paid five Jordanian dinars (seven dollars) for an apartment on Ramallah's highly valued al-Manara Square for fifty or more years. Better, many owners think, to keep a property empty than to enter a contract one cannot get out of.

At the time that Munadil and Majd sought a solution to their predicament, Airbnb had recently become accessible to Palestinian users. Through the platform, they could rent out for finite, pre-set periods of time and their guests would not count as renters under Palestinian law. They could vary prices depending on the season and capitalize on Bethlehem being a tourist destination. Thus, since 2016, Airbnb has served as an infrastructure buttressing Munadil's family against precarity. The income he and Majd obtain through Airbnb helps secure them financially against the weight of their loan. It allows them to hold onto the additional piece of land they own, which can be liquidated or built upon for their children. And it allows them to invest in the future in a way informed by aspirations for upward mobility. As refugees, their children have the ability to attend UNRWA schools for free. But Munadil and Majd prefer to send their daughters to a private school, a choice made possible by Airbnb. From the money their listing made between April and August of 2018, they were able to pay the private school tuition for both their daughters for the year. Munadil expressed satisfaction at having paid the sum up front, which mitigated the indignity of worrying month to month if he could afford his daughters' education.

Airbnb holds property in reserve for owners in a legal system that gives long-term renters quasi-ownership by creating a new category of unfamiliar-guest-but-not-

regular-renter that can be comfortably assimilated into the workings of an owning family, while also creating a new experience of property as something protected but exploitable. Munadil and Majd had hesitated to bring what Munadil called a "stranger" (*hada gharib*) into the house through long-term rental. They preferred for the house to "stay with us" (*idall ma'na*). These phrases expressed that ownership is undermined when one's property becomes another's home. Ownership in this context is less the ability to extract value (through rent or sale) than it is the ability to change use of the property at will.

In Ramallah, Iyad began hosting when he failed to find ideal long-term renters for his sister's apartment. She had financial pressures that she needed to alleviate. She was working in the United Arab Emirates and had taken out a mortgage to buy the place as an investment. She was looking for someone who would only want a one-year or eighteen-month contract. That would keep the apartment open for use in an uncertain future. Iyad paraphrased his sister's concern: "Maybe I'll be back." She had to consider the question of her return as well as the fact that the timing of return was uncertain. A foreign renter would be ideal as foreigners leave. Second best would be a young Palestinian family trying to buy their own place elsewhere. Single, male, or older Palestinians were a no-go. They might want to stay indefinitely. Iyad convinced her that putting the apartment on Airbnb would "stop the bleeding" (that is, her economic woes). She agreed and they decided the nightly rate—forty dollars. With a hopefully high monthly occupancy rate, that could cover the loan amount plus a small margin. Iyad was also trying to convince his retired parents to list their place.

A small dive into the stories of Palestine's hosts reveals that occupation, exile, and dispossession are at the core of many of the experiences of precarity that Airbnb helps mitigate. The mother of one of my hosts in Ramallah was a political prisoner in Israel who has been serving rounds of administrative detention for years. Renting the family apartment on Airbnb offset some of the expenses – lawyers, prison fees, loss of income – associated with her long-term incarceration. Though not all the forms of "bleeding" Airbnb helps stop are so obviously political, they still reflect the particular difficulties that Palestinians face. Munadil and his parents had to build wealth in land through debt because, as refugees, they had begun with little. Iyad's sister did not know if and when she was going to return to her apartment in Palestine because, given Palestinians' history of being expelled from the Gulf, she could not be sure how long the UAE would be hospitable toward her. She also could not imagine if and when conditions in Palestine improve enough economically that she could live there and help Iyad take care of their parents.

Airbnb creates the material conditions for spontaneous care of others – a need for care made especially acute for displaced populations. The fact that the two upstairs apartments had been empty when Munadil and Hani got married in Bethlehem had enabled them to live rent-free. When their father died one of Munadil's sisters, who enjoys a high salary in Canada, gave up her share of the father's house. Munadil insisted that the house would always be "hers" as well – she was always welcome. When Majd suggested putting the smaller apartment on Airbnb, Majd argued that

foreigners, whom Munadil and Majd anticipated they would draw, were lighter (*akhaf*) and easier (*ahwan*) to host than local, long-term renters. Foreigners' imprint on the use value of the property could be limited and controlled, thus allowing the space to remain available for Munadil's sister whenever necessary. My own experience trying to book Airbnbs in Ramallah supports the idea that hosts in Palestine value being able to use their properties whenever they need them, for example for a relative visiting from abroad. After issuing "request to book" queries I received several host replies stating that booking was not possible even though my dates had appeared available on Airbnb's calendar. Hosts explained that they were going to be using (or lending out) the apartment, off-platform, during my dates.

Yet practices of belonging to emplaced community and those of belonging to the "global" community Airbnb thinks of itself as promoting sometimes conflicted. Using Airbnb to secure flexibility of property use had its drawbacks. Sarah in Ramallah began our conversation with a story about being "punished" by Airbnb because she had canceled a reservation. Her brother-in-law had decided to visit, and his dates overlapped two days with a booked Airbnb guest. "What do you do?" she asked as if the answer were obvious. But I could tell that she faced what she saw as a dilemma. She had invested years into hosting well and receiving great reviews. She had become a "superhost" on the platform, which meant that her listing was featured prominently on the site and could garner higher prices. She was supporting the cafe she and her husband ran downstairs and was making enough money to be able to fly back to the United States to visit her family with some regularity. Yet in the context of the family into which she had married, it was unfathomable that she would reject her brother-in-law's (off-platform) request to stay in the apartment. Sarah was a host, not the property owner. She did not set the priorities for the space. Those priorities, it turned out, valued hosting family over making profit or maintaining good standing on the platform. She asked the Airbnb guest if she could change his dates or if she could put him up in a hotel for the first two nights. He became angry and complained to company representatives. In response, Airbnb blocked Sarah's listing from being rented for the dates she had canceled. After Sarah canceled the guest booking to host her brother-in-law, Airbnb removed her "superhost" status and placed a public statement on her page that she had canceled on a guest, damaging her credibility on the platform and her chances of securing future bookings.

Gifts, Family, Community

In adding to the social and semiotic flexibility of Palestinian property in housing, Airbnb also proliferates the possibilities for new social relations. It does so first because hosting is often a family affair, extending historical Palestinian practices combining business and family, and business and homes.[22] Munadil and Majd's Bethlehem listing is booked about twenty days per month, mainly by Europeans, North Americans, and Russian-speakers. Guests stay between a day and about a week, though one had recently stayed for fifty days. Munadil and Majd clean the apartment

themselves. They spend between ten and fifteen hours per week on hosting, often also enlisting Munadil's brother Hani (who studied in Russia) to help them coordinate with the many Russian-speaking guests who come to visit Bethlehem's holy sites. Before guests arrive and while they are in Bethlehem, Munadil, Hani, and Majd make themselves available for guests' questions on email, phone, and Facebook, along with the free texting and phoning applications Viber and Whatsapp.

Airbnb consolidates the status of the Palestinian home as a kind of public space, challenging the idea of intimacy as something contained within the walls of a house, where the public begins outside the threshold.[23] Palestinian thinkers are increasingly exploring the power of hospitality as public, political praxis. Architect Sandi Hilal, for instance, has a project on what she calls "refugee hosting," which turns a staged refugee's living room (*al-madhafa*) into a space where refugees host non-refugees in Sweden in spaces provided by the project. Refugees exercise what Hilal calls "their right to be a host" as a political act subverting exile. The project proposes that hosting itself is a form of temporal, spatial, and narrative ownership that does not require title to property: refugees "no longer feel themselves passive guests in the new destination but *owners* of their own present and story."[24] Hilal's framing helps us understand Sarah's sense of ownership accrued through years of hosting her husband's apartment in Ramallah, and her dismay when her husband's family compelled her to cancel a booking in favor of hosting her brother-in-law. The Palestine Hosting Society (PHS) is a live art project of traveling, pop-up meal events (for example, "Family Dinners," "Our Nablus Table") for forty to sixty guests at a time.[25] PHS dinners reverse hosting's mobility rules by *traveling to guests* to bring them flavors and stories of Palestinian dishes under threat of disappearance. PHS's philosophy shares Hilal's idea that "hosting is power" both because it brings visibility and because it asserts a dispossessed or threatened person's agency, in some sense performing a reversal of the vulnerability of being a guest/refugee. We can think of hosting by Munadil and Majd in Bethlehem, refugees hosting foreigners with more mobility and resources than they possess, as refugee hosting in these terms. Forced – occupied – home-sharing seems to be reversed.

Airbnb hosting is like a nesting doll of more hosting. The fact that Palestinian hosts open their properties to foreigners through an online platform might be all the more subversive because it creates daily opportunities for them to decide to give (or to withhold) gifts of various kinds. When guests arrive, for instance, Munadil picks them up from Bethlehem's main checkpoint or from the bus stop from Jerusalem. Munadil takes guests on a short tour of the city before bringing them to the apartment and showing them how things work. Check-in includes offering guests free water, fruit, and a home-cooked dish. He offers advice about sightseeing in Bethlehem, Hebron, and Jericho. If a guest stays for multiple days, Munadil and Majd invite them over for a meal or tea.

Munadil also offers guests tours that highlight the ongoing Nakba, the term meaning "catastrophe" that Palestinians use to describe their mass displacement at the hands of Zionist militias in 1948, and continuing occupation. Tours last two and a half to three

hours. He takes guests to 'Ayda camp, the Wall, the Church of the Nativity, the Old City, Bethlehem's market, and nearby al-Walajah village. He discusses refugee and water issues. He thinks of tours as part of what he calls "political" or "community" tourism. He charges twenty-five to thirty dollars per hour. That he charges fits with Airbnb's logic that everything can be commodified – it becomes an "experience" to be sold on the market. Airbnb encourages commodifications of many kinds, turning homes into spaces with "amenities" and hosts into "providers" offering a menu of services.

Yet a host can also decide what is worthy of, or necessitates, commodification, and when. Munadil only ends up accepting money for tours about 20 percent of the time. In 80 percent of the cases, he told me, he "cannot" take money. He explained that guests "enter the heart" (*budkhulu lal-qalb*). It would feel wrong to charge them. The customer–provider relationship breaks down when a different relationship, or its possibility, appears. Something about Munadil as businessman – which a friend who knows him well affirmed is one of his strongest, most long-standing identities – softens. The phrase "enter the heart" suggests an opening. Munadil becomes porous, susceptible to guests. What he thinks causes them to enter the heart is their interest (*ihtimam*) not in him personally but in the Palestinian struggle. There is a long-standing tradition of foreigners traveling to Palestine to convey or perform solidarity with Palestinians under occupation, a tradition sometimes more cynically referred to as "occupation tourism."[26] Given Bethlehem's highly developed hotel industry and connection to organized international religious tours, many Airbnb guests in Bethlehem are likely those who are already familiar with Palestine and are therefore less fearful about staying in independent apartments. This might account for the high percentage of guests who are able to "enter" Munadil's "heart," undermining the possibility of becoming targets of economic extraction. Or perhaps the currency with which Munadil is paid for tours is *ihtimam* itself, such that to take money would be to charge guests twice. Either way, what we see here is that Airbnb users' moral and affective sensibilities set limits to Airbnb's commodifications.

In Munadil's hesitation we also see that an important feature of Palestinian hosting is that it creates opportunities for the assertion of connection-beyond-commodification, of community forged on alternative terms. Commodification of the home by Airbnb thus offers avenues for commodification's opposite. Sometimes assertions are made through refusal to commodify otherwise commodifiable relations. Sometimes they suture hosts to guests. And at other times hosts assert their belonging and commitment to communities in their midst rather than to Airbnb's "global community." One more mode of assertion works through refusal to host inappropriate guests, to which I turn in the following section.

Rejections

A constitutive power embedded in hospitality is the power to reject, as the Derrida quote that opens this essay proposes. Each host I spoke with had rejected or canceled

at least one booking. Someone had requested to book Munadil's apartment in Bethlehem for a few days. Majd, who managed online communications, accepted the request and sent directions to the apartment. On his way through Bethlehem's checkpoint, the guest called Munadil, whose phone number was listed on the site, to confirm his check-in time. Munadil detected an accent and realized that the guest was Israeli. The guest confirmed this, but said he had another passport. Munadil told him to turn back. "If you come here, I can't protect you," he said. "And I can't have my community wondering who you are and giving me a hard time." Munadil canceled the reservation. "To be honest," he told me, "I wasn't comfortable with an Israeli coming to the apartment. What was he going to be doing there?"

In rejecting this Israeli guest, Munadil asserted a kind of host sovereignty, if briefly and uncomfortably. Airbnb offered a rare chance for an incarcerated, colonized host to constrain the colonizer's freedom of movement, both to reverse roles and to reverse flows of Israelis that have been entering Palestinian spaces, including as tourists, for as long as the state of Israel has existed.[27] This represented a reversal of the way that hospitality can *test* sovereignty, as Andrew Shryock has shown with his work among the Balga Bedouin in Jordan. Shryock shows that the extent to which a host is able to provide shelter, food, and protection indexes the host's sovereign ability to muster and wield resources toward the creation and management of a household.[28] For the Balga Bedouin, sovereignty is manifest in giving and generosity. Airbnb hosts in Palestine may exercise this form of sovereignty as well, for example by offering guests home-cooked meals free of charge, as Munadil, Majd, and Sarah often do. But whatever protection hosts may offer – for example from the weather or from the public gaze – is upended by their guests' exposure to the Israeli military. The latter form of exposure is all the greater in a Palestinian home that could be the target of an army raid at any time of day or night, as a Palestinian Airbnb would be. Yet in rare moments like the one Munadil had on the phone with his Israeli guest-to-be, Palestine's Airbnb hosts can exercise an additional form of sovereignty by making an Israeli guest who expects to feel welcome, feel *un*welcome. This is sovereignty because the gift could be given but is withheld.

Palestine's Airbnb hosts are able to wield this symbolic form of sovereignty because Airbnb can function extraterritorially. Munadil rejected his guest under Airbnb's protection. If the guest were to have turned out to be an aspiring settler and had forced his way into Munadil's house – a practice Israel might have backed with force, as it systematically does[29] – that would have been poor guest behavior from Airbnb's perspective. At the very least, Munadil would have been able to leave the guest a negative review.

It may be humorous and even grotesque to juxtapose Israeli state force with a bad review on Airbnb. But a structural point about the company's ability to mediate between Palestinian host and Israeli guest stands. Through Airbnb's mediation a refugee and colonized subject denied access to his land (Munadil cannot travel to al-Malha where he is from, only thirty minutes away) established a physical boundary with his colonizer, deciding who could enter his property and under what conditions.

Munadil's cancellation of the Israeli's booking was also an assertion of belonging to a community of neighbors and to Palestine more broadly. It upheld the norm that views an Israeli Jew in a Palestinian city as a likely threat, as well as the norm that considers socializing with an Israeli Jew potential evidence of collaboration with Israel's security services against other Palestinians. Munadil weighed his options and decided that acceptance by his community, and protection of his home, were more important than his status on a platform – a status that was compromised by his cancellation, as I discuss below.

Iyad's sister in the Gulf also found herself weighing community against Airbnb hospitality. She received a booking request for her apartment in Ramallah from a Palestinian man in Jordan. Excited that someone wanted the place, she accepted. But after a few days she revoked it. She was not sure, Iyad told me, seeming to understand her dilemma. His sister's requester was a single man from Jordan seeking to stay for three days. What would he be doing? Her friends lived in the building. What would they say? The thought implied that a lone Palestinian man might have sinister intentions. He might bring unmarried women over, for example. When Iyad himself had been looking to rent a place long-term in Ramallah, he recalled facing similar hesitation from landlords. To overcome the constant rejections, he had ended up speaking only English and claimed that he was not Palestinian.

The use of Airbnb to circumvent social norms has become a large enough issue that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is now also addressing it. The tourism ministry has been investigating who owns and manages Palestinian Airbnbs and how many there are because, as Munadil put it, the PA is concerned about people "who have relationships" using the properties. By this he meant extramarital sexual relationships. As in other instances – like closing Beit Aneeseh restaurant in Ramallah, a favorite among expats and artists, following rumors that it was operating as a brothel (and for illegal drug trade) – the PA sought to adjudicate cultural mores around where and how people congregate.

Similar concerns about societal norms precipitated a bind that Sarah recently faced in relation to her Ramallah listing. An American woman booked the apartment for two weeks. Upon arrival, she informed Sarah that her West Bank Palestinian boyfriend would be staying with her. Sarah told her that she would not be able to do that and argued that because Palestinian law forbids Palestinian hotels to allow Palestinians to stay as unmarried couples, and Airbnbs were essentially hotels, the same was illegal in an Airbnb. The American woman, whose credit card had been charged by Airbnb for the full two weeks as soon as she had checked in (one of Airbnb's automatic features), was irate. She argued that Airbnbs are not hotels. That was the whole point.

Hosting the couple would besmirch Sarah's local reputation. She worried that the neighbors would see the couple coming in and out of the apartment. She called the neighbors "nosy, gossiping women" and noted that the man was from a refugee camp. The class optics were especially tricky. The apartment was just upstairs from her own family. The entrance was not private; guests entered from the street. The bedroom window faced neighbors and a refugee camp. The American woman left, canceling

the reservation. Sarah's refusal to host the couple echoed her cancellation of the other guest's booking to allow her brother-in-law to stay in the apartment. Both rejections allowed her to assert morally appropriate belonging to her husband's family and to the neighborhood. When an Israeli Jerusalem host rejected a booking by my friend Kristen, her prospective host made a similar assertion of community belonging, in this case along political lines. Kristen's Airbnb profile picture featured the Palestinian and Mexican flags together as a symbol of solidarity. The host denied her booking, explaining that Kristen's profile picture had made him "uncomfortable."

Yet these assertions of community come at a price. Airbnb metes out consequences for rejection. The platform's universal idea of community ("belong anywhere") can chafe against the actual communities to which platform users (not to mention critics) belong. Munadil lost his "superhost" status by canceling the reservation of his Israeli booker. After canceling, Sarah's American almost-guest requested a refund from Airbnb. A few days later, Airbnb representatives deducted the two weeks' rent – plus the cleaning fee – from Sarah's credit card, which she had had to connect to her account in order to become a host. Sarah seemed indignant as we discussed it over tea. She felt that Airbnb had willfully ignored Palestine's legal regime and social mores. She felt betrayed by the platform, which has a reputation as one that often rules in favor of hosts. Sarah was also an American dealing with an American company. This might be why her sense of indignation at not receiving good customer service was so much greater than Munadil's, which, if present, was undetectable.

Exclusions

Occupied Palestinians' Airbnb experiences are shot through with disadvantages, risks, and exclusions that can also compound those Palestinians face as a result of occupation. Platform use exposes hosts to potentially dangerous physical, social, and political encounters. These stem from the mixing of Airbnb's properties as a technology and financial instrument with Palestine's structural inequalities. It is likely that there are fewer Palestinian listings than there are Israeli listings, for example, not only because Israel is squeezing Palestinians onto less and less territory, sending Palestinian real estate prices skyrocketing and people into denser living conditions, but also because of Israel's longstanding campaign to discourage tourism to Palestinian areas.

It is, moreover, likely due to the uncertainties that accompany being an occupied host that Palestinian listings have flexible cancellation policies at a higher rate than listings in almost any other location for which AirDNA collects data. A flexible cancellation policy means that a guest canceling at least twenty-four hours before check-in receives a full refund. Cancellation less than twenty-four hours before check-in results in a charge for only the first night's stay, and cancellation after check-in gives guests a refund for any unused nights they had booked. A host is left little time to find a replacement guest, and thus a flexible cancellation policy can mean a host loses even more money. Compare Ramallah's 77 percent flexible cancellation policies to New York (27 percent), Madrid (33 percent), Berlin (37 percent), Rio (39 percent),

Tel Aviv (43 percent), Beirut (47 percent), New Delhi (58 percent), and Istanbul (60 percent), for example. Only Sindh, in Pakistan, and Caracas, Venezuela, have higher percentages of flexible cancellation policies, at 86 and 87 percent, respectively.

Airbnb is also premised on a sense of stranger sociability that may not be achievable in Palestine – or perhaps in other occupied contexts. Israeli hosts on settlements cannot have Palestinian guests. Palestinian hosts have to worry about accidentally welcoming their colonizers into their homes. They have to worry about their reputations being sullied by the use of their properties for activities their communities find inappropriate partly because of how limited mobility is for those communities. If they had fewer restrictions on mobility, unmarried Palestinian couples might pursue privacy further afield, for example across the Green Line where fewer people know them and where being married is not a criterion for booking a hotel.

Airbnb disorients and disappoints Palestine's hosts. Hosts expect that if they can list a unit, they can become users like anyone else in the world, receiving tailored customer service from the platform. Yet there are many examples of Airbnb behaving as if ignorant of where it has landed. A West Bank Palestinian host named Mousa wrote the following message on an Airbnb community message board in 2016: "We are a Palestinan [*sic*] family and with the assitance [*sic*] of our Israeli freind [*sic*] we try to open an account of Airbnb. The problem is that we cannot approve our location. We live in a small village but even when we try to put the name of the big city near us (Qalqiliya) it is not possible to set our location." Airbnb's algorithms failed to recognize the major West Bank city of Qalqiliya, presumably insisting on listing the unit as being located in Israel. But Mousa was equally frustrated that "the people from Airbnb are not responsive." Airbnb, which was meant to oversee this arrangement, offered no contact for redress. When Sarah first listed the family's Ramallah apartment, Airbnb offered to send her a photographer to shoot the space. But it hired a Jewish Israeli photographer, not accounting for the fact that Israel has effectively prohibited Jewish Israeli civilians from entering Palestinian cities (except Hebron) since the mid-1990s. The photographer never showed up and the company did not think to hire a Palestinian professional photographer instead.

One of the most obvious ways in which Munadil felt Airbnb overlooked his circumstances in Bethlehem involved the method of payment. To open an Airbnb account one needs a way to pay and receive payments through the platform. Credit cards and PayPal are the most commonly used methods. But most West Bank Palestinians lack credit cards and Palestinian banks have had difficulty establishing them. The Bank of Palestine, for example, had to first convince Visa and Mastercard that Palestine is a place worthy of its own country codes.[30] It does not help that Palestinians lack their own currency and the post-Oslo arrangement prevents them from having an independent central bank and creating money. Many businesses do not accept cards, likely a demotivating factor for locally-based Palestinians to obtain cards. Some are discouraged by the banking sector's suspicious stance toward Palestinians. Iyad, in Ramallah, was irritated that even a simple bank transfer from a Palestinian bank to another bank was onerous. "The clerk asks why you're doing the

transfer," he said, implying the bank's suspicion about his political motivations: "It's like an interrogation." Israel denies many Palestinians legal West Bank residence. An estimated fifty thousand cannot apply for a credit card because they lack identification. And a few, like Iyad, prefer to live without credit cards for ideological reasons. PayPal, meanwhile, which operates in 203 countries worldwide and on Israeli settlements, has refused to serve people with West Bank Palestinian bank accounts.

Until recently Munadil thus had to mobilize international networks to keep an Airbnb account. A friend's uncle in France was allowing Munadil to use his PayPal account. Once the uncle would receive the money from Airbnb, he would wire it to Munadil's friend in the West Bank. The friend would then wire it into Munadil's bank account. This system cost Munadil extra. Paypal was charging 5 percent for the initial transaction when a guest would pay for a reservation. PayPal charged another 5 percent for wiring the money to Munadil's friend. That was on top of the 3 percent commission Airbnb keeps from all hosts for each booking. (In August 2018, Airbnb rolled out an Airbnb debit card and Munadil cut the middlemen out of his transactions.) It is in this sense that Airbnb offers reversals of Palestinians' legal subject positions, for example by facilitating the power to host and the sovereignty to reject, and while Munadil's leveraging of transnational social networks also embedded him in those networks-as-community. Yet Airbnb simultaneously obstructs Palestinians' direct access to the platform by assuming that its users enjoy the privilege of citizenship in democratic states.

Conclusion

Airbnb in Palestine may tell us something about the relationship between precarity and platform capitalism. Airbnb often generates precarity, but not always or not only. Airbnb can help people who are already precarious for other reasons leverage the precarity that Airbnb generates to become less precarious.[31] It allows them to access and to create pockets of certainty; for instance the certainty of being able to spontaneously care for others (Airbnb guests or family members) by hosting them and the certainty that a property can be restored for changed use to its owners at any time. It offers a way to "lightly" use a property while waiting for a relative to return from abroad, a child to marry, a wife to be released from prison – even a state to be established. It alleviates the waiting manifest in an empty apartment. Giving up one's time through the labor-intensive process of hosting strangers nightly allows one to keep a property available, and "closer," longer. Labor time is exchanged for property time.

However, the socioeconomic position of most of Palestine's hosts suggest that relief from precarity is mainly available to the least precarious. It is an elite tool that contributes to society's further stratification. And Airbnb hosting is itself precarious work. It lacks benefits or stability, as became painfully clear when the coronavirus pandemic hit in the spring of 2020. It is based on the whims of the market, on obtaining

good reviews by pleasing customers, and on the presence of foreigners in Palestine. Hosts have an income only as long as researchers, aid workers, and occupation tourists travel to Palestine and, as always, as long as Israel allows them to do so.

Hosts have an income only as long as Israel allows religious tourists to access holy sites unregulated by Israeli-sponsored tour guides and only for as long as they can successfully cram work that requires twenty-four hour attention into already exhausting, low-paid workdays. One of Munadil's Bethlehem guests had said that she would arrive at 11 pm. She did not. She eventually called to say she would arrive at 1 am. Had she been interrogated at the airport? Had she stopped to eat? She did not say. Munadil could not ask. He felt it would be rude – the kind of rude that gets you a bad review. "We always want five stars," he told me. He was affectively as well as financially attached to the evaluative system of the platform. The couple had to rise at 6 am to get the girls off to school and themselves to work. Munadil told Majd to go sleep. He would stay up. But sleep overtook him. He did not hear the phone around 2 am when the guest finally arrived. She left, leaving a scathing review on Munadil's page. He and Majd lost their superhost status again. Majd had to work doubly hard with subsequent guests to reinstate it.

The host stories in this essay also reveal limits to the chromatography analogy, or ways in which it can be complicated. As much as Airbnb reveals, it also conceals. Palestinians host despite the many challenges they face doing so *as Palestinians*. For good hosting can require deemphasizing challenges in favor of offering guests, not all of whom are there to experience occupation, the experience of being on vacation – of escape. Airbnb also hides histories of dispossession, for example, when it renders settlement and Palestinian listings commensurate.[32] This is the dark flipside of Sandi Hilal's idea that hosting is power. Hosting does not require ownership, or a just pathway to ownership, to be powerful. And it can override the very question of property ownership (and its history) by letting a host own her "own present and story" instead. Hosting does not differentiate between just and unjust stories. It can enhance the credibility of a settler-host's story as much as it can enhance that of a refugee-host in a Palestinian camp.

Finally, it is not enough to think of the chromatography analogy as if there are hundreds of Airbnb strips, each "dipped" into its own separate glass of solution (or country). Better to think of the glasses being connected by a system of open tubes. Solution spills and sloshes from the one to the other. Or, better yet, we can think of the glass as one large one, encapsulating the many spaces in which Airbnb operates. This is how we can begin to understand the fact that, while some Israelis are listing West Bank settlement properties on Airbnb, contributing to settlements' rising real estate prices, high settlement prices are driving other Israeli investors to investment opportunities outside Israel/Palestine. The preferred investment destination for many is currently Greece, where a decade of austerity has pushed Greeks to sell their properties to foreign investors, many of whom – Israelis especially – are buying properties to list them on Airbnb.

Endnotes

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2 "As a Rare Profitable Unicorn, Airbnb Appears To Be Worth at Least $38 Billion," *Forbes*, 11 May 2018, online at (forbes.com) bit.ly/3ji2AhR (accessed 27 August 2020).

3 Julie Lasky, "Airbnb and Ikea Should Just Go Ahead and Merge, Already!" *Travel and Leisure*, 7 October 2015, online at www.travelandleisure.com/articles/Airbnb-IKEA-merger (accessed 31 March 2020). However, IKEA has also become a brand to avoid for those competing for uniqueness in oversaturated Airbnb markets – as I discovered while researching Airbnb in Athens for the larger project of which this essay is a part, and as websites, management companies, and television shows devoted to turning homes into lucrative short-term rentals insist.

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Ordinary Lives

A Small-town Middle Class at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Lisa Taraki

Abstract

This essay explores the emergence of a middle class in a small town in the Palestinian highlands at the turn of the twentieth century, a class that was of a different order and character than that developing in the cities. The article traces the emergence of an embryonic middle class in the town of Ramallah at the turn of the twentieth century in several factors that came together at particular moments, one reinforcing the other. A confluence of forces, namely engagement with missionary institutions through education; involvement in the pilgrim trade; and emigration to the United States produced a social world that was largely parochial. Paradoxically but not surprisingly, the diasporic experience, instead of leaving cosmopolitan effects, nurtured a certain parochialism.

The research for this essay is based in large part on family and individual life histories pieced together from diverse sources including interviews and local histories and genealogies, both published and unpublished; papers in the Ramallah Municipality archive; diaries and memoirs (published and unpublished) by Palestinians, British colonial administrators, and European and American travelers and missionaries passing through Ramallah at different periods; photographs of people and places; architectural records; and newspaper advertisements and articles, among other sources.

By focusing on a peripheral and marginal town at a critical historical juncture, the essay hopes to contribute to the writing of a fuller and more inclusive social history of urban transformations in Palestine. The essay is part of a larger project by the author on the social history of Ramallah.

Keywords

Urban social history; middle class lives; small towns; middle class.

Recent scholarship on the Palestinian urban middle class at the turn of the twentieth century and particularly during the British Mandate has celebrated the cosmopolitanism, hybridity, and modernity of the coastal cities and Jerusalem, recording the emergence of modern classes, institutions, spaces, and dispositions and sensibilities. In the past two decades or so, writings on late Ottoman and Mandate Palestine have focused on modern spaces, modern personas, and modern lifestyles. These works, based on diaries, memoirs, personal papers, photographs, and other kinds of primary sources, have contributed a great deal to illuminating the lives and times of the Palestinian bourgeois and middle classes.[1]

The loss of Palestine's coastal cities and the Palestinian suburbs of Jerusalem after the Nakba is a recurring theme in the literature on urban Palestine; the parochialism and conservatism of the central highland towns has been juxtaposed against the cosmopolitanism of Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem in the pre-1948 period. Salim Tamari has noted the suspicion with which the smallholding highland peasantry viewed the "alien" culture of the coastal cities; they were suspicious of urban-based elites, as well as of the secular culture of the "decadent metropole."[2]

This essay concerns itself with Ramallah, one of those small highland towns, and explores the emergence of a peasantry-turned-middle class (very similar to the petit-bourgeoisie of smaller towns in the larger region) that was of a different order and character than that in the cities. The social history of small inland towns in late Ottoman Palestine has yet to be written in full, even though we have local histories written by native sons and a few daughters, as well as a few scholarly studies.[3]

Context-specific yet contextualized social histories of towns are an opportunity for assessing broad generalizations about the process of urban transformation in Palestine as a whole and for uncovering unique economic, social, and political dynamics that governed each town's history, including interaction with the Zionist colonial project. Some of the smaller towns in Palestine provide an opportunity to observe urban growth as a process that characterized not only the major cities but also locations on the periphery usually not considered important in the urbanizing process. It is hoped that this profile of a peripheral and marginal town at a critical historic juncture can contribute to the writing of a fuller and more inclusive social history of urban transformation in Palestine.

Ramallah, in the central highlands of Palestine, entered the twentieth century as a small predominantly Christian town with an economy still dominated by olive, fig, and grape cultivation, but also home to craftspeople engaged in the production of domestic commodities and working as builders, stonemasons, potters, and weavers. One hundred years later, it has sprung to prominence as the seat of the Palestinian Authority, displaying many of the attributes of contemporary cities, albeit in miniature. Ramallah has become the new urban center for Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory. A new middle class and its lifestyle have become the defining features of the town today and the subject of much scholarly and public discussion.

This development is new, however. Ramallah's rise to prominence is a product of more recent developments, primarily the designation of Ramallah as the seat of the

Palestinian Authority in the West Bank since the early 1990s, followed by waves of migration from other parts of the West Bank, and the relocation to the city of many Palestinian and international institutions.

For much of its history in the past one hundred years, Ramallah was a small town with a small-town ambience and sensibilities. In the smaller towns like Ramallah at the turn of the century, the embryonic middle class was of a different nature than the new upper and middle classes of Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem. Their members lived a largely parochial existence, and had a less grandiose and self-aware sense of their mission and place in society. They were not public intellectuals who aspired to such a role, nor were they individuals of great educational or professional achievement or ambition. They constituted a diverse second-tier social group that included middling to well-to-do farmers, merchants and small traders, landowners, some professionals, and a range of functionaries with daily contact with churches, the government and its agencies, and a variety of other institutions of the Ottoman state and later the British Mandate bureaucracy. Some were émigrés who would return home from time to time. Only a few members can be said to be of the same pedigree as the Mandate-era privileged "men of capital" and "women of thrift" Sherene Seikaly has written about.[4] Neither were they part of the *nouveaux riches* produced by emigration, individuals "deeply enmeshed in the very process of bourgeois cultural production," as described by Jacob Norris, writing about Bethlehem.[5] Further yet, the majority were not part of the cultural and political elite that has been celebrated in several works; they had little affinity with public intellectuals and reformers like Khalil Sakakini, Najib Nassar, Bulus Shehadeh (himself a son of Ramallah), 'Isa al-'Isa, and others at the turn of the century.

What poses a challenge to capturing a sense of the lives and livelihoods of the nascent middle class of turn-of-the-century Ramallah is that the vast majority of these individuals did not leave behind memoirs or personal papers. This research is based in large part on family and individual life histories pieced together from diverse sources including interviews, local histories, newspapers, and genealogies, both published and unpublished. I was also fortunate to have access to the Ramallah Municipality archive, where various kinds of documents from the period 1912 until the 1930s were consulted. Not surprisingly, among the most valuable published sources are Naseeb Shaheen's two-volume work consisting of photographs and commentary, *A Pictorial History of Ramallah*, which provides a window into livelihoods and sensibilities in turn-of-the century Ramallah.[6] I have also drawn upon an assemblage of other sources consisting of diaries, autobiographies, and memoirs (published and unpublished) by Palestinians, British colonial administrators, and European and American travelers and missionaries passing through Ramallah at different periods; photographs of people and places; architectural records; and newspaper advertisements and articles, among other sources.

The emergence of an embryonic middle class in Ramallah at the turn of the twentieth century can be located in several factors that came together at particular moments, one reinforcing the other. A confluence of forces – namely engagement with missionary

institutions through education; involvement in the pilgrim trade – and emigration to the United States produced a social world that was largely parochial. Paradoxically but not surprisingly, the diasporic experience, instead of leaving cosmopolitan effects, nurtured a certain parochialism. For the majority of the early emigrants, the ambition was to contribute to their families back home and raise their own families that worked together to make a decent living. The acquisition of land, whether for building homes or for expanding their agricultural holdings in the homeland was a paramount preoccupation both for the families that stayed behind and for those who lived in the United States. It is indeed remarkable how the early émigrés endured the hardship of travel by sea, often returning to Ramallah several times, with great resolve and tenacity. They had little involvement in public causes, whether in the United States or in Palestine, that not being relevant to the world that they inhabited.

I begin with a very brief overview of the modalities and material origins of social differentiation in this rather small peasant community in the closing days of Ottoman rule.

The considerable literature on transformations in the political economy of Palestine has established that by the middle of the nineteenth century, Palestine's peasants, artisans, merchants and the social and political elite were being increasingly brought into the expanding capitalist economic transformations of the region. The land reforms introduced by the Ottomans after the middle of the nineteenth century ushered in the creation of large landed properties due to peasants' inability or reluctance to claim title to the land that they worked. Local rural potentates (shaykhs), urban notables, and the emerging commercial bourgeoisie of the coastal towns and Jerusalem acquired agricultural land either by purchase or because of peasant indebtedness.[7]

In Jabal al-Quds, (the region which included Ramallah) rural shaykhs had ruled the different subdistricts or *nahiyas* before the Ottoman reforms. Ramallah was part of the network of villages ruled by the *mashyakha* of Bani Harith al-Shamaliyya, with its seat in the "throne village" of Ibn Samhan, later known as Ras Karkar.[8] During the late Ottoman period, most of Ramallah's dealings in matters of payment of taxes and adjudication of disputes were carried out with the Ibn Samhan shaykhs. For most of the nineteenth century, the land cultivated by the people of Ramallah was included in the vast *waqf* lands of Jabal al-Quds attached to the al-Haram al-Ibrahimi in Hebron.[9] Other villages in the Jabal al-Quds area, such as Bethlehem and Bayt Jala, were also part of this same waqf holding.

The *hama'il* (kinship groups; s,. *hamula*) of Ramallah, except for one, the Shaqara, were affiliated to the Qays faction. Local histories of Ramallah show that its political leadership and the village as a whole were active participants in the Qays-Yaman struggles that often ensued, and were involved in several conflicts and power struggles between the two factions over the course of the nineteenth century. In fact, another Christian village in the vicinity, Bir Zayt, was likewise an active participant in the factional struggles; Musa bin Nasir, in his local history of his village, provides vivid recollections of the Qays-Yaman conflict involving several villages in the area, including Ramallah.[10]

Figure 1. "Northern views. Ramallah," 1900 [to approximately 1920], G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection, American Colony, Photo Department: Library of Congress, Washington DC, online at www.loc.gov/item/2019702574/ (accessed 23 August 2020).

The Qays-Yaman factional coalitions that were mobilized in inter-village conflicts among rival shaykhdoms and their clients in the nineteenth century did not appear to have any notable material effects in terms of the emerging class stratification of later decades; in the Ramallah region, the Qays factions were headed by the powerful Ibn Samhan shaykhs in Ras Karkar. The Shaqara *hamula*'s Yaman "patrons" were the Abu Ghosh shaykhs based in the village of 'Anab (Abu Ghosh today) in the Jerusalem area. It has been noted in one of the local histories that Qays families who purchased land outside Ramallah did so from Qaysi villages such as al-Bireh and Surda, while the lone Yamani hamula bought land in nearby Yamani villages such as Baytunya and 'AynQinya.[11]

The Greek Orthodox church was prominently present in local politics and in the life of the community in general; in times of strife and struggle with other villages and within the town itself, church officials and the patriarch in Jerusalem often played an intermediary role with the Ottoman authorities in Jerusalem, and with the shaykhs of other villages and nahiyas.[12] It should also be noted that the Jerusalem Patriarchate routinely received petitions from individuals and groups in Ramallah to intervene in a variety of matters, ranging from the quality of education, to the moral character of local priests, to disputes about money and land, assessment of *'ushr* taxes (agrarian tithe) due, and prison conditions.[13]

Figure 2. "[Women] making clay jars, Ramallah, Palestine," ca. 1905, Keystone View Company, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington DC, online at www.loc.gov/item/2004671702/ (accessed 21 August 2020).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Jerusalem elite acquired land in the traditional territory of the local shaykhs of Jabal al-Quds. Members of the Husayni, Nammari, Nashashibi, Dajani, and 'Alami families acquired land in Jabal al-Quds villages and indeed also in many far-flung corners of Palestine such as in the coastal plain, Jaffa and Jericho. The rural shaykhs also engaged in the same practices.[14]

However, many villages in the Jabal al-Quds area escaped the loss of their land to the Jerusalem notables. Johann Büssow offers an explanation: in Jabal al-Quds there were not enough agents to collect village taxes, "indicating a remarkable reluctance on the part of the elites in Jerusalem, and even more in Hebron, to invest in the lands on their own doorstep."[15] He attributes this to the rugged terrain, the strengths of

the village shaykhs, their tribal organization, and the strong bargaining position of the peasants, in view of the restraining of tax farmers' practices by the Jerusalem administrative council as a result of peasant protests of maltreatment by tax farmers.[16]

Ramallah was one such locality in Jabal al-Quds. There is no evidence of Ramallah town lands having been acquired by the urban elite or the rural shaykhs for that matter. Village land remained in local hands and was divided among the different hama'il.[17] The villages closest to Ramallah where land was acquired by Jerusalem families were 'Ayn Sinya and 'Ajjul, where the Husaynis had acquired much of the villages' land.[18] Further away were the villages of Dayr al-Sudan in which the Husaynis owned land, and Umm Safa, Kobar, and Burham, where the Nashashibis had acquired land.[19] Elihu Grant, the American missionary who headed the Quaker school in Ramallah from 1901 to 1904, notes that it was commonly thought that the Husaynis' intercession made it possible for the Jerusalem-Nablus carriage road to pass by 'Ayn Sinya.[20]

Sometime in the late nineteenth century, a social differentiation with some consequence was present. Local Ramallah historians Khalil Abu-Rayya and Azeez Shaheen have noted two main kinship groups (*hama'il*) constituting the town early in the twentieth century: the Hadada and the Hama'il groups.[21] Abu-Rayya describes the Hadada as merchants and craftsmen and the Hama'il as those "who remained *fallahin*;" they were always at odds with one another, exemplified in a big *tosha* (altercation) of 1905.[22]

How did this internal social differentiation originate? Abu-Rayya asks why, in view of the fact that the Hadada were only one of the five original hama'il, they came to be pitted against the other four? He locates this in the increase in the numbers of the Hadada with time, approximating the numbers of all the other hama'il combined; this, he opines, led to the Hadada's attempts to become the ruling hamula. Furthermore, since the lands historically allotted to them were not sufficient, they sought other occupations such as trading, weaving, shoemaking and building[23]

At first sight, an examination of the biographies and some life stories of Hadada personalities appears to bear out the point about diversification of occupations. This is particularly true of the Sharaqa hamula, who produced weavers, pilgrim guides, moneylenders, and shopkeepers. Three brothers for whom we have biographical information reflect this diversity of economic pursuits. Mansur Muhawiyya had a shop in the village of Bayt 'Ur, spoke Greek from his work experience in Jaffa, and sold his grapes in Jerusalem in the early 1900s. His two brothers Shahin and Nasrallah were weavers; Shahin hired laborers, and was a moneylender later.[24] The histories of the Harb, Jabir, and Hishmeh families also support this diversification of occupations among the Hadada; municipality records from the end of the Ottoman period reveal a variety of occupations such as suppliers of fuel and other municipal services.

On closer examination, the diversity of occupations was witnessed among both groups. Some Ramallah men worked in Jerusalem as stonemasons and domestic workers, and in church institutions. For example, some men from the Ghanayim family (of the Hama'il) were known as builders of church properties in Jerusalem. In 1914, several Ramallah residents were relieved from paying the *werko* (property)

tax and are listed in municipality records as pursuing various manual occupations in Jerusalem.[25] In a memoir written for his children in the United States, Hanna Batih (born 1904), describes how his mother, in addition to being a domestic worker in Jerusalem, traveled regularly to her native Ramallah to bring grapes for sale in Jerusalem.[26] The marketing of fruit in Jerusalem seems to have continued for several decades; the son of a major landowning family recalls his trips to Jerusalem to sell grapes as late as the early 1960s, even though he was a university student at the time and rather embarrassed about doing this kind of work.[27]

We note there was much internal differentiation within each of the two kinship groups, although it is not clear what was the basis of the main social division and the conflicts that ensued. Was it land ownership? The Hama'il clans (the so-called "*fallahin*") had large landholdings (the Batih, Ziyada, and Faramand families). On the other hand, several large landowners can be found on the other side of the divide, among the Hadada. These are the Qasis, Jabir, and Harb families.

It might be appropriate to comment here on the designation "*fallahin.*" It applied particularly to those families who were still, at the turn of the century, actively involved in agriculture as overseers as well as participants in the annual harvest and the social practices surrounding it. To this day, these families take pride in their traditional "love of the land," in presumable contrast to those who sold their land, abandoned agriculture, or did not have any land to speak of. But they were not necessarily peasants as we understand the term.

More importantly, there is evidence to suggest that the Hadada were more likely to pursue educational paths that led to social mobility of another kind. More Hadada young men, after completing basic primary education at missionary or local church schools in Ramallah or Jerusalem, attended the Protestant-run English College in Jerusalem, followed by either the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut (renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920), or colleges in the United States. The Jerusalem Law Classes after 1920 was another prestigious institution that some joined. The relation between education and confessional affiliation was important: the Hadada appear to have converted to Protestantism in larger numbers than the Hama'il, who remained attached to the established churches in the town.[28] In particular, all of the Quaker converts were from the Hadada, particularly from the Sharaqa hamula. Finally, emigration to the United States seems to have been more pronounced among the Hadada families, with a few notable exceptions. The key material effect of emigration was the investment of money earned in the United States in real estate and land, both inside Ramallah and in the surrounding countryside. The building of modern homes in Ramallah was a notable development as well.[29]

Since the Hadada were more likely to have pursued higher levels of education, it is not surprising that almost all of the Ramallah men who became part of the community of public intellectuals active in forums in Jaffa and Jerusalem in the 1920s and after were from the Hadada, and from the Yusif and 'Awwad hama'il in particular. Some of them relocated to Jaffa, Haifa, and other cities to work in legal professions or in the Mandate bureaucracy. Examples are from the Shehadeh, Harb, Balat, Shatara, and

Salah families. The vast majority of Ramallah men and women were not similarly inclined, however.

Another intriguing feature of the Hadada–Hama'il divide demands explanation. Why were families who migrated to Ramallah from areas to the east and north in the late eighteenth century (after the original migration of the Haddadin) "adopted" by the Hadada hama'il and became part of them, while the Hama'il incorporated none? Was it the fact that these migrants came with urban, non-agricultural trades and were more easily claimed and absorbed by the Hadada and not the "peasant" Hama'il?

Several sources mention the acquisition of land in surrounding villages by Ramallah families. Grant noted, as early as 1901, that significant amounts of land were purchased by Ramallah families in a dozen or more surrounding villages such as 'Ayn Qinya, Mikhmas, Baytuniya, and Dayr Dibwan, ostensibly for the purpose of grain farming, since the village lands themselves consisted of "choice grape vineyards and orchards of figs and olives."[30] He also notes land and olive groves owned in the outskirts of Ramallah by the well-to-do Faramand family.[31] Social differentiation was further spurred by the purchase by some families of lands in the vicinity of Ramallah; Abu-Rayya mentions land in al-Bireh, Surda, Abu Qash, al-Mazra'a al-Qibliyya, neighboring Baytunia, Rafat, and 'Ayn Qinya.[32]

Significantly, by the early 1920s, capital accumulated through emigration to the United States was used to purchase agricultural land (mostly citrus groves) in Jaffa and areas on the coast, as well as in Tulkarm and Bisan. The practice of buying land in surrounding villages continued, and well into the twentieth century; one family is known to have bought land from less fortunate relatives, thus amassing large land holdings; a similar trend has been observed for the twin town of al-Bireh by Abdul Jawad.[33]

We have the story of a father and son of a landowning family of the Hama'il ("*fallahin*") group that illustrates this: Salim Sam'an Ziada (born in approximately 1884) emigrated to the United States around 1900 and worked as a peddler (the proverbial *tajir shanta*) for about fifteen years before returning, having been a moneylender to villagers, as well as trading in livestock before his emigration. He spent several years trying to collect the loans his father had given to villagers with the money he had sent from the United States. He often took land or cattle in return. He also purchased land for the family in nearby villages such as Biddu, 'Ayn Qinya, 'Iraq al-Sudan, Judayra, Ras Karkar and many other villages. According to Salim Ziada's grandson, his grandfather had land before emigrating, but money from America made possible many of the subsequent land purchases.

Was this land used for growing commercial crops, and did these landowners market their produce to major commercial enterprises in Jaffa, such as soap factories? For example, did they themselves become merchants involved in the olive oil trade, thus expanding their material resources? The educator Khalil Totah mentions in his diaries that Ramallah merchants supplied Jaffa soap manufacturers with olive oil.[34] Were the returning émigrés with their newly accumulated wealth involved in the olive oil trade? We have an intriguing insight into this issue in a recent doctoral dissertation;

Jeffrey Reger has found a reference in the writings of an American deputy consul in the early years of the twentieth century to remittances from the United States having been invested by Ramallah émigrés and others in nearby villages for speculation in what Reger calls an "olive oil futures market." The oil was bought in the year of plenty when the olive harvest was robust (given the prevailing alternating seasons of good and poor harvests), stored in underground cisterns, and kept over to sell during the poor year.[35]

Only detailed family histories can give us a satisfactory answer. Grant noted that Ramallah businessmen traveled to surrounding villages to procure raisins for export by a German firm. The raisins were taken by camelback to Jaffa. Women wage laborers prepared the raisins for export.[36]

Missionaries, Education, and the Pilgrim Trade

Protestant missionary interest in Palestine dates to the early nineteenth century. In 1850, the Ottoman government legalized the conversion of Christian Ottoman subjects to Protestantism[37] thus opening the door to more robust conversions, notwithstanding the hostility from the Greek Orthodox and Catholic churches, opposition that broke out in violence on several occasions throughout the period under consideration. In 1852, a petition signed by 194 men in Ramallah was sent to the Ottoman authorities asking for their community to be recognized and removed from Greek Orthodox church auspices.[38]

Samuel Gobat, who was Bishop of Jerusalem from 1846 to 1879, established several schools in Jerusalem and other cities. The notable Bishop Gobat's School, or Madrasat Sahyun as it was known among Palestinians (due to its location on Mount Zion), was established in Jerusalem in 1847 as a free boarding and day school for the children of converts.[39] A Gobat school was opened in Ramallah in 1850.[40] The Church Missionary Society (CMS), in turn, took upon itself the expansion of schools: by 1882, there were thirty-five schools with 1,635 pupils in Palestine.[41]

Other missionaries were active in Palestine and provided services in education and welfare work in addition to the CMS: they included Germans, Americans, Scots, and the Quakers in Ramallah.[42] There were other, more modest, schools in Ramallah at the time, notably the school operated by the Greek Orthodox Church since the early 1700s and the school run by the Catholic (*Latin*) Church after 1850.

The early Quakers in Ramallah included "Bible women" and teachers. Some of them were Lebanese, and worked in the various Quaker schools in Ramallah and the surrounding countryside (in Jifna, 'Ayn 'Arik, Tayba, and al-Bireh). Several young women from Ramallah joined the emerging cadre of teachers and missionaries attached to Quaker institutions; women such as Ni'ma Abu Shahla, Martha Totah, Wadi'a Shatara, and Maryam Shatara were among the earliest groups of women teachers. Several male teachers and other functionaries and professionals from Mount Lebanon, Jaffa, and Jerusalem were also important fixtures in the Quaker community in Ramallah.[43]

Local histories have often noted that the presence of the Quaker Mission in Ramallah spurred emigration through education of Ramallah boys, most critically knowledge of the English language. This prevailing view of the singular impact of the Quaker presence in Ramallah must be moderated. The emigration urge was gaining steam in the neighboring village of al-Bireh as well; as early as 1909, several al-Bireh residents emigrated to the United States without the benefit of a Friends education or contacts with Quaker networks. Saleh Abdul Jawad, who has studied the impact of the emigration of Birawis to the United States on land ownership and the rise of a new local leadership, notes that the first emigrants left in 1909, a few years before the First World War.[44] However, the help of people who knew English was probably crucial in the early years of emigration from al-Bireh, and it may have been Quaker contacts in the United States that some Friends teachers and employees used to assist emigration by Birawis.

Undoubtedly, engagement with Christian institutions in Jerusalem, particularly schools, was instrumental; several Jerusalem schools stand out in the late nineteenth century for boys and young men in Ramallah: Gobat's Madrasat Sahyun; the Schneller school and orphanage, established in 1860; St. George's School (run by Anglicans, known as Mutran), established in 1898–89; the Catholic Collège des Frères, established in 1876; and the Maslaba school, established in 1855 for theological studies.

Many persons who were to become appendages to the pilgrim trade or government functionaries, or craftsmen, skilled laborers, and service workers of different kinds were beneficiaries of the educational opportunities offered at these schools. In his Annual Letter in 1877, Bishop Gobat claimed that his Madrasat Sahyun was successful "in raising many poor and neglected children to good positions in society." Abdul Latif Tibawi, a historian of this period, considers this a fair claim to make, noting that up to this time, the school had produced one catechist, fifteen schoolmasters, most of them employed in missionary schools, a number of dragomans and tourist guides, and a few who began businesses on their own."[45]

It is relevant to discuss the incentives for conversion to Protestantism as a means of social mobility. There is a derogatory characterization of the Protestant church in Ramallah as "the shilling church" (*knisat al-shilin*) during the Mandate period, whereby churchgoers were allegedly paid a shilling to attend Sunday services.[46] More seriously, the material incentives provided by the Protestant churches might have been important. Tibawi has suggested that in the mid-nineteenth century and at the height of the strife between the Greek Orthodox church and Gobat, the former's poor laity, who were housed in church property, could be threatened with eviction if they showed disloyalty to the church, but the Protestants were willing to help such people. However, Tibawi observes that "many were not victims at all; they were unscrupulous opportunists who tried to milk the two cows at the same time," noting that similar experiences had been recorded in Syria and Lebanon by American missionaries. Protestant schools of the Church Missionary Society used inducements such as board and clothing to students, salaries for teachers, and medical relief.[47] There is other supporting evidence of the material assistance the Protestant mission offered to converts during Gobat's time.[48]

Many of Ramallah's boys and young men who later became lawyers, judges, publishers, merchants, and public servants in the Mandate bureaucracy studied at these schools. However, and crucially, they pursued a kind of further education that was not taken up by most of the graduates of the Jerusalem schools mentioned above, or at the schools in Ramallah operated by the local churches. While the majority made do with a basic education at the Sahyun school or in the Ramallah schools, this group enrolled in the English College (formerly named the Young Men's College, run by the Church Missionary Society), and a few of them went on to study at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. A few went directly to the United States for further study. Anis Sayigh, a graduate of the Sahyun school, reminisces in his memoirs that it was a "popular" (*sha'bi*) rather than an "aristocratic" institution like St. George's School.[49]

It was a small group of young men, mostly from the Hadada, as was noted earlier, who pursued further study. They formed the nucleus for a modernist and less parochial middle class that would expand in the 1920s and 1930s. One can mention the lawyer George Sa'; the physician Bulus Salah; Sulayman Ishaq; Fu'ad and Farid Shatara; Bulus, Nicola, and Salim Shehadeh; Nasif Harb; Sa'dallah Qasis; Ibrahim Ka'ibni; Mughannam Mughannam; Sam'an Da'ud (Balat); Khalil Totah; and Jiryis Mansur. There is no similar sizeable group among the Hama'il during the earlier part of the twentieth century.

'Umar al-Salih al-Barghuthi, a member of a shaykhly family who became a prominent lawyer, writer, and politician during the Mandate, recalls in his memoir that boys in Jerusalem where he was sent to school from his village of Dayr Ghassana in the early 1900s mocked him for the haughty demeanor he put on in their presence. A boy asked him once: why do you want to go to school? So you can become a *turjman suyyah* (tourist guide)?[50] This episode that al-Barghuthi chooses to highlight encapsulates the essence of the difference in dispositions between an aspirant to membership in a modernist middle class – for which al-Barghuthi was materially and politically well-endowed despite his rural upbringing – and possibly the majority of the boys in Jerusalem schools, who did not necessarily aspire to a life better than that of an interpreter and guide for tourists and pilgrims.

A *turjman*, or dragoman, as he was called in the burgeoning English-language travel literature, was a standard fixture of tours in the late Ottoman period in the area encompassing modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt. The dragoman, more than a mere translator or tour guide, was expected to speak a foreign language, be resourceful, able to deal with brigands, thieves, and beggars, and to be an all-around fixer. The basic fluency in English that the foreign-run schools in Jerusalem (and Ramallah as well, by the 1860's) seemed to have been the medium for a genre of Palestinian service worker, attached either to missionary institutions or to the pilgrim trade. Travel guides from the period 1840 to the early twentieth century, such as those published by Baedeker and Thomas Cook, give expositions on the politics of dragomen.

Ramallah had its share of dragomans. Two, Ya'qub Hishmeh and his son Shukri, shone among dragomans, and were recommended in several travel guides of the

period. Two decades before Ramallah became a tourist destination for summer vacationers from Palestine and surrounding regions, Ramallah and the Hishmehs were noted in Western travel literature and the writings of missionaries and pilgrims. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Ya'qub Hishmeh and his son Shukri's hotel makes its appearance in travel guides and accounts published by pilgrims, biblical scholars, and tourists.[51]

Ya'qub Hishmeh was a classic case: he began his career as a guide to Charles Sandreckzi, a missionary sent to Jerusalem by the Church Missionary Society in the mid-1850s.[52] Sandreckzi later supervised CMS missionary activities in the Ramallah area[53] and it is likely that Hishmeh continued his relationship with him. He at least visited the village of Bir Zayt and met with a disgruntled Catholic Musa bin Nasir, who later converted to the Anglican church.[54] Ya'qub and his brother Salim Hishmeh, who were raised as Greek Orthodox Christians, became among the first members of the Jerusalem Protestant community in the mid-1850s. A list of members of the Jerusalem group of Protestants in 1874-75 shows that six of the sixteen, including Ya'qub Hishmeh, became Anglicans while at the Gobat School.[55]

Ya'qub Hishmeh also served as dragoman to Quaker missionaries Eli and Sybil Jones on their visit to Palestine in 1869. He probably became a Quaker in 1877[56] and stayed in the service of the Quaker Mission in Ramallah for seventeen years, helping establish several schools in Ramallah and the surrounding villages.[57] He left the Quakers in 1885 after a bitter dispute which ended in a Jerusalem court rejecting his claim of ownership of some of the Friends Mission property he had lived in and managed for the Friends.[58]

The Hishmeh family were indeed mavericks, and not all of them stayed in Ramallah. The stories I recount below illustrate another route taken by Ramallah men who chose to associate themselves with missionaries and the pilgrim trade. They were not inclined to modern cosmopolitan values and had little affinity to the urban middle class and the literati who were emerging at the time. Instead, they cultivated a particular segment of the pilgrim market through performing Oriental personas that they thought would further their interests. Most of their entrepreneurial ventures involved missionaries or the pilgrim trade, in one way or the other.

Ya'qub's brother Salim Hishmeh ventured abroad and embarked on unusual journeys to different parts of the world. Critically, Salim also studied at the Bishop Gobat School in Jerusalem, and also entered the travel business, but on a much grander scale than his brother Ya'qub. While still quite young, Salim became the interpreter for the American journalist and adventurer Henry Morton Stanley on his famous expedition to central Africa in 1871 in search of Dr. Livingstone. Stanley's biographer provides a rare portrait of Salim that he culled from Stanley's autobiography and other sources. He notes that

by the 1880's [Salim] had freed himself from his identification simply as Stanley's interpreter and had begun to create for himself a new identity – part fact, part fiction – in which he began describing himself, not merely

as "the first discoverer of Dr. Livingstone," but also as "Chief of the Moabites."[59]

Salim used the new designation with further embellishments in 1882 in an American town, where he visited the home of a Quaker entrepreneur and friend of the Quaker missionaries for whom his brother Ya'qub had worked as a guide in 1869. The next year, we find Salim in Scotland, using the designations "sheik" and "Arab Chief" when he gave a talk about his African adventures at a Presbyterian church in Scotland in 1883.[60]

Salim's evangelist nephew Jiryis adopted a similar persona as a "sheik" while on tours in the United States. Jiryis Hanna Hishmeh (born 1866) seems to have made up for the relatively ordinary life of his father Hanna, who had settled in the United States and was reputed to have helped Ramallah men establish themselves as peddlers upon arrival in America. Jiryis's route to social mobility was similar to that of his uncles, again apparently tied to work with foreign missionaries. He was educated in Jerusalem and Lebanon according to American media reports from1920; Jiryis had accompanied General William Booth, the flamboyant and charismatic Salvation Army preacher and evangelist, during his visit to Palestine in 1905.[61] Earlier, in 1882, Jiryis is said to have converted to the Salvation Army faith in Port Said after he heard a service delivered by Salvation Army Commissioner Frederick Booth-Tucker, who was on his way to India.[62]

Jiryis eventually became a reverend and a captain in the Salvation Army serving in Palestine, India, and the United States. In Jaffa, he was reportedly successful in converting Jews to Christianity. He is said to have baptized entire families in the Mediterranean Sea.[63] He was buried in Ramallah in 1946.[64]

Jiryis's brother As'ad Hishmeh, born in approximately 1876, lived a much less colorful life, and his adventures seem to have been rather limited. As'ad Hishmeh was a *jawish* (tax collector) at the municipality as early as 1913, according to Ramallah Municipality records. After his retirement, and in keeping with the Hishmeh entrepreneurial spirit, As'ad moved to Jericho to establish a successful winter resort motel in the late 1940s.[65]

The 'Audeh family tells another but similar story. Yusif 'Audeh, one of the first Quaker converts in Ramallah, was said to have operated, with his brother Ilyas, a travel service in Ramallah for a short period prior to the First World War.[66] One of the al-Bireh stories that Abdel Jawad relates is about Yusif 'Audeh's role in the emigration of al-Bireh men: he was accused of having sponsored the first organized "migrants' smuggling network that transported men from Ramallah and al-Bireh, and who the women of al-Bireh often cursed in their sad songs about their husbands and sons who never returned."[67]

Studying the life trajectory of Yusif 'Audeh, we can say that Yusif's knowledge of English was probably a rare asset at the time. Yusif, whose brother Ilyas was the first mayor of Ramallah, became a prosperous man, establishing an "Oriental Bazaar" in a Welsh town under the name of "Audi the Arab Sheik" in the 1890s. He also worked

as a travel guide and tour manager in Palestine for Western pilgrims and tourists, in addition to his frequent trips to the United States, where he gave a series of lectures in 1903 as "Sheik Joseph Audi." [68]

Yusif was enterprising. He had made the acquaintance of a number of American ministers and biblical scholars, one of them a university president, while they were on tour in Palestine. Several of them hosted 'Audeh at their churches between 1902 and 1905 for talks on Palestine. Interestingly, he is described in some newspaper reports as having come to America to interest wealthy Americans in a hospital project in Ramallah. He is described variously as "a cultured Arabian guide" and a wealthy businessman, and is said to have appeared in "Bedouin" robes and lectured on domestic life in Palestine, among other topics.

Yusif supplied the St. Louis World Fair in 1904 with items from the 'Umar bin al-Khattab Mosque and was in charge of the life-size replica of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher erected in "the City of Jerusalem" exhibition at the fair. It was the largest concession at the fair and was visited by thousands of people. An advertisement in a St. Louis newspaper reflects a grand act of self-invention (and other-invention), resplendent with a photo of "Joseph the Eloquent" in full regalia, including a sword attached to his belt. His people is described as "the Indians of the Orient," living in tents in the deserts of Northern Syria.[69]

Yusif's brother Ilyas, who stayed in Ramallah throughout his life and was the mayor from its founding until 1921 (his family ran the fashionable Grand Hotel), was also closely connected with the Quakers early in his life. He studied at the Friends school in Brummana, Lebanon, to which he was sent by the Friends Mission in Ramallah.[70] He translated for the Quakers, and was also Clerk of the Friends Meeting in Ramallah. In 1887, he was "under teacher" at the Friends Boys School.[71]

Ilyas married Emily Armuni, a Lebanese, who had been sent to Ramallah to teach at the mission girls' school there.[72] She was listed as a "bible teacher" in a Quaker report for 1891. She proved to be an able businesswoman as well, and bought land for investment along with her sister Nabiha, who married Hanna Hishmeh from Ramallah. This was the same Hanna Hishmeh who had settled in New York; he seems to have been a fixer for many new immigrants from Ramallah. Nabiha later emigrated to the United States.

Ilyas was able to draw on his brother Yusif's wealth to invest in real estate, buying land and building homes in Ramallah. He never emigrated to the United States, but he sent his daughters there just before the First World War with his brother Yusif in the company of a group of American Quakers being evacuated from Palestine by the U.S. government.[73]

The life trajectories of such people have rarely been studied or considered in works on the social history of the Palestinian middle class. Based on life stories of a number of such personalities, it is possible to argue that there were people who by their sheer determination, hard work, and stubborn ambitiousness fashioned new futures for themselves and the generations that came after them. They and their children, whether they were emigrants to the United States, never left Palestine, or returned to live in

Ramallah after a period of life in the United States, did not have lofty intellectual or political aspirations. The life stories of these individuals show how life projects and trajectories of members of a new middle class were neither uniform nor were single-mindedly aimed at the kind of conscious modernity and cosmopolitanism that characterized the early pioneers of the urban middle class of this generation, people like Sakakini, Shehadeh, or Totah, among many others. Neither did they have much affinity with the contemporaneous class that Watenpaugh has identified in Eastern Mediterranean cities: a middle class defined by the way it asserted its modernity, by its declaration of the intent to be part of the production of knowledge and culture for society at large.[74]

Emigration and the Constitution of a Middle Class

Emigration, when it was not for the purpose of higher education by those who had received post-secondary education in Jerusalem or even Ramallah, tended to have a parochializing effect; it produced individuals who did not incline to public careers or the fashioning of modern personas in the Palestinian or American public spheres. But this effect was not uniform; at one extreme, it allowed the emergence of enterprising "Christian" entrepreneurs who performed identities as "Orientals" both abroad and at home, as we have seen. At the other extreme were the vast majority who became integrated into the American business world; their periodic visits to their hometown did not leave any durable modernizing traces, apart from the modern homes that they built.

Jacob Norris charts the effects of the emigration of merchants from small market towns in the hilly interior of Palestine after the middle of the nineteenth century; he shows that with time, these émigrés, who had amassed considerable capital, returned to their towns and villages as nouveaux riches, challenging the established urban elite.[75] In the case of Bethlehem, merchants began to market Christian devotional objects abroad independently after the middle of the nineteenth century.[76] They also began to travel to Europe and Latin and Central America in search for markets for their goods. Through this global circulation, they returned as shapers rather than mere recipients of new forms of bourgeois culture; as Norris puts it, "they were deeply enmeshed in the very process of bourgeois cultural production."[77]

This pattern was unique to Bethlehem, however, and cannot be generalized to the rest of the market towns of the Palestinian highlands. First, the émigrés that Norris focuses upon were merchants, albeit of modest means at first, whereas the majority of the Ramallah émigrés were not merchants and not of great means. They were, at best, modest landowners with a rudimentary education but much ambition. Second, Bethlehem had been involved in commercial networks that could be exploited, networks that had already swept up many of the town's merchants in international circuits in Europe and in Latin America. Third, emigration to Latin or Central America or Europe was different from emigration to the United States, which was the

destination of Ramallah men and later families. The first Ramallah emigrants were in the main working class peddlers in the American context, not merchants dealing with commodities that had the prospect of expansion with a lot of hard work. Sulayman Jacir or Nakhleh Kattan of Bethlehem might have been nouveaux riches in the eyes of the Jerusalem or Jaffa elite, but the early emigrants of Ramallah and al-Bireh (the latter studied by Abdul Jawad) were of another social and cultural order altogether. In the more modest and less pretentious Ramallah, there was no burning desire to outshine the urban landowning and mercantile class or to emerge as cultural trendsetters. This picture was to change somewhat in later decades, however.

The impact of emigration to the United States (often followed by periodic or frequent visits home or permanent return to Ramallah during the early period under examination here) has been considerable. Writing about Mount Lebanon, Akram Khater concludes that "without the history of emigrants [to the United States], we are left with a sorely incomplete narrative about the making of "modern" Lebanon."[78] Much in the same way, the trajectory of Ramallah's journey from village to town was bound largely to the emigration of its sons and some daughters, beginning in the early years of the twentieth century and continuing for several decades.

Despite important similarities between Lebanese and Palestinian emigration to the United States, it is not clear that Ramallah's returned emigrants assumed, like those of Mount Lebanon, that they were "the future." In Ramallah, there was a difference between those who emigrated for the purpose of study and those (the vast majority) who went in search of bettering their own and their families' material conditions. They were of simple means and simple aspirations. They helped one another in the United States, where most of them started out single lives as peddlers in rural and urban communities. The sheer stamina, hard work, and endurance of these early migrants paid off, and the lure of America became irresistible; before long there was a growing community of Ramallah families in the United States.

That emigration to America was a key contributor to the eventual emergence of a middle class in Ramallah is without doubt. Whether through investments in the town by actual returnees or through sending money to family members in Ramallah, the impact of emigration was palpable, and seems to have been well in place by 1905. During the First World War, many emigrants were trapped either in the United States or in Ramallah for the duration of the war, when no travel was possible. After the war, the pace of emigration accelerated. Among the early emigrants to the United States (before the First World War) who became well-to-do businessmen while keeping their ties to Ramallah were Aziz Shahin, Yusif Dirbas, the Zaru brothers (hoteliers), 'Isa and Jamil al-Batih,[79] Ibrahim 'Isa Salim, and some members of the Harb family. The 1920s and 1930s ushered in a new era in Ramallah's history. While this paper does not focus on this period, it will be useful to discuss, however briefly, some features of Ramallah during the Mandate in order to highlight transformations as well as continuities in middle class lives and livelihoods.

By the 1920s, emigrants' remittances were instrumental in the expanding wealth of their families, and this was often translated into the building of modern stone houses,

the setting up of businesses, investment in the education of children and siblings in Ramallah, and the acquisition of property in the form of agricultural land and farms in the coastal areas near Jaffa, Bisan, Jericho, Tulkarm and in Ramallah area villages, as noted before, and investments in real estate in Jerusalem.[80] One example is the remarkable journey of Ibrahim 'Isa Salim (born around 1891) of Dar Ibrahim (one of the "fallahin" hama'il). It is a journey of hard work in the United States, including service in the U.S. army. It is also a tale of fierce determination to return to Ramallah so he could invest in land and real estate not only in Ramallah but also in Jaffa and Jerusalem.[81]

On a purely physical level, the postwar period of 1920 to 1930 saw a veritable explosion of building in Ramallah, reflecting new lifestyles. A qualitative change in building styles – away from the typical peasant dwelling – was ushered in, a trend that continued for many years.[82] More generally, residences built after the First World War in Ramallah were influenced by building styles popular in Jerusalem, particularly the sculptured arches and crowned columns.[83] Notably, the building of new homes outside the old town core was implicated in the breakup of *ahwash*, the traditional residential units that housed families of the same hamula in close proximity.[84] This material development must have had wider-reaching social consequences concerning lifestyles, redefinitions of the meaning of neighborhood and its social obligations, and the like.

By the early 1920s, several Ramallah men returned with medical and other professional degrees from the United States and the American University in Beirut. The most well-known are Salim Salama, Khalil Totah, Hanna Khalaf, Jiryis Mansur, Mughannam Mughannam, Fu'ad Shatara, and Salim and Nicola Shehadeh. Several of them took up posts in the British Mandate government and in institutions such as schools, as well as in the professions. These individuals' aspirations went beyond improving their families' material conditions. They aspired to live lives as professionals and public figures, but they were a distinct minority, and it is not clear that we can even count them among the emigrants, the majority of whom did not emigrate or travel for higher education. They were also a minority in another sense, in that their social universe was not restricted to Ramallah but rather extended beyond.

The reputation of Ramallah as a summer resort for urban Palestinians was on its way to being established by the early 1900s. The Bellevue Locanda was opened in Ramallah as early as 1902 by Ya'qub and Shukri Hismeh, the father and son team engaged in the pilgrimage trade. In 1907, a European traveler described the hotel as having visitors from Jerusalem and Egypt in the summers.[85] Khalil Totah, a Ramallah Quaker and later principal of the Friends schools in the town for many years, notes in his 1905 diaries that Ramallah was a summer resort with a respectable hotel and rooms for rent in the town. Totah mentions the special attraction of Ramallah to teachers, presumably from other Palestinian cities and towns, who spent the summer there doing "nothing profitable [in the] evenings [–] they are hilarious, playing games, chatting, and having a good time."[86] This was probably anathema to Ramallah's prevailing peasant sensibilities, not to mention the ascetic culture of the Quaker missionaries

to whom Totah's and his family's fate was attached. Ramallah as a site for summer holidays for the Jaffa elite and resident foreigners is also mentioned in Yusif al-Hakim's memoir for the year 1910.[87]

Advertisements for the Bellevue Locanda in Ramallah in the newspaper *Falastin* beginning in the summer of 1911 (the paper began publication that year) and throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century are revealing of the sensibilities and concerns to which the hotel catered. A 1912 advertisement in *Falastin* promised the known health benefits of Ramallah air, as well as all sorts of sports facilities.[88] What the hotel was introducing to Palestine at the dawn of the twentieth century was what was already known as mountain resorting (*istiyaf*), developed in the Lebanese mountains in the middle of the nineteenth century. This discourse of healthy mountain air was part of the idea of leisure as a legitimate pastime, available to those with means to indulge in it.

During the Mandate, Ramallah was offered the opportunity to become part of the summer resort industry in earnest through the enterprising spirit of some of its homeowners who began to rent out rooms and entire homes to visitors; Ramallah municipality records note a number of homes rented to summer visitors in the period after the 1920s. More sophisticated hotels were built later in the 1920s, once running water became available. Cooks, waiters, and a range of workers began to make their appearance.

Figure 3. An advertisement for Bellevue Hotel Ramallah, 1911, in *Falastin*, 15 July 1911.

But there was still a great deal to be learned by what some considered to be the unpolished citizens of Ramallah. An editorial in *Mir'at al-Sharq* in 1926[89] laments the lack of realization among Ramallah homeowners of the need of summer vacationers for accommodations that came with basic furniture; it advises them to invest in simple amenities, especially since Ramallah had the potential to become the premier holiday resort in the region, due to the turbulence in Lebanon and Syria preventing travel to resorts there.

Although many think that Ramallah's heyday as a center for tourism and leisure was during Jordanian rule in the 1960s – when the town became well-known as a summer resort catering to the Palestinian urban middle class, Palestinians in Jordan, and Arabs elsewhere, including the Gulf – Ramallah's resort reputation was cemented much earlier, in the early1920s. *Falastin* and other newspapers ran advertisements for dances and other events at Ramallah hotels throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Municipality revenue from leisure-related activities spiked sharply in the 1930s. Its reputation continued until the Nakba brought an end to the revelry.

Robust advertisements for "casinos,"[90] dances, and musical performances appeared in the English-language *Palestine Post*, shortly after the paper began publishing in 1933. A few Jewish musicians, entertainers, and bands were also featured; one managed the Kit-Kat Casino at the Harb Palace Hotel.[91] In 1938, at the height of the Arab revolt, the Grand Hotel under the 'Audeh family's management placed an advertisement in *Falastin* claiming that "peace and security prevail in Ramallah; all claims to the contrary are fabrications."[92] This was at a time when the revolt was inching closer to Ramallah, which had in fact witnessed a confrontation in the previous month. A month after the advertisement, battles with the British had moved into Ramallah itself, including the campus of the Friends Boys School.[93] Rebel leaders led hundreds of fighters into the town. By mid-September, the courts, the post office, and telephone lines were shut down. Later in the month, al-Bireh was bombed. In fact, throughout 1938–39 the British launched a campaign of repression through executions (including of a Ramallah militant, George al-Sa', for whom a street is named today), arrests, bombings, curfews, restriction on travel, and other measures.

We may say that today's "Ramallah bubble" or "Green Zone" phenomenon has an uncanny resemblance to the Ramallah bubble of the 1930s and 1940s of the past century, but with a crucial difference. Today, most members of the new middle class or aspirants to membership in it and who partake so exuberantly of this middle class ambience, especially in cafes, fitness centers, restaurants, and malls, live in the city itself. They have settled in Ramallah during waves of migration that continue to this day, and are claiming the city for themselves. In times past, however, Ramallah was the playground of others from another milieu, those from the coast and Jerusalem until 1948, and then from Jerusalem, Jordan, and the Arab world during Jordanian rule.

Despite this, it cannot be denied that there were some elements in Ramallah society who, beginning in the early 1920s, were meticulous devotees of all things "modern," or to be more exact, European and Western. These people, like some members of the

'Audeh hotelier family, or the owner-managers of the Harb Palace Hotel, no doubt had a "modernist agenda," a life-mission of being and appearing modern. But this should not be taken to constitute a societal, political, or intellectual project. "Being modern," whether that was operating or frequenting hotels or being a smart dresser, or a member of the Masons, or pursuing a teaching or civil service job, was not necessarily cast in the lofty discourse of public intellectuals or political activists. The influence of a handful of Lebanese women, who one can assume had some business savvy, is palpable. Zahiyya Mirhij, the Lebanese daughter-in-law of Yusif 'Audeh (who had settled in Wales) and her husband Hanna, owners of the Ramallah Grand Hotel, catered receptions for visiting dignitaries at municipality expense.[94] Later, her renowned daughter 'Aida 'Audeh continued in her mother's footsteps. The daughters of Yusif's brother Ilyas and his Lebanese wife Emily also became, in different ways, part of the "modern" scene in Ramallah in subsequent years. [95]

It is quite likely that the Palestinian clients of the Lebanese mountain resorts in the 1930s and 1940s who Andrea Stanton writes about in an engaging essay[96] were much the same group of people who frequented Ramallah's resorts during the same summers. At a dance held for over two hundred guests at the Harb Palace Hotel in July 1933, the following are among the attendees: the wife of Hanna Salah, the Jaffa city engineer (originally from Ramallah); Hasan Shukri, mayor of Haifa; the lawyer Hasan Sidqi Dajani; the inspector of courts; and the mayor of Jerusalem.[97] There is little evidence, with a few exceptions, that the families of Ramallah partook in any major way in the revelry in the hotels and casinos in the town, other than as landlords, bystanders, and service workers.[98] The Jaffa newspaper *Mir'at al-Sharq*, whose publisher was from a Ramallah family, not only ran advertisements for Ramallah hotels but also featured promotional articles about summer resort facilities throughout the 1920s and 1930s. An event at the Harb Palace Hotel in 1929 was attended by five hundred people, including high-ranking British officials, foreign consuls, and families from Egypt.[99]

The considerable scholarly literature on tourism and leisure at the turn of the twentieth century in Bilad al-Sham is almost entirely written with a focus on the lives and sensibilities of the bourgeois and aspiring middle classes who were clients of establishments such as hotels and summer resorts. We know very little about the lives of those who served those clients, the invisible and nameless villagers who rented their homes to the coastal bourgeoisie and serviced their needs.[100]

Once the summer visitors left, Ramallah reverted to its dull parochial existence. The writer Raja Shehadeh, who grew up in Ramallah in the 1950s and 1960s but whose family, originally from Ramallah, had lived in Jaffa before 1948, relates his childhood memories:

> Jaffa, I was told, was the bride of the sea, and Ramallah did not even have a sea. Jaffa was a pearl, a diamond-studded lantern arising from the water, and Ramallah was a drab, cold, backward village where nothing ever happened … Ramallah was not Jaffa. There was no sea; it was just

not the place. The place was over there, in the unreachable world of the imagination, the world that was evoked by the words of my elders as they yearned and described, reminisced, dreamed, and remembered.[101]

Figure 4. Advertisement for "Grand Hotel Ramallah: Reduced Rates on the Occasion of the Current Situation," August 1938, in *Falastin*, 4 August 1938.

In her autobiographical novel, Ramallah native Yasmin Zahran describes Jaffa summer visitors sometime in the mid-1940s thus:

> Our village had become a summer resort overnight. The wealthy and Westernized [*mutafarnija*] class from the cities came to spend the summer. This demolished the boundaries of our village and our familiar world. The streets would fill with haughty women whose appearance aroused contradictory feelings; a feeling of superiority toward the city, but also a sense of inferiority in the face of their wealth and lifestyle and clothing and accents … the word urbanite [*madani*] carried with it [for us] scorn and contempt, just as the word peasant [*fallah*] meant to them brutishness and backwardness.[102]

The class dynamics are unmistakable, and are part of the untold history of Ramallah. These dynamics are fluid and change with time, and just as they manifested themselves in this form in the middle of the past century, so they are in full view today, in the opening decades of the twenty-first. The same applies to the *fallahi-madani* divide, an existential condition that may not have presented itself with as much urgency in the larger cities in Palestine. The transition from *fallahi* to *madani* in Ramallah in subsequent decades might seem to have occurred effortlessly, but it was not a linear journey or one without problems. The issue is relevant again today, when the majority of Ramallah's residents have roots in villages in different parts of Palestine. The full story must be told, especially for the period after the 1950s, when the social universe of Ramallah was irrevocably transformed as a result of the Nakba and its aftermath.

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Endnotes

1 Some of these are works by Salim Tamari, Rochelle Davis, Issam Nassar, Sherene Seikaly, Jacob Norris, and Andrea Stanton.

2 Salim Tamari,"From Emma Bovary to Hasan al-Banna: Small Towns and Social Control," in Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (University of California Press, 2009), 44.

3 Among the latter are three recent studies of Ramallah, Tulkarm, and Bethlehem: Sameeh Hammoudeh, *Ramallah al-'Uthmaniyya: dirasa fi tarikhiha al-ijtima'i* [Ottoman Ramallah: A Study in its Social History] (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2017); Farid al-Salim, "Landed Property and Elite Conflict in Ottoman Tulkarm," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 47 (Autumn 2011), online at (IPS) bit.ly/31uLWFE (accessed 27 August 2020); and Jacob Norris, "Return Migration and the Rise of the Palestinian Nouveaux Riches, 1870–1925," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, 2 (Winter 2017): 60–75.

4 Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford University Press 2016), 13–14.

5 Norris, "Return Migration," 71.

6 Naseeb Shaheen, *A Pictorial History of Ramallah,* Part I (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1992); and Naseeb Shaheen, *A Pictorial History of Ramallah*, Part II (Ramallah: Birzeit University, 2006).

7 Alexander Scholch, "European Penetration and the Economic Development in Palestine, 1856–82," in Roger Owen, ed., *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1982), 21–23. There is voluminous literature, ranging from scholarly works to field reports written by explorers and various officials, including Zionist functionaries, on the social and economic consequences of the Ottoman reforms.

8 There is some inconsistency between different sources about the domains ruled by Ibn Samhan. See B. Abu-Manneh, "Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period: the New Ottoman Administration and the Notables," *Die Welt des Islams* 30 (1990), 6; Suad Amiry, *'Amarat Qura al-Karasi* [Throne Village Architecture] (Ramallah: Riwaq, 2003), 173; and Edward Robinson and E. Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, vol. 2, (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1841), 131, 134.

9 Amin Abu Bakr, *Awqaf al-Haram al-Ibrahimi 1858–1918* [The Haram al-Ibrahimi Endowments 1858–1918] (Jerusalem: Mu'assasat Filastin li'l Thaqafa, n.d.), 244, online at (thaqafa.org) bit.ly/3lrcHTu (accessed 14 July 2020).

10 Musa bin Nasir, *Tarikh Bir Zayt*, unpublished manuscript, 1904, 37, online at (fada.birzeit.edu) bit.ly/3gsG2Ju (accessed 27 August 2020).

11 Khalil Abu Rayya, *Ramallah Qadiman wa Hadithan* [Ramallah, Ancient and Modern] (American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine, n.d.), 24. For a discussion of the social and political significance of the Qays-Yaman divide, see Alexander Scholch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856–82* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), 191–96; Miriam Hoexter, "The Role of the Qays and Yaman Factions in Local Political Divisions: Jabal Nablus Compared with the Judean Hills in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Asian and African Studies* 9 (1973): 284; Salim Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation in Recent Palestinian History," in Owen, ed., *Studies in the Economic and Social History*, 177–202.

12 Several accounts of the intermediary role played by the church are found in local histories of Ramallah and the surrounding region. See Abu-Rayya, *Ramallah Qadiman,* 25–26; Yusif Qaddura, *Tarikh Madinat Ramallah*, 2nd ed. [A History of the City of Ramallah] (Amman: Rafidi Printers, 1999), 27, 32–33, 36–37; Fathi Ahmad, *Tarikh al-Rif al-Filastini fi al-'Ahd al-'Uthmani: Mantiqat Bani Zayd Kanamuthaj* [A History of the Palestinian Countryside in the Ottoman Era: the Bani Zayd Area as a Model] (Ramallah: Nasa Center, 1992), 168–69. Aziz Shahin, Jiryis Qaddura, and other local historians have noted good relations between the church and the authorities in Jerusalem. See Qaddura, *Tarikh Madinat Ramallah*, 37.

13 These petitions, dating from the middle of the nineteenth century and after, can be found in the archive of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem (AEPI), accessible through the Open Jerusalem Project, online at openjerusalem.org/database (accessed 12 July 2020).

14 Ahmad has given several examples of

shaykhs who had laid claim to land outside their purview: the Abu-Ghosh, Sahwayl, and Baraghitha had acquired land in many far-flung areas as part of their tax collecting benefits. See Ahmad, *Tarikh*, 52, 159–60.

15 Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 330.

16 Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine.*

17 The traditional narrative about land allocation is found in Abu-Rayya, *Ramallah*, 21; Qaddura, *Tarikh Madinat Ramallah*, 12–14; Azeez Shaheen, *Ramallah, its History and its Genealogies* (Birzeit University, 1982), 22. Elihu Grant, an American missionary and biblical scholar who lived in Ramallah from 1901 to 1904 as superintendent of the local Quaker School, discusses the general mode of allotting land for tilling in Ramallah. See Elihu Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 2nd ed., (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1921), 131.

18 Ahmad, *Tarikh*, 53.

19 Ahmad, *Tarik*h, 53–54; Ibtisam Iskafi, interview with Nasir al-Din Nashashibi, *Al-Quds*, 13 November 1995.

20 Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 223.

21 Abu-Rayya, *Ramallah*, 21. Versions of this are reproduced in Assad Saied Kassees, *The People of Ramallah: A People of Christian Arab Heritage* (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1971); and in Mariam Zarour, "Ramallah, My Home Town," *Middle East Journal* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1953), 430–39.

22 Abu-Rayya, *Ramallah,* 21. Elihu Grant reported on village social groups (calling them "tribes") in the opening years of the twentieth century, mentioning the Hadada-Hama'il division quite along the lines described by Abu-Rayya. See Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 51–52. It is not clear why one of the kinship groups (hama'il) was given the name Hama'il, since both the Hama'il and the Hadada were considered hama'il. The tosheh referred to in the traditional lore was a violent altercation involving many individuals, including women.

23 Abu-Rayya, *Ramallah*, 21.

24 Jirius Mansur, "Autobiography," unpublished manuscript, 103; courtesy of Donn Hutchinson.

25 Ramallah Municipal Council decisions 109, 114, and 115 for the year 1914.

26 "Baba Hanna, A Remembrance in Words and Pictures," Lil' Hanoon Productions, 2004 (no longer available online; accessed in 2011). This is a memorial to Hanna Batih written in English by his "family and friends."

27 Interview with the son of a prominent landowning family who later became a university professor.

28 There are some exceptions; some men from the Hama'il converted for reasons having to do with marriage to Protestant women.

29 Most of these buildings are documented in the superb volume by Nazmi al-Juʻbeh and Khaldun Bshara, *Ramallah: ʻAmara wa Tarikh* [Ramallah: Architecture and History]. (Institute for Jerusalem Studies and Riwaq, 2002).

30 Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 192, 199.

31 Grant, The People of Palestine, 214.

32 Abu-Rayya, *Ramallah,* 24.

33 Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Landed Property, Palestinian Migration to America and the Emergence of a New Local Leadership: al-Bireh 1919–1947," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 36 (Winter 2009): 13–33. Online at (IPS) bit.ly/31x3Fwl (accessed 27 August 2020). Abdel Jawad also notes one of the ironies of history (what one may consider an act of historic revenge), whereby émigré wealth enabled the purchase of Nashashibi-owned land in the Ramla area (25–26).

34 Thomas Ricks, *Turbulent Times in Palestine: the Diaries of Khalil Totah, 1886–1955* (Institute for Palestine Studies and PASSIA, 2009), 110.

35 Jeffrey Reger, *Planting Palestine: the Political Economy of Olive Culture in the Twentieth Century, Galilee and West Bank* (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2018), 33, 75–77.

36 Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 139. Naseeb Shaheen has a photo of Ramallah women sorting raisins, taken sometime before 1910. See Shaheen, *A Pictorial History*, Part I, 152.

37 Abdul Latif Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine 1800–1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 104.

38 Rafiq Farah, *Tarikh al-Kanisa al-Usqufiyya fi Mutraniyyat al-Quds*, 1841–1991 [The History of the Episcopal Church in the Jerusalem Bishopric, 1841–1991] (n.p., 1995), 340.

39 Tibawi, *British Interests*, 91, 95.

40 Shaheen, A *Pictorial History*, Part II, 33.

41 Tibawi, *British Interests*, 225. The Bishop Gobat School was taken over by the CMS in later years; see Tibawi, *British Interests*, 159–60.

42 Tibawi, *British Interests*, 160–61.

43 The sources consulted about the Quaker presence include American Friends Board of Foreign Missions, *Foreign Mission Work of American Friends, from the Beginning to the Year 1912,* 139–67; Friends Syrian Mission annual reports for 1886, 1887, and 1889; Ricks, *Turbulent Times*, 100; Anisa Ma'luf, *Mu'assasat Jam'iyat al-Asdiqa' al-Amrikiyya fi Filastin min 1869–1939* [The American Friends Association in Palestine, 1869–1939], Cairo: Modern Publishing, n.d.); and Shaheen, *A Pictorial History*, vol. 2, 33–34.

44 Abdel Jawad, "Landed Property," 19.

45 Tibawi, *British Interests*, 160.

46 Interview with the son of a prominent Greek Orthodox family of the Hama'il.

47 Tibawi, *British Interests*, 109–110.

48 Charlotte Van der Leest, *Conversion and Conflict in Palestine: The Missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Protestant Bishop Samuel Gobat* (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2008), 182–83.

49 Anis Sayigh, *Anis Sayigh 'an Anis Sayigh* [Anis Sayigh on Anis Sayigh] (Beirut: Riad al-Rayyes Books, 2006), 122, online at (us. archive.org) bit.ly/34CmCzB (accessed on 27 August 2020).

50 'Umar al-Salih al-Barghuthi, *Al-Marahil, Tarikh Siyasi* [Stages, a Political History] (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 2001), 105.

51 These are works by David E. Lorenz, H.W. Dunning, William Barton, William Baxter Godbey, Charles B. Trumbull, Addison Naylor, McCready and Tyndall, H.M. Wharton, Rosa Lee, Ellen Clare Pearson, and the Baedeker guides for 1909 and 1912, and several other books.

52 Farah, *Tarikh al-Kanisa*, 182–83.

53 Farah, *Tarikh al-Kanisa*, 339.

54 Bin Nasir, *Tarikh Bir Zayt*, 37.

55 Farah, *Tarikh al-Kanisa*, 183, 192.

56 Farah, *Tarikh al-Kanisa*, 340.

57 Ma'luf, *Mu'assasat,* 25.

58 Friends' Syrian Mission, "17th Annual Report of the Year 1886," 9.

59 T. Jack Thompson, *Light on Darkness?: Missionary Photography of Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 128, 130.

60 *Hamilton Advertiser*, October 1883, online at www.stonehouseonline.org.uk/newspapers. html#1880s (accessed 12 July 2020).

61 David Bennett, *The General: William Booth,* vol. 2 (Xulon Press, 2003), 380–81.

62 "Unique Speaker Moves Hearers," *Gloversville Morning Herald*, 10 January 1920 (no longer available online).

63 Shaheen, *A Pictorial History*, vol. 1, 191.

64 *Falastin,* 3 October 1946 *(*death notice).

65 Personal communication with his granddaughter Suhaila Hishmeh Haddad, May 2011.

66 Ma'luf, *Mu'assasat*, 21.

67 Abdel Jawad, "Landed Property," 30.

68 Among the several news items about his trip is one in the *Pittsburg Press*, 14 February 1903, 2 under "Church Notes"; online at bit. ly/3aVej37 (accessed 2 August 2020).

69 "'Joseph the Eloquent' gives hourly lectures at Jerusalem," *St. Louis Republic*, 9 October 1904, online at (Library of Congress) bit. ly/32u0Zij (accessed 12 July 2020).

70 Anisa Audi, *From Ramallah, Palestine to Lake Wales, Florida and In-Between* (New York: Vintage Press, 1992), 1; Qaddura, *Tarikh Madinat Ramallah*, 123.

71 Friends Syrian Mission Report 1887, 30

72 Audi, *From Ramallah*, 4; Ma'luf, *Mu'assasat*, 50–51.

73 Audi, *From Ramallah,* 20.

74 Keith Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 8.

75 Norris, "Return Migration," 62.

76 Norris, "Return Migration," 63.

77 Norris, "Return Migration," 71.

78 Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (University of California Press, 2001), 11.

79 Qaddura, *Tarikh Madinat Ramallah,* 118.

80 A local history of Ramallah mentions the purchase of land in Jaffa, Tulkarm, Bisan, and in east Jordan as well. See Qaddura, *Tarikh Madinat Ramallah*, 117.

81 Interview with Salim Salim, the son of Ibrahim Salim, 24 April 2011, in Ramallah.

82 The volume by al-Ju'beh and Bshara, *Ramallah,* traces these developments in great detail.

83 Al-Ju'beh and Bshara, *Ramallah*, 228.

84 For a description of the *ahwash*, see al-Ju'beh and Bshara, *Ramallah*, 20–22.

85 Harry Dunning, *To-day in Palestine* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1907), 95.

86 Ricks, *Turbulent Times*, 110–11.

87 Yusif al-Hakim mentions a French "nobleman" residing in Jaffa who vacationed in Ramallah. See Yusif al-Hakim, *Suriya wa'l 'Ahd al-'Uthmani,* 4th ed. [Syria and the Ottoman Era] (Beirut: An-Nahar Publishing, 1991), 206.

88 *Falastin*, 5 June 1912.

89 *Mir'at al-Sharq*, 15 May 1926.

90 It does not appear that what were called "casinos" in this period engaged in gambling; their activities were described as mostly dancing and music.

91 *Palestine Post*, 7 June 1933.

92 *Falastin*, 4 August 1938.

93 Ricks, *Turbulent Times*, 231.

94 Ramallah municipal council minutes, decisions taken several times in 1927, 1932 and 1933. Al-Ju'ba and Bshara, *Ramallah*, provides an intimate history of the hotel and the family's women, 190–203.

95 Two of them, Anisa and Najla, later worked in the Mandate government and had many escapades. See Audi, *From Ramallah.*

96 Andrea Stanton, "Locating Palestine's Summer Residence: Mandate Tourism and National Identity," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 44–62.

97 *Palestine Post*, 24 July 1933.

98 John Berger must have been told this when he visited Ramallah many years later: "Long ago, in another life, before the nakba, Ramallah was, for the well-off, a town of leisure and ease, a place to retreat to from nearby Jerusalem during the hot summers, a resort." See John Berger, "A Moment in Ramallah," *London Review of Books*, 25, no. 14 (24 July 2003): 21.

99 *Mir'at al-Sharq*, 2 July 1929.

100 The only exception is a sociological study of the mountain village of Brummana in Lebanon, exploring the village's experience of *istiyaf* as it was developing into a major summer resort, and an essay about Bhamdoun. See Richard Alouche, *Évolution d'un centre de villégiature au Liban (Broummana)* (Dar El-Machreq éditeurs, 1970); Kamal Salibi, "Bhamdoun: Historical Portrait of a Lebanese Mountain Village," (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1997).

101 Raja Shehadeh, *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine* (Penguin, 2003), 3, 31–32.

102 Yasmin Zahran, *Al-Lahn al-Awwal* [The First Melody] (Amman: Dar al-Karmil, 1991), 47–48.

"The Roots for a Palestinian Nahda"

Zulfa al-Sa'di and the Advent of Palestinian Modern Art

Laura Tibi

Abstract

This article examines the significance of Zulfa al-Sa'di's paintings in the advent of modern art in Palestine. Although her work was largely prompted by the political context of 1930s Palestine, al-Sa'di also drew from a robust archive of images, newspapers, and texts, recognizing their value as agents of national unity. Her ability to bridge Islamic themes with Christian motifs, historical texts with contemporary media, politics with poetry, painting with photography, and art with nationalism made her work palatable to an Arab intelligentsia who sought to reconcile tradition with modernity. Additionally, this paper will consider the context in which al-Sa'di's oeuvres gained traction, most notably the 1933 National Arab Fair in Jerusalem. National fairs represented a pivotal shift in the production, consumption, and exhibition of culture. They not only facilitated the display of Palestinian art, but also informed its content and purpose. The paper demonstrates that al-Sa'di's apparently traditional portraits relied on an intrinsically modern system of representation underpinned by the fair's political agenda. By contextualizing al-Sa'di's portraits and reading them against her cache of historical and contemporary references, this article aims to give a more substantial account of al-Sa'di, giving back visibility and agency to her life and work and asserting her importance in the history of Palestinian art.

Keywords

Palestinian art; painting; photography; modernism; tradition; nationalism; nahda; archives; exhibitions; fairs.

Editor's Note:

A notable contribution to the Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem 2020 Round.

Much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised.

– Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

In July of 1933, people from all over the Arab world gathered in Jerusalem for the opening of the First National Arab Fair. Organized in an era of British and French mandates, the fair sought to promote independence and Arab unity in the face of growing Western imperialism. The Palestinian newspaper *al-'Arab* described the fair as "the roots for a Palestinian renaissance [*nahda*]," and, more broadly, the grounds for "strengthening relations with neighboring Arab countries."[1] Held in the newly built Palace Hotel, the fair boasted Arab industrial and cultural innovations, avidly promoting the consumption of Arab goods among Arab nations. While the fair's industrial exhibits were motivated by national interests (*maslahat al-watan*), the cultural displays solidified its pan-Arab objective, conveying the urgency of the Arab nation's unified cause against imperialism (*qaddiyat al-umma al-'Arabiyya*).

Paintings, textiles, ceramics, and other arts and crafts graced the rooms and walls of the first floor. According to a 1933 issue of *Falastin*, "the fourth room," located in the northeast corner of the first floor (figure 1), contained "several alluring oil paintings that received admiration and amazement from foreigners before locals."[2] The article went on to list the artists or creators (*sani'un*) of the works on display, most of whom remain unknown. Among these artists was Zulfa al-Sa'di (1910–1988), a Palestinian woman who was only twenty-three years old at the time.[3] Her repertoire included traditional embroidery, paintings of landscapes and village life, and, most notably, portraits of anticolonial Arab leaders and thinkers.

The exhibition's guest book entries reveal a great degree of enthusiasm for al-Sa'di's portraits, often conflating her painterly skills with Arab national pride; and a devout appreciation for her embroidery, which "upheld her commitment to her roots."[4] In this paper, I will examine the subjects and methods of al-Sa'di's portraits in order to understand the content, intention, and reception of her work. I will specifically assess the men she chose to paint as their images, widely circulated in print media, assume ubiquity in the modern Arab imagination. Additionally, I will consider the display tactics of the 1933 exhibition, which showcased al-Sa'di's portraits together with her embroidery, blurring the classed and gendered distinctions between fine arts and crafts. The synthesis between al-Sa'di's graceful cross-stitching and politically motivated portraits, I argue, is not uncalculated. Rather, it demonstrates how both fine arts and crafts became conduits of a modern Palestinian visual identity.

On the surface, al-Sa'di's portraits appear to be traditional, however, her method of construction and politically motivated choice of subjects inflect them with a modern

character. This paper will assess al-Saʻdi's portraits of the Hashemite Arab leader, Sharif Husayn Ibn ʻAli, his son, King Faysal I of Iraq, and the Egyptian poet, Ahmad Shawqi. Al-Saʻdi's portraits of these three Arab luminaries participated in the fair's project of pan-Arab unity while also conveying a distinctly Palestinian experience of modernity, colored and informed by her encounters with British imperialism and Zionist settler colonialism. By studying the formal aspects of al-Saʻdi's portraits, and engaging with theoretical debates around photography and nationalism, I hope to produce a more substantial account of al-Saʻdi, giving back visibility and agency to her life and work and asserting her importance in the advent of modern art in Palestine.
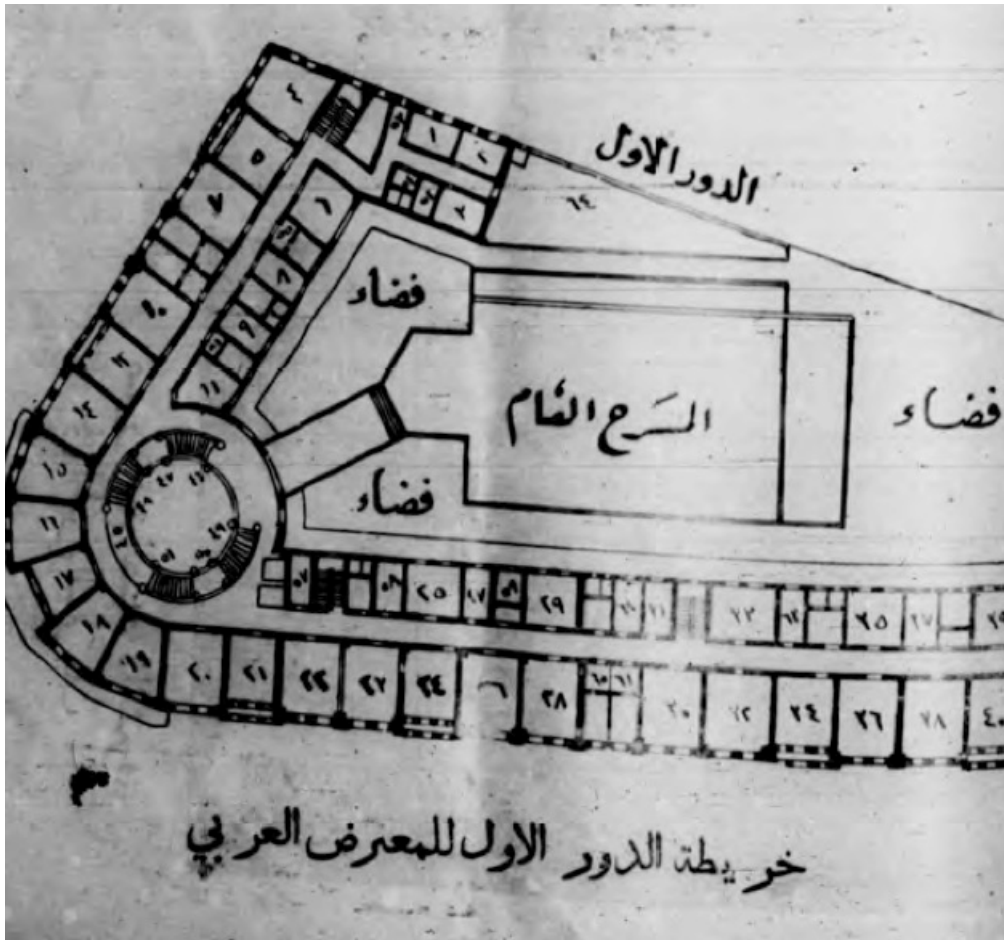

Figure 1. "Plan of the First Floor of the Arab Fair," *al-ʻArab*, 15 July 1933, 25, Institute for Palestine Studies archives. Al-Saʻdi's exhibition space was in the fourth room in the northeast corner.

Newspapers in Mandatory Palestine

Al-Saʿdi's portraits of Arab national figures relied on a pervasive reservoir of images, printed and circulated in newspapers. During Mandatory Palestine (1920–48), thirty-eight new newspapers had emerged, eleven of which were dailies.[5] Daily newspapers were especially significant as they were able to keep up with the volatile political climate and erratic colonial fabric of Palestine. Al-Saʿdi's portraits mimic the format of newspapers, combining both image and text. Her use of the image-text format signals the tremendous influence of print capitalism in 1930s Palestine, which came to be crucial in the development of a national Palestinian consciousness. Newspapers also contributed to the collapse of spatial and temporal barriers as they made the distant near, the singular multiple, the anonymous familiar, and the ephemeral archivable. Benedict Anderson describes the newspaper phenomenon as a ceremony of "simultaneous consumption," paradoxical in its private yet synchronized performativity. In this way, newspapers produce imagined communities as each member privately participates in the daily collective ritual of reading. The simultaneous "calendrical coincidence" and mass dissemination of newspapers therefore forge ties between populations who, despite their anonymity, are able to collectively participate in imagining their nation. This generates collective communities that willfully imagine and construct the modern nation.[6] In his theorization of modern nations, Anderson incorporates Walter Benjamin's concept of "messianic" and "homogenous empty time."[7] While messianic time is rupture, homogenous empty time is structured around the consistent renewal of equal, contingent moments, flowing in an uninterrupted stream of linearity. For Anderson, print capitalism can only exist in a vacuum of homogenous and empty time. It is wired into the calendars and clocks of modernity, activating a lateral, horizontal stretch of modern space-time. Here, simultaneity, contemporaneity, and linearity create the optimal conditions under which modern nations can emerge and endure. Newspapers play a central role in this horizontalization, cementing individual consciousness through their mechanical reproduction and "clocking" of a simultaneous space-time.[8]

Similarly, the replicable nature of photography lends itself to circulation and mass consumption, consolidating the image of the modern nation. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin argues that the reproducibility of photography obliterates the aura or fetishistic power in a work of art, rendering the "authentic" copy futile.[9] The mass dissemination of print media therefore eclipsed any need to refer to the original copy. In this process of painting after photography, al-Saʿdi breaks the chain of mechanical reproduction. While her painterly intervention arguably bestowed a new aura upon her portraits, al-Saʿdi's method is ultimately dependent on images. In fact, the intention behind her portraits might not have been understood had there not been such widely circulated photographic references. Her portraits were therefore popular precisely because they mirrored the celebrated images of Arab national figures.

Figure 2. The front cover of *Falastin, 7* July 1933, Institute for Palestine Studies archives. The building photographed at the top is the Palace Hotel, where the 1933 fair took place. This cover also shows us the popularity of portrait photography in 1930s Palestine.

Sharif Husayn

Al-Sa'di's portrait of the Hashemite Arab leader, Sharif Husayn (figure 3), was based on a photograph that was widely disseminated during al-Sa'di's lifetime (figures 4–7).[10] The foreground of the original photograph featured a spread for Arabic coffee that was cropped out of several iterations. As Nisa Ari has observed, this strategic cropping preserved the dignity of the Sharif, whose royal stature demanded a serious political portrait devoid of domestic or leisurely displays.[11] Al-Sa'di's portrait also mimics the cropping and layout of newspaper prints as she replaces Husayn's embellished *rakwa* (coffee pot) and *finjan* (cup)with a commemorative poem:

> This is the one whose power is known to all the tribes
> He is known by the Holy House [the Ka'ba] and sacred lands
> This is the son of Fatimah, as you may know him
> By his grandfather, the final prophet of God
> —He died on Thursday at six in the morning on the eighteenth of
> Muharram in the year 1350 Hijri, June fourth, 1931.

The poem, written by the Umayyad poet, al-Farazdaq, had originally paid tribute to the Prophet Muhammad's great grandson.[12] By reiterating al-Farazdaq's verses, al-Sa'di venerates and memorializes the Sharif, affirming his piety and reminding us of his ancestral ties to the Prophet. While al-Saʿdi's formal style and integration of image and text recalls *Qudsi* (Jerusalemite) Christian icon painting traditions, her reference to the Prophet, the Ka'ba, and the Islamic date of Sharif Husayn's passing highlight the Sharif's religiosity and pan-Islamic doctrines.[13]

Al-Sa'di's decision to paint Sharif Husayn during an era of British imperialism is rather compelling given his former alliance with Britain. This alliance culminated in the 1916 Arab Revolt against the Ottomans who, to echo Husayn, "rejected God's word."[14] While Britain sought to curb Ottoman control for political reasons, the Sharif was largely motivated by his desire for a unified Islamic state. For Husayn, the Arab Revolt was not a secular, national uprising, but an Islamic-motivated insurrection that sought to overthrow the "impious" Ottomans[15] and preserve the tenets of Islam under a united nation or *umma* of Arab Muslims. In exchange for Arab compliance and manpower, the Sharif demanded that Britain recognize his control of an independent Muslim Arab state stretching from modern day Syria to Yemen.[16] While Husayn's request was excessive, or, as the British put it, "tragi-comic,"[17] they eventually came to an agreement. This agreement, however, was not clear-cut. Rather, it lay in a series of vaguely composed correspondences between Husayn and the High Commissioner in Egypt, Henry McMahon.[18] The lack of clarity around what constituted Arab territory, and the absence of a map with clearly defined borders later allowed the British to go back on their agreement. Nevertheless, Husayn agreed to McMahon's terms and joined forces with the British. Their alliance culminated in the defeat of the Ottomans who were forced to cede their control of the Middle Eastern territories. Despite the support and casualty of thousands of Arab troops, the British reneged

on their agreement with Husayn, seizing control of the majority of the Arab states and partitioning them into British and French mandate territories.

Al-Sa'di's painting of Sharif Husayn was therefore controversial. On the one hand, he had been a pawn in the Middle Eastern theatre of World War I; on the other, he helped facilitate Britain's imperial agenda. He may have been so blinded by his desire for a unified Arab state that he unknowingly helped enable the frenzy of British and French mandates. Despite his failed attempt at Arab independence, Sharif Husayn came to symbolize Arab unity. Al-Sa'di's use of Christian icon painting techniques for his portrait can therefore be read as a gesture towards religious coexistence and an invitation to pan-Arab unity and solidarity. This would have certainly expressed the national mood of the time as several newspapers condemned the sectarian rift between Muslim and Christian Palestinians, urging them to come together for the sake of the nation.[19]

Figure 3. Zulfa al-Sa'di, "Sharif Husayn," c. 1931, oil on cavas, 70 x 50 cm. Isma'il Shammout Private Collection, Darat al-Funun archives, Amman, Jordan.

King Faysal I

Al-Sa'di's painting of Sharif Husayn's son, Faysal I, King of Iraq (figure 8) is much more controversial as he had signed the Faysal-Weizmann Agreement in 1919, approving Zionist intentions for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.[20] The Faysal-Weizmann document was issued in English, which Faysal could not read, and poorly translated by the British colonial officer Thomas Edward Lawrence. Faysal had signed the documents with a stipulation stating that Jewish refugees are welcome to
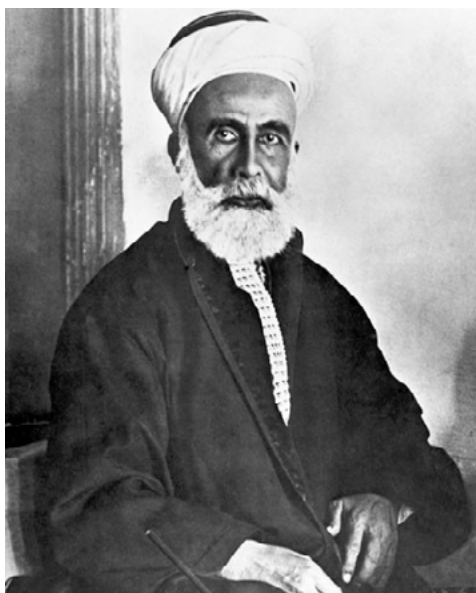

Figure 4. Photograph of Sharif Husayn, nineteenth century, photographer unknown, online at commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sherif-Hussein.jpg (accessed 16 July 2020).

Palestine under the condition that Palestine remains an independent Arab nation. Although Faysal's conditions did not align with the agreement, Zionists had continued to present the document as proof of prior Arab compliance. Moreover, while Lawrence had translated Faysal's caveat into English, neither the original Arabic nor its English translation were included at the Paris Peace Conference. The complete version of the agreement was not made public until 1936, when it was printed in an issue of the *Times*. However, by then America had already favored Zionist leadership.[21] Faysal had tried to convene with Britain in order to come to an agreement, and while he had not succeeded, al-Sa'di's decision to depict both him and his father could possibly allude to the fact that they were both deceived by the British.

Despite the controversy of the Faysal-Weizmann agreement, King Faysal was widely revered by Palestinians. His political philosophy of Arab *wihda* (unity) and *wattaniya* (patriotism) particularly resonated with nationalist political factions such as the Palestinian Independence Party, *Hizb al-Istiqlal*.[22] Unsurprisingly, the founder of the *Istiqlal* Party, 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi, was a close acquaintance of Faysal.[23] (Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, the manager of the Arab Bank and the financial force behind the 1933 Arab Fair, and Nabih al-'Azmah, the director of exhibitions, were also members of al-Istiqlal).[24] Moreover, 'Isa al-'Isa, the managing director of the fair, was a staunch supporter of Faysal and had developed rapport with him from as early as 1918. During their first meeting, Faysal offered al-'Isa a job to work for him in Damascus, addressing him with the following words, "I know you, sir, through your *Falastin* newspaper, because we read it in the literary club in Istanbul and we greatly appreciate your efforts."[25] Al-'Isa accepted his offer and remained in his service until Damascus fell to the French. In 1932, Faysal invited al-'Isa to the Iraqi Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition in Baghdad. It was after his return that he became "even more enthusiastic about the idea of an Arab Exhibition in Palestine," and "began to propagate this idea and write several articles on it."[26] Given al-'Isa's loyalty and admiration for Faysal, and Hilmi and al-'Azmah's association with Hizb al-Istiqlal, it is certainly possible that they commissioned al-Sa'di to paint Faysal or, for that matter, any other of her political portraits. Whether or not she painted them on her own terms is unclear.

Al-Sa'di's portrait of Faysal aptly communicates his exalted status, while maintaining a sense of sincerity. His earnest expression and graceful demeanor, characterized by the kind look of his downturned eyes and the slight curling of his lips, counters the droopy, solemn stare of his father. His suit and tie, perhaps a sartorial gesture towards a new and "modern" era, stand in sharp contrast to his father's traditional robe and turban. In his book on the Paris Peace Conference, Robert Lansing, the United States Secretary of State, dedicates an entire chapter to Faysal (then prince), describing, in abundant detail, his appearance, character, and overall bearing:

> The features of the Arab Prince were clear-cut, regular, and typical of his race […] His lips, which were partially hidden by a small mustache, were red and full, but did not indicate grossness or sensuality. His complexion was sallow and slightly mottled like the majority of those of pure Semitic

blood. His face was thin and, though with few lines and wrinkles, was strong and earnest in expression. His dark eyes were serene and kindly, but one could easily imagine that they would flash fire under the excitement of conflict or the impulse of violent emotion.[27]

Figure 5. Unidentified newspaper clipping featuring Sharif Husayn's photograph, c. 1930s, in Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 39.
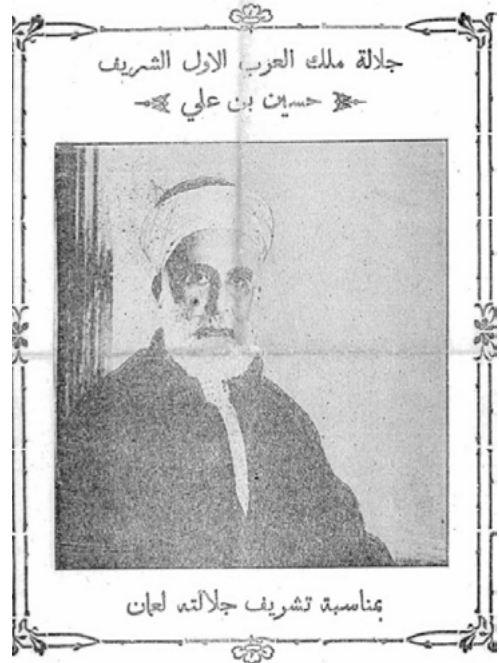
Figure 6. "The King of Arabs, His Highness Sharif Husayn Ibn 'Ali…On the occasion of welcoming his highness to Amman," *al-Nafir*, 17 January 1924, Institute for Palestine Studies archives.

Although laden with Orientalizing tropes, Lansing's gratuitous description of the king's facial features has a function of attestation, authenticating the truthfulness of al-Sa'di's portrait. But the realistic feel of al-Sa'di's portrait does not solely stem from her painterly aptitude. It is more so al-Sa'di's ability to depict the internal spirit and character of the leader that makes the painting so compelling. As Lansing noted, he was "the personification of a cause, the living inspiration to Arab unity and independence,"[28] and al-Sa'di's portrait seamlessly embodied the cause and its champion so that both were one and the same.

In September of 1933, Faysal passed away. Several Palestinian newspapers featured obituaries on the late king (figures 9 and 10).[29] The Palestinian newspaper, *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, published an entire issue in tribute to Faysal, and the featured photo appears almost identical to al-Sa'di's painting of him (figure 9). Al-Sa'di's text is visually comparable to the caption and poem included below the photograph in *al-Jami'a*. The fact that this issue was published months after al-Sa'di's painting had
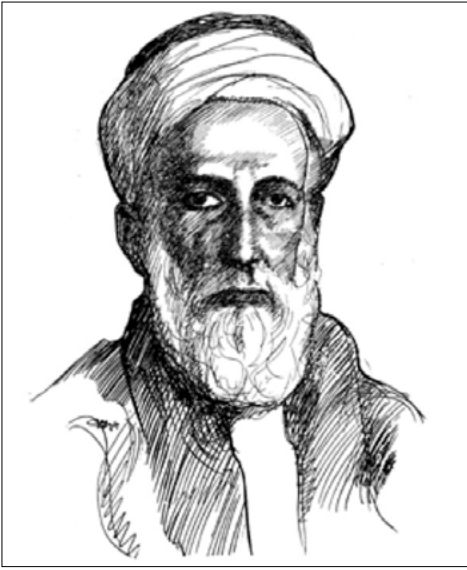
Figure 7. Sketch of Sharif Husayn by the famous Lebanese writer, Khalil Gibran, c. 1916, reproduced in "Al-Husayn al-Awwal, Malik al-Hijaz," *al-Funun* 3, no. 7 (July 1918): 508–12. Gibran's sketch indicates that this photo must have been widespread prior to the 1920s.

Figure 8. Zulfa al-Sa'di, "King Faysal I of Iraq," c. 1931, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Isma'il Shammout Private Collection, Darat al-Funun archives, Amman, Jordan.

been exhibited at the Arab Fair demonstrates the mutually performative nature of portrait painting and photography. While this photograph existed before al-Sa'di's painting, it is also important to consider that the structure and composition of portrait photography itself is based on painting. In this way, portrait photography is *a priori* informed by portrait painting. Moreover, the texts in al-Sa'di's paintings take the form and function of a newspaper caption as opposed to a painting title. As Benjamin articulated, "captions have become obligatory" in this age of mechanical reproduction, adopting "an altogether different character than the title of a painting."[30]

Ahmad Shawqi

Al-Sa'di not only painted political leaders, but cultural figures as well. A notable example is her portrait of the Egyptian poet, Ahmad Shawqi (figure 11). Shawqi served as the Khedive's court poet for twenty years, until the outbreak of World War I. By 1914, the British had overthrown the Ottomans, Egypt's Khedive was dethroned, and Shawqi, who had written numerous poems condemning Britain's colonial regime, was forced into exile.[31] One of his most well-known poems titled, "A Farewell to Lord Cromer," was written in response to a 1907 farewell speech delivered by the British colonial administrator and controller-general of Egypt, Evelyn Baring, Earl

of Cromer.[32] In his speech, Cromer noted the ungratefulness of the Egyptians, who failed to recognize "the instrumentality of England, that had raised them from the slough of despond."[33] Published within five days of Cromer's speech, Shawqi's poem condemned Cromer's arrogance and the violence and humiliation brought by Britain's colonial administration. Shawqi's poem was so widely circulated and celebrated among Arabs that the Lebanese Druze prince, Shakib Arslan, wrote, "We do not believe that there was in Egypt and the neighboring countries any man of letters or even any appreciator of literature who did not memorize Shawqi's poem and was not indebted to him for it."[34]

Al-Sa'di's painting is based on a photograph of Shawqi (figure 12). It is difficult to pinpoint the origin of this photograph, however, as we have seen with Benjamin, "to ask for the 'authentic' print" in this case "makes no sense."[35] For Benjamin, the emptying of authenticity further transforms art's ritualistic function into politics. In Mandatory Palestine, photography gained currency in its capacity to document a new age of revolutions and contestations (to echo Roland Barthes),[36] and newspapers spurred this very documentation. For Barthes, photography also "produces death while trying to preserve life."[37] The *click* is the decisive moment that determines the fate of the living object, before permanently transforming it into a "death mask."[38] It is the point at which the fleeting present is captured, preserved, and archived. The metaphor of the Barthean death mask particularly applies to al-Sa'di's portrait of Sharif Husayn, which notes the date of his death, and Ahmad Shawqi, which refers to him as the late (*marhum*) prince of poets. It is as though they died the moment al-Sa'di finished "capturing" them, permanently preserving their memory into a tangible archival record. The fact that al-Sa'di was aware of their recent deaths – down to the exact day and time in the case of Husayn – is a direct result of the newspaper phenomenon, which continues to compress space and time.

Figure 10. "A Great Catastrophe Upon Arabs After the Passing of King Faysal in Bern," *Falastin*, 9 September 1933, Institute for Palestine Studies archives.

الذي يصل جثمانه صباح هذا اليوم على ظهر سفينة بريطانية قادمة من برنديزي الى حيفا
و منها يحمل على متن طائرة خاصة الى بغداد

زار جلالته هذه البلاد المقدسة قبل ثلاثة اشهر في طريقه الى اوروبا و كانت تحف به القلوب وتتبعه
الانظار . واليوم يعود اليها في طريقه الى عاصمة ملكه وهو جثة هامدة قد انطوت فيها ابرز صفحة من
صفحات جهاد العرب في سبيل حريتهم واستقلالهم
فسلام الله عليه ورحمته ، يوم ولد ويوم مات ويوم يبعث حيا

قد روع الناس ومات الكمال   وصاح صرف الدهر ابنه الرجال
هذا مليك العرب في نعشه   قوموا انظروا كيف تسير الجبال

Figure 9. "A Commemoration of King Faysal," *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya,* 14 September 1933, Institute for Palestine Studies archives. Caption: "His Highness visited this Holy Land three months ago on his way to Europe. People were mesmerized by him. Today, he returns to it [Jerusalem] on his way to the capital of his kingdom [Baghdad] as a [deceased or lifeless] body, which holds with it the most prominent pages from the history of Arab freedom and independence. So may peace be upon him and may God bless him; the day he was born, the day he died, and the day he will be resurrected." At the bottom (last two lines) is a poem lamenting Faysal's death. Notice how the text is similar to al-Sa'di's.

The "Performative After-Effect"

Benjamin argues that the highly prescribed image-text format of print media gives us clearer "signposts," prescribing and naturalizing the meanings behind politically charged photographs.[39] Stephen Sheehi locates this naturalization in Arab portrait photography, which, he argues, was "performative rather than productive" as it did not produce any new social relations or discourses.[40] Instead, this "performative after-effect" reinforced existing social values.[41] Just as the photographs of Arab luminaries were printed, distributed, and consumed, so too were the political messages they signified. Al-Sa'di's portraits also exemplify the "performative after-effect" as they do not convey anything particularly new or modern. Rather, they solidify the image and message of Arab unity. But unlike the monochrome photographs that continue to be printed, replicated, and circulated, al-Sa'di's paintings, by virtue of the artist's hand and the medium's inimitability, cannot be reproduced. Moreover, while newspapers and photographic prints were reproducible commodities made with the intention to distribute and sell, al-Sa'di's paintings were not for sale. In the commercial playground of the 1933 fair, al-Sa'di's choice to exhibit for exhibition's sake rather than monetary gain particularly stood out. As a 1933 issue of *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya* noted, "Ms. Zulfa did not offer these works for sale, but rather exhibited them for honorable Arab audiences as proof of the Arab woman's skill, taste, and ability to stand out in the world of art and beauty."[42]

Figure 11. Zulfa al-Sa'di, "Ahmad Shawqi," c. 1931, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Isma'il Shammout Private Collection, Darat al-Funun archives, Amman, Jordan.
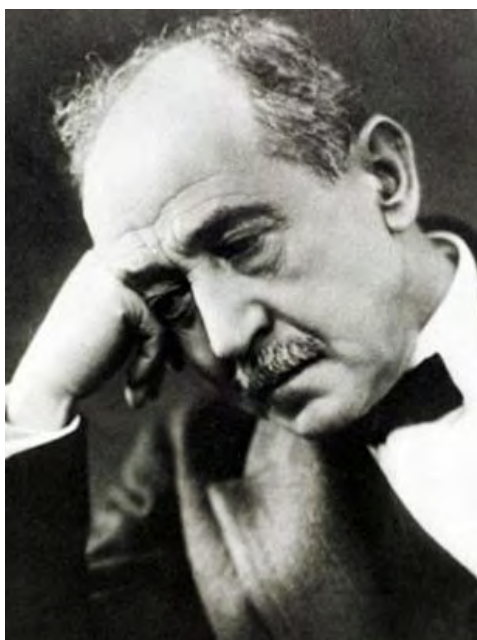

Figure 12. Photograph of Ahmad Shawqi, date unknown, photographer unknown, online at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Shawqi (accessed 16 July 2020).

The Exhibition Guest Book

*Al-Jami'a'*s comment hints at a more pervasive tendency to focus on the artist rather than her art, measuring the value of her work by her good "taste" and refinement rather than on its own merits. Indeed, much of the guest book comments called attention to al-Sa'di's conduct as an Arab woman.[43] A comment made by a man known as 'Abd al-Ghani al-Karmi reads, "We plead to God for more women like Miss Zulfa, so that the men of this nation can come together to revive the glory and civilization that has been wiped out."[44] Another man, referring to himself as the major general to the king of the Arab lands, praised al-Sa'di for her "nobility" (*nubula*).[45] Tanyus Nasr, the owner of *al-Ahram* newspaper, lauded "the wonderful artifacts made by this genteel (*muhadhaba*) Arab lady," which "stir up great hope that our women are on their way to a renaissance."[46] Another visitor, signing his name as "Abu Khaldun from Tulkarim," stated he was "very proud of the artisanal renaissance that is being carried out by young Arab women in Palestine," and hoped that the "young women of the future will follow in al-Sa'di's footsteps."[47] In keeping with the spirit of al-Sa'di's anticolonial portraits, he ended his comment with a political chant: "Onwards, onwards until we gain independence" (rhyming in Arabic: *Ila al-amam ila al-amam hata nayl al-istiqlal*).[48]

The exhibition guest book is one of the only surviving documents that can offer us a glimpse into how al-Sa'di's work was received, as well as the perceived role of women artists or cultural producers at this time. Based on the guest book comments, the value of al-Sa'di's work lay in her manners, decorum, and commitment to her nation. This is what made her a good Arab woman, worthy of admiration and praise. Al-Sa'di was therefore successful in that she managed to make "women's work" comport with nationalism and facilitate a male-driven march towards independence.

Arts, Crafts, and Gendered Space

Al-Sa'di's exhibition at the 1933 Arab Fair represented a turning point in the history of Palestinian culture, when arts and crafts were exhibited for aesthetic contemplation rather than lucrative gain. More importantly, it signified the moment in which visual art in Palestine came to be recognized as a viable means of national expression. Upon first glance, al-Sa'di's portraits appear to be traditional. However, as this paper demonstrated, they were very politically charged. In a similar vein, al-Sa'di's embroidery, which was exhibited alongside her portraits, was ideologized and mobilized for a national cause. In the eyes of her fellow countrymen, al-Sa'di's work presented an opportunity for the Arab woman's political "awakening" and participation in a national project. This project, however, was envisioned and led by men with gendered notions of nationalism, independence, and liberation.[49] After all, if al-Sa'di, who seemed to have reached the zenith of the Arab woman's awakening, continued to be excluded from the political sphere, what chance did her Arab sisters stand? In the words of one visitor, the greatest accomplishment she can aspire to would be "to become the director of an artisanal school for women, so that the future

generation of Arab women can benefit from her distinguished genius and creative taste."[50] Arts and crafts, which were branded as women's work and designated to the domestic sphere, were therefore viewed as appropriate avenues from which women could support Palestine's national cause. The public sphere, on the other hand, was designated for serious political matters. Although al-Saʿdi's works were immersed in political, and therefore public, dialogues, the spaces they occupied—both in the fair and conceptually—were designed, controlled, and moderated by men. While the Arab Fair was public, it did not forego these gendered assumptions of space.

According to Habermas's definition, the public sphere constitutes "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed."[51] Art gave women a way to partake in the cause for Arab nationalism and fairs and exhibitions gave them a platform to present their work, intervene in political issues, and form public opinions. Fairs were therefore crucial sites of modernity that facilitated the display of Palestinian art and influenced political discourse and public opinion. They created a space for articulating and visualizing a modern Palestinian identity that informed and shaped Palestinian art and politics after 1948. In fact, al-Saʿdi could have completely disappeared from history had she not exhibited her work at the fair. Nevertheless, al-Saʿdi's participation in the fair was a complicated instance of visibility as her work was mediated, interpreted, and subsumed by men.

Conclusion

It is striking that we have no images or self-portraits of al-Saʿdi today. Instead, her paintings of well-known Arab men come to stand in for her. It is very unlikely that any live sitters were involved in al-Saʿdi's painting process. Instead, she would have relied on newspapers and photographs as a source of reference. The replicable nature of photography further lends itself to archives and, in this case, to the very archives I am exploring. As I engage with archives, I continue to recognize their power and implication in the project of history. Similarly, al-Saʿdi relied on an archive of images, newspapers, and texts, recognizing their value as agents of national unity. From al-Farazdaq's poetry, to al-ʿArab's newspaper clippings, her cache of references helped bolster the historical significance and political impetus of her work. Her ability to bridge Islamic themes with Christian motifs, historical texts with contemporary media, politics with poetry, painting with photography, and art with nationalism made her work palatable to an Arab audience and intelligentsia who sought to reconcile tradition with modernity.

Due to the limited scholarship on al-Saʿdi, I have had to piece fragments of newspapers and photographs, and carefully study her paintings and the exhibition guest book in order to develop a more representative and generous interpretation of her work. Doing this kind of historical patching is crucial for us to decolonize our archives and introduce these lost figures into global art histories. I want to particularly stress the importance of women in these pursuits as they tend to be excluded from Arab

narratives of resistance and progress. In the complex colonial realities of Palestine, women's liberation struggles have been downplayed at the expense of a unified anticolonial front; however, this unified front can only exist by leveling the playing field. We must therefore assess the politics of archives and of exhibition culture as well as the neglect of women in history, not only to restore and redeem these actors, but also to consider the ways in which our history has been dismembered from within.

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Endnotes

1   "The Opening of the Arab Fair in Jerusalem," *al-'Arab*, 29 April 1933.

2   "The Displays at the Arab Fair," *Falastin*, 21 July 1933.

3   For biographical information on al-Sa'di, see Isma'il Shammout, *Al-fann al-tashkili fi Filastin* [The Fine Arts in Palestine] (Kuwait: Kabs Press, 1989); Shammout, "A Palestinian Artist Presents Her Work at the National Arab Fair in Jerusalem in 1933," Lecture Notes on Zulfa al-Sa'di, 1998; and Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art: 1850–2005* (London: Saqi Books, 2009), 68–69.

4   "Zulfa al-Sa'di's Guest Book from the 1933 Exhibition at the First National Arab Fair," Darat al-Funun Archive, Amman, Jordan, entry dated 27 July 1933.

5   Mustafa Kabha, "The Arabic Palestinian Press between the Two World Wars," in *The Press in the Middle East and North Africa 1850-1950: Politics, Social History, and Culture,* ed. Anthony Gorman and Didier Monciaud (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 103.

6   Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 33–36. See also Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon, *The Origins of Palestinian Art* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 37–40.

7   Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24–26. Makhoul and Hon, 38.

8   Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24–25, 33.

9   Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. and trans. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 171.

10 Gannit Ankori suggests that al-Sa'di's painting of Sharif Husayn could be based on a newspaper clipping of the Arab leader (figure 5). This prompted me to develop Ankori's hunch and solidify the relationship between al-Sa'di's paintings and Palestinian print media. See Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 39. The photograph of Sharif Husayn was more prominently featured on the cover of a 1924 issue of the Palestinian newspaper *al-Nafir* (figure 6) and was also sketched by the Lebanese writer and poet, Khalil Gibran (figure 7). See "The King of Arabs: Husayn ibn 'Ali," *al-Nafir*, 17 January 1924; and "Al-Husayn al-Awwal, Malik al-Hijaz," *al-Funun* 3, no. 7 (1918): 508–12.

11 Nisa Ari, "Cultural Mandates, Artistic Missions, and 'The Welfare of Palestine,' 1876–1948," (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2019), 278.

12 Ari points to this in her dissertation, "Cultural Mandates," 279.

13 Ari, "Cultural Mandates," 278–79.

14 C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Revolt in Arabia* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), 45.

15 Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 288–89.

16 For more on the history of the Arab Revolt, see Robert McNamara, The Hashemites*: The Dream of Arabia* (London: Haus Publishing, 2010), 60–82.

17 Ronald Storrs, *Orientations* (London: I. Nicholson & Watson, 1937), 178. Storrs also noted that the "partial sacrifice of his

[Husayn's] name before Islam," was "vital to our [Britain's] cause."

18 For more on the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence, see McNamara, The Hashemites, 47–49.

19 In 1929, the Christian founder and editor of *Falastin*, 'Isa al-'Isa, proclaimed that "national unity outweighs religious parity," and in 1930, he advocated for ethno-national unity among Muslim and Christian Arabs claiming, "before Christ and Muhammad we were, and always will be, Arab […] for what is [this country's] religion, but Christianity and its dear brother, Islam." Al-'Isa's comments are particularly important in our reading of al-Sa'di's work as he went on to be the managing director of the fair. Al-'Isa's cause for an ethno-national unity, along with the fair's pan-Arab agenda, would have certainly influenced al-Sa'di. See "Christians and Muslims are Brothers and Sisters," *Falastin,* 11 October 1930.

20 'Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 186–90.

21 Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq*.

22 Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 131–32.

23 Muslih, "The Origins," 122–23.

24 Nadi Abusaada, "Self-Portrait of a Nation: The Arab Exhibition in Mandate Jerusalem, 1931–34," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 77 (Winter 2019): 128, online at (IPS) bit.ly/3lmKk8O (accessed 27 August 2020).

25 Noha Tadros Khalaf, *Les mémoires de 'Issa Al-'Isa: Journaliste et intellectuel Palestinien, 1878–1950* (Saint-Denis: Institut Maghreb-Europe, 2009), 73–74.

26 'Isa al-'Isa, "Min dhikrayat al-madi [Memories of the Past]," 62, 'Issa al-'Isa Collection, Institute for Palestine Studies Archive.

27 Robert Lansing, *The Big Four and Others of the Peace Conference* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1921), 164.

28 Lansing, *The Big* Four, 167.

29 See, for example, "A Commemoration of King Faysal," *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, 14 September 1933; and "A Great Catastrophe Upon Arabs After the Passing of King Faysal in Bern," *Falastin*, 9 September 1933.

30 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 171.

31 Donald Malcolm Reid, Whose Pharaohs? *Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 207–208.

32 Hussein Kadhim, "The Poetics of Postcolonialism: Two Qaṣidahs by Aḥmad Shawqi," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28, no. 3 (1997): 182–83, online at www.jstor.org/stable/4183397 (accessed 7 July 2020).

33 "Lord Cromer's Farewell Speech delivered at the Khedival Opera House in Cairo on the evening of May 4, 1907," *Times* (London), 6 May 1907. Reprinted in Kadhim, "The Poetics of Postcolonialism," 209–15.

34 Shakib Arslan, *Shawqi, aw Ṣadaqat arba'in sanah* [Shawqi, or the Friendship of Forty Years] (Cairo: 'Issa al-Bani al-Halabi Press, 1936), 25. See also Mounah Khouri, *Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt: 1882–1922*, vol. 1, in *Studies in Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1971), 73.

35 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 171.

36 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 93–94.

37 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92.

38 Barthes, *Camera Lucida.* See also Stephen Sheehi, "The Nahda After-Image, Or All Photography Expresses Social Relations," *Third Text* 26, 4 (2012): 401; and Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

39 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 173. See also Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Laver and Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993). In order to deconstruct a myth, one must question the values it naturalizes.

40 Sheehi, "The Nahda After-Image," 406.

41 Sheehi, "The Nahda After-Image," 402.

42 "What is Worth Seeing at the Arab Fair," *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, 10 July 1933.

43 For select English translations see Anneka Lenssen, Sarah A. Rogers, and Nada M. Shabout, "Viewing the Exhibition: Guest Book Entries for Zulfa al-Sa'di" in *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents,* trans. Kareem James Abu Zeid (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 77–79.

44 "Zulfa al-Sa'di's Guest Book."

45 "Zulfa al-Sa'di's Guest Book." entry dated 28 July 1933.

46 "Zulfa al-Sa'di's Guest Book,"

47 "Zulfa al-Sa'di's Guest Book." entry dated 26 July 1933.

48 "Zulfa al-Saʿdi's Guest Book."

49 For more on the gendered notion of liberation in a Palestinian context, see Frances Hasso, "Modernity and Gender in the Accounts of the 1948 and 1967 Defeats," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 4 (2000): 492-94.

50 "Zulfa al-Saʿdi's Guest Book," entry by Abd al-Raziq Mayri from Aleppo, Syria, dated 27 July 1933.

51 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 398.

Performing the Collective

Al-Hakawati and Beyond

Ruba Totah

Abstract

The performance experience of theatre and dance has reflected the Palestinian sociocultural situation under colonialism for decades. The early contribution of al-Hakawati theatre troupe to the Palestinian performance renaissance invites examination of how it promoted the centrality of Jerusalem and was the means for discourses about various collectivities in Palestinian society, the societal, religious, and gender discussions within the Palestinian communities. It examines how this discussion influenced parallel performance endeavors in other Palestinian locations concerning social constructs such as class. By comparing the experiences of two generations of Palestinian performers, this essay argues that if national and religious collective identities constantly challenged a gendered one, some tactical initiatives by performing artists encouraged practices towards gender equality within Palestinian society.

Keywords

Collective identity; contemporary folklore; artists from the middle class; arts in Jerusalem; gender; performance in Palestine.

In 2016, the Jerusalem Arts Network SHAFAQ[1] emerged with the vision that art is essential to the lives of Palestinians in Jerusalem and their steadfastness. Through this collaborative space of art activism for producing, promoting, and

representing various artistic productions in and about Jerusalem, the network is reclaiming the position of Jerusalem in the Palestinian cultural scene.

In 2019, a number of cultural events around the performing arts took place in the city. Among them were: the Elia Short Film Festival, an event that connected the city with filmmakers and artists from other Palestinian cities, the Arab region, and the diaspora; Fawanis theatre production, which combined theatre directors, performers, and a diverse Palestinian audience from Jerusalem[2] and outside it; the Jerusalem Nights Festival; the Banat al-Quds[3] music band that toured in several countries; and the travelling performances of the Nakhleh Esheber Institute. In addition, there were performance events which joined Jerusalem with other Palestinian cities such as the Contemporary Dance Festival in Jerusalem, theatre performances from northern Palestine – Haifa and Galilee, and through national institutions such as Tamer Institute. As key components of the current cultural scene in Jerusalem, these performances provide opportunities for exchange and interaction of ideas, performers, and audiences. However, this scene is also constrained by the Israeli occupation practices of isolation, prohibition, interruption of events, and closure of many affiliated centers, as in the 6 August 2019 closure of the Yabous Cultural Center,[4] and the arrest of its director together with the Edward Said Music Conservatory director in July 2020.[5] The scene is also beset by internal complications of conservatism and gender inequalities affecting body representations through a number of taboos, as in the ban of the female dance "Enhedwana" performance at al-Najah University and the pressure against its performance in Jerusalem in December 2019,[6] and the repeated bullying of female artists for standing against escalating punitive policies under the guise of the COVID–19 crisis[7] in the first half of 2020. Amid the enhanced collaboration for cultural participation, and despite the deteriorating sociopolitical situation in the city and in Palestine generally, art continues to be able to uphold its role as a tool of steadfastness and social change.

Since its occupation, the city's political particularity has manifested itself in multilayered dynamics affecting the performance scene. Among those dynamics is the defensive discourse against "de-Palestinianization" and "de-Arabization" of the city, which prompts a cultural tendency toward reinforcing various collective identities of Palestinians. There are also the dynamics created by art producers who hold, as cultural agents, capacities that bring about some balance between the aesthetic aspects of productions and the various collective identities associated with it. In addition, the political dynamics that have caused the city's isolation from its surroundings have resulted in cultural activism being instrumental as a tool for restoring the social fabric and steadfastness. Given this complex scene, this essay examines the various collective identities emerging in Palestine, tackled through the Palestinian performing experience of al-Hakawati theatre in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The article also demonstrates how aspects of Palestinian artists' life experiences, not only those who are active in Jerusalem but others beyond the city, have contributed to restoring modes of cultural activism in the city and the various Palestinian locations.

This article benefited from recent studies on Palestinian performing arts,[8] and on

arts in Jerusalem[9] in the emergence of performance as a collective act. It provides a socio-anthropological analysis of the performing experience, extending the historical understanding of its contribution to the national struggle by introducing subjective reflections by engaged performers in the performance communities in Palestine. It demonstrates al-Hakawati's influence on other contemporary performances produced in Palestine.

Data and Method

This paper uses a narrative analysis of first-hand research carried out over three years, 2011–13, through biographical interviews and documentation on theatre, dance troupes, and productions.[10] Thirty semistructured interviews were conducted with professional performers over the age of eighteen, both women and men, who participated in at least three performances during the period 1960–2013.[11] A methodological decision was made to categorize the artists into two generations of performers: an older generation of performers (above 50 years old) who became trainers later or who no longer perform, and a newer generation of performers who perform currently and consistently within one troupe or more.

Collective Identities and the Performing Artists Groups

Despite calls for modernity, which accompanied the modernization of cities through relations with the British Mandate, trends in art (dance and theatre) in Palestine were derived from the pre-modern era. The twentieth century performing arts created by Palestinians were inspired from Palestinian heritage and demonstrated the consequences of the 1948 Nakba.[12] A reason for maintaining linkage with those traditions is the multiple identities that drove Palestinian society's interests in a colonial context between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Three collective forces, the religious, the national, and the gendered collective identities, were enmeshed with and dominated the emerging performing arts, and influenced strategies of its producers. Several decades before the appearance of al-Hakawati theatre group in Jerusalem in 1977, performances in Palestine shadowed the internal dispute on the themes within the national struggle in Palestine, whether a religious- or a secular-inspired struggle; during certain periods, the struggle conflicted with religiosity, and at other times, it did not.[13] In the late twentieth century, many Palestinians prioritized a collective national identity while battling threats to their existence under Israeli occupation, and performances combined the religious with national affiliations to acknowledge Palestinian resistance. Al-Hakawati theatre in Jerusalem was one of the few emerging ensembles to commit to social and patriotic themes of people's empowerment.

The third collective identity arose as a result of the activism of the women's movement in asserting women's agency in the national struggle. By sharing progressive visions with both the performing troupes and the political factions, the

Palestinian women's movement nurtured the performing arts as a tool to emphasize women's issues and gender equality.[14] Promoting female participation in performance was the task of middle-class agents among women unions. It was also promoted by some members among the national movement factions, and later by civil society organizations concerned with women's rights, and by theatres themselves. However, some challenges faced the female artists within the performing groups, especially challenges pertaining to the conservatism of the other two collectives. As the three collective forces contrasted and clashed within Palestinian society, they created a turbulent socio-political ground for performing artists. They mobilized public opinion regarding the socio-political effectiveness of performance for Palestinians. Such turbulence provokes the question of the role of Palestinian artists' networks and experiences as part of a middle class in conveying the various messaging behind performance in Palestine.

Several studies demonstrate that the middle class contributes to the national economy by its position within social unions, political parties, religious representation, and in media as well as in cultural production.[15] Its cultural capital is its main property,[16] and the stratum of its members support their autonomy from public opinion as a result of their multiple affiliations.[17] Therefore, the middle class remains a force that has access to means and resources, and the will to achieve changes in the social conditions that benefit its members.[18] If performing arts are representations of the society,[19] then middle-class performers are those who mediate between capital and labor through their bodies in performance. This process of mediation reflects the awareness needed among performers to produce various messages that aim at eliminating inequalities related to the multiple collective identities.

In the Palestinian case, Hilal[20] demonstrates that the Palestinian middle class emerged following 1948 through a considerable number of political party intellectuals who had not been part of the working class themselves, nor of the elite, and this caused their marginalization. These groups of intellectuals, including artists, developed within the national movement, even though they did not unite in a class. They invested in community mobilizing towards the priorities of the Palestinian national movement and led the political agenda, which included social and cultural aspects of resistance, and fostered the environment for maintaining their social stratum. The middle-class stratum provided performers among its members with power and prestige needed for social change concerning various equalities and freedoms called upon by the collective identities, such as ending occupation, oppression, and gender inequalities. Manifestations of this class turned the performance into what some termed "a form of nationalist education," or "resistance theatre,"[21] and was ceaselessly confronted by the Israeli occupation through the enforcement of military orders aimed at prohibiting the formation of cultural clubs, and using censorship against cultural activities for Palestinians. These orders actually boosted the agency of art activities as forms of resistance,[22] and led to more troupes emerging during the eighties and nineties focusing on a national collective message similar to Balalin (1971–78) and the Wonder Box (1975–77).[23]

Al-Hakawati Theatre Troupe Experience

Al-Hakawati theatre troupe was active in Jerusalem between 1977 and 1993, and committed to theatre as a promoter of social and political change and extending beyond conventional societal class and traditional understandings of art.[24] Politically, the troupe managed to transform the theatre into a patriotic instrument, as a group member explained: "The [Palestinian] theatre before [us] was more a way to learn English or a fancy way to spend an evening. It did not have any interaction with people's needs."[25] The troupe was closed fourteen times between May 1984 and March 1987, seven times between March and May 1987, and banned by the Israeli occupation during the whole of the first intifada. When it managed to reach out to the community by performing in schoolyards of villages, pressure from the Israeli occupation increased. A founding member, François Abu Salem recalled at the time:

> The permit [obtained from the Israeli occupation authorities in Jerusalem] for our play *Mahjoob* . . . was withheld at first, but we won the case on appeal. Once you get the censor's permit, you face with all sorts of other pressures. Sometimes the [Israeli occupation] police come to us and say we need another permit from them, besides the censor's permit, which is not valid. Alternatively, [an Israeli] government ministry sends a telegram to the schoolmaster on the day we arrive in the village, saying, "Do not give them the use of the school because they are subversive." And you have to fight it, for the schoolmaster, in fact, is allowed to give you the place. But by then, it is not a question of legality anymore, but of pressure.[26]

The themes of their performances centered on enabling the communities to have agency against the occupation such as combining daily routines with practicing disobedience against its regulations. To do so, the troupe succeeded in employing routines that rely on the religious culture to promote a collective national agency through art. For example, one member of the troupe, Radi Shehadeh, connected the publicity for a theatre piece with the religious ritual *athan* (prayers during Ramadan to break the fast following the firing of the cannon), mocking the frequent Israeli calls for curfews. He recalls:

> During Ramadan, we toured al-Mukabir, a suburb of Jerusalem, in a car with a loudspeaker mounted on it, inviting the residents to attend performances in the main square. This amplified announcement mimicked the orders of the Israeli military government, whose public pronouncements generally presage disaster. Instead of curfews, arrests, and imprisonment, the townspeople [were] enjoined to attend a storytelling session and to rejoice [after the fasting breaking]: Al-Hakawati had learned the secret of the trade. Now after long-suffering under occupation, the Hakawati is himself a governor; not a military

governor but a Theatrical Governor [...]: "People of al-Mukabir, by order of the Theatrical Governor, it is forbidden to remain at home, so be there in the town square directly after the breaking-of-the-fast cannon-shot signal. [. . .] Al-Hakawati will be there, waiting."[27]

Socially, the troupe aimed to create a hybrid theatre that combined folkloric and Palestinian modern themes. Most performers originated mainly from cities like Jerusalem and Jaffa, not villages, and they anticipated the impact of theatre on the design of their present and future. They strove to avoid imitation and the traps of repetition found in folklore, but found in it a source of inspiration for coping with the modern era.[28] The troupe mediated between the elite and the rural community to develop a less conservative view of theatre; and they challenged the claim that theatre was centered around main towns like Jerusalem and Ramallah, with only educated people being able to attend, and that in villages and towns there existed no established theatres, where popular performances could take place.[29] Abu Salem described the reaction of the village population to the patriotic themes of their performances, "The villagers are amazing. They are part of the performance … [they] have a tendency not to sit down and listen; they yell out their reactions. A huge crowd, outdoor. They all take part in setting up the stage."[30] Performers ventured closer to the communities and addressed their lifestyle interactively, beginning an organic relationship with their society despite harassment by the Israeli occupation. Not only did al-Hakawati theatre reach out to villagers but they also embraced common characteristics of Palestinian society to call for people's agency against silence and adaptation to oppression.

Patients from nearby hospitals in Jerusalem attended the premiere of *I Must Have Light* on December 31st, 1989, at nearby al-Nuzha theatre. The stage and audience overflowed with the wounded:

> The setting is a dark room where 'Ayub (Arabic for patience), is seated in a wheelchair suffering from paralysis of the hands and feet. To cry, to laugh, or to go out are forbidden acts. Darkness, they told him, is good. He needs his medicine, but he needs light to find his medicine. Salaymeh faces the audience. By playing 'Ayub, 'Ayub's mother, a sorceress, assorted neighbors, and friends, he tells the story of the events that led up to his current plight. After the onset of his disease, his mother took him to a fortuneteller and sorceress instead of a doctor. She prays for his recovery, chants, and throws mysterious unguents into the air. Friends visit to tell him that his case is famous. Salaymeh punctuates the drama of his solo narrative with ineffectual attempts to light matches. At last, he succeeds in throwing a lighted match into a standing lamp. The stage appears to burst into flames, and then 'Ayub falls to the ground in darkness.[31]

Al-Hakawati demonstrates the extent to which this troupe formed an organic group of intellectuals, in the Gramscian sense, within the Palestinian middle class.[32] Through theatre and performance, it was able to reach out to both the higher and the lower classes, and against the Israeli occupation system, which continually attempted to eliminate its activism. One member commented, "Performance changes the nature of occupation by placing 'suffering in the land' in a Palestinian theatrical framework . . . comedy, children's puppet theatre, and traditional epic or singing, which take command of a state of affairs that it is powerless to alter."[33]

However, the same theatre troupe experience reveals a gender challenge caused by the scarce participation of women in theatre. The audience among the Palestinian society identified with the secondary role of women that was introduced by the female performer on stage. Only a few females[34] joined the troupe, and little was performed to reverse the stereotypes of society toward women such as in *I Must Have Light* and in *The Story of Kufr Shamma* and *Mahjoub*. Despite its success in organizing, leading, and directing for the collective patriotic struggle through performance, al-Hakawati affirmed that participation of women in different locations, village, city or camp, is still controversial. Women who were active in performance during that period agreed that the interest to initiate a clash with the communities over stereotyping of women through performance was less of a priority to their idea of national struggle.[35]

Another gender challenge was the intense censorship of plays and imprisonment of actors, which inhibited participation of women in theatre. Families continued to prohibit sons and daughters from participation in theatre troupes.[36] Self-censorship and conservatism not only affected the case of al-Hakawati as an art movement, but it was somewhat generalized within the broader political parties, especially the leftist factions. While it is hard to track a history on the announcement of an established theatre by leftist parties,[37] Jaradat demonstrates how left-leaning intellectuals in Palestine were unable to align their cultural societies with the diverse needs of the population. He related that the adherence by intellectuals to the policies of their parties eliminated internal discussions and evaluations regarding gender relations and the cultural field. According to Jaradat, during their times culture turned into categories, and prejudice became "sectarian," and took the place of "patriarchy" while maintaining patriarchal positions.[38] Within this context, the cultural representation of al-Hakawati revealed the extent to which clashes of national, conservative/religious, and gendered collectivities were transmitted within the performing experiences in Palestine.

Palestinian Performers between Politics and Social Status

The organic dynamism among performers who lived through the experience of al-Hakawati stimulated other groups that emerged after the 1993 Oslo accords. An examination of the shared aspects of other performance experiences and performer's life stories sheds light on the dynamics of the relationship between performers and the

dominating collectivities in other locations. Generally, two decades (1993–2013) after al-Hakawati, performers still consider performance and the messages it implies to be a vital constituent of their collective identity. They also consider that they perform for self-representation within that collective identity frame. To them, participation essentially begins with a passion and a talent that develops into providing meaning and awareness about its motivations within society. Representations on the collective level accompany new concepts such as what many expressed as a change in the way they perceive their bodies. The body becomes a constituent part of their identity making.

By sharing life stories, performers reflected on their class affiliation, and about their roles within this class as performers. All thirty performers expressed belonging to the middle class. They base this identity mainly on their medium-level income, their education, and their exposure to other communities and cultures. They also recounted the ability to freely bring up ideas, beliefs, and concerns during the troupe's meetings. Performers expressed respect for the political parties and their roles in supporting performance, yet no more than two performers expressed affiliation to a political party. Production is their hobby or side job, as the majority of performers are employees at civil society organizations and receive middle class wages. They expressed satisfaction that their salaries compensate for the lack of financial revenue coming from performances, so they can afford to perform. All performers said they were committed to social justice issues and sensed that performances achieve social change.

Among the older generation that coincided with al-Hakawati's emergence, one performer described how she belonged to the middle class: "I work and have a steady income and have better conditions than other people. The children go to private schools, and we celebrate Christmas." Another performer said, "I am originally a house painter, a lower class, but changed over time. I studied at the university at the age of thirty-five, and have a steady income now, so currently I belong to the middle class. But certainly, I believe in the lower-class potential – myself is an example." Another said, "My income and education place me within the middle class," while further qualifying, "I need some kind of income to keep me within the middle class, and I constantly look for ways to achieve things for myself that leave me with a good reputation."

As for the young generation that emerged after the Palestinian Authority's establishment, performers focused on education, income, and social engagement as factors indicating belonging to the middle class. One performer saw the reason for his belonging being "because my income is relatively higher than the worker's category. Also, the informal communication and interaction with members within the same class, in the troupe, and with friends from the same private school put me in this class, even if I do not choose it." Another performer recognized, "I use my performance and my participation in the youth political movements to overcome the power imbalance created by the rich to serve the occupation." Another expressed the opinion that "a middle-class person is one with an intellect to analyze and speak out on ideas for a better future, and that is what we are."

As for the older generation, many said they joined troupes to participate in the collective resistance act of Palestinians. For one performer, performance reflected the political awareness of Palestinians, and fighting against oppression and occupation's demolition of the personal, romantic identity. This linking between the collective political identity and the romanticized personal identity motivated performance as a resistive act." For them, the subjective identity – considering their personal feelings and concerns – is fulfilled within the Palestinian collective identity of a troupe. Their views were largely complementary to one another. Many considered that attending Palestinian performances in childhood was familial participation in resistance activities, and involvement in production was mainly to fulfill an individual passion: "to perform . . . is to fulfill one's ego and to improve the body's capacities. Also performing was equivalent to resistance with stones, and I was satisfied with my form of resistance because it rewards and assures my identity as a Palestinian," one performer explained.

Since the Israeli occupation authorities canceled many troupes' productions, one performer explained that people used the opportunity to demonstrate against the Israeli occupation after performances. Another performer mentioned that "performing troupes were mainly affiliated, supportive or connected to political parties. Belalin and Balalin had been one troupe, but because of political differences, split into separate theatre troupes. The development of performing troupes met a substantial national need, and the production of folkloric songs was considered an act of asserting Palestinian identity. A performer from 1948 Palestine described his own experience: "At first it was my desire just to be seen on stage, but after that, I went to perform in Ramallah. There I realized that I do not want to perform in and with an Israeli theatre. I realized that in theatre, I could change mentalities to reflect national stances."

On the other hand, for the younger generation, performers communicated their personal experiences as the main constituent of their identity. In the surrounding political and social atmosphere, they asserted the importance of a high quality of technique for a successful and creative Palestinian performance. Performance for most of them is a "personal interest and an ambition toward professional performance." They were encouraged by a supportive family who believed that performance ability contributes to achieving political and social change. They joined a performing group when they were children based on their parents' desires and, as a result, performance remained part of their lifestyle.

Concerning how they defined their individual identity, performers of both generations shared that performance changed the way they perceive themselves. "When I first joined, I was conservative, shy, and knew nothing about women; I felt so shy holding hands with them. However, with performance, there are lots of 'windows,' lots of meanings to things, not only one way of looking." Another performer said that now she is not shy about walking down the street, and does not feel that she must hide her feminine side – considered a taboo in society. Another young performer stressed, "I lost my arrogance. I thought I should be superior to others, belonging to a wealthy family, and spoiled. The group dealt with me without categorizing and

cared only about my performance skills, so that changed me." For another person, performance "changed me into a person who has many ambitions in life. Without it, I would have been a useless guy hanging out in the streets today." Such representations of the transformative power of art on one's identity explain the collective dynamics in creating an organic, open-minded, and productive space through performance, in ways that seek a collective national identity, with an equal contribution of men and women.

Change on the individual level, which includes class awareness and affiliations, pushed performers to connect to other communities and transcend their differences through training others, whether in theatre or dance. For many, passing on knowledge and experience aimed to encourage others to be involved in similar personal experiences, which can change them as individuals. Both generations participate in "dance schools" or "drama paths" as trainers. One performer summed up, "I established the dance school to give the message that when children grow up loving to dance, they will find places to practice it. We joined life skills with dance to develop individuals with creativity, productivity, and interest in professional dance." Another performer said, "I work with local organizations on workshops that use theatre in paths that are practical for our lives, for topics such as non-violence, and identity, which I feel are very important for Palestinians growing up now."

Performers held that the change they experienced in their own identity had an impact on the identity of those they train as well. A performer training in a school in Jerusalem put it this way: "It is more of an educational issue . . . instead of children's exposure to Israeli songs, it is a priority to encourage them to sing [their own] folkloric songs. Girls in the group found a model of nationalism; they listen to the national values that grew within me while performing with the troupe, and I influence them." Another performer said, "Working with girls on expressing feelings through the body, not verbally, is honest – and sometimes more influential with children and youth . . . even though with their heads covered by a veil. But they performed in front of the village residents, and they were accepted by them." Another performer said, "The group of girls that I trained in Bayt 'Ur refused their families' orders to quit the troupe to get married . . . [and] organized a group strike. They refused to go to school because they wanted to join the performance. One now is a trainer of dabka in the village."

Middle-Class Performers after Oslo

Performance in Palestine – forming an organic group that challenges the dominance of one collective over another and over Israeli occupation policies – developed as part of a scene that was independent from the political authorities. It also developed in constant challenge to the conservative fronts of the various collectives within the Palestinian society. After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, it continued to challenge, existing independently amid new forms of dominance. The Palestinian Authority budgets were channeled either toward the arts that align with mainstream

culture, with its dominant religious collective identity, or they inadequately supported the development of any performing culture.

On the other hand, the performance scene in the decades following the Palestinian Authority establishment has been largely dependent on international aid, which allowed intellectuals to achieve the economic stability of the middle class. If some performing groups had to depend on project-based art productions in order to continue their missions, the society's view of foreign funding encouraged performers to engage in additional actions to maintain credibility within the community. The stigma of being linked to an external agenda left performers in a defensive position against the call that they contribute to political decision making by the formal body Palestinian Authority, since both are dependent on foreign aid. Most of the Palestinian middle class are motivated by political decisions rather than by social or economic conditions. Audiences have noticed the correlation between the inability to achieve change on the political level and representations of that in performances, which led performance away from playing an organic role within the various collectivities in Palestine. Aware of this criticism, performers have realized their role, and made attempts to reverse it. "We allocate the revenue from performances to community charity," one performer explained. "We connect to people and support girls' participation in underprivileged locations by dialoguing with families," said another. "We do not take conditional funds and make our best efforts to depend on our own financial resources and not on foreign aid," a third explained. The voluntary nature of the troupes enabled the above initiatives but they still struggle to reverse the stigma.

The post-Oslo period and the ability to travel outside Palestine enabled some groups to introduce contemporary trends into theatre and dance. Attention has been given to the professionalism of the performers and their competence as performers from Palestine. While performances by the old generation introduced themes calling for community mobilization against the occupation, attention shifted after Oslo to reflect the change in political decisions. Many performances in the past two decades introduced themes of remembrance and defeat rather than resistance. Some performers from both generations developed a new philosophy of performance – a belief that individual professionalism in contemporary performance defines a new resistance mode for Palestinians, whereby the representation of Palestinian art based on its quality reverses stereotypes of Palestinians as a backward nation. Many performers stated that they no longer produce art that is admired only for the sake of its being Palestinian, victims of occupation, but strive for quality of production. Interest increased in representing liberal values, knowledge, and skills, showing that Palestinian performing men and women can produce quality art, like any other nation in the world. Others held that "the granting of non-member state status [to Palestine] at the UN in 2013 puts the responsibility on us to perform as well-deserving of a state." The professional interests that the performers developed introduce a new aspect to the understanding of the collective national identity of Palestinians. However, these contemporary trends raised discussion about their contribution to the national struggle. This has the effect of widening the gap between the three collective identities,

especially the collective gender identity of Palestinians. Despite being separated from other Palestinian geographies, Jerusalem continued to take part in this turbulence.[39]

Collective Gender Identities in Performance

The performing groups are active as middle-class agents towards social change, yet they are still struggling for gender equality and a good reception from the Palestinian audience. One central aspect of the performers' gender struggle for change has been around the authenticity of folklore that uncovered rigid beliefs and inequalities. Some performers considered themselves performing "folkloric dance," others "contemporary folkloric Palestinian dance," and others "Palestinian modern dance," while others term it "contemporary dance." Within theatre, performers consider their genre as "Palestinian folkloric theatre," while others define it as "modern theatre." The diversification and flourishing of styles or performance modes during the past half-century reflect the debate around Palestinian performance that serves specific gender interests. If performers are the leaders of this debate, gender regimes within the performing troupe are decisive. For some performers, detachment from the authenticity of performance is an inventive tactic leading to creativity and individual growth. They emphasize using the term "contemporary folklore" to illustrate a tactic to overcome its rigidity. As one performer explained, "There are up to twenty-four dance routines in folklore, but our troupe uses one hundred routines which are not folkloric but are built on and inspired by folklore." Another performer pointed out, "I cannot do *sahja*, a long dancing routine known in wedding festivities, because it lasts for four hours, but I adapt from it in some routines so that people will not be bored sitting down." For another performer, "We do comedy-drama, a Western style, but with a Palestinian theme."

For female performers specifically, "contemporary folklore" is not only a means for inventiveness and individual growth in which the body is liberated, but also a space to eliminate gender inequalities found within the rigidity of the folklore and its dress code. They reflect on achievements over specific traditional and backward views of women, such as "changing the way the audience expects women on stage to be of bad repute," "changing the view of women performing only feminine roles in performance," and "changing the view that women's bodies exposed to the public is taboo." One performer explained that the dress of female performers evolved over the decades to enable better movement on stage and on certain occasions, men and women appeared with the same costume.

However, despite achievements in gender awareness, female dance performers offered that they had not yet targeted a collective gendered message through performance. Such attempts remained as individual struggles, not a collective one. This was blamed on women performers not showing support for other women within the troupe, according to many female performers: "Female performers do not show enough or consistently organized support to each other, especially in improving

capabilities, or in challenging a certain dress code for performance, or in the selection of time and locations for women to train. It stays at the level of individual complaints." One performer expressed finding her individual identity within women's parts: "I love the dabka performance and what it creates with its audience, but contemporary dance is rewarding to me. Whether I performed it or not, when I get into the training hall, I feel all my blood changes." Another performer said that belonging to a troupe within an organization "gives you, as a woman, space to perform in many locations and to gain support and admiration from the society, but at the same time, it "limits your ambitions in terms of techniques and dress, because sometimes I think of things and rehearse them, but then they do not agree with putting it on stage." In theatre, on the other hand, the increased interest in gender issues introduced additional relevant topics to their agendas.

This paper traces al-Hakawati theatre experience over time and investigates performers' individual subjective reflections within a group belonging to the middle class. It examines the extent to which performance can form an organic intermediary group towards change, especially on the gender level, under the dominance of three prevailing collectivities over performance. The performing experience enabled performers to nurture their agency and status to influence communities and encourage broad engagement, especially when the themes supported the national collectivity against colonialism. Individual subjective experiences of performers within these groups correlated with the collective national identity when performance was a resistance tool, but diverged when individual interests became identified within professional objectives or when tangled with political decisions. The gender collectivity was challenged amid the other two collectivities, and some tactical initiatives were witnessed at the level of performers to encourage further practices towards gender equality within the Palestinian society. Relatively speaking, efforts were supported by the national movement and its political factions, yet patriarchal sectarian visions were maintained overall. The period after the Oslo agreement created a gap between the ruling political middle class and the culture-producing middle class, which put performance in a paradox between individualistic goals and resuming the goals of national resistance against occupation. Further investigation of the religious trends in theatrical performances is another interest emerging from this research and yet to be explored.

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Endnotes

1 The SHAFAQ network is comprised of five organizations based in Jerusalem: al-Ma'mal, al-Hakawati, al-Hoash, Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, and Yabous Cultural Center.

2 Fawanis is based on *The Little Lantern* by Ghassan Kanafani (1963), a distinguished book in young adult literature of the Palestinian repertoire following the 1948 Nakba.

3 Banat al-Quds is one among many music groups of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music. Members of the group are also part of the Palestinian Youth Orchestra, which includes Palestinian youth from Palestine and the diaspora and tours internationally.

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6 "al-Hakawati yu'ajjil 'ard "Enhedwana" wasata tabayun fi al-'araa' " [Al-Hakawti Postpones 'Enhedwana' Show amid Differing Opinions], *Akhbar al-Balad*, online at akhbarelbalad.net/ar/1/11/5050/ (accessed 5 August 2020).

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11 Interviewees represent almost all of the currently performing troupes in theatre and dance in Palestine. Most interviews took place in 2012–13; identities have been kept confidential.

12 Nicholas Rowe, "Post Salvagism: Choreography and its Discontents in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *Dance Research* 41, no. 1 (2009): 45–68, online at muse.jhu.edu/journals/drj/summary/v041/41.1.rowe.html (accessed 29 July 2020); Kamal Ahmad Ghnaim, *Al-masrah al-Filastini: dirasa tarikhiya naqdiyya fi al-'adab al-masrahi* [The Palestinian Theatre: A Historical Critical Study of Drama Literature] (Cairo: Dar al-Haram li-Turaath, 2003).

13 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

14 Interview with Amneh Rimawi, member of Belalin theatre troupe, Ramallah, May 2012.

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16 Neil Smeler, *Karl Marx on Society and Social Change* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

17 See Mills, *White Collar*; and Tom Bottomore, *Classes in Modern Society* (London: Routelage, 1992).

18 See Julia Droeber, *Dreaming of Changing Young Middle Class Women and Social Transformation in Jordan* (Boston: Brill, 2005); Jamil Hilal, *Al-tabaqa al-wusta al-Filastiniya: bahthun fi fawda alhawiyya walmarji'iyya walthaqafa"* [The Palestinian Middle Class: Research into the Confusion of Identity, Authority, and Culture] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies and Muwatin, 2006).

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25 DeBare et al., "Palestinian Culture."

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33 Slyomovics, "Bleeding Wound," 24.

34 Most of the female parts in the performances were acted by Jackie Lubeck, an American and one of the founders of the troupe.

35 Interview with Rimawi; interview with Rula Abu Dehu, active in theatre, Ramallah, July 2011.

36 Mahamid, *Masirat al-haraka al-masrahiyya*, 67–87.

37 Interview with Rimawi; interview with Abu Dehu.

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Behind the Big Blue Gate

The Kenyon Institute, a British Eccentricity in Shaykh Jarrah

Mandy Turner

Abstract

The Kenyon Institute based in Shaykh Jarrah has a long history. Established during the British occupation of Jerusalem in 1919, it was an exemplar of the marriage of academia and empire. In its early days, as the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, it was biblical, British, and very imperial, but this outlook and reputation changed over time. This essay by a former director (January 2012–December 2019) provides a brief history of the institute, and discusses the recent changes in its character and relationship with the local community. The author also reflects on some personal experiences and thoughts about her time living and working in East Jerusalem.

Keywords

Kenyon Institute; British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem; British Mandate; British academia in Palestine; Shaykh Jarrah; East Jerusalem.

We passed by the home of the beloved

but the enemy's laws and wall turned us away

I said to myself, "Maybe, that is a blessing"

What will you see in Jerusalem when you visit?

You will see all that you can't stand

when her houses become visible from all sides

When meeting her beloved, not every soul rejoices

Nor does every absence harm

If they are delighted when meeting before departure

such joy cannot remain kindled

For once your eyes have seen Jerusalem

You will only see her, wherever you look.

part of
In Jerusalem
by Tamim al-Barghouti
trans. Houssem Ben Lazreg

Behind the big blue gate sits the Kenyon Institute. In a prime location in East Jerusalem, on top of the hill in Shaykh Jarrah, just minutes from the famous American Colony Hotel, it peeps out over Wadi al-Jawz and then sweeps its gaze up to the Mount of Olives. A tall wall, covered with pink bougainvillea dripping with flowers, keeps it hidden from the road. When you enter the gate and climb the steps, a traditional Palestinian garden hugs the pathway up to a charming Ottoman building.

Endowed by the Murad family, and held in trust for them by the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf since 1967, it once served as the residence of the British Consul General. It looks magnificent on the outside but suffers from multiple problems on the inside. A bit like Jerusalem itself. And yet I loved both. Loved or love? Is it in the past tense? Probably not. Because while you might leave Jerusalem, it never leaves you. I know that now, six months after leaving both for good.

Figure 1. "The big blue gate: the Kenyon Institute's entrance in Shaykh Jarrah," photo by T. Haddad, July 2020.

In January 2012, I became the director of the Kenyon Institute. This British academic research center had a long history but hardly anyone outside of the archaeology community knew about it, and very few were aware of what lay behind the big blue gate, at least not in the most recent decades. I had only learned of its existence a few years earlier, although I had been visiting Jerusalem for years, often residing in St. George's Cathedral Guest House, just a stone's throw away. But once we became acquainted, I fell in love with its "times-gone-by" ambience: the age-yellowed letter to King George VI hanging askew in the entrance salon, pieces of archaeology casually idling around the garden that cried out for attention, and its dilapidated buildings requiring repair. Some of it was less loveable: the lack of heating that meant we all froze in the winter, and the power outages that plunged us into darkness on occasion. But all of these aspects, and more, contributed to its other-worldly atmosphere.

Figure 2. "A peaceful sanctuary to read and write: the Kenyon Institute entrance terrace." Photo by author, June 2013.

I began the job full of dreams and plans: of taking the institute in new directions, opening it up to the community, working with local organizations, and making our name known to researchers far and wide. I was excited about living and working in Jerusalem. What a dream! And yet I do not think I really knew what I was getting myself into, even though I was an experienced researcher of the situation and a frequent visitor to Jerusalem. No amount of reading or short visits prepares you for what you confront as a resident.

Because Jerusalem is a place of dreams, but also of nightmares. It just depends on which side you live of Highway 60, the road that runs somewhat up the route of the 1948 "green line" and has physically erased it. Quite simply, Palestinian East Jerusalem is neglected and marginalized, its inhabitants treated like a hostile fifth column, aggressively policed, and subjected to unwanted Israeli settler expansion. I *knew* these sad facts and had even seen much of this when I had visited in the past. But for eight years I witnessed the way in which Israel's occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem burrows deep into every aspect of life, gnawing away at the capacity of Palestinians to survive and thrive, occasionally provoking despair or defiance, though more commonly greeted with quiet resignation. Because to endure it you need to remain calm despite constant provocation.

Figure 3. "Beautiful and bewitching: the view towards the Mount of Olives from the Kenyon Institute's rooftop." Photo by author, January 2018.

My memory is full of images that capture the beauty of Jerusalem: the cobbled streets of the Old City; the luminous limestone of the buildings; the spectacular vistas from Mount Scopus and Mount of Olives; the bustle of the believers from the three monotheistic religions making their way to their respective places of worship; the tangerine tint of the Mediterranean sun as it rises over al-Quds (Jerusalem's Arabic name, literally, "The Holy"), and many more. Yet, my memories are also full of images that capture Jerusalem's ugliness: the paramilitary Israeli Border Police positioned at intersections in East Jerusalem strip-searching and humiliating *shabab* (young Palestinian men) just for fun; the Israeli settlers with machine guns casually slung over their shoulders arrogantly barging round the Muslim and Christian quarters of the

Old City like they own the place; the triumphalist racist anti-Arab demonstrations on "Jerusalem Day"; and the Palestinian families thrown out onto the streets by settlers who had taken over their homes. Beautiful and bewitching – cruel and callous. Both are true of the Jerusalem I saw. The first image of Jerusalem is the one you experience as a tourist, the second, an experience reserved for Palestinians. It seemed a sort of Jekyll and Hyde duality, with Israel's occupation and annexation the ingredients of the evil potion.

Excavating the Colonial Past, Crafting an Anti-colonial Present

The Kenyon Institute began life as the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (BSAJ) in 1919 during the British occupation. It was established by the British Academy and the Palestine Exploration Fund via a committee whose membership included religious figures, academics, and government officials. The Palestine Exploration Fund played a key role in the British colonial enterprise, providing maps and collecting intelligence on the region in the late nineteenth century. Academia and empire went hand in hand; and in this case quite literally, in terms of personnel. John Garstang, professor of archaeology at Liverpool University, was the first director of the BSAJ as well as the director of the Department of Antiquities in the British Mandate of Palestine. In its early days, the BSAJ was biblical, British, and very imperial. Its initial purpose was to train archaeologists and to dig in the Holy Land and, until 1967, it had also been responsible for archaeological fieldwork in Jordan and Syria.

The BSAJ moved to Shaykh Jarrah just before that fateful 1967 war that initiated the occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem, and brought the school and our Palestinian neighbors under the direct control and jurisdiction of Israel. This caused us problems, intellectually as well as practically, because our gaze and focus has always been towards the Arab world. Intellectually, other than Kathleen Kenyon's work on the city's biblical past, our scholarship after those early days has largely concentrated on exploring the city's Islamic monuments including the Dome of the Rock, al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as surveys of Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman Jerusalem. Practically, we had a strange "non-status" which meant we had to pay large legal fees to obtain visas for our researchers and on occasion had to take the Israeli Ministry of Interior to court to get them. We even had researchers denied entry and deported but we were never able to do anything about it. No diplomatic mission seems to want to take on the "right" of Israel to deny entry to people of Palestinian heritage or those who campaign for Palestinian rights.

I know these are molehills compared to the mountains of problems for Palestinians and local institutions, which have gotten worse over recent years. But these issues kept me busy and our already meagre budget overstretched; it also gave our board of trustees based in the UK excuses to continually debate about whether to close us down.

During Kenyon's time as director (1948–70), the BSAJ had excellent links with

Palestinian universities and was seen as an important cultural presence in East Jerusalem; but this was disrupted by Israel's occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem. It took decades for us to find our feet again.

Figure 4. "Academia and empire, hand-in-hand: The entrance to the Way House which housed the British Mandate Department of Antiquities, the Archaeological Museum, the British School of Archaeology, and the Library of the American School," in a photograph by John Garstang c. 1925. Photo PEF archives/ G I 191, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

The BSAJ changed its name in 1998 (although the building did not change its name until 2001) to reflect the extension of its research remit beyond just archaeology to include humanities and social science subjects. The new name acknowledged our important heritage, that of Kathleen Kenyon, the British archaeologist world-famous for her excavations in Jericho. Purportedly Kenyon was a "bit of a character" with enormous enthusiasm, a sense of humor, a warm and generous heart, and a reputation for being anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian. It was also said that she enjoyed a tipple or two. We seem to have had a fair amount of "interesting characters" in our history. I heard plenty of stories about eccentricities and bizarre incidents including one involving a former director and another employee, an uncomfortably large consumption of whisky, a quarrel over poetry, and a confrontation around the big kitchen table with a rather large medieval sword. Do not worry, it did not end badly. I also had a couple of odd experiences, revelations of which are also best kept for an amusing storytelling session on the institute's entrance terrace.

Despite our lack of cash and limited staff, we were determined to help defend and enhance intellectual life in East Jerusalem and further afield. It is clear that Israel has been trying to destroy Palestinian East Jerusalem for a long time, through underfunding and neglect. And yet the city had, until relatively recently, continued to serve as a vibrant hub for Palestinian culture. The second intifada and the building of the Wall disrupted this. (Referred to variously as the "Separation Wall/Barrier" [by the UN], the "Security Barrier/West Bank Barrier" [by Israel], or the "Apartheid Wall" [by Palestinians], it is yet another one of the more visible surveillance mechanisms, restrictions on movement, and land-grabbing techniques used by Israel against Palestinians.) Thereafter al-Quds was denied its lifeblood – visitors and patrons – as Israel restricted access to it for Palestinians from the occupied territories who did not have East Jerusalem ID cards. This also affected our institute. The library, which houses some rare books on the history and archeology of Jerusalem, became inaccessible for Palestinian scholars and students with West Bank ID cards. And for Palestinians in Gaza, a visit to al-Quds was virtually impossible.

When I joined the institute we responded by joining forces with prestigious East Jerusalem organizations – the Educational Bookshop, Dar al-Tifl al-'Arabi, the Khalidi Library, al-Ma'mal Foundation, and al-Hakawati Theatre. We also created partnerships with universities and cultural institutions across the occupied West Bank. Collectively we organized lectures, book launches and conferences showcasing local and international academics, authors, and artists, mostly with just our own labor and shoestring budgets but occasionally with funding from international donor missions and cultural charities.

I am particularly proud of two events we organized. The first was a one-day conference on the Balfour Declaration held on the centenary anniversary of its announcement. Organized by us and our constant partners, the Educational Bookshop, it took place in the Palestinian National Theatre (al-Hakawati). It seemed significant and historic for a British institution, whose own origin was due to Britain's murky imperial past, to partner with a Palestinian organization to hold an event in East

Jerusalem on a decision that changed the course of history for Palestinians. It was one of the most shameful colonial policies of Perfidious Albion, although there are ample to choose from. Despite attempts by the Israeli authorities to prevent the conference taking place, an audience of around four hundred people gathered to listen and engage with ten leading international and local historians, and a keynote speech by the foremost historian of the period, Professor Avi Shlaim of Oxford University.

Figure 5. Professor Avi Shlaim giving the keynote address at the conference "The British Legacy in Palestine: Balfour and Beyond" on the centenary anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, which was held at the Palestinian National Theatre (al-Hakawati) in Shaykh Jarrah, 2 November 2017. Photo by Yazeed Abu Khdeir.

Buoyed by the success of "Balfour 100," the following year we organized a five-day travelling literature festival called *Kalimat* with writing workshops and public readings in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Haifa, and Nablus. I have fond memories of us and our Educational Bookshop friends chaperoning the fourteen writers around in a minibus, whisking them between cultural visits, historical tours, and their performance events. It was exhausting but exhilarating, and the participants seemed to enjoy it, although not perhaps the experience of the military roadblock and midnight stop and search at an Israeli checkpoint.

Together we were stronger: combining our resources, contacts, and specialisms to help keep Palestinian East Jerusalem, al-Quds, culturally and intellectually alive. We did what we could. But it was a drop in the ocean. Israel's asphyxiation of Palestinian East Jerusalem is an integral part of its mission to create and ensure a Jewish majority in its "undivided capital."

Figure 6. Writers from the Kalimat literarure festival (3-7 November 2018) visit Khan al-Ahmar, the Palestinan Bedouin village that Israel has repeatedly threatened to demolish. Photo by Kalimat festival organizers/Yazeed Abu Khdeir.

On the East Side of Highway 60

When I first moved into the neighborhood, the only Jewish-Israelis that set foot in Shaykh Jarrah were settlers and border police, and occasionally some leftist activists protesting against the settlements. This was because the "green line" had been physically erased but had not yet been mentally erased. For Jewish-Israelis, there was fear (but also curiosity) of what lay on the east side of Highway 60. And besides, there was no real reason for Jewish-Israelis to visit: the main languages spoken are Arabic and English, including at public events; you never heard Hebrew. But this was starting to change when I left. By then it was not uncommon to see Israelis wandering about. I did not mind curious friendly Israelis; some of them came to events at the institute and were very welcome. But I did mind the ones that crowded the pavement in front of our big blue gate waving Israeli flags at a recently erected black stone monument bearing the names of 77 people. The monument memorialized the massacre of Jewish medics making their way to Hadassah hospital across Jordanian military lines during the 1948 war. Each year, the numbers of Israelis visiting it grew. Honoring the dead is a good and decent thing to do, but this memorial had become a hotspot for Israeli groups using it to whip up anti-Palestinian sentiment. I know because I often nipped out past the big blue gate when I spotted them gathering, joining the groups by hiding at the back while silently listening in to the particular historical narrative provided by the guides. Their message was not just about the past, it was also about the present and the future – but in none of these temporal phases did they paint a picture of a Jerusalem that welcomed or wanted Palestinians.

Shaykh Jarrah was an elite neighborhood that housed some eminent Palestinian families: the Husaynis, Nashashibis, Khalidis, Jarallahs, and 'Alamis; some of which have streets named after them. Earmarked to serve as the diplomatic quarter of a future Palestinian state, it hosts consular buildings, UN compounds, some grand residential homes and institutions such as Orient House, and more foreign residents than nearby areas. Yet, despite this elite past and international present, Shaykh Jarrah is also a site of intense contestation and Jewish-Israeli settlement activity.

The biggest problems that face Palestinians in East Jerusalem are caused by Israeli settlements. These have been built around Jerusalem as part of a clear strategy to cut East Jerusalem off from the rest of the West Bank and to make it difficult to divide the city. Israel insists on calling them "suburbs" or "neighborhoods," chastising any media outlet that uses the term "settlement." They are clearly illegal under international law because East Jerusalem is classified as occupied, although this attempt at name-subterfuge has helped to erase this fact in the collective Israeli imagination. In the north side of Jerusalem, near Shaykh Jarrah, the big settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev, Neve Yaakov, and Giv'at Shapira loom large. These were built on land expropriated from the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Shu'fat, Hizma, al-Ram, Bayt Hanina, and al-'Isawiyya. And then there are the smaller Israeli settlements, inserted right into the middle of Palestinian neighborhoods – such as Ma'ale HaZeitim in Ras al-Amud, Elad in Silwan, and Shimon HatSadik in Shaykh Jarrah.

The settlement of Shimon HatSadik sits immediately opposite our institute. We could see the tattered Israeli flag hanging from the flagpole next to the portacabin of the settlement's armed guard. Its emergence and development is a case study of how some Israeli settlements are created. Political activists, supported by a member of the Knesset, mobilized opinion and action to "reclaim" Shimon HatSadik on the basis that it holds religious significance as the purported site of the tomb of the Hebrew priest Simeon the Just. Legal cases were taken based on reclaiming ownership of Jewish properties that had been abandoned after 1948 when this part of Jerusalem was captured by Jordan. From the 1950s, these buildings had housed Palestinian refugees who during the Nakba had fled their homes that were now inside the "green line." Well-funded settler organizations petitioned and paid for the legal actions and then Jewish residents were placed in the homes after the Palestinian residents were evicted and kicked out onto the street. Some of the homes taken over by settlers were built by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) during the Jordanian administration. The Israeli state, through the Ministry of Housing, thereafter paid for private security to protect the settlers. Little by little the settlement expanded as more court cases were won and evictions took place.

Lawyer friends often told me that these examples in Shaykh Jarrah could open the door for similar claims for restitution of Palestinian refugee properties in West Jerusalem and even inside the "green line." Lawyers always seem optimistic that the law can be used to help the oppressed. But we are still waiting for this to happen in Shaykh Jarrah and in Jerusalem generally. I am not optimistic in the short term. The law supports the dominant force on this occasion.
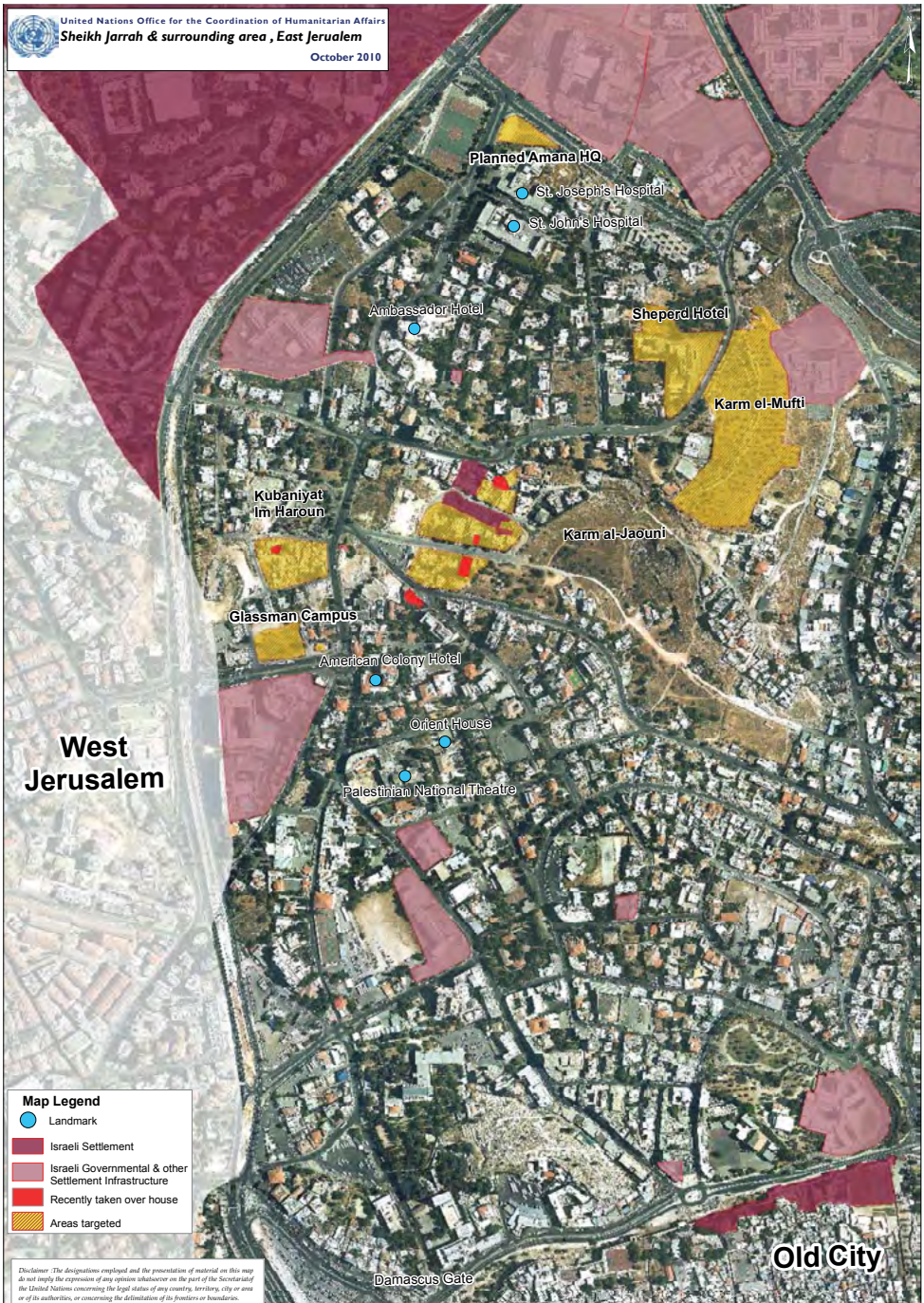
Figure 7. Map from "The Case of Sheikh Jarrah," the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, occupied Palestinian territory (UNOCHA), online at (ochaopt.org) bit. ly/3gxJOkV (accessed 27 August 2020).

Living opposite this Israeli settlement meant that I witnessed at close quarters the devastating impact it has had on the everyday lives of Palestinian residents. Time after time there were court cases and confiscations, house evictions and demolitions, the continual presence and harassment of the Israeli Border Police, and ultra-Orthodox religious celebrations where thousands poured into the neighborhood forcing Palestinian residents to stay indoors, afraid to go out. These were just the most visibly exhausting and debilitating experiences. My Palestinian neighbors feared for their future, especially those with teenage boys who saw all of this as provocation and had not yet developed the sense of fear that wracked their elders. Just before I left, a new Jewish settlement of 120 housing units was about to open on the site of the 1930s-built Shepherd Hotel originally owned by the Husayni family, but which had been expropriated by Israel and demolished in 2011. It just seemed relentless. The sense of powerlessness to halt this is overwhelming.

Figure 8. "Magical streets: The Old City during Ramadan, July 2014. Photo by author, July 2014."

There is no doubt that Jerusalem is mystical and romantic; I loved my time there. But I also left it feeling angry and sad. The actions of Israel in its pursuit of an undivided capital against the wishes of Jerusalem's Palestinian population are ugly and unjust. And it creates an atmosphere of opportunism and impunity. I witnessed the effects of Jewish-Israelis running amok in Palestinian neighborhoods, daubing racist graffiti on gates and walls, scratching paintwork and bursting car tires. One night, the teenage sons of a neighborhood friend caught two young Jewish men damaging their property and others in their street. They managed to lock them in the ground floor of their home and called the police. When the Israeli police arrived, one was overheard whispering to the criminals, "Just play along with us, we'll get you out of here soon." The officers forgot that Palestinians in East Jerusalem understand Hebrew, or maybe they just did not care because Palestinians have no voice there, and little recourse to the rule of law. In this case, as was often the way, there was no prosecution. Jewish settlers enjoy near impunity for any actions against Palestinians, so no one bothers reporting incidents to the police anymore.

Yet it is too easy to blame the settlers. They are not the only ones responsible because this is all sanctioned by the Israeli state, and supported by the majority of its politicians and the Jewish-Israeli public. The process and practice of alienating and separating Palestinians from their beloved al-Quds is quite simply discriminatory and grotesque.

Tamim al-Barghouti's poem "In Jerusalem," some lines of which serve as an epigraph to this piece, tells the story of an aborted taxi journey to Jerusalem. After it was published in 2007, al-Barghouti became a household name; almost every Palestinian, young and old, can recite the poem. It captured the popular imagination because it expresses the unrequited love that Palestinians feel for their capital city, al-Quds. It portrays a city that Palestinians love dearly but that today does not love them back, a city that excludes them but that is integral to their very being. This was crystal clear, even from behind the big blue gate, where nowadays the Kenyon Institute is not so hidden, nor separated from its Palestinian neighbors.

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Reading Jerusalem

Review by Roberto Mazza

Yair Wallach. *A City in Fragments: Urban Text in Modern Jerusalem*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020. 344 pages. $28.00, paper.

Abstract

This review critiques Yair Wallach's *A City in Fragments,* which attempts to collect and analyze the urban text of modern Jerusalem, covering the period from the 1850s to 1948. It explores how text in various forms shaped urban space and was used by authorities to create boundaries and facilitate encounters, focusing particularly on the transformation of Arabic and Hebrew as textual economies. Divided into eight chapters, (Stone, Dog, Gold, Paper, Ceramic, Wall, Cloth, and Cardboard), Roberto Mazza describes this book as groundbreaking in how it gives agency to items that in general have been considered accessories rather than agents of power, control, and conflict. He notes, however, that reading the texts from different perspectives can lead to disagreements with the author's interpretations. The book is an important addition to a wealth of literature on Jerusalem, but one that stands out among them by offering the possibility to look at Jerusalem from a material perspective.

Keywords

Language; text; urban space; governance; Ottomans; British mandate; currency; power; control; conflict.

According to the largest booksellers, every month of the year sees the publication of at least half a dozen books, in various languages, dedicated to Jerusalem. The fact is that many are nothing more than general and superficial

histories, while others serve the purpose to support political claims – or to deconstruct those claims. Obviously, there are many serious publications attempting to unpack what we do not know about the city of Jerusalem or to offer alternative interpretations. Guided by Walter Benjamin's innovative principles of writing history from refuse, *A City in Fragments* by Yair Wallach is an attempt to collect and analyze the urban text of modern Jerusalem covering the period from the 1850s to 1948. Wallach brings together text in many forms: written, painted, carved, printed, and struck in gold: on paper money, cards, ceramics, stones, and signs. Analysis of text is not detached from the material, which Wallach also links to a transformation from orality to literacy. The book's primary focus, however, is the transformation of Arabic and Hebrew as textual economies, in which text provided meaning to materials, which in turn were mobilized in the emerging Arab-Jewish struggle. In other words, Wallach seeks to explore how text, in various forms, shaped urban space and was used by authorities to create boundaries and facilitate encounters.

Wallach argues that urban text can be understood, in Derridian terms, as a supplementary element that completes, defines, and transforms artifacts, buildings, and people (7). Wallach also draws on Michel de Certeau, who adds that text, in its modern form, is a machinery at the service of colonialism and capitalism (10). While de Certeau argues that text serves power, Wallach shows that the same text can challenge that power. The last methodological pillar of this work is Benjamin, who was fascinated with fragments, small urban text like street names and signs, which he saw as tools open for reclaiming counter-hegemonic stories of the city and its people. Looking at the literature on Jerusalem discussing the late Ottoman and Mandate periods, *A City in Fragments* fits a current trend looking at the city from a multiplicity of viewpoints that shows the complexities of the relations between the communities sharing the same space. This work is also expanding the breath of sources used to write that history including objects and materials previously neglected. Wallach's work is certainly groundbreaking as he gives agency to items that in general have been considered an accessory rather than agents of power, control, and conflict. To this extent the recent work of Frederik Meiton, *Electrical Palestine*, is quite similar in engaging with the study of electricity as a way of looking at the historical development of communal relations in Palestine. So is the work of Nimrod Ben Zeev published in *JQ* 79 on the politics of cement.[1]

The book is divided into eight chapters named after specific materials and objects. Chapter one ("Stone") focuses on Arabic inscriptions in Jerusalem. Arabic was the language of the sacred Quran and it played a key role in providing religious legitimacy to the Ottoman rulers, and thus remained dominant over Ottoman Turkish even after centuries of Ottoman rule. Wallach notes (see map; 31) that Islamic inscriptions were concentrated around the Haram al-Sharif, which represented not just a sacred hub, but also the center where state, religion, public welfare, and commerce merged. The question of reading the text intersects with three developments: literacy, political changes, and urban developments. It is rather hard to know who and how many people were able to read and, more importantly, understand these texts, especially as many

are nearly illegible. Yet, Wallach tells us of an unusual reader, a Belarus-born Jewish journalist who wrote an article in 1865 reporting on the inscription of the Mamluk *sabil* of Qaytbay. After the 1908 coup, which brought the Young Turks into leadership positions, more Ottoman Turkish inscriptions were placed around Jerusalem, many promoting a nonsectarian Ottoman patriotism. The *tughra* – the monogram of the Ottoman dynasty – was printed and showcased everywhere as a way to show the authority of the state and the power of the text. At the same time, the Nahda, the intellectual movement that sought to revive and reinterpret Islamic and Arab heritage, manifested itself publicly in Jerusalem via signs, inscriptions, and publications that collided with the Ottoman state's Turkification policies. The impact of these late nineteenth-century social and political changes are embodied at Jaffa Gate (Bab al-Khalil): in the 1870s, Jaffa Gate was adorned with only Arabic inscriptions, but by the 1890s, having become the secular hub of the modern city, it was plastered with signs in all possible languages. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Jaffa Gate became the site of struggle between Arab nationalism and Zionism in 1920 during the Nabi Musa riots.

The second chapter ("Dog") looks at the spread of Hebrew text through Jerusalem. Inscriptions produced before World War I for the most part commemorated patrons of largely sacred institutions. As Hebrew went through a process of revival that was epitomized by the publication of Hebrew journals throughout Europe and also in Jerusalem, this revival transformed Hebrew from a sacred written language into a spoken and secular one. Wallach shows the battle between Orthodox Jews who advocated Hebrew as a sacred language, and Zionists who sought to make Hebrew a national language. The physical fragments of text discussed by Wallach show the shift from commemorative text to more common text such as commercial signs. Bringing to life *Stones of Memory*, a neglected work by the Jerusalemite Ben Tsvi Grayesvsky, which mapped Hebrew inscriptions at the beginning of the twentieth century, Wallach argues that the fact this book was left unused by Israeli historians of Jerusalem (84) shows who won the battle over Hebrew.

Chapters three ("Gold") and four ("Paper") go hand in hand as Wallach surveys money, first coins and then banknotes. In these chapters Wallach draws on John Maynard Keynes, who argued for a monetary system disassociated from gold. Wallach observes that coins used under the Ottomans were rarely inscribed with a value, but instead with inscriptions related to the authority who produced them. (In Jerusalem, a large number of coins from European countries circulated in addition to Ottoman coins.) Coins derived their value by the metal from which they were minted, while the value of bills was based on trust in their issuing authority. The author argues that the value of the Palestine Pound, introduced by the British in 1927, derived from its link to the Mandatory power, but also had power on its own as demonstrated by the analyses of the text and its reception by the Arabs and Zionists. While Wallach's argument does not come through that clearly, it seems he understood the money-text impact not in economic terms but more in terms of language and its power given that the Palestine Pound had inscriptions in three languages, giving the name Palestine in English and

Arabic, but "the Land of Israel" (Eretz Yisra'el) in Hebrew. Zionists, unsurprisingly, celebrated the introduction of this currency, while Palestinians complained that the quality of the Arabic was poor. One, however, is left wondering about a general assessment of text-money in its economic and political value. Money was indeed an important tool in British authorities' massive operation to revise and impose new forms of text in Palestine; however, as demonstrated by the following chapter, the British were not only introducing new text, but erasing the old.

Chapter five ("Ceramic") presents the work of Ronald Storrs and the Pro-Jerusalem Society, which aimed at dressing Jerusalem in biblical clothes, preserving the Old City as a sort of open-air museum. Street naming offered the British a relatively cheap but powerful way to reshape the city. While people were used to the fact that streets had no or different names and certainly no building numbers, Jerusalemites continued to think about their urban environment in terms of familiarity with it. The arrival of European Jews who favored cherished street naming as an element of organized society, meant also the beginning of the erasure of Palestinian geography. For Zionists, street naming was part of appropriating the urban fabric of Jerusalem. Street naming was obviously entangled with the spread of Hebrew and the two together were harnessed to serve the Zionist cause, including the removal of earlier Jewish cultural memory not in line with the Zionist project.

Chapter six ("Wall") tells the story of the Western Wall, where devout Jewish pilgrims left inscriptions – as they did at other Jewish holy places – as a form of reverence and veneration. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Western Wall was relatively full of such religious graffiti. Zionists viewed the wall as a place to redeem, to be transformed into a symbol of national revival instead of a symbol of ruin (171). After 1929, as the Zionist version of history and national culture became hegemonic, inscriptions on the Western Wall were slowly removed and prayer notes superseded the practice of graffiti. The story of the inscriptions' removal is also the story of the secularization of Jewish life in Palestine and Jerusalem. This pattern is also visible in the story of the Nabi Musa banners, addressed in chapter seven ("Cloth"). The banners, part of a centuries-old tradition, featured prominently in the riots that took place in Jerusalem in 1920, and thus came to be seen by the British as potentially explosive textual objects. According to Wallach, the sacredness of the banners played a major role in the outbreak of the riots, more than other national symbols, and here he adds an important and previously neglected dimension to analysis of the event. (Despite this, Wallach's bibliography and primary sources related to the riots are noticeably thin, considering the thorough scholarly attention they have received in recent years.) In a striking parallel to the Western Wall inscriptions, the banners were eventually superseded by the Arab flag, a non-textual symbol representing the idea of a secular state. Sadly, the Nabi Musa banners, along with the rivalries and connections among the various Palestinian cities, towns, and villages that carried them during the festival, have been largely forgotten.

Chapter eight ("Cardboard") looks into visiting cards and identification papers and is, in fairness, the weakest chapter, feeling like a late addition. Wallach uses Mahmoud

Darwish's famous poem "Identity Card," which turned Israel's imposition of new identity documents following the Nakba in 1948 into a discourse on more deeply embedded, visceral forms of Palestinian identity. The reader may wonder, however, how this text relates to the identity papers issued during the British Mandate and the borders imposed on the Middle East after World War I.

The cumulative effect of the chapters discussed earlier is to answer the question how text shaped urban space. Wallach was able to demonstrate that text played a role in the creation of boundaries and in the facilitation of encounters, yet text is only one of the various components that shaped modern Jerusalem. Readers should also be aware that some forms of text are not analyzed in this work, like political notices or commercial advertisements, and that some historians may be critical of Wallach's work as at times his narrative is based on a thin body of literature and primary sources. While there are no controversial claims made by Wallach, it is the framework that may be problematic: text is constantly re-interpreted and it is rather hard to discuss the interpretation of text in a given historical period of time without thinking about what that text may or may have not produced. In other words, it is impossible to read that text without the insight of what happened next. On another note, disagreements with the author may come from those who have and will interpret the text presented here from different perspectives. For instance, those who look at the past with a sense of nostalgia may not appreciate the historical analyses presented here; so those who are seeing a textual analyses may be disappointed: Wallach is a sort of crumbs-collector not interested in bringing back the past nor on focusing on the text itself, but on the larger picture of urban text and its agency in the regulation of intercommunal relations. The narrative of this work is fresh and engaging; however the work has been in the making for quite a few years, possibly missing the opportunity to play an important role in the debate that followed the so-called National Law in Israel that essentially eliminated Arabic as an official language and gave it "special status" only.

Wallach reminds us that early twentieth-century Jerusalem is today simultaneously visible and absent. Erasure and replacement are a constant process, threatening Arab Jerusalem in particular. Wallach ends the book showing that contemporary text, whether Arabic or Hebrew, can be fully understood only in its historical context. Wallach's work is a refreshing effort, where urban text takes on its own agency in the context of the emerging Arab-Zionist conflict. Against the dozens of publications that will fill another shelf by the end of the year under the topic of Jerusalem, this is certainly one that scholars and the wider audience must be engaged with. This book offers the possibility to look at Jerusalem from a material perspective, one that speaks volumes about its history and those who lived and controlled the city. It is undeniable that text as a form of identification has been and is at the center of the contemporary conflict: this book opens an important window on Jerusalem as a central issue, beyond politics, in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

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Endnotes

1   See Nimrod Ben Zeev, "Building to Survive: The Politics of Cement in Mandate Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 79 (Autumn 2019), online at www.palestine-studies. org/en/node/1643033 (accessed 31 August 2020). See also Frederik Meiton, "Nation or Industry: The Non-Electrification of Nablus," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 80 (Winter 2019), online at www.palestine-studies.org/en/ node/1649527 (accessed 31 August 2020).

FACTS & FIGURES

COVID-19 and the Systematic Neglect of Palestinians in East Jerusalem

Joint Briefing Paper

Al-Haq, Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC), and Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)

Abstract

The joint briefing paper published in July 2020 by Al-Haq, the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre (JLAC), and Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) exposes how systematic neglect and de-development of Palestinian healthcare has left Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem extremely vulnerable to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The joint paper highlights how Israel's discriminatory response to COVID-19 in East Jerusalem, coupled with long-standing failures to fulfil fundamental human rights, has compounded Palestinians' susceptibility to the pandemic. It explores the situation in East Jerusalem before the outbreak of COVID-19, including the impact of prolonged occupation, illegal annexation, and structural discrimination in the city. It then discusses how these long-standing politically-driven barriers, have enabled and exacerbated the systematic neglect of Palestinians in East Jerusalem during the pandemic.

The briefing highlights: a lack of COVID-19 testing facilities in East Jerusalem; inaccurate and unreliable data to track the spread of the disease; and the harassment, arrests, and persecution of Palestinian health activists working to prevent the further spread of the disease. It also warns that the capacity of Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem, the main providers of care for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, to respond to a widespread outbreak of the disease has been undermined by decades of occupation and financial constraints, leaving them at near breaking point.

The briefing paper ends by stressing that, as a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic threatens, questions regarding its handling regain importance. It importantly highlights that "a return to pre-COVID-19 normality in Jerusalem would only signify the entrenchment of existing abuses and the aggravation of an unjust reality for Palestinians" and outlines seven key recommendations for the international community to take to protect the fundamental rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

Editor's Note:

JQ thanks the publishers of the joint paper for providing this key document to *JQ* readers. This is a reprint of the original, online at www.alhaq.org/publications/17118.html

Introduction

Around the world, COVID-19 has exposed structural weakness not only in States' responses to the pandemic but also their long-standing failures to fulfil fundamental human rights, in particular economic, social, and cultural rights. As such, the pandemic has exacerbated situations of discrimination, injustice, and underlying human rights abuses, including for the Palestinian people.[1] This has been particularly the case in occupied East Jerusalem, where Israeli occupation meets illegal annexation, structural discrimination, and decades of institutionalised neglect and de-development of Palestinian healthcare.

East Jerusalem before COVID-19: prolonged dispossession, annexation, and impunity

Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, in 1967, extending its laws and jurisdiction to occupied East Jerusalem, in violation of the absolute prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force in international law.[2] In 1980, the *de jure* annexation of East Jerusalem, already formalised in 1967, was given a constitutional status in Israeli law through its codification in Israel's 'Basic Law' on Jerusalem, which the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 478 considered was "null and void and must be rescinded forthwith", and called for states not to establish diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.[3]

In order to institutionalise Palestinian dispossession, Israel, the occupying power, imposed a precarious 'permanent resident' status on Palestinians in Jerusalem in 1967.[4] Carrying out a population census in the city in the aftermath of the war, Israeli occupying authorities only registered those Palestinians who were physically present in the city at the time. Palestinians who were absent during the census, including Palestinians refugees who were denied their right of return and Palestinians who found themselves elsewhere at the time, whether for work, studies, or otherwise, were never counted. They, and their descendants, were arbitrarily stripped of their residency rights in Jerusalem, despite a generations-long connection and family ties to the city.

Following 1967, Israel's institutionalised dispossession of Palestinians from Jerusalem continued. Through discriminatory 'demographic goals' enshrined in master plans for the city,[5] the Jerusalem Municipality has continuously and overtly sought to drive Palestinian transfer from the city while seeking to maintain an Israeli-Jewish demographic majority. The 'permanent residency' status imposed on Palestinians, precarious as it already was, rendered Palestinian Jerusalemites stateless in their own land. They are increasingly required to continuously prove that their so-called 'centre of life' is in Jerusalem to retain the right to live in the city of their birth. Essentially treated like foreigners in their own land, Palestinians risk losing their permanent residency status in Jerusalem, and the attendant social benefits, including access to healthcare. Palestinian residency rights can be withdrawn, for example, should Palestinians leave Jerusalem to study or work abroad or even move elsewhere in the occupied West Bank. Israel has revoked the permanent residency rights of over

14,500 Palestinians from Jerusalem under such circumstances since 1967.

Today, some 370,000 Palestinians are residents of occupied East Jerusalem. They account for some 40 per cent of the city's population. They are required to pay taxes to the Israeli occupying authorities but do not receive the same municipal services as Israeli Jews, including settlers illegally residing in occupied East Jerusalem. They face discriminatory planning and zoning, and are only allowed to build on 13 per cent of the land in East Jerusalem, much of which is already built up, and only seven percent of housing permits in the city are granted to Palestinians.[6] As such, Palestinians are forced to build without Israeli-issued permits to sustain natural population growth and face the demolition of their homes by Israeli occupying authorities as a result. In 2019, Al-Haq documented the displacement of 236 Palestinians as a result of house demolitions in Jerusalem, including 122 children.[7] In addition, the Jerusalem Municipality deliberately avoids significantly investing in infrastructure and services in Palestinian neighbourhoods ,[8] where over 72 per cent of all Palestinians live below the poverty line.[9] At the same time, Palestinian residents are required to submit requests for 'family unification' for spouses who are not residents of Jerusalem, a very lengthy, cumbersome, and complicated process that largely denies Palestinians equality in the right to family life and marriage.[10]

In 2003, Israeli occupying authorities began construction of the Wall in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem. The Wall and its associated permit and closure regime, including severe movement and access restrictions, has completely sealed off Palestinians in the city of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, entrenching the isolation of Jerusalem and the fragmentation of the Palestinian people.[11] The route of the Wall, which represents the most significant change to Jerusalem's landscape since 1967, was designed to incorporate Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, while separating densely-populated Palestinian neighbourhoods from Jerusalem, even though they lie within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries.

About a third of Palestinian residents live in Jerusalem neighbourhoods behind the Wall, which include Kufr 'Aqab to the north and Shu'fat refugee camp and 'Anata to the northeast. Israeli checkpoints physically separate them from the rest of the city. Over the years, Israel's Jerusalem Municipality and various Israeli government representatives have deliberately neglected these neighbourhoods, effectively absolving themselves of responsibility towards upholding the rights of about a third of East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents. Consequently, these areas have essentially become a no-man's-land. However, Israeli military raids, arrest operations, as well as house demolitions continue in some of the areas, notably in Shu'fat refugee camp.[12]

The Wall and its associated permit and closure regime has also severely impacted the access of Palestinians from the rest of the occupied West Bank to East Jerusalem, whose six non-government hospitals are the main providers of routine, emergency, secondary, and tertiary care for Palestinian from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[13] Patients and staff require a permit from the Israeli occupying authorities to access care or get to work. In 2018, the total number of referrals of patients to East Jerusalem hospitals from the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 43,256, representing 39.4 per cent

of the referrals for treatment by the Palestinian Health Ministry.[14] The process of obtaining a permit is complicated and difficult and is incredibly stressful and confusing for the patients themselves and their family members.

East Jerusalem during COVID-19: Between systematic neglect and healthcare de-development

Israel's fragmentation of the Palestinian people and de-development of Palestinian healthcare,[15] as part of a systematic denial of Palestinians' rights, has created a context of extreme vulnerability for Palestinians in Jerusalem, where the population density in Palestinian neighbourhoods is double that of Jewish ones,[16] and where the inequity of distribution of social determinants of health between Palestinians and Israeli-Jews is evident.[17] In this context, Palestinians have become ill-equipped to deal with any public health crisis, let alone the outbreak of a pandemic such as COVID-19.

The susceptibility of Palestinians to the pandemic is compounded by specific patterns that have characterized Israel's discriminatory response to the COVID-19 outbreak in East Jerusalem. This has included long delays in opening testing centres for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, delays in the provision of quarantine facilities, harassment, arrests, and persecution of local volunteers distributing aid materials and food stuffs, closures of community-led initiatives to contain COVID-19 and raise awareness as to the pandemic, and the initial failure even to provide data on the numbers and rate of infections in Palestinian communities as well as to issue information and guidance for the Arabic-speaking public.

According to estimates by the Jerusalem Alliance to Confront the Coronavirus Pandemic, an *ad hoc* umbrella group of Palestinian civil society organizations and community-based organisations established on 15 March 2020,[18] the hardest-hit communities by the coronavirus have been the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Silwan, Shu'fat refugee camp, Kufr 'Aqab, and Issawiyeh. Palestinian residents of these neighbourhoods already faced extreme housing shortages and overcrowding before the pandemic, due to Israel's refusal to grant them building permits, making social distancing and self-isolation virtually impossible.

The acute shortages of ICU beds, ventilators, and personal protective equipment in Palestinian hospitals, exacerbated by the 2018 decision by the United States to cut funding to East Jerusalem hospitals,[19] have further undermined the capacity of Palestinian hospitals in the city to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.[20] It is arguably the delays in carrying out testing in East Jerusalem, as in Palestinian villages and towns within the Green Line,[21] that most powerfully articulates the Israeli occupying authorities' negligent conduct vis-à-vis the containment of COVID-19 in occupied East Jerusalem.

Lack of testing facilities

The Israeli Health Ministry confirmed the country's first COVID-19 case on 21 February 2020 but it was not until 2 April 2020, and following legal pressure by Palestinian human rights organisations, that Israeli medical services set up a drive-

through testing facility in occupied East Jerusalem, specifically in Jabal Al-Mukabber neighbourhood. This discriminatory delay in responding to the outbreak of the pandemic in Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem is redolent of Israel's general attitude towards the Palestinian people, including Palestinian citizens of Israel.

As far as Palestinian communities beyond the Wall are concerned, the first testing centres opened as late as 13 April 2020, nearly two months after the first confirmed cases, and only following a petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice by Palestinian human rights group Adalah.[22] Today, the four Israeli health maintenance organisations (Clalit, Maccabi, Meuhedet, and Leumit) each operate a COVID-19 testing facility in East Jerusalem. Yet, eligibility to be tested in these facilities is conditioned upon membership in a private Israeli health maintenance organisation, which a significance portion of Palestinians lack. Free healthcare in Jerusalem is also only available to those who hold a 'permanent residency' status, but thousands of West Bank Palestinians married to Palestinian Jerusalem residents are denied residency and therefore healthcare. So are Palestinian children who are not registered by the Israeli Ministry of Interior and Palestinian Jerusalemites whose residency has been arbitrarily revoked.

Not only does Israel's delay in opening testing centres and clinics for Palestinians in East Jerusalem sharply contrast with the urgency and speed in reacting to the needs of the Israeli-Jewish population, it also does not meet the standard obligation of an occupying power under international humanitarian law, as detailed below. The delay also cost an already-hampered Palestinian medical infrastructure in the city precious time to prepare with the scarce resources available to them.

The main quarantine facility for Palestinian patients or those who have been in contact with them was set up at St. George's Hotel in East Jerusalem. It has been exclusively funded by Palestinians and run by Palestinian volunteers, but can only serve a limited number of Palestinian residents. Palestinians in Issawiyeh, for instance, whose relatives have tested positive for the coronavirus complained that Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency medical service, has been late in processing and responding to their requests to be quarantined.

Inaccurate and unreliable data to track the spread of COVID-19

Due to the reality of Israel's illegal annexation of Jerusalem,[23] only the Israeli Health Ministry has access to figures and rates of infections amongst Palestinians in East Jerusalem, as is the case within the Green Line. In the absence of disaggregated data for East Jerusalem, the available COVID-19 numbers come from three different bodies: the Israeli Health Ministry, the Israeli occupation's Jerusalem Municipality, and local Palestinian grassroots groups working under the umbrella of the Jerusalem Alliance to Confront the Coronavirus Pandemic.

A clear disparity exists and has undermined the ability of both the Palestinian Health Ministry, which does not have access to East Jerusalem patient files, and the World Health Organization (WHO) to adequately assess the scale of the outbreak in occupied East Jerusalem, as an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Therefore, the Palestinian Health Ministry initially only reported COVID-19 cases in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, excluding East Jerusalem. As a result, WHO, whose figures are taken from those officially reported by the Palestinian Health Ministry, also excluded East Jerusalem cases in their COVID-19 figures for the occupied Palestinian territory.

Harassment, arrests, and persecution of Palestinian health activists

There are long-standing attacks on Palestinian healthcare, compounded by the widespread and systematic targeting of Palestinian health workers and health infrastructure in East Jerusalem and across the occupied Palestinian territory, carried out with impunity.[24]

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Israeli occupying forces have systematically targeted and briefly arrested Palestinians distributing posters in East Jerusalem neighbourhoods to raise awareness on precautionary measures needed in the face of the pandemic, as was the case in the Old City on 14 March, as well as Palestinian youths who volunteered to clean and disinfect public spaces such as mosques.[25] Overall, while UN human rights experts urged the Israeli government to release prisoners to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak in detention,[26] the Israeli occupying authorities continued to carry out arbitrary arrests of Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem. Amongst those arrested during the COVID-19 period were the Palestinian governor of Jerusalem, Adnan Ghaith, and the Palestinian Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, Fadi Al-Hidmi, for alleged Palestinian Authority (PA) activity in Jerusalem.[27]

During the weeks-long vacuum created by Israel's lack of responsiveness to address the COVID-19 pandemic in East Jerusalem, the PA attempted to fill the gap, either by directly sending PA officers to enforce preventive measures in Kufr 'Aqab, behind the Wall, or by helping set up a testing facility in Silwan. In the former case, the Israeli occupying forces later raided Kufr 'Aqab, a neighbourhood consistently deprived of the most basic services, to remove PA signs. In the latter, the Israeli occupying authorities raided the testing facility set up in Silwan and shut it down,[28] impacting over 60,000 Palestinian residents of Silwan during the pandemic, originally arguing that the facility posed a threat to public health because it was run by unlicensed doctors. The doctor in question who administered the tests was, in fact, licensed in Israel, as confirmed by the doctor himself, but the pretext for the centre's closure by the occupying authorities was that its activities were overseen by the PA.[29] Regardless of the pretext, the very fact that Palestinians were forced to set up a testing centre on their own is a testament to Israel's consistent failure to meet its obligations to uphold the right to health of Palestinians without discrimination.

Palestinian hospitals at breaking point

Amongst the Palestinian-run hospitals in East Jerusalem, Al-Makassed Hospital, Augusta Victoria Hospital, and Saint Joseph Hospital – the three hospitals designated to manage suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases amongst Palestinians – only have 22 ventilators and 62 beds for coronavirus patients between them; of these,

12 ventilators are reserved for patients of Augusta Victoria Hospital with extremely compromised immune systems. Al-Makassed Hospital has a coronavirus unit with 22 beds, while Saint Joseph Hospital has a wing prepared with 28 beds.[30]

The pandemic hit at a time when all of these hospitals were already facing exceptionally dire economic conditions and chronic underfunding. Critically, Al-Makassed, the largest Palestinian hospital in the city, has been struggling for its very survival for the last two years. Both Al-Makassed and Saint Joseph Hospital received additional funding from the Israeli Health Ministry since the outbreak of the pandemic, with the Israeli Health Ministry having delivered NIS 25 million worth of personal protective equipment to East Jerusalem hospitals, including over 50,000 face masks and 10,000 gloves. Yet, this does not come close to covering the needs of some 370,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem.[31]

While Israeli hospitals are also open to Palestinian patients in Jerusalem, it is the right of the occupied Palestinian people to develop a functioning healthcare system and to provide and receive the treatment they need in Palestinian hospitals. The availability of Israeli hospitals also does not absolve the Israeli occupying authorities from responsibility for the deliberate weakening, de-development, and systematic neglect of Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem.

COVID-19 meets Israeli bureaucracy, prolonged occupation, and militarism

The vague and onerous requirement imposed on Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to continuously prove that their 'centre of life' is in Jerusalem jeopardizes access to healthcare for thousands of Jerusalemite Palestinians. They are also particularly wary of abusive use of surveillance technology and counter-terrorism rhetoric by the Israeli occupying authorities, in particular through the Shin Bet, the Israeli intelligence agency, throughout the state of emergency.[32] Israel's efforts to confront the COVID-19 pandemic have been led by its National Security Council, increasing fears over racially-motivated policing and profiling of Palestinians. Throughout the world, social determinants of health dictate communities' capacities to confront diseases. Occupied East Jerusalem is no exception as the COVID-19 pandemic has both exposed and exacerbated pre-existing political, economic, social, and health inequities and injustices.

Legal analysis

Israel, the occupying power, is bound to respect, protect, and fulfil international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in occupied and annexed East Jerusalem.

International humanitarian law

Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention requires the occupying power to adopt the necessary prophylactic measures to combat the spread of epidemics, including the education of the general public, the distribution of medicines, the organization

of medical examinations and disinfection, the establishment of stocks of medical supplies, the dispatch of medical teams to areas of outbreak, and the opening of new hospitals and medical centres where necessary.[33] In addition, where the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate, it is the occupying power's responsibility to ensure to the fullest extent of the means available to it the necessary food and medical supplies of the civilian population.[34] The occupying power is further under an obligation to provide relief schemes to the civilian population in occupied territory, where supplies are insufficient.[35]

As such, under international humanitarian law, Israel must provide the essential supplies needed by Palestinians in East Jerusalem to respond to the threat of COVID-19 or otherwise facilitate others to provide such essential supplies.[36] Israel also has an obligation to establish testing centres and open clinics, to educate the general public in a language they can understand, and to send medical teams to areas of outbreak. At any rate, Israel, as the occupying power, may not hamper the provision of essential supplies and foodstuffs, nor the delivery of awareness raising materials to Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Rather than arresting volunteers for disinfecting streets in East Jerusalem and shutting down a centre set up to test COVID-19, such as in Silwan, the Israeli occupying authorities should be the ones to disinfect streets and set up clinics and testing centres. Accordingly, Israel is in violation of its obligations as occupying power under international humanitarian law in its failure to adequately respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in East Jerusalem.

International human rights law

Under international human rights law, Israel must respect, protect, and fulfil the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of Palestinians, including in occupied East Jerusalem, in line with Article 12(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).[37] This includes an obligation to maintain a functioning healthcare system in East Jerusalem and to provide essential medicines and supplies as well as access to healthcare for Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, even where closures are in place. This means that, also under international human rights law, Israel has an obligation to strengthen rather than to hamper the functioning and development of Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem and to ensure that Palestinian hospitals are able to adequately respond, with the necessary resources and equipment, to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the ICESCR requires States parties to "take measures to prevent, treat and control epidemic and endemic diseases."[38]

Fulfilment of the right to health is further closely related to the realisation of other fundamental rights and freedoms, with the underlying determinants of health and well-being including the right to adequate housing, water, sanitation, and food, the right to work and education, the right of access to information, and the right to a life of dignity.[39] Yet, Israel's discriminatory policies targeting the Palestinian people, including denial of adequate housing, which results in overcrowding and the continued displacement and dispossession of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, have undermined

the rights of Palestinians to enjoy the underlying determinants of health.

WHO recognises that: "The underlying conditions of life needed for enjoyment of good health and wellbeing by Palestinians are… detrimentally affected by the situation of ongoing military occupation."[40] Moreover, WHO has highlighted that: "Assessment of underlying determinants of health is closely linked to assessment of what determines inequalities in health outcomes," and that "health inequities are the unjust systematic differences in health outcomes among different populations that result from the political, economic and social conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age."[41]

Conclusion and Recommendations

As a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be breaking out, questions regarding its handling regain importance. Beyond the grave health concerns the pandemic has caused, its ramifications threaten to intensify long-standing grievances and systemic discrimination. Thus, any recommendations based on the facts presented hitherto need to take into account not just the direct health challenges caused by the coronavirus but the general context of Israel's prolonged occupation and human rights abuses against Palestinians. A return to pre-COVID-19 normality in Jerusalem would only signify the entrenchment of existing abuses and the aggravation of an unjust reality for Palestinians. In light of the above, we call on third States to:

i.   Uphold their international law responsibility to recognise the illegality of Israel's annexation of the city of Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan, and any other parts of the occupied territory, not to aid or assist in maintaining the illegal situation, and to cooperate the bring the illegal situation to an end;

ii. Support the Palestinian healthcare system in general and the Palestinian hospital network in occupied East Jerusalem in particular;

iii. Ensure access to East Jerusalem hospitals for all patients from the occupied Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip, in line with the recommendations of the UN Commission of Inquiry on 2018 protests in the occupied Palestinian territory;[42]

iv. Put pressure on Israel to comply with its obligations to halt all forms of collective punishment as well as policies and practices driving Palestinian displacement and dispossession in Jerusalem, including discriminatory planning and zoning resulting in house demolitions and the denial of building permits, the arbitrary revocation of residency rights, and the denial of family unification, as well as policies of systematic neglect, which disproportionately impact Palestinian health outcomes;

v.   Promote Palestinians' enjoyment of the underlying determinants of health throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and within the Green Line, including their right to adequate housing, water and sanitation, work, and education, as essential to upholding their right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;

vi. Address root causes undermining the fulfilment of the right to health of Palestin-

ians, by upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including permanent sovereignty over natural resources, and the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes, lands, and property;

vii. Support genuine justice and accountability for widespread and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people, including through international legal avenues, as a way to prevent future violations, end impunity, and provide justice to victims.

Al-Haq is an independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organization based in Ramallah, West Bank. Al-Haq was established in 1979 to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law in the occupied Palestinian territory. Al-Haq documents violations of Palestinian rights, irrespective of the identity of the perpetrator, and seeks to end such breaches through advocacy before national and international mechanisms. www.alhaq.org

The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC) is one of the pioneering human rights organizations in Palestine providing legal aid to vulnerable communities in combating human rights violations. It was established in 1974 by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)- formerly known as the Quaker Service Information and Legal Aid Center. www.jlac.ps

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) works for the health and dignity of Palestinians living under occupation and as refugees. MAP provides immediate medical aid to those in great need, while also developing local capacity and skills to ensure the long-term development of the Palestinian healthcare system. www.map-uk.org

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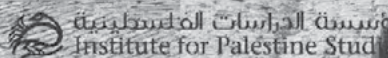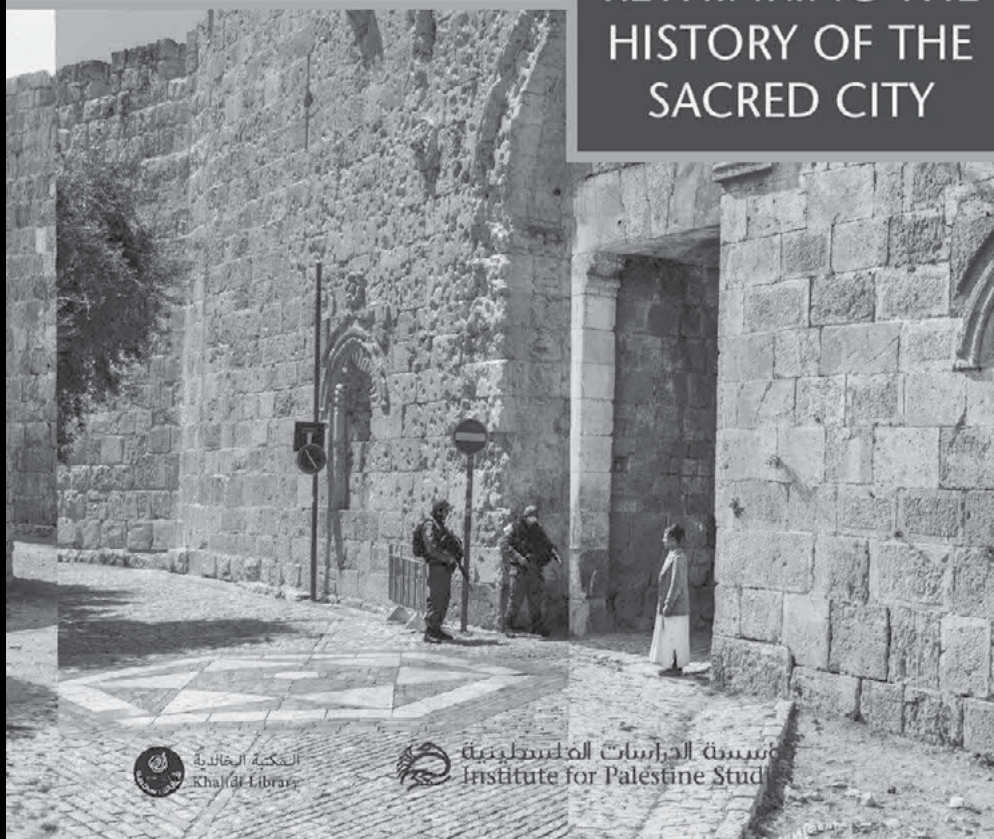The deadline for submissions is **31 October** of each year.

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