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SUBALTERN ARCHAEOLOGY — PART 1

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* Peer reviewed article.

Excavating Palestine

We are happy to present this first of two issues on archaeology in Palestine, focusing in part on the materiality of the archaeological enterprise from a unique and under-represented angle. As guest editor Salim Tamari notes in his introduction, we bring into focus "the hidden army of site diggers – the men, women, and children – as well as foremen, surveyors, builders, and labor contractors who were often photographed as the background setting for sites but whose voices are rarely heard." The essays in these issues seek to situate archaeological excavation in its broader social context – the local knowledge, economic relations, and political sensitivities within which archaeology intervenes. The contributors to these issues not only reevaluate a number of archaeological sites in Palestine, but reaffirm that the preservation or neglect, reconstruction or destruction of sites is never only about their past significance, but about their meaning in the present – a meaning that is not only academic, but embedded in the social, economic, and political worlds of those who live and work in their vicinity. This is highlighted in Penny Johnson and Raja Shehadeh's reflections on abandoned Palestinian holy sites, in this instance, the Nabi 'Ukkasha mosque and tomb located in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhood in western Jerusalem, of all places.

This issue is further enhanced by pieces from Nadim Bawalsa, who writes on the struggle of diaspora Palestinians for the right to Palestinian citizenship during the Mandate, concluding that "the Palestinian struggle for a right of return began well before 1948"; and

from Thomas Ricks, who reflects on remembrance and memory, and the lessons for social historians as they try to navigate the various versions of traumatic events, most prominently the Nakba.

As this issue of *JQ* goes to press, the brutal colonial reality in which Palestinians in Palestine live continues to manifest itself in multitudes of ways. The murder of the widely admired and iconic Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May continues to resonate and dominate the news, underlining the astounding impunity Israel enjoys among the powers that be, primarily the United States government. Despite several investigations by Palestinian and international organizations implicating the Israeli army in the killing of Abu Akleh, including one by the *New York Times*, justice continues to be out of reach. In early July, the U.S. State Department announced that "independent, third-party examiners, as part of a process overseen by the U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC), could not reach a definitive conclusion regarding the origin of the bullet…." Despite the further flurry of activity around the case, it is entirely likely that the perpetrators of this crime, like so many before them, will not be held accountable.

While the killing of Abu Akleh occupied a prominent place in the media, another kind of less visible killing has been gathering momentum of late: that of Palestinian children targeted by the Israeli army. According to Defense for Children International, over eight hundred Palestinian children have been killed by the army since 2014, the highest number being recorded in May 2021, during what has been called the May unity uprising that engaged Palestinians from all over historic Palestine.

Israeli courts have also intensified the deployment of an old weapon of control, that of home incarceration for children. Between January 2018 and March 2022, some 2,200 home detention orders were issued, about half of which targeted children less than twelve years old. While this punitive measure was used widely in the 1970s and 1980s against university students and activists, its current reincarnation is more sinister in that the parents of the youngsters, some as young as ten years of age, are expected to be enforcers of home detention orders pending the sentencing of their children. Home arrests can run for months on end, with parents all the while under the threat of stiff fines and/or arrest if their children violate the orders. This practice has damaging consequences for Jerusalemites, particularly in the Old City, where families live in cramped living conditions.

Finally, we highlight the decades-old Israeli effort to evict Palestinians from the Masafir Yatta region in the southern hills of al-Khalil from their historic abodes. In May 2022, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that no legal barriers remained for the planned expulsion of Palestinian residents from the area to clear the way for a military firing zone. Since then, several homes in the area have been demolished, further demolition orders have been issued, and increased movement restrictions have been imposed as military exercises using live ammunition have commenced. We can only imagine the terror rained upon children with such indiscriminate use of firepower.

These recent developments are all elements of a longstanding multipronged strategy pursued by the Israeli state to cement its control over the land and stifle

resistance in its many forms and manifestations. Yet, Palestinians continue to resist settler colonial violence, in spite of the draconian measures that have been deployed against them for decades.

One of the themes implicit in this issue of *JQ* is the potentially subversive and liberatory role new knowledge about archaeology in Palestine can play in resisting the Zionist narrative that has underpinned and justified the colonization of Palestine. Palestinian scholars and institutions have a crucial role in this regard, whether in promoting the teaching of a politically aware and critical archaeology curriculum in universities, investment in archaeological investigations and research, fighting continuing restrictions on excavations on Palestinian lands, or using archaeological knowledge to launch legal challenges, whether in Israeli or international courts. Together with international scholars such as those whose works appear in this issue, they can contribute to a formidable movement for resisting violence and erasure.

Submissions General Guidlines
The Jerusalem Quarterly (JQ)

The *Jerusalem Quarterly* accepts author submissions of original contributions about Jerusalem, its social and political history, and its current realities. Occasionally personal memoirs or works of fiction are accepted. Submissions are received throughout the year; specific deadlines for special thematic issues may also be announced.

JQ sends all manuscripts to designated readers for evaluation. <u>Authors may also specifically request that their article be peer-reviewed</u>. Authors should allow four to eight weeks from the date of submission for a final evaluation and publication decision.

Please direct submissions or queries to the *JQ* team: jq@palestine-studies.org

General Guidelines

Material submitted to *JQ* for consideration should adhere to the following:
- **Length**: Articles for peer-reviewing should not exceed 8,000 words; essays should be between 3,500 and 5,000 words; "Letters from Jerusalem," reviews, and submissions for other sections should not exceed 3,000 words. All submissions should include an abstract of a maximum of 200 words; a list of up to 10 keywords; and a brief author's biography of a maximum of 25 words. NOTE: the above word-count limits exclude footnotes, endnotes, abstracts, keywords, and biographies.
- **Spelling**: American English according to Merriam-Webster.
- **Text style**: Refer to *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) for all questions regarding punctuation, capitalization, and font style.
- **Transliteration** of names and words in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish should follow the style recommended by the *International Journal for Middle East Studies*, but modified for Arabic transliteration by omitting all diacritical marks except for the 'ayn (open single quotation mark) and hamza (closed single quotation mark). No right-to-left letters are allowed, except for very limited instances of crucial need.
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The *Jerusalem Quarterly* encourages the inclusion of visual material, wherever possible, for articles, essays, and for other sections submitted for publication. Visual material can be photographs, scans, charts, diagrams, graphs, maps, artwork, and the like (hereafter called "figures").

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INTRODUCTION

Subaltern Archaeology and Strange Beginnings

Salim Tamari, Guest Editor

Palestine has been a rich destination for archaeological excavators the world over. Ever since the discovery of the Lost Cross by Queen Helena in the fourth century CE, pilgrims and collectors have been on an obsessive search for relics and remains in the Holy Land. Israeli archaeology is a popular occupation, with a parallel academic tradition that includes an army of biblical scholars, and a small circle of revisionist investigators. A black market in artifacts (shrouds, pieces of the cross, Dead Sea scrolls) has dominated criminal activities on both sides of the Green Line. Yet, perhaps in reaction to the Israeli obsession with archaeology and archaeological artifacts – or rather with the Israeli use of archaeology as an ideological tool for building national identity, and as a Zionist justification for claiming putative sites to be living testimonials for biblical markers – archaeology has not been an attractive discipline for Palestinians in the occupied territories, neither at the scholarly level nor in popular discourse. Archaeology departments in local universities are few (existing only at Birzeit, al-Najah, and Hebron universities in the West Bank, and the Islamic University in Gaza), and they struggle to attract students.

Exceptions to Palestinians' relative lack of interest in archaeology are excavations that are not biblical or otherwise related to Christian or Jewish themes. Tal al-Nasba in the Bireh region, although ostensibly a "biblical site," is nevertheless focused on extensive pre-Israelite excavations. This great archaeological site is located in the Ma'lufiyya neighborhood of Ramallah/al-Bireh, north of Jerusalem. Ma'lufiyya

is known locally as the site of the Ramallah 'Araq Factory, named after the Ma'luf family, originally the Jerusalemite owners of the land where the offices and storerooms of the Tal al-Nasba digs were located. It was excavated in five seasons between 1926 and 1935 by William Badè. Labib Sorial, the excavation's surveyor and architect, and the only staff member other than Badè to participate in all five excavation seasons, produced the site plans. The final report on the site – published a dozen years after the excavation's conclusion and largely assembled after Badè's death in 1936 by his colleague Chester C. McCown and his chief assistant Joseph C. Wampler – focused on the Babylonian and Persian periods (586–400 BCE).[1]

Figure 1. William Frederic Badè, the director of the Tal al-Nasba excavations. Photo courtesy of the Badè Museum.

Figure 2. Labib Sorial, the Egyptian surveyor/architect who drew the Tal al-Nasba plans. Photo courtesy of the Badè Museum.

The site's problematic stratification and the lack of detailed site plans (most of the site's architecture was published at a scale of 1:400) impeded scholarly use of the site remains for nearly half a century. In 1993, Jeffrey R. Zorn revisited these, drawing on hundreds of photographs of the site's architectural remains, in his dissertation, which remains the definitive work on the site's stratigraphy. Zorn's study also identified key features of the site, including its inner-outer gate complex and "an until then unsuspected stratum belonging to the Babylonian to Persian periods (ca. 586–400 BCE)."[2] This remark was made in the 1990s, decades after Bade's early identification of the site in the 1930s.

The photographs, architectural plans, and other materials relating to Tal al-Nasba that Zorn used, and those that would be necessary for any further reevaluation of McCown and Wampler's findings, are held at the Badè Museum in Berkeley, California. As it happens, the online exhibition *Unsilencing the Archives: The Laborers of the Tell en-Nasbeh Excavations (1926–1935)*, has made the Tal al-Nasba collection available online to the public.[3] The digital files that comprise the exhibition not only include the successive plans and archaeological reports, but provide a vivid account of the work conditions of the local Palestinian men and women laborers – most of whom were recruited from Ramallah, al-Bireh, and Jerusalem – including their pay scales, tasks, and relationship with the American archaeologists. The records also contain detailed accounts of Badè's relationship with the Ma'luf family who leased their property

for the site's workshop, and the continued protests made by the workers over hiring practices, wages, and work conditions.

The contribution of these local figures – laborers, landowners, and others – has generally been elided from the narrative of nineteenth- and twentieth-century archaeology in the Middle East. As Allison Mickel's outstanding recent book *Why Those Who Shovel Are Silent* demonstrates, "Workers were not considered crucial participants in the scholarly work of archaeology. Their work was characterized as bodily, not brainy." Using digs at Petra (Jordan) and Çatalhöyük (Turkey) as case studies, Mickel argues that this "belief in the separation of manual and intellectual work, of unskilled versus skilled labor in archaeology" produced a "crisis," effectively ostracizing communities of archaeological experts, to the detriment of "science and history."[4] This work should be read in conjunction with Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri's edited volume *Imaging and Imagining Palestine: Photography, Modernity, and the Biblical Lens, 1918–1948*, reviewed by Nayrouz Abu Hatoum in *JQ* 91. In one chapter, Rona Sela provides a new reading of Khalil Ra'd's ethnographic photography of archaeological sites where Ra'd "enabled the return of the voices of those who were silenced by colonialism." Further, Sela proposes "refocusing attention away from the indigenous practitioner's subjugation to colonial discourse [and] toward the various strategies of resilient resistance that he or she may employ – among them appropriation, deconstruction, disruption, cross-referencing, and reassembly."[5]

This issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* (*JQ* 90) and the subsequent one (*JQ* 91) focus in part on these invisible subjects in the archaeology of Palestine: the hidden army of site diggers – the men, women, and children – as well as on foremen, surveyors, builders, and labor contractors who were often photographed as the background setting for sites but whose voices are rarely heard. In "Archaeology: Past Meets Present," Serge Nègre discusses the work of the École Biblique, an august institution of Dominican friars whose extensive record of archaeological digs from the nineteenth and early twentieth century is unparalleled in the Middle East. As Nègre observes:

> Over the years, Palestinians were hired on digs to lift blocks of stone, dig the earth, and haul thousands of tons of rubble uncovering many archaeological sites in the country…. [These jobs] brought salaries to the families and therefore the means of survival in an often harsh and difficult existence, in this region scorched by the sun. Working on these photographic collections, I imagine myself as if with them in the field, spending long hours with the workers who were doing the laborious work of digging, clearing, and searching. Under the watchful eye of the archaeologist clearing a shard, the men at the bottom of an excavation load and hoist buckets of earth or rubble to the top. Processions of men and women could be seen carrying heavy baskets on their heads with the remnants of their history and those of their ancestors, of whom they knew nothing.

Sarah Irving's "The Kidnapping of Abdullah al-Masri: (Un)employment and Power in the British Mandate Department of Antiquities," appearing in *JQ* 91, uses

an intriguing story of a Palestinian guard working at archaeological sites during the 1936–39 revolt to consider the political economy of archaeology during the Mandate period. Her approach highlights the ways in which archaeology "was not just a sphere of elite academic discourses *about* Palestine, happening at a distance from the place and people. It was also an everyday practice taking place *in* Palestine, involving ordinary workers and the communities in which they lived." Archaeology provided many different kinds of jobs, and thus drew workers into different kinds of relationships with sites of excavation, the communities around them, and Mandate authorities.

My own contribution ("Archaeology, Historical Memory, and Peasant Resistance," also appearing in *JQ* 91) examines the history of archaeological excavations in Gezer, which involved one of the most important excavations by the Palestine Exploration Fund in the nineteenth century. The digs became entangled with German land settlement in the village of Abu Shusha, and the subsequent struggle over communal land appropriated by the Bergheim banking family. The study is based on a new reading of biblical archaeology in Gezer as well as on oral histories gathered from Abu Shusha elders. These are examined against Ottoman police records and nizamiyya court records in Jaffa, Ramla, and Jerusalem, and highlighted by the murder of Peter Bergheim in 1885. In this light, Gezer becomes an arena for colonial conquest and Palestinian defeat. Although Abu Shusha farmers were defeated in Ottoman and Mandate law courts, their resistance to the imposition of tax-farming (as well as the assassination of their landlord) contributed to a compromise deal with the German caretaker of the Abu Shusha land, and later with Jewish purchasers of the Bergheim estate, that allowed them to retain a part of their possessions, even though they became sharecroppers on their own land.

Dima Srouji's "A Century of Subterranean Abuse in Sabastiya" is a history of the interaction between the villagers of Sabastiya in the Nablus region with five successive archaeological expeditions (Harvard University, the British School of Archaeology, Jordan's Department of Antiquities, and the Hebrew University) in the site saturated with biblical referencing (this is where John the Baptist lost his head to Salome). In what she calls "militarized archaeology," the author examines the most recent dealings between the Archaeological Department of the Civil Administration (ADCA) and the farmers of Sabastiya. It should be noted here that Israeli archaeological surveying in the West Bank is governed by the Civil Administration which is an arm of the Israeli Ministry of Defense. This unofficial adoption of the ADCA "is a conceptual annexation of all archaeological sites within the West Bank into the Israeli government's control."

Mahmoud Hawari's essay on Silwan ("Biblical Archaeology, Cultural Appropriation, and Settler Colonialism") extends the issues treated by Srouji on Sabastiya. He examines how Israel weaponizes archaeology to create an invented "biblical" narrative centered presumably on the "City of David" to justify its settler-colonial project in Silwan. According to Hawari, this contradicts the ethics of accepted archaeological practice and presents a biased narrative of the site as "biblical" and "Jewish," while ignoring its diverse multifaceted history. A major concern for Hawari is the issue of "slippage" in the selective silencing of the past produced by the

preference given "larger architectural structures and artefacts, representing significant 'biblical' or 'Jewish' historical events that can be labelled 'First or Second Temple' (Iron Age through to early Roman)." Not only is material from "later periods" (a euphemism for a vast expanse of time from the late Roman period to the late Ottoman period) undervalued and under documented, it is often destroyed as bulldozers and mechanical diggers are used in an attempt to "get down to the desired earlier strata as quickly as possible."

A similar kind of periodization can be seen in Hamdan Taha's essay on the history of the Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem (appearing in *JQ* 91). Taha examines the roots of Mandate archaeology in the Imperial Ottoman Museum established in the Old City in 1901 and its tribulations during World War I. James Henry Breasted, the American Orientalist, prevailed on the Rockefeller family during the 1920s to support the establishment of the Palestine Museum based on the concept of a "multicultural human civilization" and to highlight the cultural diversity of Palestine. The eventual building that housed the museum was inspired by Umayyad palaces, particularly by the Alhambra in Granada, Spain. Taha notes that the museum presents an Orientalist vision of Palestinian history through its focus on ancient history and a chronology that stops at the end of the Crusades and thus fails to include the Mamluk or Ottoman periods.

Taha's essay also suggests a second theme running through these two issues of *JQ*: ways of displaying and reading archaeological material. In this issue, Beverly Butler tackles the history of the University College London's Institute of Archaeology, its relationship to Palestine and the work of Flinders Petrie, and Petrie's "homeless" Palestinian collection and its movement from Palestine to Britain. Once secured, "the Institute of Archaeology goes on to take a crucial role in the international mission of instituting archaeology; thereby building on the pioneering legacies of Petrie's excavations in the Middle East." Butler also discusses the *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition (2019) at the University College London, co-curated with asylum seekers and refugees. The exhibition featured objects from the Institute of Archaeology's Palestine collection, displayed in an effort "to 'speak' to and of experiences of displacement, marginalization, and conflict." Butler situates this reframing of the objects within a larger discussion of "rehoming" the Palestine Collection.

As several other contributions to these issues of *JQ* illuminate, new readings are made possible not only by reframing the objects or materials collected from archaeological sites – as in the case of the *Unsilencing the Archives* or *Moving Objects* exhibitions – but by revisiting sites themselves. In this issue, Khaldun Bshara's "Lifta's Ruins: The Presence of Absence" is a work of forensic anthropology of Lifta, the Palestinian "ghost" village on the western slopes of Jerusalem that was emptied in 1948 and left to crumble since then. His investigatory method, which includes the use of "forensic architecture" to investigate war crimes, and as "an operative concept and analytical method for probing the events and histories inscribed in spatial artifacts and in built environments," has gained recognition among researchers and

practitioners who try to reconstruct spatial crime scenes. "As in criminology," Bshara writes, "every destroyed or depopulated site is a crime scene that carries within it the fingerprints of the perpetrator, and also shows the type of injury that was committed against the victim – the site itself."

Beatrice St. Laurent's "*Spolia*: A Conscious Display of History in Seventh Century Jerusalem" (appearing in *JQ* 91) is an inventive discussion of appropriated ruins. It inverts the notion of pillage by successive regimes into a practice of monumental spectacles. St. Laurent focuses on the use of *spolia* (a Latin term for spoils that refers to the repurposing of earlier architectural elements as building material) as historic objects on display in seventh-century monuments in Umayyad Jerusalem. What we have here is not "the incorporation of ruins in adaptive reuse such as columns built into walls," but the conscious incorporation of "ruins" in monumental Umayyad buildings during the period of Mu'awiya and his successors. The planners of early Islamic buildings, we are told,

> consciously incorporated *spolia* for prominent display as historic objects from earlier regional cultures and religions worthy of respect and preservation. This concept of displaying the ancient past has been linked with imperial power as early as the Greek Mouseion. Thus, the concept of a "Museum of Antiquities" was voiced by Muslim authority in mid-seventh-century Jerusalem invoking an egalitarian relationship with earlier Christian and Jewish monuments and proclaiming that message to a multicultural multireligious population.

Finally, "The Five Modifications of Dung Gate – Bab Harat al-Maghariba in Jerusalem" by Jean-Michel de Tarragon (appearing in *JQ* 91) is another photo essay using the photographic collection of the École Biblique (as well as auxiliary work by Khalil Ra'd) to show how Bab Harat al-Maghariba was transformed over time, from the late Ottoman period, through the Mandate, and the period of Jordan's administration of Jerusalem.

Endnotes

1   See "The Digitizing Tell en-Nasbeh (Biblical Mizpah of Benjamin) Project," Cornel University Library Digital Collections, online at (cornell.edu) bit.ly/3RtkCP8 (accessed 3 June 2022).

2   "Jeffrey R. Zorn's Academic Research Site," online at jrzorn.arts.cornell.edu/1947_Report. htm (accessed 14 May 2022).

3   "Unsilencing the Archives: The Laborers of the Tell en-Nasbeh Excavations (1926–1935)," online at (storymaps.arcgis.com) bit.ly/3Q47ij9 (accessed 14 May 2022).

4   Allison Mickel, *Why Those Who Shovel Are Silent: A History of Local Archaeological Knowledge and Labor* (Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2021), 6.

5   Rona Sela, "Resilient Resistance: Colonial Biblical, Archaeological, and Ethnographical Imaginaries in the Work of Chalil Raad (Khalil Ra'd), 1891–1948," in *Imaging and Imagining Palestine: Photography, Modernity and the Biblical Lens, 1918–1948*, ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 219.

The Transnationalization of Palestine

Jerusalem's Defense of Palestinian Migrants in the Interwar Period

Nadim Bawalsa

Abstract

Following the promulgation of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council, British Mandate authorities regularly denied Palestinian citizenship to thousands of Palestinian migrants across the diaspora (*mahjar*) – mainly the Latin American mahjar, where the largest Palestinian communities resided. In response, Palestinians in Palestine formed the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries in 1927. A group of nationalists, including Musa Kazim al-Husayni, submitted petitions to the Government of Palestine and the League of Nations demanding justice for migrants barred from their rights to Palestinian citizenship – and thus, to their right to return to Palestine as Palestinians. Importantly, the editors of *Filastin* newspaper called on Palestinian leaders to reform and unite, doing away with divisive rivalries, in order to defend the rights of Palestinian migrants. In entry after entry, *Filastin* decried the state of the current Palestinian leadership, stressing the interconnectedness of Palestinian migrants' struggle to secure their rights to Palestinian citizenship and the struggle to reform the faltering Palestinian nationalist movement.

These efforts of Palestinians in Palestine to protest British citizenship policy and to reform the Palestinian nationalist movement through solidarity with Palestinian migrants demonstrate that Palestinian political consciousness in the interwar period formed and developed transnationally. Through their activism, Palestinians in Palestine brought Palestinian migrants' voices home, and contributed to the emergence and consolidation of a Palestinian diaspora, and to the amplification of Palestinian voices transnationally. The Palestinian struggle for a right of return began well before 1948.

Keywords

Diaspora; *mahjar*; watan; Jerusalem; Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries; *Filastin;* citizenship; right of return; Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council; transnational solidarity.

This article explores the efforts of Palestinians in Jerusalem to protest the denial of Palestinian citizenship to Palestinian migrants throughout the diaspora (*mahjar*) during the British Mandate. Thousands of Palestinians who had emigrated since the late nineteenth century in pursuit of economic opportunity submitted applications for Palestinian citizenship following the promulgation by British Mandate authorities of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. Most had their applications refused on the claim, among others, that they had been out of Palestine since before the establishment of the Mandate in 1920 and therefore could not prove connection to Palestine or intention to return permanently to it.[1] As a result, tens of thousands of Palestinian migrants were rendered stateless during the first decade of British rule in Palestine.

Throughout their mahjar, Palestinians responded immediately to the denial of their applications for Palestinian citizenship starting in late 1926. For the duration of Britain's three-decade rule in Palestine, Palestinian migrants protested what they perceived as a grave injustice, and Palestinians in Palestine joined them. Hundreds of letters and petitions were delivered to British consular offices throughout Latin America, government channels in London, and Mandate authorities in Jerusalem. Several were sent directly to the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) in Geneva. In petitions to the High Commissioner in Jerusalem and through condemnations of British policy in local periodicals such as *Sawt al-Sha'b* and *Filastin*, Palestinians within Palestine pressed British authorities in Palestine to address these transnational grievances and recognize their authors as Palestinians.

This article examines the efforts of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries, founded in Bayt Jala in 1927, and the editors of *Filastin* newspaper to bring the crisis of Palestinian citizenship in the mahjar to the British administration and the Palestinian public in Palestine. In petitions delivered to British authorities in Jerusalem and in hundreds of articles printed in local newspapers, they helped build transnational networks of communication, financial remittance, and solidarity among Palestinians and their allies; they bolstered local and mahjar claims to national self-determination as Palestinians; and they challenged the equitability of Mandate rule in Jerusalem, London, and Geneva. Palestinians in the diaspora had been forming pro-Palestine collectives since 1918, members of which would visit British consulates throughout Latin America and submit petitions to be delivered to London, Jerusalem, and Geneva. However, applying pressure from within Palestine on the government of Palestine, on the League of Nations, and on Palestinian leadership was critical to efforts to resolve the crisis of mahjar Palestinians' international legal standing.

In the long run, Palestinians in Palestine were unable to change British policy toward Palestinian migrants, and the exile of their fellow Palestinians persisted for the duration of British rule in Palestine – and beyond. Yet the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries and the editors of *Filastin* succeeded in bringing mahjar Palestinians' voices home. By merging the mahjar with the *watan* (homeland) in a struggle to protect Palestinians' citizenship rights – all

within the context of national self-determination – they effectively made mahjar Palestinians' crisis a crisis for Palestine, which they also mobilized against their own failing nationalist leadership.

Injustice Is Served

The arrival of British forces in Jerusalem on 11 December 1917 brought transformative legal and political changes throughout Palestine. Weeks earlier, on 2 November, British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour had expressed Britain's commitment to "facilitate" the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." This commitment was incorporated into the text of the British Mandate for Palestine, article 7, which also promised to "facilitate the acquisition of Palestinian citizenship by Jews who take up permanent residence in Palestine."[2] Tens of thousands of Jews subsequently immigrated to Palestine. In 1925 alone, over 95 percent of the nearly thirty-five thousand total immigrants to Palestine were Jewish.[3] In July of that year, following years of deliberation and legal craftmanship, notably by Norman Bentwich, attorney general of Mandate Palestine, the government of Palestine promulgated the Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council.[4] Most Jewish immigrants to Palestine received Palestinian citizenship and all it entailed, including rights to residence, property ownership, employment, and legal recourse in Palestine.[5]

But Jewish immigrants to Palestine were not the only would-be subjects of the British Crown who sought legal representation and protection from Britain in the interwar period. Since the late nineteenth century, thousands of Palestinians had been migrating to the Americas in pursuit of economic opportunity and political stability. By the start of World War I, migrants from the Ottoman provinces of Palestine – including the sanjaks of 'Akka and Nablus, and the mutasarrifate of Jerusalem – to the Americas numbered roughly ten thousand, a figure that increased to approximately forty thousand by 1936.[6] While they left their homes as Ottoman subjects, the dissolution of the empire in 1918 left them with obsolete documents and precarious legal status. In the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, in exchange for the Allies' recognition of its sovereignty, the new Republic of Turkey relinquished its claims to former Ottoman territories, including the Arab provinces now under European mandates. Former Ottoman subjects of these territories ceased to be Ottomans and, unless they opted for Turkish nationality, were to seek protection and representation through British or French mandate authorities.[7]

The extent to which British authorities denied citizenship to Palestinians was unique. While French authorities also burdened Lebanese and Syrian migrants with cumbersome and impractical requirements for acquiring Lebanese and Syrian citizenship during the French Mandate, their general policy was to award it. Indeed, the Beirut-based high commissioner for the Levant included Lebanese migrants in the country's 1921 census; consequently, they could claim Lebanese citizenship four years later when a citizenship law was enacted in Lebanon.[8] French authorities saw Syrians as rabble-rousers whose nationalist aspirations would inconvenience the

Mandate and thus subjected applicants for Syrian citizenship to harsh vetting to ensure their compliance with French rule. Still, French authorities encouraged migrants from what would become the French mandates of Lebanon and Syria after 1923 to apply for Lebanese and Syrian citizenship at French consulates abroad. French authorities were interested in increasing their mandates' population of wealthier, mostly Christian citizens. Meanwhile, extending citizenship to Lebanese and Syrian migrants would indicate their acceptance of (if not enthusiasm for) French rule, dealing a blow to anti-colonial nationalists.

In Palestine, however, British Mandate policies were largely crafted to fulfill Balfour's promise, and so Jewish immigrants were naturalized at the expense of their Palestinian counterparts. Between 1925 and 1929, over three-quarters of the twenty thousand-odd applications for Palestinian citizenship were approved, of which only one percent were for non-Jewish applicants.[9] In 1937, Harold Morris of the Palestine Royal Commission estimated that about nine thousand applications for citizenship had been submitted by Palestinians residing in Latin America over the course of the decade, "and of these not more than 100 were accepted."[10] In the new postwar order, Palestinians who had migrated across the globe thus found themselves excluded from the privileges associated with Palestinian citizenship. They were effectively stateless, losing claims to property and inheritance in Palestine, and lacking protection and legal representation in their host countries and abroad.

The 1925 Citizenship Order-in-Council fulfilled Britain's promise to Zionists by naturalizing Jewish immigrants, and complicated the legal status of Palestinians residing abroad. The ordinance was divided into four parts with twenty-seven articles. The first article granted Palestinian citizenship to Ottoman subjects "habitually resident in the territory of Palestine" on 1 August 1925.[11] The second article, which dealt with Ottoman subjects born in Palestine, but "habitually resident abroad," presented Jerusalem and London with more complications. This article imposed a two-year limit for Palestinians living abroad to apply for citizenship and gave the government of Palestine "absolute discretion" in dealing with such cases. Article 4 imposed further conditions on such applicants: they could not have acquired any other citizenship and they must "have been resident within Palestine for not less than six months immediately prior" to their application for citizenship.

The six-month residence in Palestine as a prerequisite for citizenship presented many Palestinian migrants with difficulties. How could those with profitable businesses abroad leave them? Wasn't the fact of their birth in Palestine, a stipulation in the Treaty of Lausanne, and the fact that they had not acquired any other nationality sufficient? Moreover, as the ordinance made clear, Palestinian citizenship was ultimately granted at the discretion of the high commissioner – even to applicants who qualified under articles two and four.

Further frustrating Palestinian migrants who desired Palestinian citizenship was High Commissioner Herbert Plumer's November 1925 decision to bring the order-in-council into conformity with Article 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which gave former Ottomans until August 1926 to adopt a post-Ottoman nationality.[12] This decision

shortened the timeframe given to Palestinians residing abroad to opt for Palestinian citizenship to less than a year. With the six-month residency requirement, it effectively gave them three months to return to Palestine by February 1926. This was an onerous and largely unrealizable requirement for migrants with lives and livelihoods abroad. What is more, Plumer's amendment was not widely publicized. By the time thousands of migrants began applying for Palestinian citizenship in 1926, they were already unable to fulfill its requirements.

In addition to impractical application requirements, British officials prioritized applicants' motivations and intention to remain permanently in Palestine in granting citizenship. In December 1923, the Palestine government suggested amending the ordinance further to "check the application for Palestinian citizenship by immigrants who have not established any permanent home in Palestine but who may be birds of passage and desire to obtain that citizenship in order to enjoy British protection."[13] The urgency of the amendment was underscored by the number of applicants: "over 20,000 persons" had declared themselves to qualify for Palestinian citizenship in 1922. British consuls were told to use their discretion, and failure to provide sufficient proof of intention for permanent residence in Palestine became a frequently cited pretext – sufficiently proscriptive and strategically vague – for rejecting non-Jewish applicants.

The requirement of proof of intention to return permanently, British officials argued, was based on Britain's reluctance to create a "large class of persons who, though permanently resident in foreign countries, are entitled to British protection."[14] This reason acquired an irrefutable logic of its own among British policymakers in Jerusalem and London, who used it to dismiss Palestinian complaints. While most Palestinian migrants declared their intentions to return permanently to Palestine after amassing sufficient wealth abroad, officials in London and Jerusalem considered this insufficient and saw no reason to reconsider their applications. Britain was selective in offering the privileges associated with citizenship, and Palestinian migrants did not fit the bill. While Palestinian migrants in the Americas were denied return to their homeland, despite the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, British authorities encouraged the immigration of Jews to Palestine and naturalized them "virtually without check of any kind."[15] But this crooked governance played a fundamental role in forging transnational Palestinian political consciousness. As Palestinian nationalism emerged in the early twentieth century, therefore, the defense of Palestine and Palestinians was never limited to geographic Palestine. It was global and included communities of Palestinians as far as the Peruvian and Chilean Andes.

The obstacles to naturalization written into the 1925 ordinance began to come into focus as Palestinian migrants petitioned the government of Palestine and the League of Nations, and appealed the rejection of their citizenship applications at British consulates throughout the Americas starting in late 1926. In the interwar period, "more than 3,000 appeals, charges, or communications of some kind *reached* the [PMC] Secretariat in Geneva."[16] About 84 percent of these concerned Syria and Lebanon or Palestine and Transjordan, with the latter making up the largest single group.

Most of these questioned the Mandate system writ large, and the British Mandate for Palestine specifically, and most were dismissed. Yet in petitions and periodicals, letters and fundraising campaigns, Palestinians and their allies worldwide spoke out against what they perceived to be a grave injustice. As a result, Palestinians began speaking about themselves more deliberately and exclusively as Palestinians, and calling for Palestinian national self-determination. The 1925 citizenship ordinance, in other words, contributed to the formation of a Palestinian diaspora and to the development of Palestinian national consciousness transnationally.[17] But the denial of Palestinian citizenship to Palestinian migrants also affected Palestinians in Palestine. The denial of citizenship to relatives, neighbors, friends, and business partners had dramatic consequences for property ownership, inheritance, and social cohesion. It meant dissolving family and community structures, including permanently keeping families apart. Palestinians in Palestine thus responded to the denial of citizenship to thousands of their compatriots in the diaspora, strategizing to confront British authorities in Palestine and contributing to the broader Palestinian national movement within Palestine.

The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries

In 1926, ʿIsa Bandak, a prominent nationalist from Bethlehem, spearheaded a campaign to protest the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council through his newspaper, *Sawt al-Shaʿb*.[18] In piece after piece, he argued that the ordinance "constituted a ploy to increase Jewish immigration at the expense of citizenship of Arabs born in Palestine."[19] Bandak called on migrants to register themselves as Palestinian nationals at local consulates across the diaspora, in defiance of the ordinance. Other leaders in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah, including "newspaper editors, municipal council leaders, lawyers and members of prominent families," joined Bandak in publicizing the citizenship crisis through manifestos and open letters.[20] The Arab Executive in Jerusalem supported these efforts, and Musa Kazim al-Husayni, its president, lobbied colonial officials in Jerusalem throughout 1926. Late in that year, Bandak, Musa Kazim, and other Palestinian leaders met with Mandate officials and Colonial Secretary Leopold Amery in Jerusalem to request changes to the citizenship ordinance. Amery "refused to discuss changes to the order or increase assistance for the emigrants," and in response Musa Kazim wrote an open letter to the government asking it to extend the citizenship application deadline, explaining that the law "was difficult to understand for even competent legal authorities."[21] By early 1927, Palestinians transnationally had become so prolific in demanding justice for migrants that Palestinians in Palestine began to speak of migrants' "right to return" to their homeland in periodicals like *al-Jamiʿa al-ʿArabiyya* and *Filastin*.[22] Musa Kazim called on Palestinians in Palestine to "stand up in order to defend [the migrants'] rights, which are our rights," effectively merging the Palestinian nationalist movement with migrants' right to nationality and to return to Palestine.[23]

In 1927, Bandak, along with Khalil Murqus of Bethlehem and 'Atallah al-Najjar of Bayt Jala, announced the formation of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries.[24] The committee was formed in response to British citizenship policy, but the larger context included multiple concerns. In his memoirs, Bandak described the unsafe conditions many Palestinian migrants reported from the diaspora. Throughout the 1920s, Latin American republics faced coups and uprisings that put migrant communities at risk. For example, Bandak wrote, Honduran "revolutionaries looted the shops and homes of many Palestinian expatriates."[25] Without British consular support, Palestinians were particularly vulnerable. 'Adnan Musallam explains that "Palestinian migrants deprived of their citizenship faced extremely difficult circumstances," including loss of protection during times of war, inability to travel, and, in some cases, extortion under threat of deportation.[26] In the absence of official support, the committee "billed itself as the voice of the emigrants."[27] Bandak, Murqus, and al-Najjar came from Bethlehem and Bayt Jala, the two towns from which most Palestinian migrants in Latin America originated. The committee leaders appealed to residents of these towns, many of whom had relatives in the diaspora who were impacted by the citizenship ordinance. As the committee's membership grew, its leaders went to the Arab Executive, which extended its support to the committee. On 2 June 1927, Musa Kazim joined the committee's leaders in visiting the office of the high commissioner in Jerusalem to request that the government of Palestine reconsider the rejections doled out to Palestinian migrants applying for citizenship. Their petition covered nine areas that explained the extent of the crisis for Palestinians, as well as the benefits for Britain if it were to reverse its policy.

The petition began by expressing a people's reasonable expectation of their government, "that it should safeguard the well-being and happiness of the people."[28] The objections of so many Palestinians to the "oppression" caused by the citizenship ordinance was in itself evidence that it was "harmful and contrary to the rights of the people, and thus to be condemned." The petition described Palestinian migrants' rights to Palestinian citizenship as "a natural acquired right," of which Britain could only deprive them unintentionally, and asked Plumer to reflect on Britain's reputation were it to "persist to turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of a people, based on a rightful and logical claim." That is, "the committee envisioned an international right to nationality that mandated that individuals had diplomatic protection from their nation's government."[29] Palestinian migrants had made their citizenship applications in good faith, the petitioners went on:

> Applications were duly submitted, and the Palestinian residents abroad in the belief of having complied with the law, awaited the issue of the proper nationality certificates. They were greatly surprised to learn from their Consuls that the Palestine Government had refused its approval, on the plea that the applicants did not reside in Palestine for the required period. If we consider the Consuls' reply to be in conformity with the stipulations of the nationality law, on the other hand, we find that the

law contains harm and oppression to a degree not applicable on the most uncivilized people.[30]

In other words, assuming that British officials were faithfully applying the law, the law itself was not only unjust but unjustifiable.

The petitioners quoted article 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne and stressed that the "logical conclusion to be deduced from the stipulations of the article is that the emigrants of this land who belong to the majority, enjoy the right to the Palestinian nationality."[31] The narrow window given to Palestinian migrants to meet the conditions set out in the citizenship ordinance, the petitioners noted, was a problem of British making – after all, the citizenship ordinance was published after the Treaty of Lausanne – and noted that the Colonial Office had "in its reply to a petition in this connection, acknowledged that the time and circumstances under which the nationality law were published were inadequate." Adherence to the treaty thus required revising the law to allow Palestinian migrants, by right, to claim their nationality.

The petitioners went on to describe Palestinian migration as a benefit not only to Palestinian society but to British rule in Palestine and globally. In doing so, they included Palestinians transnationally within British suzerainty and British Palestine within the ranks of the world's greatest nations. For the petitioners, it behooved Britain to encourage Palestinian migration and to protect Palestinian migrants because "all Arab emigrants possess real estate and immovable property in Palestine, upon which they pay taxes and rates."[32] The petitioners explained that migrants did their part in supporting the government of Palestine in its "administration of the land," but they added that the government "seems to refuse to do its part, by depriving them, through the iniquitous nationality law, of the protection they require in their abodes abroad." They alerted the high commissioner to the riches of Palestinian migrants in the mahjar, who "have attained a large success in business and industry, many of whom own progressive factories reaping large profits." These riches, they went on, "will eventually be added to the wealth of the land upon their repatriation"; in the meantime, "it is impossible for busy people to abandon their affairs for several months to come to Palestine to reside in compliance with the law." The continued denial of Palestinian citizenship to these migrants would harm Palestinians inside Palestine, "notably [through] the stoppage of all money remittances that have heretofore been the backbone of the wealth of the country." This loss, they continued, "will be felt through the renunciation of the rich emigrants to repatriate themselves, bringing their wealth and establishing in the homeland commerce, industry and agriculture. The losses to the Government in taxes and revenues are great." Palestinians' economic success, the petitioners implied, should give them the privileges normally associated with metropolitan citizenship: "The nationals of the greatest nations in the world are scattered all over the world, and instead of being hampered for reasons of nationality, are afforded the greatest help in the pursuit of their business." If Britons could pursue their interests globally, why shouldn't Palestinians enjoy the same opportunity?

The petitioners also strategically pointed out the new Turkish republic's interest

in Palestinian migrants. Even as British authorities denied Palestinian migrants their citizenship rights, the Republic of Turkey "has informed her Consuls abroad to recognise as Turkish subjects all emigrants, formerly Turkish subjects, but who did not acquire or were not admitted to the nationality of the new political division their country has acquired." Thus, Turkey stood to profit from the riches of twenty-five thousand successful Palestinian migrants – as the petitioners emphasized, "The benefit to be derived of their activity is not negligible." Assuming that Britain would not wish to cede any victories to Turkey, they asked: "Would the British Government tolerate that the active section of the Palestinian population be accredited to Turkey? Would that be suitable to British policy?" Still, the petitioners continued to emphasize the preference for Palestinian citizenship by these migrants, "who would rather die than relinquish their land associations, family ties and Palestinian nationality."[33]

Before making their demands of the government of Palestine, the petitioners described specific difficulties migrants were experiencing without citizenship. They pointed out that Palestinian migrants were unable to travel "between Europe and the different parts of America on business, as they cannot obtain a Passport from the British Consul"; their lives and businesses were at risk without British consular protection, especially in Latin American countries experiencing political unrest; and they faced imminent deportation from "some of the American republics, notably Chile and Mexico" that "have promulgated laws to expatriate all foreigners not provided with a certificate of some nationality, which laws will shortly be enforced." Regarding the last difficulty, the petitioners explained that Palestinians would "be forcibly ejected, as tramps and outlaws." They concluded this section with the following statement: "Your Excellency will not ignore the dangers and losses to which they will be subjected, and the dishonour and disrepute that will befall them."

The petitioners demanded that Britain amend the ordinance "to enable all Palestinian emigrants abroad to maintain their nationality while residing abroad" and to notify British consular offices "all over the world to afford the protection to the Arab emigrants until the amendment of the law in a suitable manner." The high commissioner, the petitioners concluded, should "consider this solicitation as the expression of Arab public opinion in this land and abroad." Indeed, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries did not merely represent a unified position of Palestinians at home and abroad, but helped forge this unity within Palestine and among Palestinians transnationally.

The committee's petition, and the deluge of petitions from Palestinians across the Americas during the first half of 1927, seems to have prompted a flurry of discussion among British officials in Jerusalem and London. In June, George Symes, chief secretary of the government of Palestine, told Amery of his meeting with members of the committee and Musa Kazim, shared a copy of the petition, and explained the extent of Palestinians' complaints: "Arab sentiment in Palestine has been stirred to protest against what is represented to be an arbitrary deprival of the rights of persons born in Palestine and resident abroad to become nationals of the country of their birth."[34] Symes described to Amery the nature of the petition and its authors, and elaborated their position:

The members of this deputation . . . did not deny that many emigrant families had been absent from Palestine for more than a generation, but they maintained that they had never completely severed their connection with this country, had paid visits to it whenever they could afford them, sent considerable sums of money to their relatives, and in some cases, retained ownership of immovable property in Palestine.[35]

After explaining the petitioners' complaints, Symes intimated that he agreed with them and was open to reconsidering the migrants' applications:

I feel that there is a certain force in these contentions and am satisfied that fairly regular connection is maintained between individuals and "colonies" of these persons in America and their country of origin. On political and other grounds I should not be disinclined to reconsider sympathetically applications for Palestinian citizenship made by persons who by birth, race, and sentiment are genuinely attached to Palestine, although they are resident abroad and are likely to remain abroad for an indefinite time.[36]

The work of the committee members had seemingly paid off, convincing Symes that Palestinian migrants deserved British sympathy and assistance in securing Palestinian citizenship, even if they chose to remain abroad.

Symes did, however, express concerns about the migrants' intentions. He agreed with Amery that "it is not intended to accept options from persons who desire to obtain Palestinian citizenship merely as a means of obtaining British protection," and acknowledged that:

My deputation did not conceal the fact that, apart from individuals who found it inconvenient to return immediately to Palestine, the desire of a majority of persons affected was to obtain a national status which would regularise their position in the American States where they were resident and also secure for them the good offices and protection of British Consuls.[37]

Ultimately, however, Symes argued, "It is not in the interests of the British Government to estrange numbers of Arab natives of Palestine who are resident abroad and arouse the resentment of their relatives in this country on account of what, they contended, was a repudiation of the Mandatory's proper responsibility." He suggested that the Foreign Office be involved, and asked Amery to determine how many Palestinians were actually residing in the Americas – especially in Chile and Mexico – and "whether protection of their interests would involve trouble and expense so considerable as to make it inexpedient to afford them special facilities to obtain Palestinian nationality."

According to Albert Montefiore Hyamson, Palestine's chief immigration officer and a leading British Zionist, Jerusalem had received 3,603 applications that fell under

article 2 of the 1925 citizenship ordinance. The government had rejected more than half of these already and seemed poised to reject more than 60 percent in total under the existing guidelines. If Symes's approach were made policy, Hyamson wrote, "it is possible that about 1,700 of these rejected applications on reconsideration will be accepted."[38] Hyamson suggested that Symes convey these numbers to Amery, which he did not. In the meantime, however, Symes wrote Amery:

> I propose to maintain the present practice of refusing all applications for certificates of Palestinian citizenship from persons who left this country prior to 1920 and have not resided here for more than a period of six months since that date, or from persons who, having left the country more recently, are not able to satisfy me of their intention to return and permanently to reside here in the near future.[39]

At the end of July 1927, Mitchell Banks at the Home Office in London sent a letter to William Ormsby-Gore at the Colonial Office in which he expressed sympathy for the case of Palestinian migrants whose citizenship requests had been denied. Calling it a "very important" issue, he concluded that granting them nationality would, first, "be an act of justice and fairness to them, because otherwise they may lose any nationality"; and, second, "it will also be of considerable advantage to British interests to have these people satisfied and therefore friendly to us in the different countries in which they live."[40]

Replying in September, Ormsby-Gore referred to article 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne and stressed that granting nationality to former Ottoman subjects now residing abroad was "subject to the consent of the Government exercising authority in the detached territory" (that is, the mandate governments). Ormsby-Gore found the existing law sufficient in addressing "all the possible cases" of Palestinian migrants, and declared that migrants who left Palestine before 1920, when Palestine was "part of the Turkish Empire," had no intention of returning and settling there irrespective of their "material interests in Palestine." Therefore, he continued, "they are scarcely entitled to British protection while abroad." Since many Palestinian migrants had "no connection with Palestine and had no intention of returning there except perhaps for occasional short visits," Ormsby-Gore deemed it "undesirable to create a class of persons permanently resident abroad who are entitled to British protection."[41] With this in mind, he found the "adoption of 1920 as the year since which applicants for citizenship must have resided in Palestine" to be "quite fair and equitable," since it ensured that only those migrants truly intending to remain in Palestine were naturalized. Those who had their citizenship certificates rejected "are not and never have been Palestinians."[42] As far as Ormsby-Gore and the Colonial Office were concerned, Palestinian nationality began with the establishment of the British Mandate and not, as many migrants protested, with birth in Palestine or, as the Treaty of Lausanne put it, "belong[ing] by race to the majority of the population of that territory."

But not everyone in Europe agreed with Ormsby-Gore. In September 1927, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries also

sent a petition to the League of Nations requesting amendments to the citizenship ordinance. Murqus followed the petition with a telegram in which he adjured the League to revise the law, since "it is unreasonable that [an emigrant] should be prevented from his nationality because he has emigrated from his country to work in commerce."[43] Mary Adelaide Broadhurst, founder of the National Political Reform League in England and advisor to the Arab Executive in Palestine, forwarded Murqus's telegram to the colonial secretary and explained that there is "great anxiety amongst the Arab leaders on the matter, which they rightly consider to embody a real grievance."[44] Amery rebuffered her, however, stating that British officials had already considered the issue, found the law sufficiently thorough, and decided that it did not need to be amended. As for migrants who had left Palestine before 1920 and could not fulfill the two-year residency requirement in Palestine, Amery reassured her that "the High Commissioner for Palestine would exercise a proper discretion" in addressing their citizenship applications.[45] London gave Jerusalem the freedom to determine the fates of thousands of Palestinian migrants.

Several weeks later, Ormsby-Gore sent a confidential dispatch to Plumer. After explaining the previous months' correspondence and developments on the issue of Palestinian migrants requesting Palestinian citizenship, Ormsby-Gore reiterated that, despite Symes's, Banks's, and Broadhurst's recommendations for clemency, he was "reluctant to agree to any relaxation of the rule" surrounding residence in Palestine in or after 1920. He declared that "there can have been little emigration from Palestine between 1914 and 1919" due to the war, so

> the adoption of 1920 as the year since which applicants for citizenship must have resided in Palestine means in effect that most natives of Palestine who have been in that country for a period of six months or more during the past thirteen years can obtain Palestinian citizenship provided that they intend to return there within a reasonable period and to settle there permanently.[46]

He then reiterated the undesirability of creating a class of British protected persons abroad. As for those who had been out of the country for longer than "thirteen years," they "cannot be held to have had direct connection with that country except under the Ottoman regime or to have any legitimate claim to be considered Palestinians or to British protection." Ormsby-Gore added that this position was supported by the foreign secretary and would be conveyed to the secretary-general of the League of Nations.

The issue persisted until the end of October 1927, during which time Plumer wrote to John Shuckburgh at the Colonial Office's Middle East Department stating that he "entirely agree[d]" with the decision to not amend the law.[47] Plumer also submitted a communiqué to Amery summarizing the cumbersome second article of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council and the difficulties it imposed on applicants for Palestinian citizenship in Latin America, whose applications were denied because they missed the deadline, because they had not maintained connection with Palestine,

or because they could not prove an intention to return to reside permanently in Palestine. Plumer rejected the possibility of extending the deadline for applications, but added that "the Palestine Government are anxious to accord every facility for the acquisition of Palestinian citizenship by persons who by birth, race and sentiment are genuinely attached to Palestine."[48] Yet, even as Palestinian migrants repeatedly sought to prove their "genuine attachment to Palestine" in their petitions, it was never enough. British officials in London and Jerusalem continued to ignore claims to Palestinian nationality and citizenship based on migrants' historic, familial, and economic connections to Palestine; the benefits of migrant remittances to Palestine and to the government of Palestine; and the legality of extending citizenship to migrants, as well as the concerns over having no nationality at all pending further rejections. Britain simply did not find it necessary or worthwhile to amend the citizenship ordinance on account of Palestinian migrants' grievances.

Throughout 1928, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries continued to appeal to authorities in Jerusalem, London, and Geneva. They also appealed to the British public in a forty-page open letter, published in multiple Palestinian periodicals, which reiterated many of the arguments made in the petitions submitted to the government. This was not the only instance in which the press contributed to the efforts of the Committee for the Defense of Palestinians Residing in Foreign Countries. The editors of *Filastin*, a Jaffa-based Palestinian nationalist periodical, were committed to defending Palestinian migrants' rights and to exposing Britain's unjust policies.[49] Further, they leveraged the crisis of mahjar Palestinians' citizenship against Palestinian leadership in Palestine and its failure to achieve national self-determination. The editors' strategic linkage of the defense of Palestinian migrants' citizenship rights to the need for Palestinian political reform indicates the extent to which Palestinians in Palestine considered mahjar Palestinians' citizenship to be a transnational political issue that impacted Palestinian political freedom.

Filastin, Citizenship, and the Reform of Palestinian Leadership

Throughout 1927, the editors of *Filastin* newspaper – 'Isa al-'Isa, a prominent nationalist, and his cousin Yusuf al-'Isa – gave the issue of Palestinian migrants' citizenship considerable attention. The 'Isas considered it a thoroughly national issue and, unlike the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries, stressed the importance of protesting British policies *and* of calling for the reform of Palestinian national leadership to assist Palestinian migrants. In doing so, they linked the issue of Palestinian migrants and their struggle for Palestinian citizenship to the broader struggle for national self-determination. *Filastin*'s editors printed mahjar Palestinians' protests against British Mandate policies as well as their appeals to Palestine's leaders to bolster the newspaper's agenda of revamping Palestine's nationalist movement in the face of an increasing Zionist threat. As a result, *Filastin* enhanced communication and solidarity between Palestinians worldwide

who were struggling for the same outcomes and contributed to the development of Palestinian national consciousness transnationally.

The inability of thousands of Palestinians residing abroad to return permanently to Palestine without abandoning economically viable businesses abroad was cause for alarm across Palestine, and *Filastin* alerted its readers to this crisis. In August 1927, for example, *Filastin* printed a petition sent earlier that year to George Symes from Salamon Canavati (Sulayman Qanawati) and Bishara Ya'qub al-Qawwas, president and secretary, respectively, of the Centro Social Palestino in Monterrey, Mexico.[50] The text of the petition took up the issue's entire front page and most of the back page. Canavati and Qawwas decried the Government of Palestine's hypocrisy, recalling Britain's promise to help Palestinian migrants as part of their "duty as guardians of the rights of Palestinians," which was undermined with their refusal to amend the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council to allow the migrants more time to apply for citizenship. They asked: "What sort of assistance do you mean, Your Excellency, when you contradict yourselves?" Canavati and Qawwas dispelled any notion that migrants had severed ties with Palestine as a result of their lengthy stays abroad. "This is an accusation with no godly authority," they declared, "for every migrant is in constant contact with his dear homeland through writing letters to his family and sending them money to pay taxes on his properties." Canavati and Qawwas explained further that "the towering palaces and buildings being built in Palestine are from the riches of migrants, and this is the biggest proof of their attachment to Palestine, their dear homeland."[51] Palestinian migration had historically been part of a larger global tradition of movement in pursuit of economic betterment, they argued, noting that, like migrants from other cultures, Palestinians never wished to remain permanently abroad. The obstacles that British authorities placed in these migrants' paths were thus "illegitimate." Specifically, the petition stated: "The government [of Palestine] has no right to forbid [the migrant] from the holy inheritance [of nationality], holding on instead to an unjust law enacted for Zionist ends and founded on miserly ambitions!"[52]

Toward the end of the petition, Canavati and Qawwas emphasized their community's confidence in their claims to Palestinian nationality and their steadfastness in the face of oppressive British policies:

> We do not acknowledge nor accept any nationality but that of our fathers and ancestors, whether the government desires it or not. We were born Palestinians and will live and die as Palestinians; we will make every effort for our Palestine; and we would rather starve, be murdered, or burn to death than embrace another nationality. Know, too, that we demand a right that is legitimately ours, and thus, we will remain steadfast in accomplishing our mission until we receive our rights.[53]

Canavati and Qawwas demanded that British authorities repeal the citizenship ordinance and remove all obstacles placed in migrants' paths to citizenship. Accordingly, they concluded, "you will have carried out your duty to justice and you will be written into the history books and in gold onto the hearts of every Palestinian."

By publishing Canavati and Qawwas's petition and others like it, *Filastin* at once broadcast the circumstances of Palestinians worldwide, demanded that British authorities acknowledge Palestinians' national rights, and bolstered the Palestinian nationalist movement.[54] For *Filastin*, migrants in the diaspora were Palestinians in every sense, and their struggle with British authorities was part of a larger Palestinian struggle for national self-determination.

Filastin's editors also collaborated with regional newspapers in the Middle East to publicize the injustice of British policies. Palestinians in Egypt were evidently experiencing difficulties similar to those of their counterparts in the Americas and in August 1927, *Filastin* printed a statement from the British consulate in Alexandria, Egypt, regarding its policies on "Palestinians and passports." The statement appeared in Egypt's *al-Muqattam* newspaper, whose editors added critical commentary. When Palestinians in Egypt had complained to *al-Muqattam* that they had been denied visas to return to Palestine, *al-Muqattam*'s editors wrote:

> We sent a representative of *al-Muqattam* to the consulate. . . . The specialist in issuing visas there explained to the representative that the Palestinians who left Palestine before the month of August 1925 are not considered Palestinians even if they were born there and carry Palestinian passports.[55]

Al-Muqattam responded:

> If the consulate's statement is true, then this is very strange. For how can the British consulate forbid individuals who were born and raised in Palestine, all enjoying the birthright to Palestinian nationality, from return to their country, considering, too, that they haven't replaced their nationality with another . . . ? If they were not present in Palestine before August 1925 even though when they left it before this date, they did so as Palestinians carrying Palestinian passports, it is the British consulate's duty to protect and help them.[56]

Like Palestinians in the Americas, these Palestinians were told to apply for other nationalities: "People such as those," *al-Muqattam*'s editors continued, "may not return home carrying Palestinian passports; instead, they must receive Egyptian passports. It is this reality that many Palestinians do not wish to accept, for they believe that the British consulate is placing obstacles in their way."

Filastin printed *al-Muqattam*'s critique of British policy in full and its editors explained that *al-Muqattam* had discovered that the British consulate had apparently been requesting information about certain applicants from the Government of Palestine, and was requiring some applicants to prove their wealth before considering their applications for return visas.[57] These policies, *al-Muqattam* argued, were strange and unprecedented:

> Has it been the case that any government in the world can treat its subjects this way? And if the government of Palestine can forbid the sons of the

nation from entry into their home on account of poverty or impoverishment, where should they go? . . . As for the special arrangements put in place to allow consulates to solicit information from the government regarding suspicious individuals, we do not have an objection as it concerns the government's security and safety. Regardless, we want that this not be applied to the sons of Palestine to whom the doors must be opened for return home.[58]

The editors of *Filastin* concluded by calling on the British government "to attend to these severe measures . . . and to facilitate the travel of returning Palestinians of all social classes to their homeland." The crisis of Palestinian citizenship thus brought Palestinian and Egyptian periodicals together in protesting Mandate authorities' abuse of Palestinian rights transnationally, and in demanding redress.

But *Filastin*'s editors also linked protecting the rights of Palestinians residing abroad to demanding reform and empowerment at the local level. In several articles from 1927, *Filastin* offered critical reflections on the status of the Palestinian nationalist movement in Palestine and its responsibilities toward its compatriots throughout the diaspora.[59] Referencing the rivalry between the Husaynis and the Nashashibis, two of Jerusalem's most prominent families, *Filastin* printed a message to its readers in the mahjar decrying the state of Palestinian leadership:

We would like to inform our immigrant brothers that there are no political parties in Palestine today; . . . there is nothing but familial discord among our leaders. . . . This discord . . . is what invited and invites us today to form a new and inclusive political party . . . to restore to our national movement its former energy and to build our future on firm grounds, unswayed by the winds of personalities and families. We hope that our migrant brothers will join us in this blessed movement, which is undertaken by every reasonable thinker in the country.[60]

This vision for a reformed nationalist movement would also benefit mahjar Palestinians. The editors reiterated to their readers abroad that *Filastin* belonged to them as well as to Palestinians within Palestine, and sought to build among its transnational readership a united front against antiquated, old-regime politics.

Efforts to cultivate this transnational Palestinian unity can be found in *Filastin*'s periodic column "American Mail" (*barid Amrika*). Under this column, the newspaper printed Palestinian migrants' dismay at the state of their nationalist movement. One such piece, titled "The Immigrants Are Crying! O Leaders, What Have You Done For and With the Nation!" included a testimony from an unnamed migrant in San Salvador, El Salvador:

I went one day to the capital, San Salvador, as my national brothers invited me to the Association of Palestinian Brotherhood and I saw the miserable citizens, all of them crying. I began to cry with them without knowing why. Someone asked me what I was crying about, and I said, "I

am crying with you." He said, "Does your family cry with you as well?" I said, "No." He said, "So you are not of us because we and our families cry and ache together!"

I asked him why that was, and he said, "We cry because we have become without a nation and without a nationality, and without a common ground to resort to. Our nation was given to others at no cost; our honor was sacrificed for the sake of chairs and desk jobs; and our nationality has gone for the sake of division, discord, and troublemaking."[61]

That migrants felt the paralysis of Palestine's nationalist movement, and that this was ostensibly a larger cause for their tears than the loss of their citizenship, enhanced the newspaper's call to reform a failing nationalist movement.

The testimony continued with a description of the abysmal conditions experienced by Palestinian migrants in El Salvador because their Palestinian citizenship had been denied by British authorities:

Our prestige has fallen in the eyes of people, for we have no consulates to protect us, no passports in our hands. We have become prisoners, insulted, humiliated, dying. And our children after us are dying as vagabonds, for they have no home or nationality, and no nationalist connection.[62]

The account then echoed *Filastin*'s editorial line, blaming Palestinian leadership:

But what makes us cry even more is what we read in the papers about slander in the nation, and hostility between leaders. The small slanders the big, and the big demeans the small, which makes us believe that our connection is dissolved, that our national movement is paralyzed, and that our honor in the homeland and the diaspora is lost . . . Our countrymen have been oppressed, and their home given to Jewish vagrants, denying them their natural nationality. And our leaders are unaware. There is no mercy or strength but in God.[63]

Filastin's editors thus sought to convey to their readers in Palestine that their counterparts in the diaspora were equally frustrated with Palestine's leadership and that they were equally committed to the newspapers' agenda: out with the old, in with the new.[64]

As another conflation of the citizenship crisis with Palestinian nationalist reform, *Filastin* published the testimony of 'Abdullah Abu Shawariyya, residing in the small town of Curanilahue, Chile.[65] Abu Shawariyya was exasperated by the restrictions on naturalizing Palestinian migrants and described the challenges Palestinians faced when submitting applications for citizenship to local British consulates:

British consuls here announced to all Palestinians that whoever wishes to have the right to his citizenship and to acquire Palestinian nationality must register at their consulates. We all did so . . . Three months later, the

British consul wrote explaining that the government of Palestine refused to accept our nationality. They said that if we wished to be considered as Palestinians, we would need to travel there, reside there for six months, and then write to the government requesting acknowledgment of our nationality. Otherwise, we cannot be considered Palestinians. This was how the consuls replied to us. Observe, brothers, the obstacles and difficulties that the occupying state places before us, for who can leave behind their work to travel to Palestine, live there for six months, and then get acknowledgment of nationality?[66]

The sequence of events was familiar to Palestinians throughout Latin America. But *Filastin* was also interested in what Abu Shawariyya had to say about the Palestinian nationalist movement in Palestine. While he explained that the plight of Palestinian migrants was a result of unjust British policies, he emphasized that a somnolent, stagnant Palestinian leadership was also to blame for not protesting the policy:

And is it not shameful that this happens to us while you are asleep? . . . You must not overlook the present condition of our country, which lacks a political party or committee to represent it before the government. This has made us like sheep without a shepherd while the Zionists grow in power through their unity. How long shall we sleep, how long this slumber and stagnation?[67]

Abu Shawariyya called on his compatriots in Palestine to convene and form a unity opposition party to regain the dignity and pride Palestinians once enjoyed, effectively echoing *Filastin*'s mission. This was a solution in which Palestinians both within and outside Palestine could share: "So, let us move forward, gentlemen, and protest to your government, for there are among you those with the financial means to do so. And we Palestinians abroad will endeavor to subscribe to this project on which we hang our hopes for our nation."

The most salient connection between the mahjar and the watan was invariably monetary, and *Filastin*'s most direct way of showing support for Palestinians in the diaspora came in honoring their financial contributions to their watan. In an article titled "To Defend the Rights of Migrants," *Filastin*'s editors published a message from the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries announcing that migrants in Honduras and the Dominican Republic had sent the committee 165 dollars and 50 dollars respectively, and naming the donors.[68] *Filastin* regularly honored Palestinian migrants who sent money to the committee, indicating the quality of the union the newspaper editors wished for between their local and transnational readers. Reciprocal appreciation could overshadow the newspaper editors' inability to effect policy change or reform the Palestinian nationalist movement, but simultaneously uphold the interconnectedness of the – now transnational – Palestinian nationalist cause.

Filastin's nationalist editors were committed to easing the struggles of their

compatriots in the mahjar. To do so, they honored migrants for their generosity and printed their testimonies; they protested British policies individually and in collaboration with regional presses; and, most importantly, they called on Palestinians in Palestine to unite and reform their leadership. *Filastin*'s nationalist mission of political reform and party unity within Palestine thus found transnational fodder in the injustices meted out to the Palestinian diaspora community after the promulgation of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. The causes were aligned, and the rhetoric describing them was made congruous. *Filastin*, as a platform for challenging British and Zionist colonial hegemony in Palestine during the interwar period and for critiquing Palestinian nationalist leadership, was ideal for publicizing the crisis of Palestinian citizenship – a thoroughly political issue – and for building transnational solidarity around it.

The Transnationalization of Palestinian Solidarity

Through their activism and publications, Palestinians in Palestine brought the crisis of mahjar Palestinians' citizenship to the offices of the British Mandate in Palestine and to the attention of Palestinians throughout Palestine. The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries and the editors of *Filastin* raised awareness about the issue and sought justice for their relatives and compatriots in the diaspora. As a result of their efforts, mahjar Palestinians' voices came home, and their right of return to Palestine acquired new significance as a legal and political matter that concerned the Government of Palestine as well as Palestinian leadership.

Bandak, al-Najjar, Murqus, and Musa Kazim al-Husayni exposed a rift in British opinion regarding the status of the thousands of mahjar Palestinians who desperately sought protection in a turbulent diaspora and a way to legally remain connected to Palestine. On the one hand, Symes, Banks, and Broadhurst counseled clemency for Palestinian migrants, calling to amend the text or implementation of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. On the other, Ormsby-Gore, Shuckburgh, and Plumer refused to relax the law and even to acknowledge Palestinian migrants' claims to Palestinian nationality. This dissonance ultimately did little to safeguard the rights of Palestinian migrants, and Geneva allowed the Government of Palestine to behave as it pleased, irrespective of international law. However, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries challenged a fundamental imbalance in British governance of Palestine and confirmed what Palestinians everywhere had been protesting since the 1917 Balfour Declaration: Britain's crooked administration of Palestine, giving clear priority to the Zionists at the expense of Palestinians worldwide.

In his memoirs, Ayyub Musallam, an intellectual and political activist from Bethlehem who spent a considerable part of his career in Latin America throughout the mid-twentieth century, described the epoch of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries as follows, highlighting Britain's duplicitous behavior:

> The committee . . . held meetings and carried out protests against the government regarding what it viewed as politics of separation, and it showed through these efforts a flaw in British Mandate policy regarding migration legislation. However, it was unable to convince the government to abandon the law or annul what it had issued in confidential instructions to British ambassadors abroad regarding easing the acquisition by migrants of the nationality of their country. . . .
>
> Such was the rule of the British Mandate over Palestine, operating on a concealed politics of evil toward Arabs. For while it encouraged the emigration of Arabs from the country, it was simultaneously easing the immigration of Jews to it in an alarming and dreadful way.[69]

Beyond exposing inequities in British practice, Palestinians in Palestine decried their own leadership's shortcomings. Palestine's most prolific and anti-colonial nationalist newspaper, *Filastin*, highlighted the crisis of citizenship as a thoroughly nationalist issue, the resolution of which *Filastin* insisted was the responsibility of a reformed Palestinian nationalist movement that would effectively challenge British and Zionist rule, and as a result, defend the national rights of Palestinians wherever they may be. In printing petitions and testimonies from Palestinian migrants protesting British policy and lamenting the state of Palestine's nationalist movement – while also acknowledging the financial commitments of diaspora Palestinians to Palestine – *Filastin*'s editors effectively merged the defense of Palestinian migrants' rights to citizenship with its main mission: unity and reform in the face of archaic and ineffective Palestinian nationalist leadership. *Filastin* advised its local and transnational readers that to support its nationalist cause was also to call for the defense of Palestinians residing in foreign countries, and vice versa.

The efforts of Palestinians in Palestine to protest exclusionary British policy and to reform the Palestinian nationalist movement through communication and collaboration with mahjar Palestinians demonstrates that Palestinian nationalist consciousness in the interwar period formed and developed transnationally. In writing a history of the rise of Palestinian national consciousness in the early twentieth century, therefore, we must recognize that what it meant to be Palestinian and, indeed, *where* it meant to be Palestinian were never limited to geographic Palestine. As Sebastian Conrad writes in the case of German national identity, "The search for particularity and for the elements of an unchangeable national identity . . . was . . . an actual effect of processes of cross-border circulation."[70] Palestinians across the Americas were also defining Palestine and collective Palestinian political consciousness.

Palestinians joined in the age of transnational migration in pursuit of economic stability and political security that impacted much of the world starting in the mid-nineteenth century. And wherever they settled, they adapted and responded to the extensive global shifts in political, economic, legal, and social dynamics that rapidly characterized the new interwar world order. As the world they knew radically transformed, permanently altering the borders of their homeland and their manifold

connections to it, they resisted interwar European imperialism and demanded national rights and justice. In doing so, they contributed to the development of a transnational mode of political identification among Palestinians, to the emergence and consolidation of a Palestinian diaspora, and to amplifying Palestinian voices transnationally.

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Endnotes

1 On the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council, see Mutaz Qafisheh, *The International Law Foundations of Palestinian Nationality: A Legal Examination of Nationality in Palestine under Britain's Rule* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008); and Lauren Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). On British authorities' use of the citizenship ordinance to deny citizenship to Palestinian migrants, see Nadim Bawalsa, "Legislating Exclusion: Palestinian Migrants and Interwar Citizenship," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 2 (2017): 44–59.

2 "The Palestine Mandate," online at avalon. law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp (accessed 5 May 2022).

3 *A Survey of Palestine* (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1945–46), 185.

4 For the full text of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council, see The National Archives (TNA), London, Colonial Office (CO) 733/179/2.

5 The Zionist Federation in London regularly contested revocations of Jewish migrants' citizenship, arguing that the British authorities were obliged to respect the Mandate and its commitments to the Jews. See TNA, CO 733/179/2.

6 Cecilia Baeza Rodriguez, *Les Palestiniens d'Amérique latine et la cause palestinienne:* *Chili, Brésil, Honduras, 1920–2010* (PhD diss., Sciences Po, 2010).

7 On the legislation of Palestinian nationality following the Ottoman defeat, including comparison to other League of Nations Mandates in the Middle East and elsewhere, see Qafisheh, *International Law*.

8 Stacy Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 163.

9 *Survey of Palestine*, 208.

10 TNA, CO 733/347/4.

11 TNA, CO 733/179/2.

12 Lauren Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 85.

13 Letter to John Evelyn Shuckburgh, Middle East department, Colonial Office, 2 December 1923, TNA, CO 733/55.

14 *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), 133–34.

15 John Shuckburgh, head of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, relayed this in a letter to the Zionist Federation on 25 May 1925. TNA, CO 733/110.

16 Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87. Emphasis in original. The figure of three

thousand represents petitions reaching Geneva between 1919 and 1940. In order from highest to lowest percentage from each mandated territory, the PMC received petitions from: Palestine/Transjordan (43.4 percent), Syria/Lebanon (40.6 percent), South West Africa (4.8 percent), French Togo (2.3 percent), Iraq (2.3 percent), British Tanganyika (2.2 percent), French Cameroon (1.3 percent), and Western Samoa (1.2 percent).

17 See Nadim Bawalsa, *Transnational Palestine: Migration and the Right of Return before 1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022).

18 'Isa Basil Bandak (1891–1984) served in several roles throughout his life in Palestine. Most importantly, he produced two publications after World War I, the magazine *Bethlehem* and the newspaper *Sawt al-Sha'b*; the latter was in circulation until 1957. A nationalist, he was also a member of Bethlehem's Muslim-Christian Association, as well as the Arab Executive. In addition, he served as mayor of Bethlehem in the 1930s and, after 1948, as Jordan's ambassador to Spain and commissioner in Chile.

19 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 96.

20 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 97.

21 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 99.

22 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 99.

23 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 100.

24 Adnan Musallam, "The Formative Stages of Palestinian Arab Immigration to Latin America and Immigrants' Quest for Return and for Palestinian Citizenship in the Early 1920s," in *Latin American with Palestinian Roots*, ed. Viola Raheb (Bethlehem: Diyar Publishers, 2012), 21.

25 'Isa Basil Bandak, *Hayatuhu, a'maluhu, mudhakkaratuhu; 1898–1984* [His life, his work, his memoirs; 1898–1984], ed. Adnan Musallam (Bethlehem: Diyar Publishers, 2013), 58.

26 Musallam, "Formative Stages," 22–23.

27 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 103.

28 Petition, Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries to High Commissioner of Palestine (Jerusalem),

2 June 1927 (hereinafter "CDRPFC Petition"), Israel State Archives (ISA), Jerusalem, M-223/38.

29 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 105.

30 CDRPFC Petition.

31 CDRPFC Petition.

32 "Arab emigrants" refers to Palestinians residing abroad who were applying for Palestinian citizenship.

33 CDRPFC Petition.

34 Confidential dispatch from George Symes, Chief Secretary, Government of Palestine (Jerusalem), to Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), 21 June 1927, in ISA, M-233/38.

35 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.

36 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.

37 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.

38 Albert Montefiore Hyamson, Chief Immigration Officer (Jerusalem), to George Symes, Chief Secretary, Government of Palestine (Jerusalem), 16 June 1927, in ISA, M-223/38.

39 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.

40 Mitchell Banks, Home Office, to William Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office (London), 29 July 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.

41 William Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office, to Mitchell Banks, Home Office (London), 2 September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.

42 Ormsby-Gore to Banks, 2 September 1927.

43 Khalil Murqus, Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries (Bethlehem), to Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations (Geneva), 2 September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.

44 Mary Adelaide Broadhurst (London) to Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), 6 September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.

45 Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), to Mary Adelaide Broadhurst (London), September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.

46 William Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office (London), to Herbert Plumer, High Commissioner of Palestine (Jerusalem), 7 October 1927, in ISA, M-233/38.

47 Herbert Plumer, High Commissioner of Palestine (Jerusalem), to John Shuckburgh, Middle East Department, Colonial Office (London), 21 October 1927, in ISA, M-233/38.

48 Herbert Plumer, High Commissioner of

Palestine (Jerusalem), to Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), undated [October 1927], in ISA, M-233/38.

49 Founded in 1911, *Filastin* began publication as a weekly, primarily devoted to critiquing Greek clerical power over the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem. The scope of *Filastin*'s coverage expanded in the interwar years, protesting and critiquing hegemonic colonial powers' efforts to quash Palestinian national aspirations, and it became Palestine's most prominent periodical in the first half of the twentieth century. By 1929, the year the newspaper became a daily, it is estimated that *Filastin* had circulated three thousand issues, doubling its nearest competitor. During the 1948 war, the offices of *Filastin* in Jaffa were relocated to East Jerusalem, which was annexed by Jordan. The newspaper continued to be published in Jerusalem until 1967, when it was merged with *al-Manar* to produce *al-Dustur* newspaper in Amman, still operational to this day. For more on *Filastin*, see R. Michael Bracy, *Printing Class: 'Isa al-'Isa,* Filastin*, and the Textual Construction of National Identity, 1911–1931* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011); and Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

50 "Hawla al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya" [About Palestinian nationality], *Filastin*, 16 August 1927, 1, 8.

51 On the homes built by Palestinian merchant families with overseas ties, see Jacob Norris, "Mobile Homes: The Refashioning of Palestinian Merchant Homes in the Late Ottoman Period," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 83 (Autumn 2020): 9–33.

52 "Hawla al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya," 1.

53 "Hawla al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya," 8.

54 For example, in another issue, the editors noted a similar request from the Association for Palestinian and Transjordanian Unity in Tampico, Chile, and asked "the government to please make efforts within the Colonial Office to amend the present Citizenship Order-in-Council in a way that safeguards for Palestinians their rights in their homeland and distances ill thought from them." "Al-Jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya fi al-Tshili"

[Palestinian nationality in Chile], *Filastin*, 9 August 1927, 6.

55 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar: bayan min al-qunsuliyya al-Britaniyya fi Misr" [Palestinians and passports: a statement from the British consulate in Egypt], *Filastin*, 5 August 1927, 3.

56 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar."

57 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar."

58 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar."

59 On the troubled Palestinian nationalist movement in the interwar period, see Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.

60 "Al-'Awatif al-sharifa: kalima hawla al-sulh" [Honorable emotions: a word on reconciliation], *Filastin*, 12 August 1927, 1–2, quote at 2.

61 "Al-Muhajirun yabkuna! Ayuha al-zu'ama' madha sana'tum li-l-watan wa bihi?" [Refugees are crying! O leaders, what have you done for and with the homeland?], *Filastin*, 9 August 1927, 6.

62 "Al-Muhajirun yabkuna!"

63 "Al-Muhajirun yabkuna!"

64 It is not outside the realm of possibility that the editors edited, or even fabricated, these messages to score political points. See, for example: Samuel Dolbee and Shay Hazkani, "Unlikely Identities: Abu Ibrahim and the Politics of Possibility in Late Ottoman Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 63–64 (Autumn–Winter 2015): 24–39.

65 "Mushkilat al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya wa kayfa nasha'at" [The problem of Palestinian citizenship and how it arose], *Filastin*, 30 August 1927, 2.

66 "Mushkilat al-jinsiyya."

67 "Mushkilat al-jinsiyya."

68 "Lil-difa' 'an huquq al-muhajirin" [For defending the rights of the refugees], *Filastin*, 12 August 1927, 7.

69 Ayyub Musallam, Ihya' dhikra faqid al-watan wa-l-mahjar, Ayyub Musallam Ya'qub Musallam, 1905–2001 [The commemoration of the late Ayyub Musallam Ya'qub Musallam, 1905–2001, a loss to the homeland and the diaspora], ed. 'Adnan Musallam (Bethlehem: Diyar Publishers, 2016), 56–57.

70 Sebastian Conrad, *Globalization and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.

Rehoming Flinders Petrie's "Homeless Palestinian Collection"

Beverley Butler

Abstract

Palestine has a material presence in the story of the founding of the Institute of Archaeology (IoA) in London. The first institute director, Mortimer Wheeler, in his 1953 address on the centenary of Flinders Petrie's birth, tells of the vital role that Petrie's renown, and his "homeless Palestinian collection," subsequently rehomed in Britain, had in the establishment of the IoA. Once secured, the IoA goes on to take a crucial role in the colonial mission of instituting archaeology. Butler explores both the idea, and the operational logistics, of "rehoming." The author begins with a detailed critical reading of Wheeler's address in which the act of "rehoming" and the "Palestinian collection" as critical lenses are used to trace both Petrie's patriarchal persona as the "Father of Palestinian Archaeology" and also new "beginnings" (as Edward Said proposed) and new possibilities for "decolonizing" the collection. The article later places the IoA's unusual beginnings in conversation with the exhibition *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* (2019) that was co-curated with asylum-seekers and refugee groups and held in University College London's Octagon Gallery. The exhibition featured items from the "Palestinian collection" engaged with by Palestinians living in refugee camps in Jordan. The author explores how these new engagements repositioned archaeological collections as a resource for contemporary Palestinians to reflect on and profile alternative experiences of "homelessness" and heritage.

Keywords

Archaeology; heritage; Palestine; rehoming; Flinders Petrie; Mortimer Wheeler; refugees; exhibitions; decolonizing collections.

Introduction – Strange Beginnings

> [My] most inspiring association with him [Petrie] was at the time when the proposal for the foundation of what is now the London University Institute of Archaeology was first under serious consideration . . . it was Petrie's name, and the bait of his homeless Palestinian collection, that attracted the anonymous endowment which eventually, in the early thirties, turned the scheme from two dimensions into three. The Petrie Palestinian collection at the Institute of Archaeology is still indeed the biggest and best of its kind in the country. . . . The "spirit of adventure." I suppose that the phrase contains nearly all that makes life worthwhile; but to define it is another matter.
>
> — R. E. M. Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure"[1]

Palestine has a material presence in the story of the founding of the Institute of Archaeology (IoA) in London.[2] The first Institute director, Mortimer Wheeler, in his prestigious presidential address "on the centenary of Flinders Petrie's birth" given to the Royal Archaeological Institute on 13 May 1953, tells "for the first time" the "important" and "decisive part" that Flinders Petrie's "name and reputation" played in the foundation of the IoA.[3] It is in this 1953 presidential address that Wheeler highlights how the "bait" of what Wheeler describes as Petrie's "homeless Palestinian collection"[4] and its movement from Palestine and rehoming in Britain provides the necessary "catalyst"[5] for the enterprise. Once the "anonymous endowment" is secured, the IoA goes on to take a crucial role in the international mission of instituting archaeology, thereby building on the pioneering legacies of Petrie's excavations in the Middle East.

The encompassing focus of my article is upon both the idea and the operational logistics of "rehoming." This motif is initially present in the above founding of the IoA, with the Palestine Collection acting as a "catalyst," and the decisive act of its "rehoming" regarded as a solution for its (alleged) state of "homelessness." Its materiality thus offers a literalizing force that makes the "dream" of establishing the IoA into a "reality."[6] Moreover, Wheeler takes this motif forward in his presidential address titled "Flinders Petrie and Adventure." He thus evokes and at the same time further fuses the triad of: the IoA's "strange beginnings,"[7] Petrie as "Father of Archaeology," and the Palestine Collection as the "Petrie Palestinian Collection," as exemplifications of a powerful "spirit of adventure" that underpin the archaeological quest past, present, and future.[8] The act of rehoming the Palestine Collection thus merges with this spirit of adventure that Wheeler subsequently repositions as synonymous with both "personal fulfilment" and as "opportunities for fulfilment" as viewed "from a national stand-point." He also positions these dynamics as a resource to articulate exclusivist neo-colonial visions of post-war Britain as both the home/homeland of archaeology and as an internationalizing force operating outward.

In what follows, I begin my critical exploration of the motif of rehoming by offering a more detailed critical reading of Wheeler's presidential address. Here Wheeler draws out further what Peter Ucko, the seventh director (1996–2005), refers to as the IoA's aforementioned "strange beginnings," while simultaneously grounding them in the context of future aspirations for archaeology post–World War II. As explored later in the article, the term "strange" is used after Ucko to capture the unusual and unexpected dynamics that led to founding the IoA, and more specifically still the curious, even accidental way, in which both Petrie and "his" so-called homeless Palestinian Collection become pivotal to this. As such, this "strangeness" emerges as a centered quality as both Petrie and the Palestine Collection are simultaneously transformed, essentialized, and pressed into the service of increasingly more overt foundational operational logistics.

My wider aim is to demonstrate that the motif of rehoming and the simultaneous instrumentalization of Petrie and the Palestine Collection has further efficacies once they are recast as a dual critical lens. This dual task, I argue, is one that is not only capable of apprehending the above colonizing tropes of archaeology in relation to Petrie's patriarchal status as the "Father of Palestinian Archaeology" but is also capable of enabling new beginnings and new possibilities for decolonizing the collection. As such, in the latter half of my article I place the IoA's "strange beginnings" and the initial foundational "rehoming" of the Palestine Collection in conversation with the exhibition *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* held in the Octagon Gallery of University College London (UCL) in 2019, which was co-curated with asylum-seekers and refugee groups.[9] This modest though ground-breaking exhibition brought together research undertaken as partnerships between UCL staff and those with lived experience of exile and enforced displacement.[10] More specifically, the "Talking Objects" case, located within the wider *Moving Objects* exhibition, featured items from the Palestine Collection selected by Palestinians living in refugee camps in Jordan.[11] These new engagements based on long-term ethnographic research repositioned archaeological collections as a resource for contemporary Palestinians to "speak of and to" alternative ongoing experiences and realities of homelessness that look to heritage as part of the quest for better futures.

The *Moving Objects* exhibition, and more particularly the "Talking Objects" case, thus approached the dynamic of rehoming and the Palestine Collection from very different perspectives to that of the IoA's founding fathers Petrie and Wheeler: notably via the lived experience of Palestinian refugees. The exhibition's title – *Moving Objects* – reflects both the capacity of objects "to move us and move with us in complex, intimate ways," including "moving us" not only to "dream" and "imagine new worlds of possibility" but to "act politically."[12] More specifically, the "Talking Objects" case addressed the power of objects "to 'speak' to and of experiences of displacement, marginalization, and conflict."[13] The exhibition and, as we shall see, accompanying creative workshops, also explored the double-edged efficacies of archaeology and heritage as that which has the agency to displace and dispossess, yet alternatively

and/or simultaneously, provide "significant loci for repair, revitalization and recovery of persons and 'lost' worlds."[14] Objects as symbolic and material presence thus give substance to both the existence of Palestine as historical reality, and to contemporary Palestinian dreams and aspirations that promise to be literalized as new and alternative "facts on the ground."[15] Pursuing the latter, not only were objects from the Palestine Collection explored as potential loci for gaining a sense of wholeness and healing synonymous with archaeology and heritage as a vision and material manifestation of deep time and deep pasts, but also for their efficacies in mapping across and collapsing virtual, spiritual, and real worlds.

What interests me then are the colonial and also decolonizing tropes at play and how these trajectories are embedded within certain holistic, imaginative, promises of fulfillment and the fulfillment of promise. The motif of rehoming precedes, accompanies, and clarifies such promises that in turn are bound up in acts of materialization that revolve around the possession and movement of objects. An important shared understanding of the vitality of heritage emerges across these colonial and decolonizing tropes. This occurs in the former trajectory as Wheeler employs the encompassing phrase "spirit of adventure" – exemplified by Petrie and "his" Palestine Collection and by extension the IoA – to ultimately embrace the quest to grasp "all that makes life worthwhile."[16] In the "Talking Objects" case, co-curators from Palestinian refugee camps, similarly but differently, spoke of the Palestinian "spirit" encapsulated within the heritage and tradition of *sumud* as synonymous with steadfastness, resilience, well-being, and action. Moreover, in a further alternative mirroring – or perhaps inversion – of Wheeler's trajectory of rehoming, Palestinian co-curators juxtaposed items from the Palestine Collection with the words of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, whose poem "On This Earth" embraces the land of Palestine from a Palestinian perspective as "what makes life worth living." Ultimately, this trajectory underpinned the vision of Palestine as home/homeland and rehoming as embedded within the aspiration and quests/questions of return. We can assert that heritage is made vital when possessed by those for whom it contributes most to making life worth living. The wider quest/ion that emerges is: what would new beginnings (as Edward Said proposed) as new logics and logistics of rehoming look like in contemporary and future contexts?[17] As such, within my article I explore the concept and operational logistics of rehoming both to draw out the figurative promises, aspirations, and spirit of fulfillment as well as literal grounded realities and directionalities, and how these dualities and efficacies are inextricably linked.

Bridging Acts: Centenary Celebrations – "Father of Pots" (Abu Bagousheh)

As a bridge to Wheeler's speech, below I give an overview of how Petrie, his work in Palestine, and the assemblage of the Palestine Collection are part of foundational and formative operational interventionism that turns the "dream," both of the IoA and writ

larger still of instituting scientific archaeology, into a "reality." Of note here is that, since Petrie's death occurred during World War II, which prevented the customary commemoration at that time, there was added emphasis for celebrating his birth centenary in 1953. The centenary celebrations thus consisted of Wheeler's address on "Petrie and Adventure" and crucially, too, an exhibition titled *The Archaeology of Palestine* (23 June to 31 August) held at the first "home" of the IoA at St. John's Lodge in London's Regent's Park.

Figure 1. St. John's Lodge, Regent's Park London. The first "home" of the Institute of Archaeology. Photo courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

Iconic images of the Regent's Park location show Petrie's name and "London" possessively scrawled on the huge crates containing hundreds of objects from Palestine. As "moving objects," these photos illustrate the colossal physical process that was involved in operational and grounded logistical processes of rehoming the so-called homeless Palestinian Collection. As we shall see, Petrie and Wheeler can be seen to simultaneously operationalize the more figurative aspects of rehoming alongside the literal. Indeed, this is how they, like the co-curators featured in the second half of this paper, commune with and thus empower the various efficacies of the Palestine Collection.

Figure 2. Crates containing the "Petrie Palestinian Collection" at St John's Lodge. Photo courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

Raising Archaeology to a Science

At the time of the 1953 centenary, a plaque was proposed for Petrie's home in Hampstead, London, iterating Petrie's major contribution: "He raised archaeology to a science." It is a defining moment in which previous amateur antiquarianism and proto-archaeological exploration are left behind. Further accolades afforded Petrie include: father of archaeology, of Egyptology, and of Palestinian archaeology, respectively. Other commentators see him as the pioneering father of those wider domains – museology, conservation, and public archaeology – that make up the then nascent, now flourishing, field of heritage studies. The catalogue that accompanies the 1953 exhibition highlights Petrie's "contribution to Palestinian archaeology," especially noting his "pioneering work" at Tal al-Hasi in 1890 for the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF).[18] Petrie's excavation technique of cutting into the tell revealed the "debris of the decay of successive building periods": this paradigmatic moment establishes "Palestinian archaeology on a scientific basis." By ushering in "an entirely new scientific approach," Petrie's work marks a break with previous archaeological preoccupations, thus transforming Palestine as biblical object – and its possession by the literalizing forces of "biblical archaeology" – into an object of scientism. The "profound impression" Petrie made sees a particular archaeological logic emerge within which applied mathematics, stratigraphy, and seriation are

routinized as the efficacies of scientific excavation: not just in Palestine but within the whole of archaeological practice.[19]

Here too a key link is made with Petrie as the "Father of Pots."[20] The 1953 catalogue continues: "A corollary to Petrie's establishment of the importance of stratification was the use of pottery as an indispensable means of establishing the date of successive strata."[21] Thus, "He recognised that each period had its characteristic pottery, and that the date of these pottery groups would be established by the collection of evidence association with datable objects." The catalogue reiterates: "All this was accomplished in a six-weeks campaign at Tell el Hesy [sic] in 1890," adding, "No archaeologist has ever had such an impeccable record of rapid publication. Such was Petrie's contribution to Palestinian archaeology in a stay of only three months." Petrie then returned to Palestine in 1926 and during the following thirteen years, "excavated three important sites in Southern Palestine, Tell Gemmeh [Tal Jamma], Tell el Fara [Tal al-Far'a] and Tell el Ajjul [Tal al-'Ajjul]" ("Ancient Gaza"), objects from which make up the Palestine Collection.[22]

Ucko's aforementioned "object biography" of the Palestine Collection outlines how Petrie gives to the IoA a "large selection of his excavated material" from all three sites: "some 20,000 individual items in all comprising mainly sherds, as well as several hundred complete pots, the contents of several complete sets of grave groups including gold jewelry, faience, and scarabs."[23] Not only was the Palestine Collection to provide "a uniquely important research collection" but, to ensure "Petrie's hopes for its future," accompanying conditions stipulated the way that "Petrie's Palestinian collection should be housed and displayed." Petrie thus argued that the IoA, "will make this the Mecca for all students of Palestine and the necessary centre for research and teaching."[24] Archaeology would henceforth be recognized as a serious scientific investigation of the past, through the application of a strict inductivist logic based on a methodology of stratigraphy and seriation initially worked out on the

Figure 3. "William Flinders Petrie in 1928, at Tell el Ajjul (?)." Photograph by Canon C. B. Mortlock, courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

Palestinian material record. A first "homing" of the Palestinian collection was indelibly linked to the *fons et origio* of the subject of archaeology as an event recognizing the archaeology of Palestine.[25]
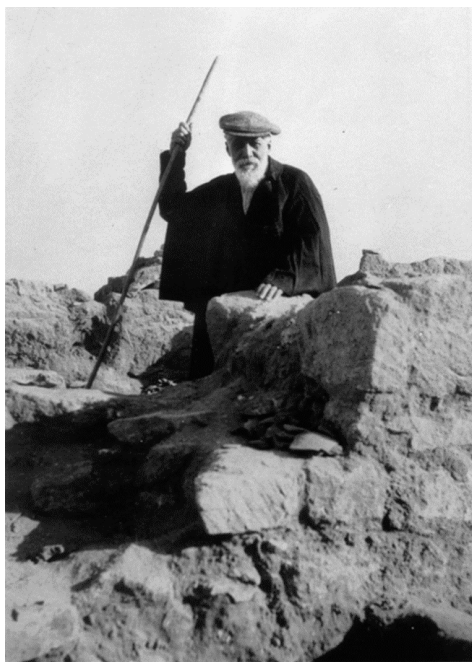
Here too archaeology acquires its potent efficacies and its privileged place in its ability to give material substance to "deep" pasts and to literalize as "facts on the ground" the existence of "lost" ancient civilizations. The archaeological logic Petrie puts in place as "pioneer" turns these logics and logistics into a "Western" possession housed within empirical scientific professional practice and as a form of technicist colonial institutional interventionism.

Figures 4 and 5. Display cases, St. John's Lodge. Photos courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

Queen, Country, and Commonwealth

The Palestine Collection as critical lens is capable of further "excavating" this first act of rehoming and Petrie's role in the foundational and formative institutional interventionism that transformed the dream of scientific archaeology as well as the IoA into a reality. By focusing attention on Wheeler's 1953 address, insights emerge of "Western" colonial tropes, and more specifically British perspectives and positionality. Indeed, Wheeler began his centenary speech by quoting the new queen:

> I have it in mind that our Royal Patron, in the course of her Christmas broadcast to her peoples, used the following words: "Above all, we must keep alive that courageous spirit of adventure that is the finest quality of youth: and by youth I do not just mean those who are young in years; I mean, too, all those who are young in heart, no matter how old they may be. That spirit still flourishes in this old country and in all the younger countries of our Commonwealth." Those words have recurred to me more than once since I first heard them, and I take them as the text for the short address which recent custom demands of me this afternoon.[26]

Wheeler's opening remarks see him begin by reiterating and reflecting upon the spirit of adventure: a phrase set in play by no less than the British monarch in her "Christmas broadcast to her peoples." Referred to by Wheeler, more intimately and possessively, as "our Royal Patron," he takes the monarch's words as the "text" for his "short address." He therefore closely aligns himself to queen, country, and

commonwealth and subsequently takes up the quest of particularizing these wider royal reflections for archaeology. We see exposed a moment in 1953 – coronation year – when aspirations are alive to redeem an "old country" in fusion with the "new."[27] Throughout his speech, Wheeler addresses his audience as "us Britons," thus positioning archaeology – and by extension Petrie, the Palestine Collection, and IoA – within an exclusive nati/onal, patriotic trope. The spirit of adventure is synonymous with movement – in terms of aspirations, optimism, and promise – if not the urgent need to redeem an "old country" in alignments with youthful life forces and expansionism rather than face stasis, death, and decline.

A theme emerges from the outset: of how encompassing imaginative visions are projected and materialized as "real" operational concerns. The efficacies of archaeological investigations are thus grounded in pragmatic, instrumentalist, methodological interventionism as "facts on the ground." By positioning "spirit of adventure" as a phrase that "contains nearly all that makes life worthwhile," Wheeler takes us on a quest to try and articulate what this means not only for foundational and formative "beginnings" synonymous with both Petrie, archaeology/heritage, and the IoA, but for the future of postwar Britain also. The auspicious timing of Petrie's centenary in the coronation year can be juxtaposed with alternative perspectives, notably those of Palestinians on the ground experiencing the realities of the aftermath of the 1948 Nakba and the violent beginnings, displacement, and deaths that accompanied the creation of the Israeli state.

It is worth pausing to acknowledge the equally "strange" and unexpected structure and content of Wheeler's address. Published in full in *Antiquity*, Wheeler's speech consists of six pages: the first two are his attempts to articulate and reflect upon archaeology as emboldening the spirit of adventure. It is not until page four that Wheeler mentions archaeology for the first time, and a further one-and-a-half pages before Petrie first appears. Wheeler, to great effect, gathers momentum before positioning Petrie as the epitome and embodiment of the spirit of adventure, connecting this in turn with the founding of the IoA and the vital role of the Palestine Collection's rehoming within it.

Real World of Adventure

From the outset Wheeler's quest sees him conflate real and imagined worlds in order to grasp what he argues to be the "real world of adventure" in which archaeology operates. Indeed, his whole speech emphasizes the efficacies of the world of the imagination in its relationships to the real. Wheeler starts by highlighting, yet ultimately moving beyond, "rudimentary notions of adventure" synonymous with "Boy's Own" fiction and the "bygone world" of his "parents and grandparents era" in which, for "the adventurous of spirit it had for the most part to be sought, and sought deliberately."[28] He recalibrates his quest by grasping the extremes of the spirit of adventure. At one end of the spectrum is "adventure of the polite kind" found "within books" indicative of "perfect Victorian gentility" and with the "easy live and quiet die." At "the other

end of the scale we have that preposterous cult of adventure" that Wheeler argues is synonymous with the "professional adventurer as feigned and false adventuring" and "demonstrative imposture."[29] He reflects on the disappearing opportunities for "real adventure" in his contemporary world and argues, "the enemy of adventure" is the "life of routine" that "smears us into uniformity" and "regimentalizes us." He outlines a desired scenario in which he positions "adventure" as part of the national heritage and promise of fulfillment for "an ordinary average Englishman, an opportunity of self-fulfilment such as has, through the ages, peculiarly fitted and augmented our accumulative tradition. I am not now discussing the merits of that tradition; I am merely considering, from a national standpoint, personal fulfilment and the opportunities for fulfilment."[30]

Wheeler at last turns to address archaeology. He places the discipline outside the "political world," and within both the "intellectual field" and the "spirit of high tradition of adventure which," he adds, "is our greatest pride." To substantiate his claims, Wheeler iterates the achievements of British archaeology, arguing, "Our own victories remain outstanding." Dismissing prevailing contemporary theses of the "end of discovery" and of a "shrinking world" as "Cassandra" calls, he highlights: "In this very month of May wherein I am now speaking to you, the unscaled height of Mount Everest still lies before us."[31] Finally, he issues a challenge to archaeology, telling his audience, "Reflect upon the great expanses of Asia which have not yet been even touched by skilled exploration. Think of Africa, still Dark archaeologically from its innermost recesses to the Indian and Atlantic coastlines." He makes further gestures to Arabia, to what lies beyond the "iron curtain" and beyond and exclaims, "What possibilities await us!"[32]

Wheeler advocates: "From time to time I have sought, with limited power and opportunity, to divert some of our younger archaeologists from their back-yards to these vast horizons. At the risk of inflicting boredom or irritation, I repeat that challenge. Here lies a great opportunity for continuing that high tradition of adventure which is our greatest pride."[33] It is here that he turns to the grounded operational efficacies of archaeology and to training. "If the political field is closing upon us," he posits, "the intellectual field still awaits us." He adds:

> Let us train our young people at home under the informed short-range criticism which makes British archaeological training perhaps the most scrupulous and scholarly in the world; but then let us enable them with that training behind them to exploit these immense world problems with the same skill which they now lavish on a burial-mound in Wales or a Roman market-town in England.[34]

With a rallying cry, Wheeler continues: "Let them, these young people, seize the opportunity, with all that it implies, not only for the discipline which they serve but also for the manhood and womanhood which cannot fail to be enhanced by the whole adventurous process." With even more fervor, he argues: "Let them go to the ends of the earth, and let them go in numbers, with the thought that ten years of carefully

selective exploration and excavation in the wide open spaces can scarcely fail to tell us more of human achievement than can a hundred years of digging in an English back-garden." Finally, he reasserts, "As archaeologists, we are unsurpassed in the world." Then Wheeler reiterates his "general principle" by "plead[ing] for a wider and more adventurous archaeological outlook."[35]

At this latter stage in his address, Wheeler finally turns to Petrie, who crucially provides the link needed to exemplify and ground his thesis. Acknowledging Petrie's "almost universal interests," Wheeler reflects on a series of vignettes that feature moments in Petrie's career from "an entirely unknown but very confident young man" to his "death-bed." As insights into his spirit of adventure, what connects these vignettes are Petrie's dual mastery of what Wheeler describes as his "quest for precision" and "overmastering ingenuity" that "are at the same time present." The first three vignettes featuring Petrie illustrate this trope. Collectively, Wheeler depicts in these "curious" stories the "paradoxical character of a man whose microscopically precise measurements of the pyramids of Gizeh [Giza] are almost legendary. By his incredible ingenuity, complex problems were liable to be rendered excessively simple and surmountable, simple problems might be tangled into inextricable complexities."[36]

Death of a Patriarch

Wheeler finally describes his "most inspiring association" with Petrie as the "time when the proposal for the foundation of what is now the London University Institute of Archaeology was first under serious consideration." While Wheeler "drafted the scheme for this Institute in 1926," he laments, "the realization of the scheme was slow." Until, that is, Petrie brings his precision to bear on the IoA project: "I took my scheme to Petrie, and he in turn brought out a characteristically detailed plan for floorage and wall-space, every figure worked out to a decimal point."[37] It is here that the Palestine Collection acts as "bait" and "catalyst," thus transforming "two dimensions . . . into three."[38] While describing Petrie as "genius," Petrie's limitations come into view. Using military metaphors, a defensive Wheeler argues, "Petrie fought with the weapons that he knew or himself invented, and in his youth fought better than any of his contemporaries in the East." The outdated "weaponry," however, includes the "most notorious example" in terms of Petrie's "lasting adherence to an obsolete and untenable Egyptian Chronology; but the foible showed itself in many ways. The result was a sometimes disconcerting lack of proportion in thought and action. He would dart headlong up the road, without necessarily glancing at the signpost."[39] The active mind thus producing leaps of imaginative logic that others, including Wheeler and Kenyon while at the IoA, would subsequently update. Omissions here are glaring to the contemporary reader, especially in terms of Petrie's "sins" currently attracting significant critical scrutiny vis-à-vis his alignment with the eugenics movement.[40]

Instead, in Wheeler's final vignette, we see Petrie, the epitome of an archaeological scientist, on his deathbed now transformed into a "Biblical patriarch." As part of the paradox of Petrie's life, at the same time as the IoA's "strange beginnings" and the

"rehoming" of the Palestine Collection, "Petrie himself went to live in Palestine about this period and dropped out of the whole business." We gain the sense of Petrie as both a pioneer of modernity and science and its repudiation. Here the promise of archaeology is also one of an escape and of rehoming oneself outside the "West." On hearing news that "Petrie was dying," Wheeler thus recalls rushing to Jerusalem to the "peaceful atmosphere of the little hospital where Petrie in his 89th year lay placidly upon his death-bed."[41] He remembers Petrie "swathed in white sheets, and a sort of turban of white linen was about his head. His grey beard and superb profile gave him the aspect of a Biblical patriarch," adding that, Petrie's "mind was running even faster than was its wont, as though it had a great distance still to cover before the approaching end," and how "in the course of ten minutes it ranged without pause over a wide variety of matters, from the copper implements of Mesopotamia to the lethal incidence of the malarial mosquito at Gaza. I left the room quietly, my little brain stretched by the immensity and impetus of a mind for which there were no trivialities in life and no place of respite."[42]

In his concluding reflections, we see Wheeler revert back to his "primary theme" to argue, "Petrie's life was in fact one long adventure, one long process of search and discovery in many places and under many circumstances." While contrasting Petrie with Petrie's own former pupil T. E. Lawrence who was "an adventurer in a sense that Petrie never could have been," Wheeler reiterates that Petrie's life of adventure was one that "you can't buy . . . at Messrs. Thomas Cook's." Wheeler's final thoughts turn toward aspiring a future in which he could "hope that one morning soon my door may open again to some young Englishman – or Scot or Welshman, for that matter – with the light of the sunrise in his eye."[43]

New Rehomings – "Talking Objects" and New Beginnings

> How should we best "speak" about the land of Palestine? An object possessed by sacred narratives? The Promised Land of Milk and Honey? As lost homeland? As witness to many possessional acts: of pilgrims, crusaders and ancient to modern colonising projects? And/or as a place that folklore populates with supernatural forces of ghouls and jinn that "speak" of alternative wisdoms, cures and curses? A land that possesses us and acts back?
>
> — Text label, "Talking Objects" case, *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition UCL, 2019

The Octagon Gallery is a public space housed under UCL's iconic dome within the central cloisters and is located close to figures of old and new ancestors.[44] It was under the nearby gaze of auto-icon and honorary UCL founder Jeremy Bentham before an attempt at a populist move saw him rehoused within UCL's new student building.[45] The provost's office is guarded nearby by the Koptos lions, taken – rehomed –

from Egypt by Petrie; these statues are thus testimony to Petrie's status as Father of Egyptology and further colonial tropes.[46] In the contemporary moment, the world of institutional ancestors and ancestry is coming in for deep critique. Initiating a new genre of "moving objects," calls are being made to displace and/or rehome selected ancestors – via acts of removal, renaming, displacement, rehoming – and/or acts of destruction that are part of attempts to articulate new ethics/aspirations/futures within alternative visions of fulfilment and quests for what "makes life worth living."[47]

As previously mentioned, the "Talking Objects" case featured items from the Palestine Collection that were engaged with by Palestinians living in refugee camps in Jordan. These engagements took the form of a variety of "Heritage Workshop" sessions in camps in the context of long-term ethnographic research.[48] This, in turn, provided the basis upon which artefacts were selected from the Palestine Collection synonymous with Petrie as well as from Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in Palestine, also housed at the IoA.[49] As modest new beginnings and as a second phase of rehoming, such collections were thus repositioned as a resource to reflect on and profile alternative explorations of homelessness and heritage.[50] The exhibition and accompanying creative workshops offered all participants a means to consider: "How can collections be formed and 'reformed' in relation to conflict and displacement" and "How can displaced people themselves relate to and reinterpret artifacts 'housed' and 'labeled' by UCL Museums (again including collections specifically relating to Palestine held at UCL IoA)."[51] What interests me are the diverse ways co-curators engaged with imaginative worlds within which materiality – including discussion and relabeling of objects, the juxtaposition of their own objects and creative interventions alongside items from UCL collections – offers a literalizing force that holds the promise of turning dream into reality and of articulating new and alternative meaning and truth-value.[52] The quest of how to "speak" about Palestine emerged as the point of intervention.

The "Talking Objects" case in particular sought to articulate a movement, one that in many senses decentered and redirected the spirit of adventure synonymous with Petrie's

Figure 6. *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement*. "Talking Objects" case. Photo by Stuart Laidlaw, courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

and Wheeler's colonial and neo-colonial ambitions by centering instead upon what a number of co-curators named as the spirit of sumud, an efficacious force synonymous with Palestinian life forces of steadfastness and resistance. Sumud as a decolonizing counterpoint to Petrie's own motivations, aspirations, and particularly his racist, eugenicist viewpoints, is one that recasts the Palestine Collection in a way that offers Palestinians the promise of the repossession of heritage led by the spirit of sumud as both the practice of well-being and operational action. Again, "Heritage Workshops" held in refugee camps in Jordan guided the quest.[53] Here for example, the narrative movement of "Talking Objects" takes the viewer symbolically through a journey of displacement and visions of rehoming. The theme of "Talking Heritage" (*Turath*) initiated this movement with the traditional Palestinian dress or *thobe* presented as the epitome of Palestinian *turath*, and described by co-curators as "the unique fingerprint of Palestinian heritage and identity."[54] Adjacent to examples of modern thobes made by refugee co-curators were placed items from the Palestine Collection associated with Petrie's excavations and other IoA Palestinian collections. Together these reflected the "ancient arts of weaving [that] resonate across time from the material traces of ancient Gaza and Jericho to the makers and wearers of Palestinian textiles today."[55]
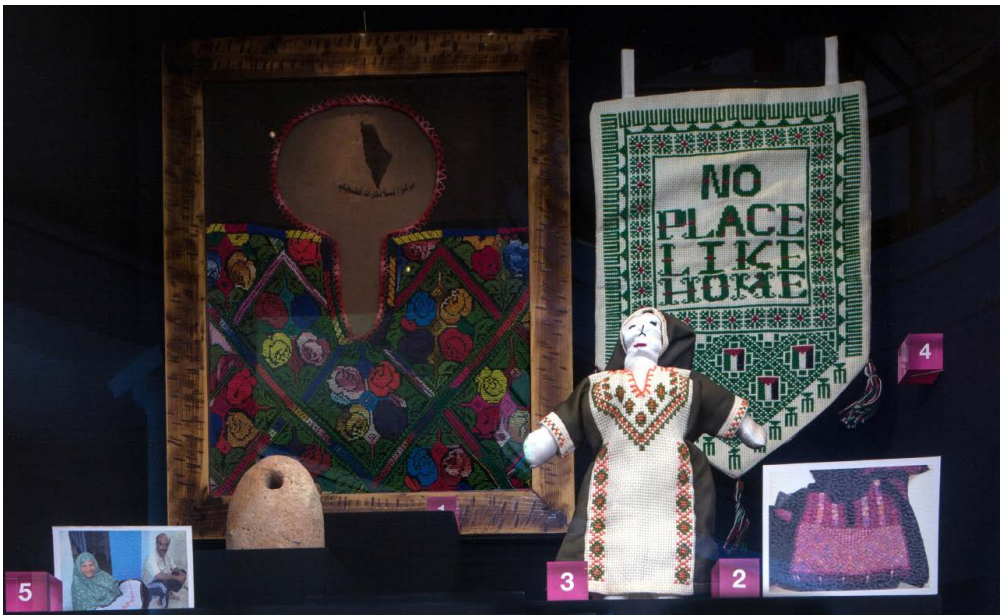
Figure 7. "Talking Heritage" (*Turath*). Photo by Stuart Laidlaw, courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

The second section "Exile" *(Nafi)* addressed the loss of home/homeland and displacement while also featuring subsequent repossession of heritage. This section featured poetry and other art forms selected from refugee camps that sought to articulate the violence of the 1948 Nakba and 1967 Naksa and the pain of displacement, encampment, and/or enforced movement.[56] The focus subsequently explored how

"Palestine" is brought to the refugee camps – often dubbed "Little Palestines" – in various ways. Here heirlooms (*mirath*) or kept objects/inheritance (*irth*) in the form of jewelry, dresses, crafts, photographs, title-deed documents, and house keys emerged as recurrent material symbols and motifs. The section also explored how "dreams" of repossessing Palestine as "lost object" are literalized as sensoria – for example, in the preparation of traditional food, in *dabka* dancing, and in street art.

Figure 8. "Exile" (*Nafi*). Photo by Stuart Laidlaw, courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

The topic of "Home" (*Watan*) was then explored in more depth and within the "dream" of fragments of place being transformed into wholeness. This act of virtual, imaginative rehoming was accompanied by a wealth of objects old and new. Colonial patriarchs (and matriarchs) were displaced and new constituencies brought into view.[57] In this reversal of power and authority were placed Petrie's commentary on the "struggle of the bedouin" and Wheeler's (this time Margaret, Mortimer Wheeler's third wife) commentary on the plight of Palestinian refugees in Jericho as constituting the "latest stratum in the life of the place."[58] A key omission from Wheeler's address was Petrie's significant distribution of Palestinian finds; a label thus highlights: "The objects from these excavations too resist incorporation into the archaeological story alone, resonating with a sense of places and persons too powerful to reduce to one narrative. The distributed finds from such excavations followed the paths of later Palestinian exile to America, Europe, and Australia."[59] Thus as migrant, exiled, and moving objects the Palestinian collections (plural) have greater efficacies of circulation. Moreover, a wider, popular, folkloric heritage was also juxtaposed to the Palestine Collection to draw out the limits of scientism and alternative efficacies vis-

à-vis how persons look to objects to provide protection, amuletic and/or medicinal, and to explore the healing powers of such material.

Figure 9. "Home" (*Watan*). Photo by Stuart Laidlaw, courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

Figure 10. "Home" (*Watan*). Photo by Stuart Laidlaw, courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

The concluding section addressed "Promise" (*Wa'd*) and, as such, spoke of "visions of fulfillment." Items selected for this case included fantastic, creative interventions that used "desire, wish-fulfilment, and dream-work" – often blended with humor and satire – to grasp future promise. The creation of "counter-factual" objects, for example, were present in the promise of the Palestinian artist Larissa Sansour's "Palestinaut" and the "Bethlehem passport" created by "Open Bethlehem," while a subversive re-imaging of folk/fairy storytelling narratives saw the sole of Cinderella's glass slipper symbolically filled with soil from Palestine.[60] Visions of a return to home/land were also powerful, materialized in a map embroidered by refugees.

Here, one object, this time a ceramic plate made by Palestinian artist Sansour, held particular efficacy in that it distilled – if not stripped bare – the underpinning logic/premise/efficacies of archaeology, notably those put in play by Petrie, while simultaneously providing a locus of reimagining.[61] The plate – presented as an archaeological find and decorated with a design that echoes the *kufiya* (the black and white patterned scarf and iconic symbol of Palestine) – highlights the archaeological preoccupation with pots/ceramics as the archaeological litmus test or basis for recognizing the existence of ancient civilizations. Locating this artwork at the "cross-section between science-fiction, archaeology and global politics," the plate's pseudo-authenticity (it is revealed to be a contemporary manufactured item) harnesses the efficacies of irony and satire and pitches us into Sansour's world of Arab Futurism.[62] When the "real" becomes "surreal," Sansour argues that we need to create

Figure 11. "Promise" (*Wa'd*). Photo by Stuart Laidlaw, courtesy of UCL Institute of Archaeology.

alternative worlds of critique. In this case, her work depicts a future "rebel leader" "setting up an elaborate operation in order for the future generations of Palestinians to obtain the basic privileges that history has so far denied."[63] As such, this sci-fi operation sees deposits of archaeological ceramics – plates with the kufiya design – implanted back in time for contemporary and future archaeologists to find. It is articulated as an act of "narrative terrorism" and thus as a strategy to move beyond the impasse synonymous with the "archaeology wars" and the over-politicized, instrumentalization and weaponization of archaeology by the Israelis state to authenticate and legitimate the "Jewish Homeland."[64]

Sansour comments in an interview that the Israeli archaeological narrative has been more effective than any legal arguments made about Palestinian human rights and the right of return. She thus explores and subverts the logic of archaeology and pottery as physical indicators, as material proofs and as the promise of entry into, and presence within, the civilizational story and deep pasts, and, crucially, as an essentialized resource for modern nation building. Not only does Sansour's work reject the Zionist
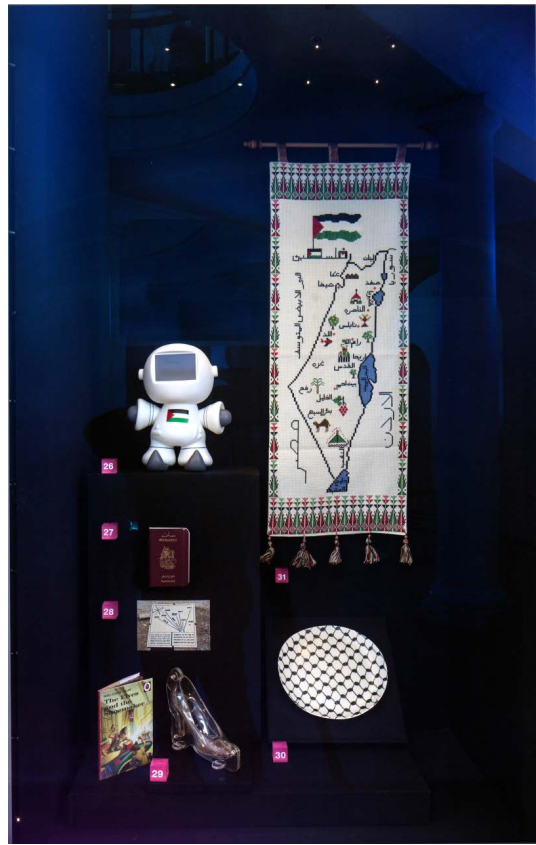
myth of "the empty land" but tests the extremes of archaeological-heritage quests – including Petrie's – to point out its brutal banality and exclusionism of Palestinian life forces. She comments, "In its most perverted form, archaeology galvanizes public sentiment, confirms myths of the past and defends them against scrutiny."[65] Sansour goes further still and challenges any and all attempts to press such heritage into a monocultural narrative – including within Palestinian repossession of heritage. We are left then to search for a new quest within which Palestinian poet laureate Darwish's articulation of the "land of Palestine" as what "makes life worth living" emerges as a locus for new beginnings in expressions of sumud and as part of rights culture and one that embraces diversity and heritage as always "on the move."

Conclusions – What Makes Life Worth Living – Reclaiming "Homeless" Objects

> A beginning must be thought possible, it must be taken to be possible, before it can be one.
>
> — Edward Said, *Beginnings*[66]

> We have on this land all that makes life worth living.
> — Mahmoud Darwish, "On This Earth What Makes Life Worth Living"[67]

The critical movement of this article has followed the "rehoming" of the Palestine Collection as it, first, plays a decisive, pivotal part in securing the "strange beginnings" of the Institute of Archaeology, thereby simultaneously authenticating, embedding, and exporting the new science of archaeology within colonial tropes. Wheeler's own repossession and reworking of this narrative within the ideal of a new inductive methodologically driven science of archaeology supports his articulation of a vision of a new beginning within an old-new "spirit of adventure," as he promises to redeem an empire in decline and revive Britain's future as one of personal and collective national fulfilment.

Within the *Moving Objects* exhibition and more specifically the "Talking Objects" case, another vision and act of rehoming is secured, one that is led by Palestinian voices and creatively draws upon imaginative and real worlds. Palestinian intellectual Edward Said's perceptive reflections on "beginnings" stresses that a "beginning is a first step in the intentional production of meaning and the production of difference from preexisting traditions. It authorizes subsequent texts – it both enables them and limits what is acceptable."[68] The quest and questions to emerge then are: what do "we" and "others" mean and understand in terms of "rehoming"; how can the Palestine Collection as a constellation of "moving objects" – that within the world of the exhibition and imagination crystallize attempts to possess the efficacies of things as part of acts of making life worth living – be taken forward? Where does this otherwise small story about the Institute of Archaeology beginnings and modest *Moving Objects*

exhibition now take us? Following Said's wider discussion of beginnings, where should the efficacies of Palestine Collection move "us" to, as the next movement in a longer quest?

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Endnotes

1 R. E. M Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," *Antiquity* 27, no. 106 (1953): 91 and 87.

2 The Institute of Archaeology (IoA) was initially in St. John's Lodge, Regent's Park, before being moved in 1958 to newly built premises in Gordon Square, adjacent to University College London in Bloomsbury as "an independent institute within the University of London," but not until 1986 did it become part of UCL. "History of the Institute – Institute of Archaeology: 80 Years of History 1937–2017," online at ucl. ac.uk/archaeology/about-us/history-institute (accessed 22 May 2022).

3 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 92.

4 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 87.

5 P. J. Ucko, "The Biography of a Collection: The Sir Flinders Petrie Palestinian Collection and the Role of University Museums," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 17, no. 4 (1998): 386.

6 G. Moshenska, "IOA 75 – the Institute of Archaeology," *British Archaeology* 124 (2012): 34.

7 Ucko, "Biography of a Collection," 356.

8 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 87.

9 *Moving Objects - Stories of Displacement* exhibition (18 February–16 October 2019), Octagon, University College London, online at (ucl.ac.uk) bit.ly/3ADAEiP (accessed 22 May 2022).

10 The exhibition's guiding motif – *Moving Objects* – was conceived of to reflect upon the "migration of persons, [non-human] animals, and objects across time and space," as led by, "stories of displacement," told by those with lived experience of such tropes. The exhibition drew on the following research projects: Refugee Hosts, UCL Migration Research Unit (UCL Geography), Forced Displacement and Cultural Interventions, the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance in partnership with the Helen Bamber Foundation (see Helen Chatterjee, Clelia Clini, Beverley Butler, Fatima Al-Nammari, Rula Al-Asir, and Cornelius Katona, "Exploring the Psychosocial Impact of Cultural Interventions with Displaced People," in *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing Refugee and Migrant Journeys across Disciplines*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (London: UCL Press, 2020), 323–46; and Beverley Butler and Fatima Al-Nammari, "'We Palestinian Refugees' – Heritage Rites and/as the Clothing of Bare Life: Reconfiguring Paradox, Obligation, and Imperative in Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan," *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 3, no. 2 (2016): 147.

11 The specific "Talking Objects" case drew on Heritage Workshops held in selected Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. See Butler and Al-Nammari, "We Palestinian Refugees"; and Beverley Butler and Fatima Al-Nammari, "Heritage Pharmacology and 'Moving Heritage': Making Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Palestine Part of the European Conscience," forthcoming in the volume edited by Kristian Kristiansen, Rodney Harrison, and Nélia Dias and published by UCL Press as part of the CHEurope: Critical Heritage Studies and the Future of Europe project.

12 Text label, *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition, UCL, 2019.

13 Text label, "Talking Objects" case, *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition, UCL, 2019.

14 Both virtual workshops and face-to-face object-handling sessions were held prior to and during the exhibition that saw co-curators select objects from various UCL collections and juxtapose them next to their own objects and narratives of displacement. On wider discussions of heritage efficacies, see Beverley Butler, "The Efficacies of Heritage – Syndromes, Magics, and Possessional Acts," *Public Archaeology* 15, no. 2–3 (2016): 113–35.

15 Regarding more generally the importance of establishing "facts on the ground," see Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

16 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 87.

17 Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intentions and Method* (London: Granta, 2012).

18 Catalogue, *The Archaeology of Palestine: An Exhibition in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie: 23 June to 31 August 1953* (University of London Institute of Archaeology Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London, 1953).

19 Catalogue, *Archaeology of Palestine*.

20 Alice Stevenson, "Abu Bagousheh: Father of Pots," Petrie Museum, UCL Press, online at ucldigitalpress.co.uk/Book/Article/3/20/83/ (accessed 22 May 2022).

21 Catalogue, *Archaeology of Palestine*.

22 Catalogue, *Archaeology of Palestine*. The Palestine Collection relates to pre-1948 Palestine and two sites Tell Gemmeh (Tal Jamma) and Tell el Fara (Tal al-Far'a) are now within contemporary Israel. Our exhibition *Moving Objects* therefore focused on Tell el Ajjul (Tal al-'Ajjul) in Gaza.

23 Ucko, "Biography of a Collection," 356.

24 Petrie quoted in Ucko, "Biography of a Collection," 360.

25 See also Gavin Lucas, *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork: Contemporary and Historical Archaeological Practice* (London: Routledge, 2000), on how paradigmatic moments of archaeology become mythologized.

26 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 87.

27 Elizabeth II's coronation was in June 1953 at Westminster Abbey in London.

28 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 87.

29 Wheeler rejects this and other postwar U.S./ Americanizing influences.

30 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 88.

31 This being Wheeler's reference to the scaling of Mount Everest by Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay during coronation year. The summit of Everest was reached on 29 May 1953 and was celebrated as an iconic British achievement of adventurism and an amplification of British patriotism.

32 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 88–89.

33 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 89.

34 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 89.

35 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 90.

36 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 91.

37 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 92.

38 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 91. Crucially here, the Palestine Collection was "bait" for an anonymous donation by Mary Woodgate Wharrie to be made and revealed on her death. Tessa Verney Wheeler, Mortimer Wheeler's first wife, is another woman credited with taking a key role in making the IoA a reality. See Gabriel Moshenska, "The Institute of Archaeology: The First 75 Years," *British Archaeology* 124 (May–June 2012): 34–37.

39 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 91.

40 See Debbie Challis, *The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

41 Wheeler was then serving with the British military as part of the North Africacampaigns.

42 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 92. For the curious story of Petrie donating his head to science, see Debbie J. Challis, "The Legend of Petrie's Head: An Artist's Response," UCL Culture Blog, 16 October 2013, online at blogs.ucl.ac.uk/museums/tag/head-of-flinders-petrie/ (accessed 22 May 2022).

43 Wheeler, "Petrie and Adventure," 93.

44 UCL Octagon, online at ucl.ac.uk/culture/octagon (accessed 22 May 2022).

45 "Jeremy Bentham Finds New Home in UCL's Student Centre," UCL News, 24 February 2020, online at (ucl.ac.uk) bit.ly/3I6hB3T (accessed 22 May 2022).

46 Koptos lion, online at (ucl.ac.uk) bit.ly/3AFnO3r (accessed 22 May 2022).

47 These include influences such as the "statue wars" and the Black Lives Matter Movement – more specifically at UCL see "Bricks + Mortals, A History of Eugenics Told through Buildings," online at (ucl.ac.uk) bit.ly/3R8VTQx (accessed 22 May 2022).

48 Butler and Al-Nammari, "We Palestinian Refugees"; Butler and Al-Nammari, "Heritage Pharmacology." Also see Chatterjee et al., "Exploring the Psychosocial Impact of Cultural Interventions."

49 For the Palestinian collections, see Institute of Archaeology, UCL, online at (ucl.ac.uk) bit.ly/3OzR2qv (accessed 22 May 2022).

50 It is worth flagging "A Future for the Past: Petrie's Palestinian Collection exhibition at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS," 9 January 2007, the first public exhibition of the Palestine Collection that took a more educational archaeological focus; online at (ucl.ac.uk) bit.ly/3uh6Ru5 (accessed 22 May 2022). Showing alongside it was *50,320 Names* by Palestinian artist-activist Khalil Rabah that imaginatively claimed to have restituted the Palestine Collection for Palestine by listing the historic buildings in Riwaq's documentation of Palestinian architectural heritage. See Kelly O'Reilly, "The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind," 3, online at soas.ac.uk/gallery/50320names/file24018.pdf (accessed 22 May 2022).

51 See Butler and Al-Nammari, "Heritage Pharmacology."

52 Ultimately, these workshops provided a space for people with lived experience of being displaced from their homes to imaginatively explore their own heritage, and to place alongside the abovementioned collections objects, images, and narratives that participants identify as "empowering" in contexts of displacement.

53 See Butler and Al-Nammari, "Heritage Pharmacology."

54 Text label, "Talking Objects" case, *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition UCL, 2019.

55 Text label, "Talking Objects" case, *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition UCL, 2019.

56 See Badil, "From the 1948 Nakba to the 1967 Naksa," online at (badil.org) bit.ly/3QXoc4Z (accessed 22 May 2022).

57 "Matriarchs" here references Kathleen Kenyon and her famous excavations in Jericho, which are also housed at the IoA and used in the "Talking Objects" case.

58 See Margaret Wheeler, *Walls of Jericho* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958).

59 Text label, "Talking Objects" case, *Moving Objects – Stories of Displacement* exhibition UCL, 2019.

60 See: larissasansour.com/A-Space-Exodus-2009 (accessed 22 May 2022); and (openbethlehem.org) bit.ly/3CLroM6 (accessed 22 May 2022).

61 See also Butler and Al-Nammari, "Heritage Pharmacology."

62 Larissa Sansour, "In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain," online at (spikeisland.org.uk) bit.ly/3OzR2qv (accessed 22 May 2022). See also Claire Norton, "The Counter/Actual: Art and Strategies of Anti-Colonial Resistance," *Art History & Criticism* 14, no. 1 (December 2018): 28–39.

63 Larissa Sansour, "In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain," 18 January–3 March 2016, Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, online at lawrieshabibi.com/exhibitions/45/ (accessed 22 May 2022).

64 Bluecoat Liverpool, "An Interview with Larissa Sansour," uploaded 14 June 2017, online at (lawrieshabibi.com) bit.ly/3acZpJn (accessed 22 May 2022).

65 "Lawrie Shabibi presents Larissa Sansour 'In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain'," 2016, online at (lawrieshabibi.com) bit.ly/3B2Ibcg (accessed 22 May 2022).

66 Said, *Beginnings*, 35.

67 Mahmoud Darwish, "On This Earth What Makes Life Worth Living," trans. Karim Abu Awad, The As It Ought To Be Archive, 24 August 2010, online at (asitoughttobe.wordpress.com) bit.ly/3bIvPMo (accessed 22 May 2022).

68 Said, *Beginnings*, 5.

A Century of Subterranean Abuse in Sabastiya

The Archaeological Site as a Field of Urban Struggle

Dima Srouji

Abstract

Sabastiya, an archaeological site and living city northwest of Nablus, was excavated by Harvard University in 1908 using Palestinian labor for the purposes of supporting biblical archaeology. The excavation left scars in the city that are still felt today, both through the intergenerational trauma of the physical labor, but also through the continued Zionist interest in the site that keeps Sabastiya as a target. Today, the city is still suffering, with Israeli settlers targeting the site and its residents frequently, burning trees, dumping sewage waste in the valleys, and terrorizing the residents. The archaeological site, most of which sits within Area C, is controlled by the Israeli Archaeological Department of the Civil Administration, essentially a militarized team of archaeologists headed by the Ministry of Defense. Although a century apart, the excavation and the military and settler violence against the residents of Sabastiya, and the site itself, have a common denominator: a Zionist ideology that believes there is a valuable singular origin to the incredibly complex layers beneath and above the surface of the ground.

Keywords

Sabastiya; deep mapping; archaeology; military; labor; museums; religion; tourism.

The archaeological site of Sabastiya is a living and breathing Palestinian village sitting atop a tell in the West Bank, twelve kilometers northwest of Nablus. The village is surrounded by

rolling hills covered by lush olive groves (figure 1). In the valleys, brightly colored wildflowers bloom every spring, where Palestinian farmers plant their plowed fields with tomatoes, lettuce, *faqus*, and squash, and tend apricot trees. Amid the olive groves on higher elevations – designated since the 1993 Oslo peace accords as Area C, the territory within the West Bank under full civil and military control of the Israeli government – archaeological monuments dot the hillsides in the west, as if the ruins came up from the ground, fragments half-emerged from the lime-dust-covered ground. The remains of the ancient city wall can be seen outlined in the rocky earth, large weathered masonry stone stacked in linear patterns poking through, hinting at the fortification that once encircled Sabastiya. The site is a complex of intertwining strata, an accumulation of multiple histories. Cisterns carved in the limestone in the deepest points exposed by excavations signal life in the area prior to the construction of monumental architecture. Above the cisterns are layers of the remnants of temple and castle walls, forums, theaters, basilicas and a stadium. The monuments date back to the Iron Age, and include Roman, Hellenistic, Byzantine, Crusader, and Ottoman construction.

The few monuments in the east, in Area B (Palestinian civil control and Palestinian-Israeli shared security control), intertwine with the denser residential neighborhoods of Sabastiya. The Palestinian homes were built on their ancestors' foundations dating back thousands of years. The layering and stacking of foundations eventually created the ground and walls of these homes. You can read the accumulation and change in strata by tracing the textures and tones of the stone elevations: as you move down the walls, the stone is slightly paler, and as you move up, the weathered surfaces harbor more dust, creating slightly darker surfaces.[1] The village is not separate from the archaeological site, but rather a very active and present part of the narrative, a continuation from the subterranean ground to the overground.

How the archaeological story is constructed is not under Palestinian control. Sabastiya is a highly contested site today, and is targeted by Israeli settlers and multiple Israeli government authorities such as the National Parks Authority, and the Civil Administration. The pattern of events in Sabastiya is strikingly similar to events that occurred recently in Silwan and Hebron and other significant archaeological spaces in Palestine, where settlers, with the cooperation from the Israeli military, use their archaeological narrative as a convenient cover for further land grabs and violence against the Palestinian village and its villagers.

Although Sabastiya sits on top of the tell in a powerful setting, it nevertheless suffers from fragility – by design – like many of Israel's methods of control outlined by Eyal Weizman in *Hollow Land*.[2] Sabastiya confronts the Israeli settlement Shavei Shomron on another hill just south of Sabastiya, across the valley. Shavei Shomron, established in 1977 by the Gush Emunim movement, was built on private Palestinian property with the purpose of establishing Jewish presence within the West Bank following the 1967 War.[3] Gush Emunim settlers are the radical right-wing supporters of post-1967 Zionist "redemption" who weaponize biblical myths and legends and dream of territorial expansionism. In Hebrew, Shavei Shomron is literally translated

as the "returnees of Samaria," the ancient biblical name for the central region of the "Land of Israel." The name of the settlement reveals the colonial mentality of the settlers and their interest in returning and recapturing sites such as Sabastiya in ancient Samaria. Today, their logo is inscribed with Old Testament words from Jeremiah 31:5, "Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria."

Figure 1. Drone footage of Sabastiya by Alaa Daraghmeh.

In a recent video, the head of the Shomron Regional Council, Yossi Dagan, was seen in Sabastiya having coffee at a Palestinian-owned cafe weeks after that same cafe, near the Roman forum, had been destroyed by the Israeli Army and rebuilt by the owners shortly after.[4]

In an interview during my trip to Sabastiya after the destruction in the spring of 2017, the cafe owner showed me plastic-covered photos of the destruction of the cafe (figure 2). He believes that the cafe was destroyed because the children from the village love to forage for artefacts. He kept some of those artefacts in the cafe on a display shelf. The Israelis claim that the destruction was due to the cafe's location, a few meters into Area C where Palestinians are prohibited from building any permanent construction.

With the Oslo defined boundaries, Sabastiya sits in both Area C in the west and Area B in the east within the West Bank.[5] The line between the two jurisdictions runs along the edge of the basilica in the Roman forum where the majority of the archaeological

remains stand, including the Roman theater, temples, and basilicas. This is not a coincidence. The ephemeral boundaries between Areas B and C were drawn carefully, a spacio-political mechanism allowing Israeli authorities to control many of the archaeological sites, and vital water resources, within the West Bank. Archaeological sites within Area C are not accessible to the Palestinian Authority for excavation, management, or maintenance.[6] This has left almost the entirety of the

Figure 2. Plastic-bound prints of the destroyed cafe in Sabastiya; photo by author, 2019.

major archaeological monuments in Sabastiya under the full control of the Israeli Civil Administration, and under the specific control of the State's military archaeology unit within the Civil Administration, the Archaeological Department of the Civil Administration (ADCA). This department is essentially composed of militarized archaeologists who are funded by Israel's Ministry of Defense. The ADCA has the legal capacity to approve military intervention in archaeological sites within the West Bank.[7] In addition, Sabastiya was also designated as an Israeli National Park, removing any of the state's financial responsibility towards the Palestinian residents of the area.

This designation is not unusual in Palestine. According to the 2015 report on Israeli archaeology policies, "Occupation Remains,"[8] in 1991, the former Archaeological Staff Officer (ASO) of the ADCA, Yitzhak Magen, altered the boundaries of the archaeological site Sartaba, the ruins of a fortress above the Jordan valley, and declared the area around it a national park in 2003, named after the assassinated Israeli Minister of Tourism Rehavam Ze'evi. Tal Rumayda became Tel Hebron, a settler archaeological park, 'Ayn Fashka became Einot Tzukim. Since the publication of that report in 2015, the most prominent example of altered sites is the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan just south of the Old City, now called the City of David. Al-Jib village is being renamed and rezoned as Gibeon National Park. It is expected for other sites to follow a similar pattern.[9]

The rezoning, reframing, renaming, and attempt at controlling the archaeological narrative does not begin with the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The abusive relationship of settler colonialism with Sabastiya is not limited to the city's proximity to Shavei Shomron settlement. It extends back an entire century to Harvard University's excavations of Sabastiya in 1908–10. The history of biblical excavation at the turn of the twentieth century – beginning with Harvard – is critical to understanding the

larger picture of the settler-colonial project that continues today. Three other major excavations were carried out in Sabastiya after Harvard's: the Joint Expedition (British School of Archaeology, Palestine Exploration Fund, and the Hebrew University 1931–35); the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (1965, 1967); and the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (1968).

Labor

Over the past century, Sabastiya was excavated by British, American, and Israeli archaeologists, looted, and transformed from agricultural land to a highly contested, fragile, and exposed archaeological site. Palestinian workers from the village, which included a substantial number of women and children, were used to excavate the site as seen in many of the photographs taken between 1908 and 1920 and archived in the Matson Collection at the Library of Congress (figure 3). The residents of Sabastiya, basket girls and boys as they were fondly and patronizingly referred to at the time, are seen digging at the top of the tell in 1908 in the first of four major excavations in Sabastiya.[10] On top of this tell, the remnants of the temple of Augustus stands, built onto the palaces of biblical kings that in turn stand on earlier remains, pools, and cisterns carved into the hard bedrock, as seen in the layered plan in figure 4.[11] The exploitative labor model used here and the role the Palestinian community played in the excavation, largely understudied, is consistent with much of the archaeological excavation in the nineteenth century in the region.[12] Rare points of reference for this include Allison Mickel's work on excavation labor that examines the Palestinian community's agency as site workers, and Zeynep Çelik's *About Antiquities*, published in 2016.[13] Çelik acknowledges the "blurry masses," as she calls the fieldworkers, and reveals to the reader that the faceless workers were not at all faceless as they inserted themselves, perhaps inadvertently, through the photographs documenting the excavations.[14] The thick descriptions below makes the blurry masses more visible by focusing on the image and the faces of those in the background. These images reveal the exploitation of the residents of Sabastiya, later resulting in intergenerational trauma that the community talks about openly in their resistance and organizing work today.[15]

In the foreground of figure 3, at the bottom of the site of biblical king Omri's palace or the temple of Augustus, is a girl in her early teens carrying a monolith, a large and visibly heavy rock on her head. A small pillow is used to balance the weight around her head. She looks to the ground without dropping her head too far to see where she is walking. She holds the rock with one hand and moves her clothes with the other, making sure not to trip on the bottom of her thobe. Standing above her in striking contrast is a young white woman carrying a white umbrella, shading her from the sun. Perhaps she is worried about the sun on her skin, or perhaps she is using the umbrella to protect herself from the excavation dust. Her white clothes and scarf are spotless, like the man's standing next to her. The man whose back is to the camera is most likely George Andrew Reisner, who headed the second season of the "Harvard

Expedition to Samaria," supported by the Harvard Semitic Museum.[16] He began work in Palestine after a decade of work in Egypt. He would have been forty years old during this excavation. Holding a large wooden stick in his right hand, one wonders if that is a walking stick used to help him navigate the uneven ground or if he used that stick to point at findings in the ground or to the workers excavating below.

In a recent interview with a Sabastiya resident and community organizer, Zaid Azhari,[17] we are told that the last surviving "basket girl" from the second round of excavations during the Joint Expedition in the 1930s passed away in recent months during the COVID-19 pandemic. Azhari related that she remembered those early days with a great deal of anguish that threw an ominous shadow on the current violence engulfing the area today. She saw painful similarities between the excavation work she was led to do with the work that the young men in the community do in the construction of settlements today.

To make a point that the labor was exploitative, Hilal argues that the residents were not as aware of what they were doing and did not understand the value
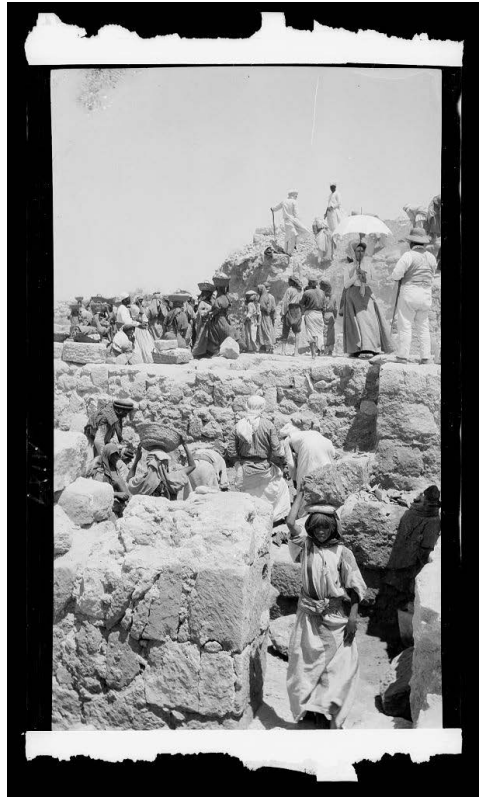

Figure 3. Palestinian women, children, and men carrying rubble and artefacts with breadbaskets on their heads. "Excavation labor on the tell." Photo courtesy of Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

of the artefacts that were extracted from the ground.[18] However, certain notes from the archaeologists' diaries point out that in the first excavation in 1908, there were objections to the pay scales, complaints about the damage to the olive trees, disputes over dumping areas, and severe difficulties with the local administration and the workforce.[19] Objecting to a pay scale suggests that the basket workers felt that the work they were asked to do was worth more than what they were being paid. Complaints about damage to the olive trees also suggests that the community was concerned with the agricultural and economic effects that the excavations would have on their land.

Over the decades, this sensibility towards the "natives" as a labor force changed only subtly over time. In his book *The Archaeology of Palestine*, first published in 1949, William F. Albright prescribed paternalistic advice to future archaeologists on how to "deal" with the Palestinians, whom he termed the "natives."[20] According to Albright, they will require generosity, strict honesty, and fairness, and child laborers

should be treated with a softer hand, simply giving them warnings rather than the sack when they are careless in digging for fragments and remnants.[21] Further, he states that women might make the best archaeologists, possibly referring to Kathleen Kenyon whose first experience in excavating Palestine was in Sabastiya; he believed in their skill and abilities but, according to him, a mixed group of archaeologists in a single camp meant a great increase in expenses for maintenance and in scandals. Albright did not offer specifics about his concern over scandals, but it is possible that he was concerned about having women and men live at the excavation site without their partners.[22]

Funding and Ideological Control

During the four Sabastiya excavations from 1908 to 1968, countless objects were unearthed by dusting off soil and sand with trowels and hand brushes, and then stored in wooden crates, labeled, and moved to the funding institution or to government warehouses and museums. Despite their displacement, each of these artefacts trace a historical "truth" that archaeologists aim to decipher, to let that object speak. Many of these archaeologists and their funding patrons and institutions perceived these objects with a subjective lens, as archaeological protocol funded by a state is subjectively designed to do. Those that believe deeply in a specific ideology work from that framed lens, as is commonly argued by Ian Hodder in post-processual archaeology. Post-processual archaeologists are critical of the assumption that if a truly scientific method was used during an excavation, that an objective conclusion could be made of the findings.[23]

We see in the case study of Sabastiya that the interests of funders and institutions, and personal biases, cannot be disregarded when excavating an area so personally connected with those interests. Because of the ideologically framed perspective, the entry point to the excavations is inherently problematic, creating an outcome of disregarded strata – a form of erasure.[24] For example, Gottlieb Schumacher, who led the first season of Harvard excavations in Sabastiya, was a practicing Templer, German settlers who believed that living in Palestine would hasten the Second Coming of Christ. His father Jakob Schumacher was instrumental in the founding of the Haifa Templer community, where Gottlieb Schumacher was later buried in 1925.[25] The Israeli state is currently renovating their home in Haifa in what is called the German Colony.

Archaeologists selected sites for excavation in Palestine based on a series of variables, one of which was the attraction of the biblical and mythical popularity of the ancient site, or its archaeological impressiveness.[26] More importantly, the personal interest of the funders, in many cases early Zionists and supportive institutions, played a significant role in deciding which ruins to excavate. Although early Zionism, as Nur Masalha notes in *The Bible and Zionism,* was established by founders who were primarily atheist or religiously indifferent, they exploited the biblical narrative as a vehicle for international support.[27]

The Harvard dig was funded by a Zionist, Jacob Henry Schiff, who was a Jewish community leader in New York and a well-known Wall Street banker. Schiff was also the financial founder and benefactor of the Semitic Museum of Harvard University, recently renamed the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East, to be more inclusive according to the current director Peter Der Manuelian. Schiff's philanthropic efforts completely changed how archaeologists perceived Palestine: he is credited for the rise of biblical archaeology in the United States, influencing ideologies and funders toward excavations in the Middle East.[28] Schiff's major financial contribution in Sabastiya, almost single-handedly funded, was unusual during that time. Although archaeological explorations are commonly thought of as being poorly funded, and financially difficult to maintain support and to raise funds for, the excavations in Sabastiya were heavily funded for five years from 1905 to 1910 with about $1.5 million in today's currency, including $150,000 to the Ottoman officials for the initial application and permission to excavate on Ottoman land.[29]

Not only was this an extraordinarily well-funded effort by Schiff, it was also the first American excavation in Palestine and one of the earliest American missions to Ottoman Palestine. It opened doors for generations and decades of biblical archaeology, and for building Zionist/Israeli-sponsored archaeological narratives on the ground, where the proof of a biblical narrative contributed to the legitimization of a Jewish state. According to Charlotte Hallote, "This represented a firm break from previous academic perceptions of ancient Jews as subjects unworthy of study, and modern Jews as outsiders to the elite world of scholarship and its patrons."[30] American academic apathy towards early archaeological missions in Palestine had been due to the associations of Christianity and the Bible to the land, the academic world being more interested in secular archaeology. But when a Jewish funder heavily supported the Harvard mission in Palestine, American academics took note. The rise of antisemitism in the academy at the time, as well as the significant funding that the Jewish community was able to provide, led American academics such as David Gordon Lyon, Harvard theologian and friend of the Harvard Semitic Museum, to fully support the Sabastiya excavation. Lyon openly presented the work at Samaria as in the interest of biblical science.[31] According to Peter Der Manuelian, Jacob Schiff eventually lost interest in the excavations as the institution was unable to claim the artefacts from its excavations given the Ottoman restrictions on the export of artefacts at the time. There was also disagreement between Schumacher and Lyon about the ownership of the "scientific diaries." Schumacher was not willing to provide Lyon with any information about the excavation before officially publishing the reports with Harvard.[32]

In a 685-page red-and-brown leather-bound register, Gottlieb Schumacher noted, numbered, and labeled each find throughout the excavation of 1908. Some pencil drawings and sketches illustrate those findings in minute detail. The excavation amassed a gargantuan collection of thousands of artefacts, 4,913 pieces to be exact.[33] Scattered all over the world as a network of displaced forms, these artefacts, regardless of their destination, created a glossary of fragmented histories, a broken archive, and a mark of imperial presence.[34]
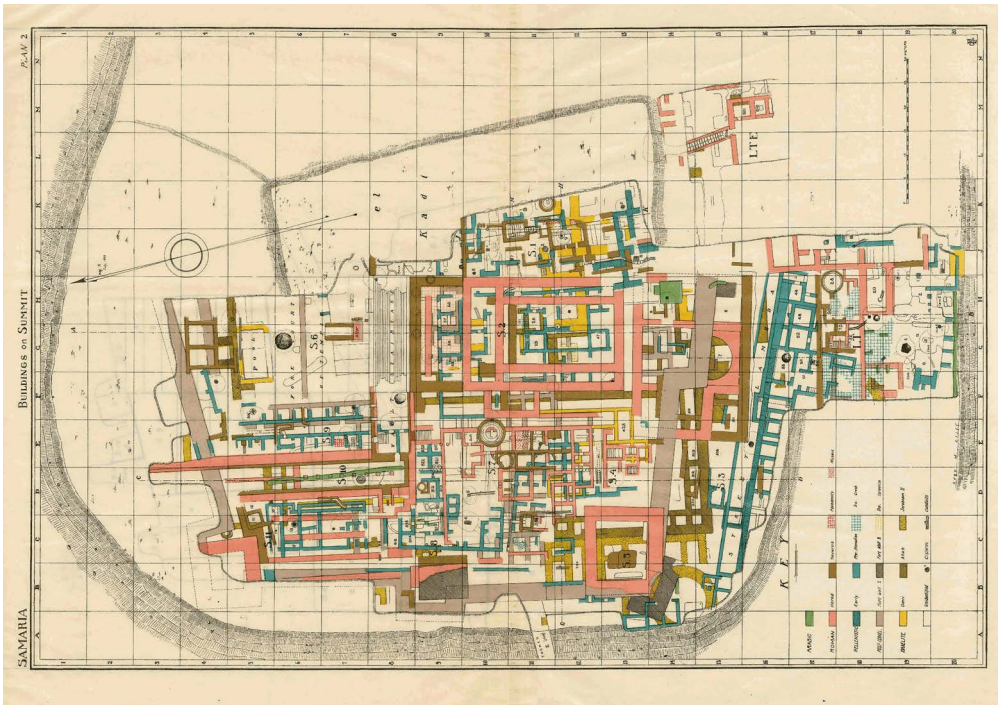
Figure 4. Layered survey of the tell by George Andrew Reisne, in Reisner, Fisher, and Lyon, Harvard Excavations at Samaria.

A Divine Right to Archaeology

An example of how biblical archaeology and state expansion converge in the case of Sabastiya is how the settlement Shavei Shomron was initially established across the valley. That history begins when the right-wing settler movement Gush Emunim occupied the former Ottoman Mas'udiyya railway station on the edge of Sabastiya, which was followed by the construction of multiple permanent Israeli settlements in the area.

Mas'udiyya was a stop on the Hijaz Railway that served residents of Sabastiya and neighboring villages, providing accelerated transportation between the villages themselves, as well as access to the larger cities, including Nablus. The station created possibilities for a healthier agricultural economy in the villages and brought more visitor activity to the region, including the beginnings of the tourism industry in Sabastiya.[35] According to Jihad Sharida, the deputy head of the village council of Burqa, a neighboring village, the land of the station encompasses around twenty-six dunums and was donated by the Palestinian residents for the benefit of the Hijaz Railway during the late Ottoman period.

According to Sharida, most of the land now in Area B and C is owned by the Palestinian state. The station itself sits within Area C. Farmers from the area recall

stealing oranges from the moving train, waiting for their parents to return from a trip to the city, and their field games making a pause as the train approached. The station was an active and key urban connection for the region until it was deactivated as a transportation hub in 1948.

According to Sabastiya resident Zaid Azhari, the land of Mas'udiyya, which intersects Burqa, Sabastiya, and Ramin villages, is now managed independently with its own local authority, separate from the three municipalities, and considered shared space by the three villages. In recent years, this joint authority planned and constructed minor interventions to support local tourism, such as a small cafe in Area B, an organized park for campers, and public toilets in Area C. Although the park, tents, and public toilets are not considered permanent construction, the Israeli authority destroyed the facilities five days after their completion, including the cafe in Area B and a house in Area C.

Figure 5. Mas'udiyya Station, in *Sebastia*, a film by Dima Srouji.

The harassment of landowners in the area began shortly after the end of the 1973 war, when a group of young Zionist women, led by Daniella Weiss, who later became secretary-general of Gush Emunim, met with Prime Minister Golda Meir. They asked Meir for government permission and assistance in establishing a small settlement in the Mas'udiyya station. Meir initially declined as the station was well outside of the government's Allon Plan that focused on occupying the Jordan Valley and the areas around Jerusalem. The movement, however, had the support of Defense Minister Shimon Peres, and the location had been strategically recommended by Ariel Sharon, who at the time had just left his military career to begin his political rise. Meir's refusal was followed by eight further attempts by settlers to illegally establish a permanent settlement over the following three years.[36]

A news clipping from 1975 reveals to us the extent to which the movement was supported by government officials:

> "The truth is that the controversy is not over a principle but rather a policy, not on the vision but rather on the timing, not on an area but rather on a specific place, not on volunteering but rather on law," Peres said. His remarks were enthusiastically received by religious MKs [Knesset members] who ardently support the militantly Orthodox Gush Emunim who contend that the West Bank belongs to Israel by divine right.[37]

During that time, Gush Emunim set up tents, a makeshift synagogue, and a medical clinic in the station while army units lingered in the area, making no attempts to

remove the settlers, allowing the movement to expand and supplies to be brought in. After negotiations, twenty-five Gush Emunim families were given the right to permanently settle in what became known as the Kedumim settlement, facilitating the establishment of more settlements in the northern West Bank, including Shavei Shomron, the closest settlement to the station. The core of the argument to build the settlements in the area was a religious one, arguing that the movement had a divine and God-given right to establish a community on biblical land solely for their religious entitlement. This made biblically significant archaeological sites such as Sabastiya, key to the strategies of state-supported occupation.

Today, the station is still frequently occupied by the settlers in the area. Settlers from Shavei Shomron, the settlement closest to Sabastiya, intrude into the station regularly, and to Sabastiya itself with the protection of Israeli military forces and settlement guards who answer to the military.

Tourism

Sabastiya, designated as an Israeli national park under the name Shomron [Samaria] National Park, is given biblical significance due to the presence of the foundations of royal palaces reputedly built by biblical kings Ahab and Omri. Frequent trips and tours to the park are organized by the settlers from Shavei Shomron with the protection of the Israeli military. The focus on Omri and Ahab is a strategy to claim archaeological sites such as Sabastiya that historically would not have been religiously significant to the Jewish community. Israeli archaeologist Yone Mizrahi of Emek Shaveh, an Israeli NGO working to prevent the politicization of archaeology, is critical of the settlers' attempts to "rehabilitate" kings Omri and Ahab, "just like they re-appropriated Herod, who murdered thousands of Jews and became the great builder, they're now whitewashing Omri."[38] Re-appropriating Omri and Ahab gives the settlers a potential entry point into a very popular tourist attraction that could support the settlers economically, give them access to more land appropriation, and more importantly, fulfill their divine fate "to return to Samaria."

Upon arrival to Sabastiya, settlers, with the cooperation of the Israeli military, use the archaeological monuments such as the Roman amphitheater to perform a biblical narrative wearing biblical costumes (figure 6).[39] The audience, mostly right-wing families and their children from illegal settlements within the West Bank, listen to the performers tell stories of their rootedness to the archaeological site. History is censored and slimmed down to a single narrative with a message of ownership and power that are strong undertones to the tour.

The buses park in the Roman forum, now used as one of the only public spaces for the Palestinian residents where wedding ceremonies are held, children play football, and families take their evening strolls on a cool summer night. The forum was initially excavated during the Harvard Expedition in 1908. In 1931, the Joint Expedition reappraised the previous work and estimated that a Corinthian colonnade originally enclosed the large esplanade, still partially exposed. Currently only the

floor of the basilica, its columns, and one row of columns belonging to the forum porch are visible. The area, originally used by the present farmers of Sabastiya as a threshing ground, where the community gathered to harvest the grain, continues to be used as a public space. When the Israeli military is not blocking the site from Palestinians entering, restaurant owners around the forum extend their seating into the archaeological site, allowing the site to be used the same way it was historically, as a community gathering space and as the core of village life.

On days when Israeli settlers have planned visits to the archaeological site, entry to the village is blocked by Israeli military vehicles and guarded by armed soldiers, changing the entire atmosphere of the archaeological site from a Palestinian public space full of life, to one that resembles a military camp.[40]

Figure 6. A biblical enactment and costume performance in Sabastiya in *Tel Shomron*.

Agricultural Intimidation

Military presence in Sabastiya is not restricted to the presence and guarding of the settlers in the Roman forum. Sabastiya farmer Ahmad al-Kayid filmed a Shavei Shomron guard carrying a machinegun in hand and threatening the farmers (figure 7). The guard refused to let them work their land, land that they privately own.[41] This act of refusal, a gesture of control and authority, is a reminder of the issues of land rights under occupation and the hierarchy of power between the Palestinian farmers and the settlement guards. In the video, the guard, unaware that he is being filmed, mentions that he reports directly back to the Israeli military. This is telling evidence that denying Palestinian farmers access to their own land is a strategic and military decision made from the highest echelons. The farmers were there to water their trees, and were in no way a threat to the settlers across the valley.

Since the establishment of Shavei Shomron in 1977, Palestinian farmers have been subjugated to settler violence, including burning of their olive groves, cutting down hundreds of apricot trees, and polluting the valleys with wastewater from settlement factories.[42] The two Israeli factories within the Shomron Region dispose of their

chemical waste in the valley, polluting the fields and the subterranean natural water sources, the water table used to irrigate the fields.[43] The Sabastiya residents are predominantly farmers; the land is the source of their livelihood. Attacking their space of production is a direct attack on their livelihood. Beyond the frequent refusal of entry to their own agricultural properties, Palestinian farmers are also denied permission to build infrastructure, water wells, public toilets, and so on, and are constantly harassed by the Shavei Shomron guards who report to the Israeli military. Palestinian-owned farms are being gradually confiscated and annexed to Shavei Shomron. The expansion of the settlement was recently approved, a benefit of then U.S. president Donald Trump's support of settlement expansion, giving the council land to build an additional 152 housing units in Shavei Shomron.[44]

Figure 7. Shavei Shomron guard approaching Ahmad al-Kayid, video footage courtesy of Ahmad al-Kayid.

Settler violence in Sabastiya affects more than the crops. According to Ahmad al-Kayid, tourism suffers when settler violence is on the rise. The odor of the sewage from the valleys is not a pleasant welcome for visitors to the hilltops of Sabastiya. With the unresolved issue of sewage in mind, it is even more baffling that the Israeli National Parks Authority designated Sabastiya as a national park, supposedly a framework for protection. In the context of the West Bank, sites are not designated national parks for purposes of preservation or conservation as is advertised on the authority's website, but as a financial strategy. Categorizing archaeological sites within the West Bank and East Jerusalem as "national parks" removes the financial liability for the state to pay the owners of the land. Under this zoning designation, a "national park" becomes a way for the state to pursue national interests and further land expropriation and confiscation with zero liability. This categorization automatically entails that authority is transferred from the local to the national level, and power and agency is transferred to the National Parks Authority (NPA), which has no liability towards landowners under Israeli law.[45] This plan of dispossessing Palestinians, using the NPA plan, is not only prevalent in Sabastiya; it is also used in several other sites such as Silwan in Jerusalem, and Area C territories, like Sabastiya, that contain archaeological sites of importance.

Militarized Archaeology

The links of archaeology to the state extend beyond Israeli military "protecting" tourists and settlers during their intrusions into Sabastiya, and beyond the designation of the site as a National Park. The militarization of archaeology statewide is a system
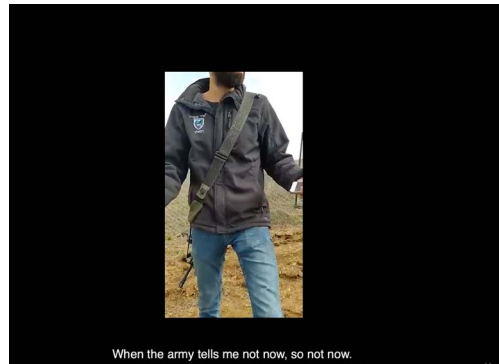
of control by design. A report published by Emek Shaveh and the Israeli human rights activist organization Yesh Din outlines how the Archaeological Department of the Civil Administration, the Israeli Authority in control of archaeological sites in Area C of the West Bank, is directly linked to the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Education, and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

As mentioned earlier, the Archaeology Department of the Civil Administration (ADCA) is the archaeology unit within the Civil Administration, the Israeli colonial authority that governs the West Bank. The Civil Administration falls under COGAT, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, a unit in the Israeli Ministry of Defense that engages in coordinating civilian issues between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The Staff Officer (SO) of the ADCA, essentially its director, is appointed to administer all issues relating to archaeology and antiquities in the West Bank. The SO is employed by the Israeli Ministry of Education. The SO Hananiya Hizmi reports back to the Israel Antiquities Authority, the ministry with authority over archaeological sites in the rest of Israeli territories that unofficially recognizes the ADCA as part of its own organizational structure. This unofficial adoption of the ADCA, therefore, is a conceptual annexation of all archaeological sites within the West Bank as being under the Israeli government's control. The interwoven links of authority are further complicated with the ADCA Advisory Council which includes a top military commander.[46]

The ADCA responsibilities include: 1) assessing the impact of building on archaeological sites and approving construction initiatives; 2) granting excavation and survey licenses together with the advisory council and supervising archaeological excavation; and 3) preserving and protecting archaeological finds and sites, as well as developing archaeological sites. Despite the conservationist attitude in the description, the ADCA has done much damage to the Palestinian cultural heritage and antiquities landscape.[47]

According to Zaid Azhari, Ariel University, a settler institution that is the largest Israeli public college, and located within Ariel settlement thirty-five kilometers from Sabastiya, published an international open call in 2016 seeking volunteers to excavate Sabastiya. Working with the ADCA, the university arrived to prepare the site for the volunteer excavation, but the Palestinian residents protested this initial work. For a period, the preparation work was stopped as a result of the protests, but the ADCA and Ariel University responded by hiring Palestinian residents to do the work, a nuanced form of forced labor not different from the work done for Harvard a century before. In this case, they hired Palestinian men over the age of sixty that were unable to find work elsewhere given the lack of work possibilities from tourism, and the loss of agricultural land. According to Azhari, an average salary for a Palestinian working in the town is fifty dollars a day, whereas this job opportunity would pay double.

Initially thirty men accepted this offer, but the younger generation, their children and neighbors, refused to accept the exploitation of their fathers. After the younger generation passionately protested the excavations, the number of workers eventually diminished. Despite the very visible and tangible impact, or damage, the ADCA has

made in Sabastiya and the rest of the West Bank over the years, settler organizations are calling for the unit to expand, and for the government to take more control of Area C.[48]

Shomrim Netzach (Guardians of Eternity) is an Israeli "coalition of organizations for the protection, preservation and development of antiquities and heritage sites in Judea and Samaria." This coalition is led by right-wing Israeli settler and archaeologist Adi Shragai, and collaborates closely with the Shiloh Forum, a right-wing research and policy institute that works to enrich knowledge and support for Jewish settlement in the West Bank.[49] The forum is led by chairman Benzi Lieberman, an Israeli lawyer, former government official, and director of the Israel Land Authority, and former settlements chairman of the Samaria Regional Council (now led by Yossi Dagan).[50]

According to Azhari, it is quite possible that many of the unofficial excavations and settler tours that are organized in Sabastiya are in fact led by organizations such as Shomrim Netzach who are mobilizing to call the government to take more direct action in archaeological sites in Area C. This call to action by settler lobbies in the Israel Knesset is of concern. Palestinian residents of Sabastiya already hear rumors that there are plans to construct a paved road that will lead to the archaeological site from the west, in Area C, avoiding any contact with the Palestinian residents. If these plans are approved, it is a sign that plans to create a state-run tourist attraction is very likely to follow. Such a plan would be disastrous for the Sabastiya community, seeing Silwan as precedent, where Israeli archaeological tourism was the scapegoat for dispossessing area residents of their homes.

Restitching

Biblical narratives and archaeological strata have been more highly valued over the local narratives of the Palestinian residents for more than a century, as the case study of Sabastiya illustrates. The erasure of other narratives and the focus on the Zionist myth of territorial emptiness became necessary prerequisites to the formation of an expanding Zionist state – creating a politics of invisibility, as Edward Said demonstrated in The *Politics of Dispossession*.[51]

Despite these coercive practices, powerful resistance is taking place within the Palestinian community. Within these difficult times a future generation is rising of highly active and resilient Palestinians willing to take on the struggle to reclaim their history and to continue to spread awareness and knowledge about the misuse of archaeology, and the critical condition of these sites and their artefacts.[52] Young men and women in Sabastiya organize weekly activities to voluntarily clean up the archaeological site, plant wildflowers in the valleys, plant trees around the periphery of the archaeological site, and help landowners farm their land when accessible. They organize alternative tours within the archaeological site and the surrounding area in an attempt to activate the Palestinian-owned agricultural land and restitch the neighboring villages through walking paths and tours.

Perhaps this younger generation of Sabastiyans impressively organizing and refusing to collaborate with Israeli institutions such as the ADCA and Ariel University is a sign of

coming change. This generation has heard stories of their great-grandmothers carrying rocks on their heads, extracting artifacts for Harvard University, and have seen the pain of their fathers making difficult decisions about whether or not to excavate today to provide for their families. It is unclear what the future of Sabastiya holds, or what the archaeological site will look like for future generations, but what is clear is that the impact of a century of biblical archaeology has irreversibly changed family structures, the right to land, and the visibility of the Palestinians and their history on the ground and beneath it. The village on the hill and its values are clearly at risk, intentionally targeted for a century by biblical archaeologists, Zionist settlers with biblical commands to return to Samaria, and an army not only supporting those settlers but spearheaded by the archaeologists as well. The case study of Sabastiya is one of multitudes that could be and should be analyzed in a similar fashion. There are over three thousand archaeological sites within Area C of the West Bank. Almost all are surrounded by settlements and under the full control of the Israel Archaeological Department of the Civil Administration, an authority that is likely to expand in the coming years.

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Silwan

Biblical Archaeology, Cultural Appropriation, and Settler Colonialism

Mahmoud Hawari

Abstract

Archaeological excavations in the village of Silwan, southeast of the Old City of Jerusalem, began more than 150 years ago and have revealed multiple layers of civilizations dating from as early as the fifth millennium BCE until modern times. The site was identified by some European and Israeli archaeologists as the biblical "King David's city" of about three thousand years ago, yet no significant remains from this period were unearthed. Since the occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has implemented policies aimed at imposing a Jewish demographic majority and strengthening its control over the city. Since the early 1990s, the Israeli authorities, and their satellite right-wing settler organizations, have been immersed in a large-scale project in Silwan: the establishment of a Jewish colony with a biblical-archaeological theme park for tourism in the heart of the village. The strategy to achieve this project is two-fold: to carry out extensive archaeological excavations in order to uncover structures and artifacts that are related to "biblical" times, particularly from King David's reign; and to appropriate and demolish hundreds of homes, forcibly displace their Palestinian residents, and replace them with Jewish settlers. This article focuses on how Israel weaponizes archaeology to create an invented "biblical" narrative centered on the so-called "City of David" to justify its settler-colonial project in Silwan. This contradicts the ethics of accepted archaeological practice and presents a biased narrative of the site as "biblical" and "Jewish," while ignoring its diverse multi-faceted history.

Keywords

Silwan; Wadi Hilwa; "City of David"; Old City of Jerusalem; house demolition; ethnic cleansing; settler colonialism; biblical archaeology; Emek Shaveh.

The Political Context – A Process of Colonization and Judaization in Jerusalem

Shortly after the occupation of East Jerusalem in June 1967, Israel declared the "re-unification" of the city and embarked on introducing a considerable number of measures with the purpose to Judaize the city and change its cultural character. These include demographic and physical changes through a series of laws and policies enacted on a municipal level that discriminate against Palestinians, and conducting extensive archaeological excavations to substantiate historical claims over the city. In 1980, it declared: "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel."[1] Israel's annexation of Jerusalem was based primarily on historic claims that the city had been a capital of a Jewish kingdom that existed some three thousand years ago, and that the city is more sacred and spiritually meaningful to Jews than to Christians and Muslims. This was done in contradiction to international law and UN resolutions. It violated Jerusalem's status as a holy city with diverse historic and cultural heritage for the world as a whole, and as a center of political, economic, and cultural life for the Palestinian people.

The municipal boundaries of the city were substantially redrawn to include the territories of twenty-eight Palestinian towns and villages, but excluding their population centers. This configuration served Israeli policy by controlling as much land as possible with as few Palestinians as possible. This process was accelerated and strengthened by the building of the apartheid "Separation Wall" in 2002, effectively isolating twenty-two villages (with a population of approximately 225,000 people) that surrounded Jerusalem and that were historically connected to the city.[2] A set of racially discriminatory planning laws and municipal ordinances were introduced that assisted Jewish expansion and simultaneously hindered Palestinian development. Master plans for Palestinian neighborhoods, including Silwan, were not approved, and no building permits were granted for new Palestinian homes, nor for expansion of existing ones. Such policies have caused a severe housing shortage for the Palestinian inhabitants who had no choice but to build without permits. As a result, the Israeli authorities imposed heavy fines and issued demolition orders to the Palestinian residents, in some cases forcing them to demolish their own homes themselves, and leading to forcible displacement. Although in theory these laws and policies are aimed at driving Palestinians out of the city, in effect they have compelled many of them to build without permits, turning them into *de facto* criminals who have to pay heavy fines and who have been issued with house demolition orders.[3]

Despite its official unification, the city remains divided, an Israeli Jewish part in the west, and, in the east, a Palestinian Arab part whose inhabitants are residents rather than citizens, and who are subject to racial discrimination in all aspects of life. This state of affairs is well-defined by Human Rights Watch in their 2021 report titled "A Threshold Crossed," which sheds light on the activities of settler organizations within the framework of Israeli apartheid. It asserts:

> In the city [Jerusalem], Israel effectively maintains one set of rules

for Jewish Israelis and another for Palestinians …. Beyond formal state confiscation, discriminatory laws and policies enable settler and settler organizations to take possession of Palestinian homes, evict the Palestinian landowners, and transfer their property to Jewish owners in East Jerusalem neighborhoods.[4]

What is happening on the ground in Jerusalem is a continual process of colonization that for decades has altered laws, land use policies, property rights, and configuration of urban spaces with new city planning strategies.[5] However, in spite of all these policies and increased Judaization measures, there are many constraints on Israeli control over the city, including the resilience of Palestinians in East Jerusalem after more than fifty years of Israeli occupation.[6] Moreover, the landscape and physical identity of the Old City of Jerusalem remain principally Arab.[7]

Silwan: Colonial Facts on the Ground

Silwan consists of a sprawl of numerous smaller neighborhoods that are built on the slopes of three valleys extending southeast of the Old City: Wadi al-Rababa, Wadi Hilwa, and Wadi Yasul (figure 1). It has a population of 55,000 Palestinians with about 2,500 Israeli Jewish settlers in their midst.[8] Many Palestinian families have been living in the village for centuries, but the majority are 1948 refugees from the ethnically cleansed villages of Lifta, Qalunya, al-Malha, and Dayr Yasin in western Jerusalem, who have been living in Silwan since the 1950s and have papers to prove it.[9] The neighborhoods of Silwan lack basic municipal services despite the fact that the residents pay Israeli municipality taxes.

In 1991, the State of Israel transferred all Palestinian Absentee Property holdings in Silwan to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), which in turn leased the land to a right-wing Jewish settler group known by its acronym Elad (Ir David/City of David Foundation).[10] Since then, attempts to forcibly displace Palestinian residents from their houses continue, employing various legal methods, discriminatory laws, municipal orders, pretexts of historical rights, claims of previous Jewish ownership, or simply by threats.[11] Yet, the land is privately owned and a number of the houses were built before 1967.[12] It has become apparent that there is a collusion, or overlapping of interests, between Elad, the municipality of Jerusalem, and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INAP) (figure 2).

Apparently, Silwan's proximity to the Old City, and its significance to various Jewish settler groups attempting to consolidate their control over it, has prompted the Israeli authorities to undertake measures to limit the growth of the Palestinian population in the area, and to embark on forcible displacement. This has been implemented using two discriminatory laws: first, the 1950 Absentee Property Law by which the State of Israel expropriates land and properties left behind by Palestinian refugees expelled during the 1948 and 1967 wars. According to this law, Palestinians who stayed in an "enemy country," or even lived in the West Bank outside the new municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, yet owned land or property inside the city, have

Figure 1. Village of Silwan, a general view of Batn al-Hawa neighborhood, on the left, and part of the archaeological site ("City of David"), on the right. Photo by author, 25 January 2013.

Figure 2. Plan of the Old City of Jerusalem showing settlement activity in and around old city. Photo courtesy of PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs).

been defined as "absentees."[13] Second, the Administration and Procedures Law of 1970 allows Jews to reclaim properties lost prior to 1948, a right denied to millions of Palestinians who were expelled from their homes in Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine during the Nakba, including Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel. However, properties allegedly owned by Yemenite Jewish immigrants, who lived in Silwan from 1884 to 1936, were claimed through the court by settler organizations.[14] In addition to using "legal" methods for

Figure 3. A home in Silwan taken over by settlers. Photo by author.

taking over properties, Elad purchased houses through Palestinian intermediaries at astronomical prices. Elad moved two hundred Jewish settlers during the night and with police protection to seven of these houses in 2014.[15] Numerous Palestinian families were forcibly evicted from their homes by the Custodian of Absentee Property and the Israeli courts, like the Abbasi family near 'Ayn Umm al-Daraj in 1995 and the Ghuzlan family in 2006[16] (figure 3).

Acting as a proxy or quasi-governmental body and enjoying the support of state agencies, Elad Foundation succeeded over the course of years to seize a large number of properties in the neighborhoods of Wadi Hilwa and al-Bustan. Its aim is to establish a Jewish colony in the heart of Silwan, and ultimately to drive all Palestinian residents out.[17] Already by 2010, almost a quarter of the Wadi Hilwa area was controlled by Elad, bringing the total number of seized houses to forty, while all open areas were appropriated by the Jerusalem municipality and the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).[18] Various housing and development schemes are planned to expand Jewish presence in the village.[19] Another right-wing religious settler organization, Ateret Cohanim, which has been involved in appropriating houses in the Old City, is seeking properties in the Batn al-Hawa neighborhood by offering large sums of money, and waging lengthy and costly legal cases against the residents who refuse to be bought out.[20] Relying on the Israeli discriminatory law allowing only Jews to claim property that was owned prior to 1948, the organization is pursuing a legal battle against eighty-four families who have been living in Silwan for decades, with the hope to win the cases and ultimately Judaize the neighborhood.[21] To date, about seven hundred houses in Silwan are threatened with demolition (figure 4).

In al-Bustan neighborhood, demolition orders were issued for ninety-seven houses, the demolition of forty-nine of which was to begin in August 2021, for being built without planning permits. This act will make more than fifteen hundred people homeless, and effectively lead to the eradication of the whole neighborhood (figure 4). However, due to international pressure the Israeli authorities decided to postpone the demolitions until further notice. Residents view this as a delaying tactic with no intention to cancel demolitions. The municipality plans to turn the entire neighborhood
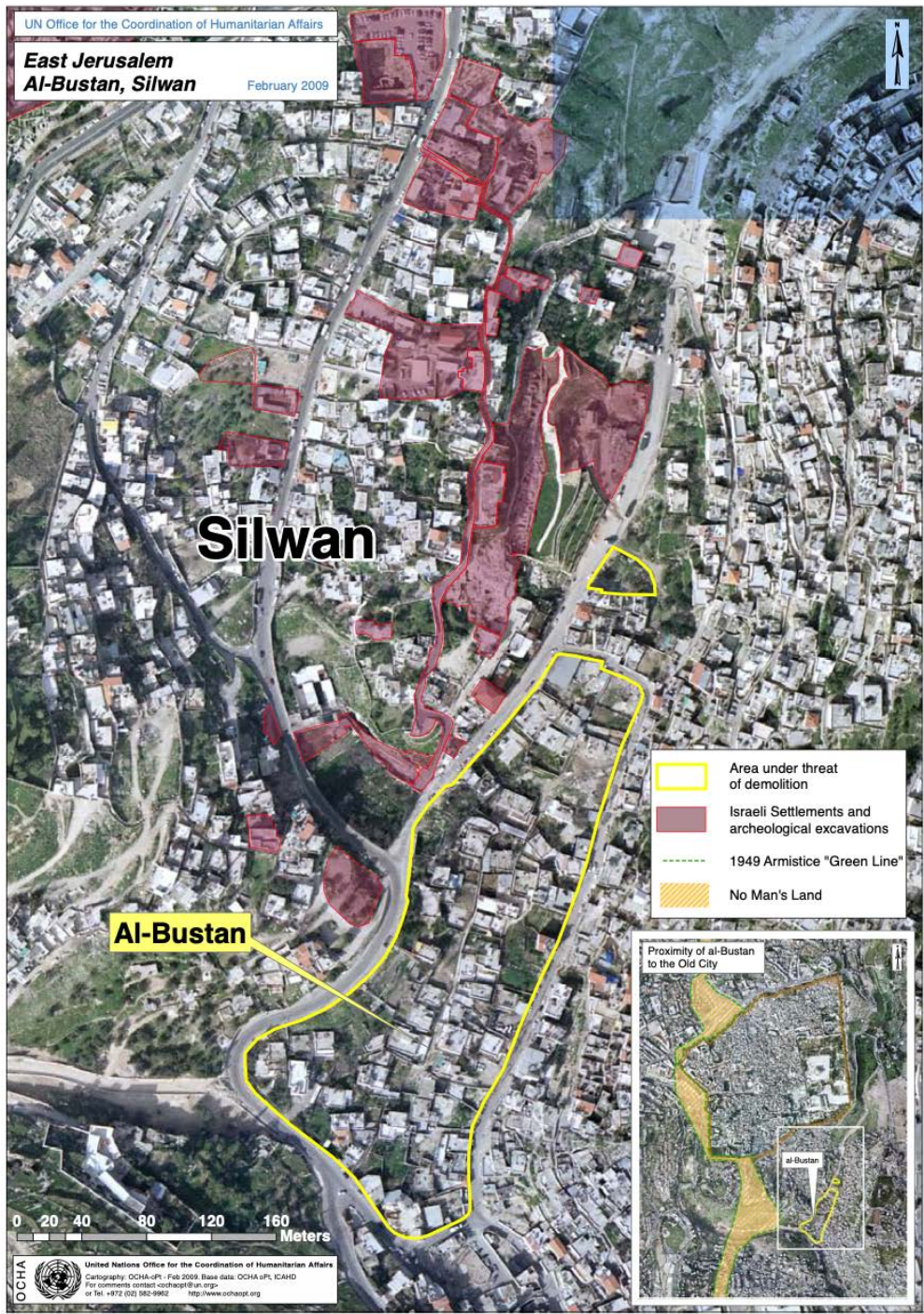
Figure 4. Map of Silwan showing Israeli settlements, archaeological excavations, and areas under threat of demolition. Courtesy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2009).

into a garden inspired by the biblical phrase "King's Garden," which is also identified in Arabic as al-Bustan (garden), as if such a baseless assumption was enough pretext to displace its Palestinian residents.[22] The project will include conducting archaeological excavations, planting a "blooming garden," building tourist facilities, and a new residential neighborhood for settlers.[23]

As part of the Judaization process in Silwan, the Israeli authorities replaced the Arabic names of streets and landmarks with Hebrew ones. For example, a sign (in Hebrew and English) was installed on the hill opposite Silwan referring to it as Kfar Hashiloah where Yemenite immigrants lived in the nineteenth century (figure 5). Wadi Hilwa neighborhood was renamed as "the City of David," the Wadi Hilwa Street was changed into "Maʿalot ʿIr David," al-Bustan neighborhood into "Gan Hamelekh," and Wadi Hilwa Square into "Givati Parking Lot."[24]

Figure 5. An Israeli sign in Silwan showing the renaming of the village. Photo by author.

The reality on the ground has had a negative humanitarian impact on the daily lives of the Palestinians residing in the Silwan neighborhoods, increasing tension, violence, and arrests; restricting movement and access, particularly during Jewish holidays; and reducing privacy due to the presence of private security guards and surveillance cameras.[25] Despite this, the Palestinian residents in Silwan have been resisting what they view as attempts at their ethnic cleansing by the occupying authorities. Residents of the neighborhoods of Wadi Hilwa, al-Bustan, and Batn al-Hawa have begun mobilizing against their forced displacement by setting up popular defense committees, organizing protests and providing residents with legal help in Israeli courts. They have challenged demolition orders and expropriation of their properties at the Israeli Supreme Court. However, they have never won appeals against demolitions and evictions, and only achieved some delays. The Wadi Hilwa Information Center was established to build a strong, well-informed, and involved Palestinian community; it provides educational and recreational courses for young people, including tours around the village, and disseminates information about colonization activities by the Israeli authorities and settlers' organizations.[26] It also launched a website providing information about colonization activities, and has an important report titled "The Story behind the Tourist Site."[27] The ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Silwan is embedded in Israeli settler colonial polices, which aim to displace the indigenous population and replace them with Jewish settlers.[28] This form of colonialism is based on gaining access to territory by expelling the "indigenous other" from their land or property, while the "emptied" territory is often resettled by other ethnic groups.[29] The settling act usually aims to undo the demographic space that was created during the cleansing and is justified through a narrative that stresses historical connection between the settlers' ethnic identity and the cleansed space, as is happening in Silwan.[30]

Archaeological Exploration in Silwan (Early Nineteenth Century to 1967)

Western interest in the Middle East, and Palestine in particular, increased greatly in the early nineteenth century, motivated by the colonial domination of the region, and the exploration of antiquities of ancient civilizations. Archaeological exploration in Jerusalem was begun by British, German, French, and American scholars who sought to recover the historical roots and truths of Christendom by turning the narratives of the Bible into reliable historical sources for their explorations. In 1838, Edward Robinson, an American biblical theologian, was the first to work in the village of Silwan, located on a ridge extending south of the Old City of Jerusalem, near the natural spring of 'Ayn Umm al-Daraj. He investigated the ancient underground water system known as the Silwan Tunnel, the results of which were published in the *Biblical Researches in Palestine, 1838–52*.[31] Charles Warren, an English Royal engineer and archaeologist, who was dispatched to Jerusalem by the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) in 1867, conducted numerous probes in the northern part of Silwan just south of the Haram al-Sharif wall (known by its biblical name as the "Ophel"), including the underground water channel systems, named after him. Raymond Weill, a French archaeologist, carried out excavations at the area of Wadi Hilwa in 1913–14, funded by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, to explore David's city – which is the first known reference of this area by that name.[32] The Irish archaeologist R.A.S. Macalister conducted excavations in the area west and above the spring in the 1920s and revealed the so-called Jebusite Ramp.[33] These were followed in 1928 by the excavations by J.W. Crowfoot, the director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, revealing part of a residential quarter dating to the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods, including the remains of a thick wall and a gate.[34] The renowned British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon carried out extensive excavations at the east slope of Wadi Hilwa in Silwan in 1961–67.[35]

Israeli Excavations since 1967

The Israeli regime's political agenda after the capture of East Jerusalem in 1967 was to enhance Jewish presence in the Old City and permanently change its political and cultural character. Large-scale archaeological excavations in and around the Old City were carried out by various institutions and universities, supported by the state. By using the past to legitimate Israel's presence, these excavations aimed at revealing the city's exclusive "biblical history," in a deliberate effort to achieve its "Jewish-colonial-nationalist project" and the physical colonial transformation of Jerusalem.[36]

Extensive archaeological excavations were carried out in the area southwest of the Haram al-Sharif (1968–1977) and aimed to unearth remains associated with the First and Second Jewish Temples. However, these resulted in revealing ruins dating to the Roman and Byzantine periods, and the remains of monumental palaces dating to the Early Islamic Umayyad Period (eighth century).[37] Further excavations in the

area in later years led to the establishment of the "Jerusalem Archaeological Park – Davidson Center," which hosts exhibitions and virtual model panoramas.[38]

Other extensive excavations were carried out in the Jewish Quarter with a declared aim to Judaize it, following the 1967 forced displacement of most of its Palestinian residents and the expropriation of their homes, many of which were demolished.[39] These excavations revealed the remains of ancient fortifications and domestic architecture from the Roman period, described as "Jewish secular architecture in the Second Temple period."[40] What followed was a scheme where archaeology and restoration and urban planning intertwined to achieve political and ideological aims.[41]

Archaeological

Figure 6. Plan of archaeological excavations and tourist areas. Photo courtesy of Emek Shaveh.

excavations and restoration works were also begun at the Citadel of Jerusalem, just south of Jaffa Gate, aimed at transferring the fortress into a museum, to be called "the Tower of David Museum for the History of Jerusalem." The main focus was on the early Hellenistic ("Hasmonean") and Roman ("Herodian") remains of fortifications at the site.[42] However, the Citadel as it stands today is a remarkable monument of medieval Islamic military architecture, and an example of appropriation of Palestinian cultural heritage.[43] The presentation of the history of Jerusalem at the museum is biased and privileges the "biblical period" over earlier and later Islamic periods.[44]

In Silwan, large excavations were carried out on the southeast ridge of Wadi Hilwa, the site of which became referred to as the "City of David," by Yigal Shiloh on behalf of the Hebrew University (1978–1985). These excavations revealed ancient remains dating from the Bronze and Iron Ages, (from the early second millennium
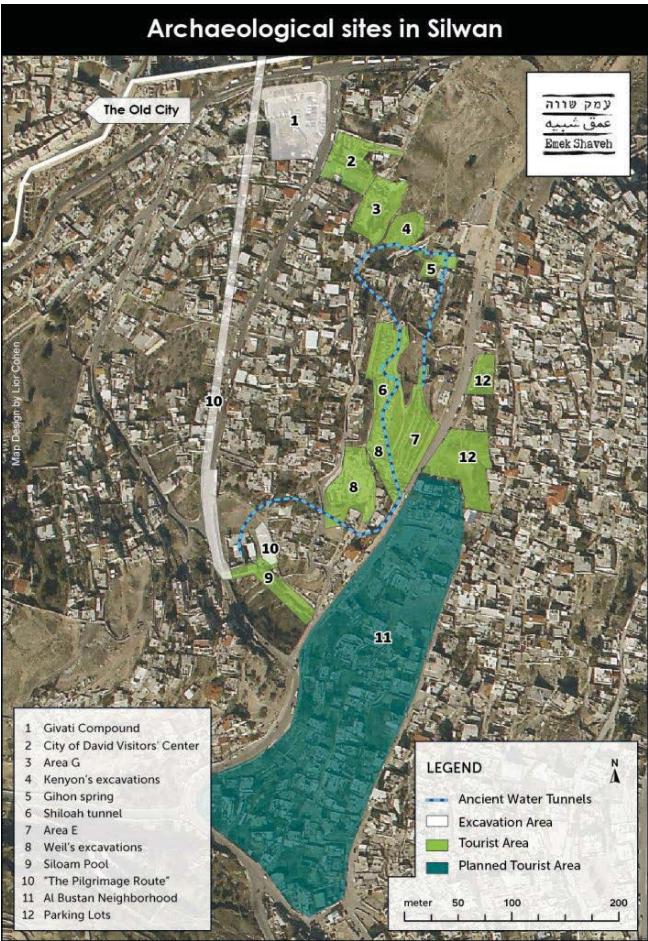
until the middle of the first millennium BCE), including an underground water system of channels and tunnels[45] (figure 6). No remains from the time of David and Solomon (tenth century BCE) were uncovered.[46]

A major political shift with regards to Israeli colonization and archaeological activities in Silwan occurred in the mid-1990s when Elad Foundation embraced archaeology as a primary method to achieve its goals.[47] In 1997, Elad consolidated its power when it was entrusted with the management of the "City of David Archaeological Park."[48] This was marked by a dramatic increase in archaeological excavations, motivated by "political and religious initiative."[49] Excavations beneath the Abbasi family house near the Umm al-Daraj spring were started in 1995 by the Israel Antiquities Authority and revealed large fortifications and a hewn water channel system, both dating to the Middle Bronze Age.[50] Archaeological excavations at Wadi Hilwa Square ("Givati Parking Lot") began in 2003 and continued to date, revealing multiple layers dating to Islamic, Byzantine, and Roman times, which were removed to reach earlier "biblical" layers, a familiar practice which obliterates the rich and diverse history of the site[51] (figure 6, number 1). Elad is planning to build a multistory visitor center with a car park at the site.[52] A petition against the plan was presented to the High Court by local residents and the Israeli Peace Now Movement in 2008, but was rejected. An excavation under the "City of David" visitor center was begun in 2005 by Eilat Mazar to investigate a large stone structure interpreted by British archaeologists

Figure 7. Remains of the "Large Stone Structure," claimed by excavator as "King David's Palace." Photo by author, 4 July 2021.

Macalister and Duncan in 1923 as the remains of a Jebusite fortress. Mazar claimed the structure was "the palace of King David"[53] (figure 6, no. 2; figure 7). Her claim was rejected by a number of Israeli archaeologists, who argued the structure was rebuilt several times over the course of several hundred years.[54]

Since 2013, underground excavations have been conducted along Wadi Hilwa Road revealing a stretch of a

Figure 8. Excavations at Wadi Hilwa Square ("Givati Parking Lot"). Photo by author, 4 July 2021.

stepped street (350 meters long and 8 meters wide) and a drainage channel underneath it. The excavators believe the street dates to the Roman period (first century CE), and extends from the Pool of Siloam in the south to the west of the "Western Wall" in the north[55] (see figure 8). The clearing of the street and the channel using tunneling requires the construction of a formidable support structure built with cement and steel pillars resembling that of an underground metro, and probably at huge cost (figure 9). An official inauguration ceremony of the street, which has been named the "Pilgrims' Road," took place in December 2016 with the participation of Israeli official figures.[56]

Archaeology Recruited in the Service of Settler Colonialism

Site Management

Through archaeology and heritage management, Elad's ultimate aim is "to strengthen Jewish settlement in Palestinian neighborhoods of Silwan and reviving 'the biblical pilgrimage to the Temple Mount.'"[57] This is a case where heritage management of a public archaeological site is handled by a private right-wing organization to implement its ultra-nationalist colonization project, in collusion with a state authority (the Israel Antiquities Authority).[58]

Elad's headquarters are located at the Visitors' Center at the City of David Archaeological Park, which has become a tourist attraction (figures 10 and 11). Visitors are offered guided tours and videos, films and lectures. Tourist packages of shows, tours, and attractions can be booked online, through an interactive website, in multiple languages, titled "The City of David, Ancient Jerusalem Where It All Began."[59] Many public areas around the site have been integrated into the tourist park and effectively become off limits to the local Palestinian residents.

The financial resources available to Elad are vast and derive from a variety of sources: public funding from myriad Israeli authorities and donations from private local and international donors. Among the donors is the Russian-Israeli oligarch

Figure 9. Excavations of the Roman Street ("Pilgrimage Road"). Photo by author, 23 November 2021.

Figure 10. Entrance to the "City of David" visitor center. Photo by author, 4 July 2021.

Figure 11. View of "City of David" visitor center above archaeological site. Photo by author, 4 July 2021.

and billionaire Roman Abramovich, famous for being the former owner of Chelsea Football Club in London, who donated one hundred million dollars to Elad.[60]

Archaeological Practices

Israeli excavations at Silwan are fraught with various legal and ethical issues. They are carried out in contradiction to international law, particularly The Hague Convention of 1954 that prohibits excavations in captured territory by an occupying nation, reiterated by the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1999.[61] The removal and transfer of archaeological artifacts and finds from an occupied territory violates the basic principles of the UNESCO Convention.[62] In addition, these excavations are part of the military occupation enforced by the Israel regime that has devastating consequences for the Palestinian residents, and are used as a means for Judaization and justifying exclusive Jewish claims.[63] The Israeli authorities' claim that the vast majority of excavations in Silwan are "salvage" excavations – possibly intended to avert international criticism – is farcical since construction works are prohibited by the municipality in an area that has been designated as an "archaeological park."[64] Moreover, these excavations are carried out in densely built-up neighborhoods and beneath private homes, without the Palestinian residents' consent, and often causing structural damage to houses, public buildings, and roads.[65] They are concealed from the local Palestinian residents by high fences, surrounded by "themed" metal screens, and subject to heavy security measures with surveillance cameras and armed guards. They also pose constant harassment and inconvenience to the lives of local residents.[66] In addition, it must be said that the

use of horizontal tunneling in the excavations of the Roman road is an unscientific method nowhere accepted in modern archaeology.

Once the "salvage" excavations come to an end, the finds are to be taken by the archaeologists for analysis and study, and potential publication. Then the site is entrusted completely to Elad to interpret and present it to the public, often without reference to the archaeological data collected during excavations. For example, a water cistern that was unearthed in the excavation is presented as

Figure 12. A presentation sign showing clay seal with biblical text presumably found at the excavation. Photo by author, 4 July 2021.

"Jeremiah's Pit" where, according to the biblical story, the Prophet Jeremiah was thrown. By using the biblical names – such as David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Jeremiah – without sufficient archaeological evidence – Elad aims to create a biased Jewish religious-nationalist narrative, and hence offer a deep sense of identification for Jewish visitors, as well as attracting what has been described as "Methodist Christian tourists."[67] The interpretation of remains by Elad is not often based on stratigraphic analysis of the excavated layers, which is a customary method on a scientific dig. Rather it is based on the "discovery" of single structures or objects at specific spots to determine their chronology and attribution to "biblical" times (figure 12).

Interpretations and Presentation

Since Elad took total control of the management of "the City of David Park," it dominates not only the agenda of excavations but the way in which the site is interpreted and presented to the public through actual experience or digital and social media, including which of the archaeological remains are to be displayed. The interpretation and presentation of the site, as reflected in films, videos, and signposts, and as portrayed by tour guides, exclusively focus on "biblical history" related to King David. Oddly enough, no tangible remains from the time of kings David and Solomon were found at the site; the stories related to these two figures in the Bible are regarded by many Israeli and international scholars as myths.[68] As previously indicated, the terminology used to describe archaeological periods, features or finds, such as the First Temple or Second Temple, Israelite Period or settlement, Herodian wall, is categorically biased.

Moreover, the broad and diverse history of the Palestinian village of Silwan is completely absent, particularly during the late Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods.[69] The excavation methodology applied at the site has often chosen to remove the layers of later periods in order to reach the earlier "biblical" strata, which prevents the excavated remains from telling the multilayered story of the site with its different periods and cultures. In addition, the entire development of the site makes the local Palestinian residents invisible to the ordinary visitor. Tourist routes have been designed to keep away from the roads frequented by the residents, instead using underground galleries where only the ruins of "Jewish history" can be seen and heard.[70] Talks and tours through the archaeological remains, above and underground, including the water channel systems, with frequent references to "King David, Israelite king of Judah," are also available on YouTube. One video shows a "City of David virtual tour in Ancient Jerusalem" focusing on the excavations.[71] In another video, titled "Soldiers Visiting the City of David," a commentator asserts: "It's part of their cultural day, to learn about what they're fighting for . . . they are not only fighting for today, they actually represent the return of the Jewish people to Israel after thousands of years."[72] In another video, pointing to an excavated section of fortifications dated to the Middle Bronze Age (about 1850 BCE), an interviewer remarks: "Abraham saw this in his own eyes."[73]

Conclusions

The principal motivation behind archaeological exploration and excavations in Silwan over the past 150 years is to reveal the physical traces of the biblical narrative, especially with regards to kings David and Solomon (eleventh and tenth centuries BCE). However, the lack of material remains that can be dated to this period has triggered considerable controversies, and reinforced the notion that the biblical account is mythical.[74] In one case, it transpired that the results of the excavation under the Abbasi family house near Umm al-Daraj spring in Silwan refuted the biblical account that King David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites by entering the city through the water system, known as Warren's Shaft.[75] The excavators concluded that the shaft was only accessible two hundred years after the presumed conquest, and the water system was defended by massive fortifications built by the Canaanites during the Middle Bronze Age, long before King David's time. But despite the main focus on early periods and the lack of interest with post-Byzantine remains, the significance of the discoveries with regard to the biblical narrative is limited, if not completely absent.[76]

The issue of the politics of Israeli archaeology is discussed within the Israeli discipline by numerous scholars.[77] While the main debate has centered on the disciplinary practice, and the resemblance between state ideology and the content of archaeological knowledge, no scholar has critically tackled the scientific epistemology. However, many critical works have focused on how archaeology played a pivotal role in the formation of Israel's colonial imagination, and in producing "facts on the ground" to substantiate historical claims and nationhood building.[78] As Nadia Abu

El-Haj argued in her important book *Facts on the Ground*, in the context of Israel/ Palestine, archaeological practice was utilized in the formation of a secular Jewish Israeli colonial-national identity and served to substantiate the historical claims to territory as "the national home."[79] In other words, archaeology played a dual role: one within nation state-building, and the other within the dimension of settler colonization in Palestine. It was in Palestine under British colonial rule that the new Hebrew nation, with its settler-colonial society and ideology, developed. And in this context, the indigenous Palestinians were prevented from achieving their independence because Britain promised Palestine to the Jews as their national home.[80] More recent research focuses on the notion that the "Zionist deployment of the past is settler-colonialist," and that "archaeology and heritage conservation emerge as part and parcel of perpetration of settler-colonial violence."[81]

International law stipulates that those Israeli archaeological excavations in Silwan are unlawful. This law requires Israel, as an occupying power, to protect and preserve the cultural heritage in the occupied territory, including archaeological sites and finds, and prohibits it from making long-term and irreversible changes. Furthermore, Israel's control of the archaeological sites, and artifacts found there, enables it to physically exclude Palestinians from these sites, and allows it to interpret and present them as it wishes. Ultimately, Israel will be able to manipulate the historical narrative of the site by emphasizing and elevating its religious and cultural importance for the Jewish people; in contrast, it minimizes the role of other peoples and cultures in its history, in particular dispossessing the Palestinians from their sites and appropriating their history and cultural heritage.

While Elad's narrative in Silwan focuses exclusively on biblical history, it is actively involved in the erasure of Palestinian heritage and contemporary urban life. It articulates the archaeological site as a colony in which new Jewish settlers' homes become an integral part of the story of the heritage management.[82] In other words, Elad considers its settlement activity as a renewal of the biblical narrative in terms of the architectural and urban development of the site, which is referred to as "residential revitalization" and "Where It All Began . . . and Still Continues."[83] Elad's ultimate aim is to promote mass tourism and Jewish "pilgrimage" to Silwan. The plan is to create an underground circuit that links the "City of David" in Silwan and the "Western Wall" near the Jewish Quarter, accessed through tunnels.[84] A projected cable car network will transport Israeli and international tourist groups from West Jerusalem directly to the Kedem Center, above the excavation of Wadi Hilwa Square ("Givati Parking Lot"), as seen at the start of the video "City of David "Where It All Began." This is probably intended to discourage visitors from going through the Old City with its bustling Palestinian markets and Islamic and Christian monuments with their splendid architecture. A likely itinerary, to be named "Pilgrimage to the Temple Mount," will begin at the Siloam Pool near the southern tip of the "City of David" in Silwan, ascending through the underground stepped Roman Street, and through another underground tunnel leading to the southwest corner of the Haram al-Sharif and the "Western Wall."

One of the main critics of archaeological practices in Silwan is Emek Shaveh, the Israeli NGO working against the politicization of archaeology in Israel. It articulates its approach as follows: "Archaeological sites cannot constitute proof of precedence or ownership by any one nation, ethnic group or religion over a given place."[85] On the practical level, it monitors the activities of right-wing Jewish settler groups in East Jerusalem, including archaeological activities, taking legal measures against the abuse of archaeology for "religious or nationalist interests." It also promotes a pluralistic discourse with regards to "diversity of the cultural heritage" and the "shared heritage of all communities and peoples living in this land."[86]

No doubt, Emek Shaveh plays an important role in opposing the settler organizations' activities and supporting the local Palestinian residents of Silwan, especially in their legal battles against settlers' schemes. However, their achievements on the ground remain limited because of their power imbalance with settlers' groups, who are far more generously funded and enjoy the full support of the Israeli authorities. At the same time, Emek Shaveh's approach does not tackle the root causes of the reality on the ground: the illegal military occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem, the prohibition of archaeological excavations by international law, the nature of settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing perpetrated in Silwan, and an inclusive understanding of Palestine's history and cultural heritage. It appears that Emek Shaveh considers the Israeli occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem as a *fait accompli*, in contrast with their opposition to the occupation of the West Bank. They also regard archaeological excavations in Silwan as a done deal, and seem to accept their definition as "salvage excavations."[87]

Another anomaly of archaeological excavations at Silwan is the bias of data collection, which typifies Israeli archaeology elsewhere, although some improvements can be noticed in recent years. The preferred practice is the recovery of larger architectural structures and artifacts, representing significant "biblical" or "Jewish" historical events that can be labeled "First or Second Temple" (Iron Age to early Roman). Such periods often receive a more thorough recording compared with remains that are commonly termed as "later periods," a euphemism for Ottoman, Medieval Islamic, as well as Byzantine, and late Roman periods.[88] This anomaly has been exaggerated by the frequent use of bulldozers and mechanical diggers on archaeological sites that are employed to remove top layers of earth in order to get down to the desired earlier strata as quickly as possible. This inevitably results in the total destruction of "later debris" that consists of multiple archaeological layers that complete the entire history of the site. In contrast, proper archaeological practice normally involves using slower digging techniques, such as trawling and sifting earth in search of finer artifacts and environmental remains, in order to reconstruct various aspects of ancient daily life. In light of this anomaly, particularly the breach of archaeological ethical and scientific practices, the call by Emek Shaveh for more inclusive archaeology under these diabolical circumstances in Silwan will remain a cliché and impossible to achieve.[89] New archaeological excavations with an entirely different approach and methodology, free from ideological, religious, and

nationalist agendas are required so that a more inclusive reading of history can be accomplished.

Archaeology is often assumed to be a neutral scientific endeavor, a practice of excavation that serves to reveal clues about past civilizations. Obviously, the excavations in Silwan abuse the fundamental ethics of archaeological practice, despite the claims that excavations are of "high caliber."[90] This presumed high quality archaeological work is absent in the interpretation and presentation of the site. Instead, what is on display is mainly interpreted and presented as "biblical" or "Jewish." While such practice has been criticized by Emek Shaveh because it "privileges one narrative or one history over another,"[91] it raises a number of questions. Are there two different histories for two peoples in Israel/ Palestine – one Jewish-Israeli history and another Palestinian-Arab? Why is the same criticism not leveled against the IAA's presentation at sites, such as Jaffa, Caesarea, 'Akka, or Hazor in Israel? The answer to the above questions lies in placing the history of ancient Palestine as a subject in its own right, outside the confines of biblical studies that has excluded the vast majority of the population of the region in search of the roots of modern Israel in the past. Keith Whitelam discusses in his landmark book *The Invention of Ancient Israel* the theological and political assumptions that have shaped research into ancient Israel by biblical scholars, and contributed to the vast network of scholarship that Edward Said identified as "Orientalist discourse." He concludes:

> It will be necessary to expose the political and religious interests, which have motivated the invention of ancient Israel within the discourse of biblical studies. It will also need to create its own space, in order to produce its own contested narrative of the past, thereby helping to restore the voice of an indigenous population which has been silenced by the invention of ancient Israel."[92]

Palestine has a history that goes back many millennia, comprising multiple periods of regional and imperial dominations. The population of Palestine consists of myriad ethnic and religious communities with diverse traditions, languages, customs, but with many shared aspects of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Native Jewish communities were part of the ethnic and religious composition of the indigenous population of Palestine. It is only due to the rise of Zionism as a settler colonial movement in the early twentieth century and the ensuing political conflict in Palestine that indigenous Jews were separated from the main body of the Palestinian people to join the newly emerging "Hebrew nation" and the Jewish State. The history of ancient Palestine continues to be shaped by the biblical rhetoric reinforced by Israeli scholarship and modern Zionism, which denies the indigenous people the right to have its own history. It remains imperative that a more evidence-based, inclusive, and unbiased narrative for the history of Palestine is created, one that is based on reviving the rich cultural heritage of ancient Palestine that attests, through its material culture, to the accomplishments of its many peoples.

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Lifta's Ruins

The Presence of Absence

Khaldun Bshara

Abstract

The case of the depopulated village of Lifta complicates the terms and concepts of ruins, tangible and intangible heritage, memory, identity, and return. This article attempts to shed light on Lifta's ruins from an archaeological perspective and reads ruins as incomplete texts that call for rewriting. This rewriting, I claim, unmasks gaps in heritage concepts and discourses that cannot capture memory, social practices, and material findings in a complex reality. I argue that the interplay between presence and absence makes Lifta into a living heritage site and a concrete testimony to traditions and meanings that unfold anew in every tour or memory practice. These practices constitute a compensatory mechanism for the awaited return, which have been mobilizing Liftawis and others to save Lifta. Further, these practices have made the archaeological remains into a polymer that binds Lifta's displaced and dispersed descendants in a renewed social contract/commitment, whose ultimate focus is the notion of Return.

Keywords

Palestine; Lifta; archaeology; Nakba; loss; memory; living heritage; spatial agency.

In 1948, more than seven hundred thousand Palestinians were forced out of their homes. Today, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), there are more than five million registered refugees in

the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.[1] Each of those refugees has memories of the events surrounding 1948. Some lived through the events themselves, and some have had the events evoked through the memories of their parents and relatives.

Liftawis – the descendants of Lifta – like all other Palestinian refugees wherever they settled, kept their villages and towns of origin alive through social and spatial practices: by collecting oral histories; holding commemoration events; sketching maps and family genealogy trees; naming neighborhoods, streets, facilities, and businesses in virtually all refugee camps after their village of origin. However, Liftawi refugees are a unique case because of the status of themselves and their village today. The case of Lifta complicates the terms and concepts of ruins, heritage, living heritage, memory, identity, and return. This article attempts to shed light on Lifta's ruins from an archaeological perspective and reads ruins as incomplete texts that call for rewriting. This rewriting unmasks gaps in heritage concepts that cannot capture memory, social practices, and material findings in a complex reality.

Lifta and Liftawis

So, what makes Lifta a unique case in Palestine displacement history? First of all, Lifta may be one of the very few, if not the only, depopulated Palestinian village that was not totally destroyed during the 1948 battles or shortly after the Nakba, as befell the four hundred Palestinian villages in what is present-day Israel. Secondly*,* although the modern parts of the town have been occupied from 1948 until now, the historic part of Lifta was not occupied by Jewish settlers (except briefly by Moroccan Jews before moving elsewhere).[2] This has made the historic core into a time capsule, a testimony – in stone – of rural Palestine during its transformation by the modernization processes of the late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire – signaled by the construction boom that radiated from Lifta's historic core toward the city of Jerusalem as the urban and the civic center of the district.

Thirdly, Liftawis were expelled outside the Israeli-controlled territory during the war and resettled in Jordanian-ruled Palestine (1948–67), mainly in Jerusalem and Ramallah. Unlike the inhabitants of ʿAyn Hawd (ten kilometers south of Haifa) and Kawkab Abu al-Hayja' (in the lower Galilee), who remained in the vicinity of their villages after their involuntary removal from their homes, the Liftawis were removed and expelled beyond the borders of Israel as defined by the armistice line after the 1948 War.[3]

Fourthly, while most Palestinian refugees settled in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, many Liftawi refugees moved to nearby village lands that were located in the Jerusalem area under Jordanian rule. After 1967 and Israel's occupation of the remaining territory of Palestine, Liftawis gained a legal status not common among most Palestinian refugees. Liftawis, in accordance with the Israeli "Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel," passed by the Israeli Knesset (parliament) on 30 July 1980, acquired the status of *permanent residents of Israel* and gained many of the

social entitlements that are exclusive to Israeli citizens, namely, blue ID cards, yellow license plates for cars, social security, and universal health care, as well as the right to vote in the municipal council elections, or apply for a full citizenship status (although Jerusalemites rarely exercised the last two rights, which are intended, according to Palestinians, to normalize the illegal colonization of Palestine). As such, Liftawis are in a bizarre legal status: they are residents of Israel and yet are not allowed to return to their village of origin *in* Israel.

Lastly, their ability to access their village of origin due to their acquired Jerusalem resident status after 1967 allowed them to witness the steadily deteriorating state of their homes, and to monitor the Israeli attempts to convert their village into a Jewish neighborhood. Over the last twenty years, the families from Lifta organized themselves and mobilized to try and save their village, one of the few cases of Palestinian refugees – displaced and not allowed to return – who persevered to keep their village ties.[4]

Liftawis: "Present Absentees"

But why is it impossible to return to one's own home only a few kilometers from one's current residence? "Present absentees" is not a metaphor, but a term used to explain why Liftawis cannot return to their original homes although they are living in their vicinity. About two million Palestinians live within Israel's post-1948 borders, including the more than two hundred thousand descendants of the Palestinians who were removed from their villages after the 1948 War, but who managed to remain inside the newly established State of Israel.[5] Those Palestinians have been struggling for the recognition of their right to return to their villages of origin as citizens of Israel,[6] alongside the inhabitants of around one hundred Arab villages – about 20 percent of the total – that escaped being depopulated or destroyed but that lost over 80 percent of their lands to Israeli government confiscation.[7]

The Israeli "Absentees' Property Law, 5710-1950" framed the definition of "absentee" to ensure that it applied to every Palestinian or resident who had left his usual place of residence in Palestine for any place inside or outside the country after the adoption of the partition of Palestine resolution by the United Nations (1947). According to the 1950 Law, Article 4 (a)(2): "Every right an absentee had in any property shall pass automatically to the Custodian [of Absentee Property] at the time of the vesting of the property; and the status of the Custodian shall be the same as was that of the owner of the property." The wholesale transfer of property to the State of Israel has been popularly framed as "the biggest robbery of the twentieth century."[8]

Stripping Palestinians of their landed property was, and still is, part of the protracted Israeli colonial process that includes control, surveillance, management, and exploitation of the indigenous peoples' resources and properties. The colonial practices toward citizens and subjects underpin discriminatory policies towards the indigenous people in terms of property and mobility rights, transforming them into daily wage laborers deployable in the colonial state's modes of production.[9] In Palestine, differential policies between citizens and subjects became amplified in July 2018 when

Israel adopted a law confirming Israel as "the nation state of the Jewish people." The new legislation fundamentally discriminates against non-Jewish citizens by stating that "the right to exercise national self-determination" in Israel is "unique to the Jewish people." The new law establishes Hebrew as Israel's official language and downgrades Arabic – the language of Palestinians inside present-day Israel – to a "special status." It recognizes "Jewish settlement as a national value" and mandates that the state "will labor to encourage and promote its establishment and development."[10]

Reading "Loss": A Methodological Problem

There is a methodological dilemma facing those who try to study the depopulated or destroyed Palestinian villages: namely, that they study structures, materials, landscapes and typologies in isolation from the history and social systems that produced them and gave them their attributes and value. Separating the buildings and the landscapes around them from the historical processes of production turns ruins into the product of an unknown producer, the crude material found in natural history museums with abstract (aesthetic and historic) descriptions detached from their context.

In other words, we, as researchers, do an injustice to the history of depopulated villages when we emphasize either the materiality or immateriality of loss. Instead, I call for reconsideration of both by means of research methods that investigate "the remains" (showing emptiness and absence) in order to unearth a complete story (expressing abundance and presence). This means that the absence of buildings, structures, and elements is turned into a question about "loss," which becomes a question about indigenous individual and collective ownership. This question, in turn, can be employed in mobilizing public opinion about identity and political rights, and the right of return to one's home village.

Another methodological problem concerning reading loss is that "the ruins of Lifta" do not reflect what Lifta was at the time of the displacement, before the destruction and the dramatic changes of Palestinian landscapes in the 1948 Nakba. Likewise, the ruins of Lifta do not reflect what Lifta would have evolved into today, had there been no Nakba. This is a question that cannot be answered through comparisons or through the application of standardized planning and statistical models, because every town and village had its own circumstances and conditions that would have led to a different reality.

Nevertheless, the description of the ruins of Lifta is of great importance, as are the attempts to find out the details of what had been lost. As in criminology, every destroyed or depopulated site is a crime scene that carries within it the fingerprints of the perpetrator, and shows the type of injury that was committed against the victim – the site itself. This investigatory method, popularly coined "forensic architecture" as a field of practice within the context of the prosecution of war crimes, and as "an operative concept and analytical method for probing the events and histories inscribed in spatial artifacts and in the built environments," has gained recognition among researchers and practitioners who try to reconstruct spatial crime scenes. [11]

These methods try to solve a crime scene in which no witnesses survived but the material evidence: things, tools, and structures, human and non-human remains. Investigators interrogate these to weave a narrative about "what happened" and about "what would have happened" This new narrative brings together *presence* and *absence* to form a more accurate and coherent account of the scene.

Presence of Absence: A Heuristic Device

How do we account for absence? How do we read a crime scene? How can loss be productive in our endeavor to restore the story of a town like Lifta? These questions and a few others guide my article.

I am using the "presence of absence" as a heuristic device rather than the metaphorical one envisioned by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. In his book *In the Presence of Absence,* Darwish states, "In memory, there are enough beautification instruments to hold the place in place," noting the power and the faculty inherent in the act of remembering, to process the traumatic events of the Nakba.[12] I take this further to suggest that remembering and writing anew of these events through the memories of the elders and through the ruins of their homes, becomes an ethical obligation, a responsibility, a political (f)act. In the absence of the beloved, practicing remembering can bring the loss to the fore.

As known in the field of archaeology, archaeological heritage is twofold: the material culture, which is all that is found *in situ*: structures, materials and tools, human and non-human remains; and the "standard" ethnographic account (or the symbolic or non-material culture), which is the logical and scientific explanation that reconstructs all that is found *in situ* into a socio-economic, politico-cultural system replete with relations, customs, traditions, beliefs, symbols, modes of production and reproduction. In the ethnographic account of Lifta, the mosque and the shrine are places of religious activity linking the physical and the metaphysical worlds. A peasant house is the farming family's castle, which embraces their domestic animals, agricultural tools and family in one cubical vernacular duplex. The mills and the olive presses are the production units of flour and olive oil. The house of the *mukhtar* (shaykh/chief) is an expression of power acquired in a complex socio-political field. The spring/pool is a meeting place for women and the source of life for the inhabitants of Lifta as well as for the irrigated orchards and crops. The agricultural platforms and terraces that contain almond and olive trees are the result of perseverance and long years of work adapting the steep topography to become suitable cultivated lands. The cemetery, near the water spring, is a constant reminder of the vulnerability of human life.

Neither the present Lifta nor the absent one can be reduced to terraces, houses, and structures. These are symbols for networks, power relations, gendered spaces, and complex social arrangements that are manifested in, and through, space and form.

Therefore, the question of absence becomes an issue of how can ruins acquire an agency beyond the museumization of memory. Heritage as a European concept and

creation is concerned primarily with the material world, despite attempts to bring attention to intangible heritage or living dimensions of material culture.[13] The concept of "living heritage," which has been gaining some momentum, calls for acknowledging that heritage is "the result of a historical and social process of selection" and that heritage as part of culture is "politically constructed." [14] It emphasizes "the shift from [an] archival documentation paradigm to one that stresses the importance of reproduction and transmission of practices."[15] As a matter of fact, the artificial divides between tangible and intangible, dead and living heritage, the monumental and the mundane, the built and unbuilt, art and architecture, culture and nature are heavily critiqued.[16] Therefore, the present Lifta and the absent one, the ruins and the memory, the historic center and the surrounding landscapes are one complex entity that needs to be understood as such.

In what follows, I will read the structure and architecture of Lifta as a crime scene that calls for new ways of reading/looking. I will briefly describe the ruins of Lifta and then use the material culture, through examples, to raise questions about absence and to read loss as an ethical-political methodological shift.

Lifta: Structure and Architecture

What survived from Lifta's built form does not lend us a comprehensive plan of what Lifta was before the Nakba.[17] However, Lifta's ruins suggest it was a medium-sized town, whose architecture is infused with urban elements, evidence of the town's connection to Jerusalem and of its prosperity and economic vitality.

Lifta, like most traditional Palestinian towns and villages, shares its identity with the environment and seems to merge with the surrounding topography. A study of the British Mandate map of Lifta (1928) shows the presence of three neighborhoods separated from each other by agricultural terraces: the northern neighborhood (the historic core), defined on the Mandate map as "Lifta," and the southern neighborhood, which is composed of separate houses located around the water spring, and indicated on the map as "the pool." There is the western extension, with dispersed houses, indicated on the Mandate map as "Taht al-Balad" (literally, under the town), perhaps a reference to the Jewish colony of Givat Shaul (see figure 1). The cemetery separates the spring/pool area from the Taht al-Balad area. We also note the presence of small service buildings on the agricultural terraces between the pool area and Taht al-Balad.

From the same British Mandate map, it is clear that the oldest part of the town is the core, with crowded and attached buildings interspersed with narrow alleys and streets, while the urban expansion of the historic core toward the Batn al-Hawa' (Belly of the Wind) valley to the north is less dense. Likewise, the urban expansion towards the pool, which mostly consists of single buildings, decreases in density and diverges the further we move southward from the core.

A plausible explanation for the fact that buildings are stacked around the historic core and scattered around the spring is that the presence of ancient buildings formed

a natural quarry for the construction of the town's core; in addition, the use of older structures served as foundations for newer buildings. As a matter of fact, the location of Lifta, the core and its extension, was also delineated by ecological and geographic factors, especially the proximity to agricultural lands and water resources on the one hand, and the distance from the valley on the other. The builders avoided construction on lands with significant mountainous slopes, especially those that slope toward the south: the slopes of al-M'arsha (the Trellis), Wadi al-Ghul (Valley of the Beast), and Khallat al-Tarha (Land of the Veil), which today form the Jewish settlement of Romema to the east. With the passage of time, the town's cemetery became a physical barrier between the northern and southern neighborhoods, and the western neighborhood.

Figure 1. British Mandate map (1937–1944). Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

The sharp slopes to the east and south made it more logical to expand toward the north and west, a continuation of the traditional planning scheme of the town, which relied on continuous terraces in the north-south and east-west directions. In this scheme, the areas near the valley, as is the case in most of rural Palestine, were reserved for agricultural activities. Lifta's urban expansion toward the east (today's Romema neighborhood) and toward the south (today's Givat Shaul neighborhood) came to an end with the Nakba (1948).

Among the interesting elements in the town are the numerous houses of shaykhs (*makhatir*), the industrial facilities related to agriculture (especially olive presses), and the presence of more than one covered alley (*qantara*) within the dense historic core of the town. The presence of covered alleys, and the breaking of building corners to widen alleys where roads turn so that pedestrian mobility within the town is facilitated, show that Lifta followed a traditional planning scheme to make the town easy to navigate and connected to its surroundings.

Figure 2. Lifta Plan (2015). Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

The valley that passes through Lifta lands from the north is known as Wadi al-Shami. Wadi al-Shami can turn into a great river in the rainy season recorded in an Eric Matson photograph during the British Mandate, see figure 10). It is remarkable to note that most of the buildings are open to the valley through double windows (*mijwiz*), tripartite windows, balconies, or terraces, whether facing west (for the northern neighborhood) or facing north (for the western neighborhood). By looking into the urban formation of the town, we can safely conclude that the view over Wadi al-Shami was an important element that contributed to the clustering of the town in such way. With this primary parameter, entry to most of the houses was from the east or the south, with the west and north facades open to the exquisite view of the valley. The town ends at the northern side with cultivated terraces (*hawakir*) and the rocky slopes of Batn al-Hawa' (see figure 2).

Reading Loss as a Reclamation Process

While looking into the architectural survey and documentation of the remaining Lifta houses, I noticed a peculiar assembled house in the historic core of the town – building number 68, according to the Ramallah-based Centre for Architectural Restoration (Riwaq) survey team for the Lifta Documentation Project. I refer to it as "Veranda House 68," to emphasize the veranda as the most prominent element in the house (figures 3 and 4). An assembled house is a building that was constructed in stages and using different styles. In the Veranda House, presence and absence are manifested in such a way that the crime scene raises new questions about the Nakba, the ongoing Nakba of Lifta's heritage, and the role of ruins in shaping the present discourse.

The northern part of the Veranda House consists of two small vaults with a western entrance, perhaps the first part of this house that was constructed. The apparent antique quality of the large cut stones of the building below the veranda indicates that these stone courses were present before the construction of the rooms around and atop of them. A room to the south, and four smaller vaults to the north were later additions.

The first floor is simple in form: the middle part of the building forms a central hall (*liwan*) for the north and south wings and constitutes the heart of the house, a typology popular in urban architecture in the late Ottoman era. The first floor of the northern wing consists of two elongated vaults forming one space connected to the liwan and overlooking the valley via a smaller window. Several niches decorate the northern facade.

In the southern wing, its first floor has two entrances, one leads to the liwan and the other overlooks the southern side. The four first-floor vaults rest on a central octagonal stone column – the only structure of its kind in the town of Lifta – whose delicate work indicates the importance of this room. The room overlooks the valley through two decorated *mijwiz* (double) windows, one of which is missing the arches' keystones as a result of vandalism or looting. Similarly, the arches of the veranda are missing their decorative jambs and arches. There is a staircase ascending from the liwan toward the natural terraces on the eastern side, and it may have also led to the roof (figures 5, 6).
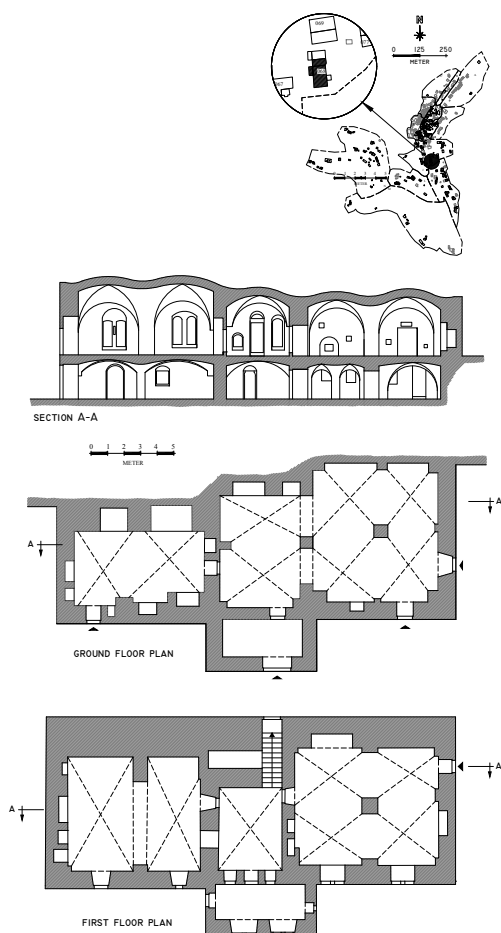
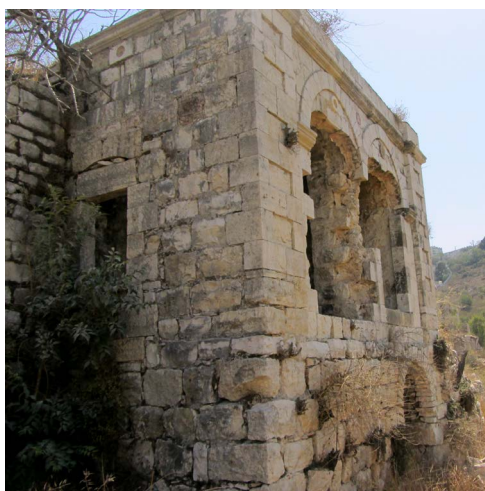Figure 4. House 68, the veranda. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

Figure 3. House 68, the plans. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.
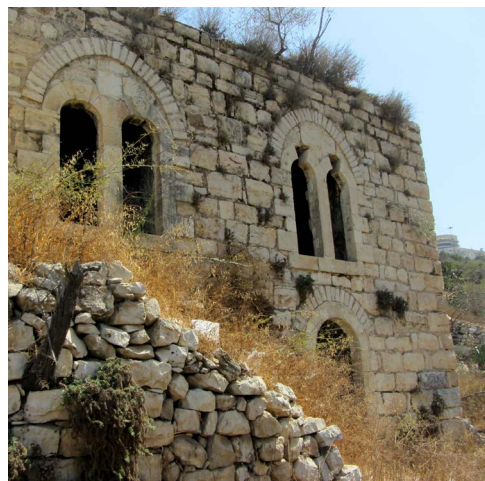
Figure 5. House 68, missing arch key stones. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

The stone veranda has prominent framed windows and rose windows (*rozana*) above arched double windows. (The Veranda House boasts another set of arched windows, also circumscribed within a rectangular recessed frame.) A ceramic plate adorns the right side of the last stone course of the veranda. To further decorate the facade, a geometric ornamentation made of colored plaster was added into a carved stone located at a central spot above the veranda arches (figure 7).
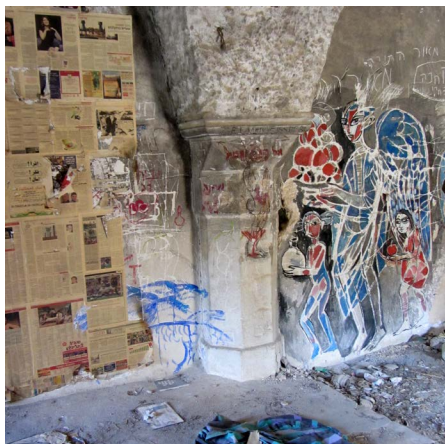
Figure 6. House 68, the octagonal stone column supporting vaults. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.
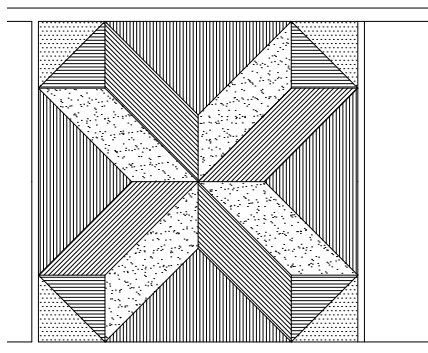

Figure 7. House 68, sketch of decorative elements of the veranda. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

The Veranda House 68 is a story of absence and presence, the presence of absence. What we see is an incomplete structure that we, as architects and archaeologists, could fill with architectural forms that blend with the rest of the frames. It is as if there is a blank page with a frame that is the limit for the writings. The text is erased and the reader is left with the task of writing a new one. Based on the experience of individuals, they write a different text every time they try to write or remember a text that has been cut off.[18] This authority that the individual assumes is what makes it possible not only to read the rest of the text (elements, frames, borders and structures), but also to complete the text, reformulate a story, rebel against form, and write an alternative ending for the story. In short, ruins appear, in the case of Lifta, as a call for writing a story of presence informed by the missing texts – an urge and responsibility to keep iterating a cohesive story made of disordered texts (figure 8).

Ruins as Texts, Writing as Social Agency

Undoubtedly, the systematic destruction, looting, and vandalism that Lifta's houses have been subjected to, especially affecting decorative stones, inscriptions, furniture, and iron and carpentry works, leave us bewildered, and perhaps unable to determine Lifta's architecture before the Nakba.

Here, it must be recalled that a town of this importance and located within the vicinity of urban Jerusalem – whose lands extend to Jaffa Street in the south and Nablus Street in the east, and is adjacent to the important Jerusalem–Jaffa Road – is featured in only two photographs in the Eric Matson Collection (the American Colony), hardly reflective of the importance of this photogenic town (figures 9 and 10).

We continue to address the methodological dilemma facing us of how to study

architecture and its aesthetics in the absence of most of the architectural details? It is not possible to analyze ruins or architectural remains without the elements and details that make architectural forms into lived and enjoyed places, apart from being an individual expression of the taste and the social status of the owners of the houses. Like dress codes and language, these aesthetic formatted shapes are the essence of the individual and his relationship to the material world and beyond. For example, the metal horseshoe, the blue glass eye, and the Qur'an verses are meant to protect owners from evil eyes; the star and the crescent represents the Ottoman flag and is a gesture of loyalty to the central authority; a ceramic plate in the center of a cross-vaulted room is a reflection of the wealth and generosity of the mukhtar; the sketched wheat and sunflowers mural paintings are evidence of hope for fertility and abundance, and so on.

In order to overcome the dilemma of missing artifacts and structures that give clues to the social and economic status of the Liftawis, I have studied all the details that survived looting and vandalism in order to reach reasonable conclusions about the details of the unusual architecture. In the absence of most architectural elements, every detail that survived becomes an approximation and speculation about Lifta architecture before the Nakba. The houses currently inhabited by Jewish settlers were excluded from this study, since they have been heavily altered and their original aesthetics obscured. They are mostly individual houses from the southern neighborhood (Taht al-Balad) or houses to the east of the town's historic core. If these houses could have been studied in detail, they might have revealed what
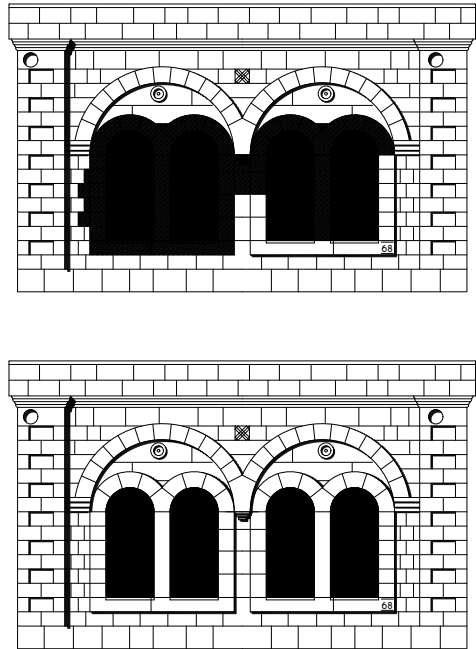

Figure 8. House 68, a reconstruction possibility of the missing veranda arches. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

Figure 9. "Lifta [?]." The photo was apparently taken at a distance from the northwest, the direction of Bayt Iksa village. Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

typical Lifta houses looked like before the villagers were displaced during the Nakba and the houses looted.

As absence helps us to infer *what was and what was not*, the ruins of Lifta indicate the presence of a larger number of decorative elements such as iron works, although most were looted, with only a few surviving. For example, House 62 contains holes for iron protection bars in the stone frames of the windows. It indicates that there were four pairs of steel plates that form a sandwich for a metal mesh made of solid square steel decorative bars, as we may infer from one of the remaining protection bars near the main door. What remains for us, as we observe the holes, is to try and fill them with our imaginings, our personal experiences, and our story. The holes in the window frame function as the grammar (the structure/ the language), while our imaginations are the texts/ speeches that we will write/ utter according to an agreed grammar (structural holes). Every time we try to write a text or utter one, it shifts its perception according to one's background and experience (and the haunting spirits of Lifta), leading to a different form in every writing/narration attempt (figures 11).

In House 28, we found a metal balustrade thrown into the upper level of a peasant

Figure 10. "Winter torrent, Lifta [?] Valley." This photo is of Wadi al-Shami on a rainy day. Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Figure 11. House 62, missing protection bars. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

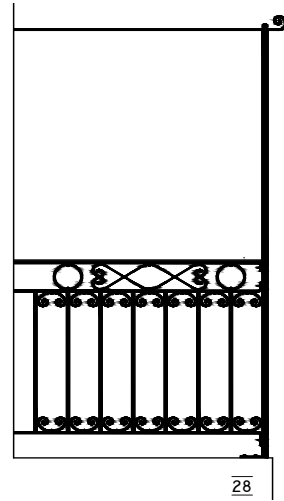Figure 12a. House 28, decorated metal balustrade. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

Figure 12b. House 28, sketch of decorated metal balustrade. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

house, probably part of a staircase railing. The balustrade is made of square solid steel bars resting on a lower steel plate and passing between two sandwich plates before it ends with a horizontal plate on top of a half-twisted steel bar. Does this masterpiece belong to House 28? It is quite impossible to assert such a claim; perhaps it belongs to another house or another staircase, and it was dragged until it reached a place where there was no suitable staircase to match. Here we have a written text (decorated metal balustrade for a certain set of stairs) extracted from a large book (the town), which consists of many chapters (the houses) and numerous pages (elements). We try to find the original place (provenance) of this text in order to restore the shredded segment of text to its original location in a huge library, with little certainty in sight (figures 12a and 12b). The same House 28 contains a window that is mostly missing but that reveals a sophisticated and delicately framed double window. The possibilities of writing a new text into the blank space are enormous (figures 13a and 13b).

Final Remarks

> Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through [it] because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it. Part of this feeling may be melancholic sentiment that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by the traumatic past.
>
> — Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*[19]

Iqrit is a depopulated Palestinian village located at the northern border of present-day Israel. While all village buildings were reduced to rubble in 1948, the church and the cemetery survived. After long and exhausting legal processes, the descendants of the village, who reside in several villages and towns in northern Galilee, managed to obtain a court decision allowing them to celebrate masses every other week in the church. Moreover, they managed to wrest another decision to allow them to bury their deceased family members in the Iqrit cemetery. Unexpectedly, after decades of struggle, the Iqrit people were able to meet, hold weddings and barbecues, and play cards and football games on top of their ruined village. Although, surrealistically, one cannot return permanently to Iqrit unless one is dead, this right of return is one that I continually encountered with Lifta elders. They want to rest near their fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers at the graveyard of Lifta. Some Liftawis have the relocation of their coffins into Lifta's cemetery, when conditions allow, written into their wills.

Figure 13a. House 28, missing window. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

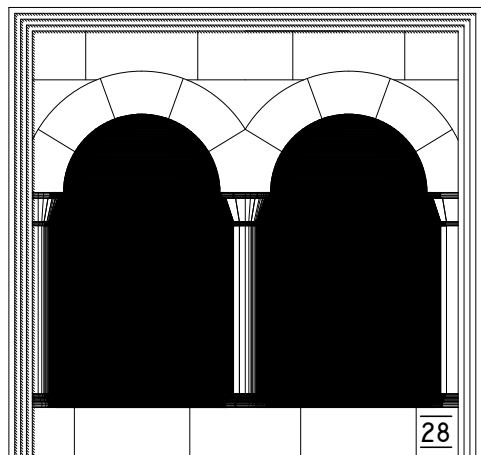Figure 13b. House 28, a reconstruction possibility of missing window. Courtesy of Riwaq Centre: Lifta documentation project.

Lifta, the archaeological site, has been transformed into a living heritage site. A place where traditions are celebrated, memory is transmitted, and identity is reproduced. The young generations of Lifta are using all means at hand to make their fathers' and mothers' claims heard, whether it is through writing a social media post or conducting a guided tour among the ruins pointing to remaining features and bringing up the story of missing others. This interplay between presence and absence makes Lifta into a living heritage site. While the "living heritage" concept is concerned with surviving traditions and meanings of heritage sites, Lifta's ruins are testimony to traditions and meanings that unfold anew in every tour or writing exercise. Therefore, much of Lifta's archaeology is about the future rather than the past events, about a renewed commitment to save Lifta.

The everyday practices constitute a compensatory mechanism for the awaited return, which have been mobilizing Liftawis and others to save Lifta. Seasonal cleaning of the cemetery, holding weddings at the pool, Nakba commemoration days, conducting oral history sessions or publishing books have made the archaeological remains into a polymer that binds Lifta's displaced and dispersed descendants in a renewed social contract, whose ultimate focus is the notion of Return.

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Endnotes

1   See website of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, online at unrwa.org/where-we-work (accessed 17 May 2022).

2   Nazmi al-Jubeh, Rana Barakat, Khaldun Bshara, and Yacoub Odeh, *Lifta: sijjil sha'b – al-tarikh wa al-turath al-thaqafi wa-l-nidal* [Lifta: register of a people: history, cultural heritage, and struggle] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2020).

3   'Ayn Hawd and Kawkab Abu al-Hayja' are examples of villages that were held under martial law until 1966. depopulation, and destruction of Palestinian villages in today's Israel were not identical processes. For example, in 1953, The village of Kafr Bir'im was destroyed by the Israeli air force in order to prevent the villagers' return and in defiance of an Israeli Supreme Court decision recognizing the villagers' right to return to their homes. By 1992, the only standing structure was the church and bell tower. Sha'b village is a different story; most of Sha'b's original residents became internally displaced refugees, settling in nearby Arab villages, predominantly in Majd al-Krum and Sakhnin. Meanwhile, many refugees from the depopulated villages of al-Birwa, al-Damun, and Mi'ar were settled in Sha'b in 1948 and were joined by refugees from Kirad al-Ghannam and Kirad al-Baqqara in 1953. The original inhabitants of Sha'b protested their circumstances and launched a campaign soon after the end of the 1948 war to return to their homes. By 1950, roughly 10 percent of Sha'b's original inhabitants returned to the village and eventually many more were given permission to resettle. 'Ayn Hawd village was not destroyed, but the Arab inhabitants were expelled during the 1948 war. Some remained in the vicinity and settled nearby, forming a new village, also named 'Ayn Hawd. After Israeli settlers' failed attempt to create a moshav on the site, Ein Hod (the original site of 'Ayn Hawd) became a Jewish artists' colony in 1953.

4   Yaqub Odeh, ""Lifta: qissat watan" [Lifta: a Story of Homeland] in Jubeh, Barakat, Bshara, and Odeh, *Lifta: sijjil sha'b*, 289–99. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2020), 289–99.

5   Jeffrey Heller, "Jews, Arabs Nearing Population Parity in Holy Land: Israeli Officials," Reuters, 26 March 2018, online at (reuters.com) reut.rs/3KCSE1x (accessed 18 May 2022).

6   Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 146.

7   Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute Palestine Studies, 1992), *xxxii*.

8   See the Golden Rule Production, "The Biggest Robbery of the 20th Century (How the Zionists Stole Palestine)," online youtube.com/watch?v=LqxSMKHFnAs (accessed 30 January 2022). Ronny Shaked quoted

Azmi Bishara using the same terminology to describe the Israeli theft of Palestine in "Arab MK: Israel 'Robbery of Century'," *Ynetnews*, 18 December 2005, online at (ynetnews.com) bit.ly/3R5agFu (accessed 18 May 2022).

9   In *Citizens and Subjects,* Mahmood Mamdani shows how the colonial states aggregate the natives (that is, territorial segregation), then administer them through customary law (that is, institutional segregation) through appointed chiefs (63–65), and in so doing, the colonial takes over the land, destroys the communal autonomy (that is, subsistence economy), and "frees" individuals for wage labor ready for exploitation (119). Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 63–65, 119.

10 See "Read the Full Jewish Nation-State Law," *Jerusalem Post*, 19 July 2018 (updated 29 July 2018), online at jpost.com/israel-news/read-the-full-jewish-nation-state-law-562923 (accessed 18 May 2022).

11 Yates McKee and Meg McLagan, "Forensic Architecture: An Interview with Eyal Weizman," in *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Politics,* ed. Meg McLagan and Yates McKee (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 440. "Forensic architecture" is the name of an emergent academic field that refers to the production and presentation of architectural evidence – relating to buildings, urban environments – within legal and political processes; see online at forensic-architecture.org (accessed 18 May 2022).

12 Mahmoud Darwish, *Fi hadrat al-ghiyab* [In The Presence of Absence] (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), 9.

13 Ioannis Poulios, "Recognising the Living Dimension of Heritage Sites," in Poulios's *The Past in the Present: A Living Heritage Approach – Meteora, Greece* (London: Ubiquity Press, 2014), 15–18.

14 Chiara Bortolotto, "From the 'Monumental' to the 'Living' Heritage: A Shift in Perspective," in *World Heritage: Global Challenges, Local Solu*tions, ed. John Carman and Roger White (Oxford: Archeopress, 2007), 39.

15 Bortolotto, "From the 'Monumental'," 41.

16 See, for example, Khaldun Bshara, "Heritage in Palestine: Colonial Legacy in Postcolonial Discourse," *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 9, 2 (2013): 295–319.

17 This article in general, and this section in particular, is informed by Khaldun Bshara, "'Alali 'ala wadi al-shami: nadhra tahliliyya ila ma tabqa min 'imarat Qaryat Lifta al-muhajjara" [Attics overlooking the valley of al-Shami: an analytical perspective on all that remains from the depopulated village of Lifta] in *Lifta: sijjil sha'b*, 227–75.

18 This act echoes Yalo, the protagonist of a novel of the same name (and also the name [Yalu] of one of the three Latrun villages destroyed in the 1967 war) by the novelist Elias Khoury, who tried to reiterate the same story to find himself writing a new one every time he tried to remember the same events; Elias Khoury, *Yalo* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2008).

19 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 22.

Ibrahim Dakkak Award
for
Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem

The Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem is an annual award launched by the *Jerusalem Quarterly* in 2017 to honor the memory and work of Ibrahim Dakkak (1929–2016), Jerusalem architect, activist, political leader, and former chairman of the Advisory Board of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

It is awarded to an outstanding submission (in English or Arabic) that addresses either contemporary or historical issues relating to Jerusalem. A committee selected by the *Jerusalem Quarterly* determines the winning essay. The author will be awarded a prize of U.S. $1,000, and the essay will be published in the *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

Essays submitted or nominated for consideration should be based on original research and must not have been previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Essays should be 4,000 to 5,000 words in length (including endnotes), preceded by an abstract of no more than 200 words, and up-to 10 keywords.

If the submitted or nominated essay is in Arabic, the abstract and keywords should be in English.

Preference will be given to emerging/early career researchers and students.

Please submit or nominate essays and a short bio (including current or previous affiliation with a recognized university, research institution, or non-governmental organization that conducts research) via email to **jq@palestine-studies.org**, mentioning the Award. In the case of nomination, please provide a contact email address for the nominated author.

Any images should be submitted as separate files with a resolution of 600 dpi minimum, if possible. Submitted images must have copyright clearance from owners, and have captions that are clear and accurate.

The deadline for submissions is **15 January** of each year.

Perspectives on the Endless Nakba

Palestinian Oral History and Traumatic Memory

Thomas M. Ricks

Abstract

The author examines Palestinian oral history from the end of the British Occupation or Mandate (14 May 1948) to the present in terms of the traumatic memory of the Nakba and its impact both on immigrants in the Palestinian Diaspora, and on Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In light of more recent research into "traumatic memories," it is now apparent that beyond the remembrances of specific autobiographic and personal events that Palestinians experienced, there are other important aspects of traumatic memories: the impact on peoples' feelings and emotions not only affects the memories of material and personal losses such as homes and gardens, land, photographs, family artifacts, and loved ones, but the intensity of those losses at the time of the trauma affects the emotions over time, more than "snap shot' or first-time memories of the past. Along with the much studied factual information of the Nakba, we now learn that the traumatic memory perpetuates the losses creating a condition of continuous actions or endless memories for those who suffered through the Nakba. Furthermore, comparative studies of global massacres or disasters find that many parallel effects exist contrary to earlier findings.

Keywords

Oral history; Palestine; trauma; Nakba; guilt; physical handicaps; memory; nostalgia.

The Palestinian Nakba is so deeply riveted into the traumatized individual and collective oral and published memories of the Palestinian victims – adults and children, villagers, and townspeople – that it is difficult to sort out the hours from the days or even from the months. The countless murderous actions of Zionist militias, including the Haganah and Palmach, as well as "irregulars" such as Irgun (IZL or Etzel), Lehi (the "Stern Gang"), and other paramilitary underground groups, began in 1946 and 1947, in the run-up to the first Palestine war (1947–49. These Zionist militias and terrorist groups were later assembled into the Israeli Defense Forces and bear full responsibility for expelling some 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and land over the days and months of the war and subsequent years.

Palestinians were so brutalized by shootings, cries for help, killings, and rapes that the collected memories in diaries, journals, memoirs, and oral history recitations appear blurred and, at times, indistinguishable from village to village and from town to town. The specifics of certain events may be vivid and crisp-edged, but these may be difficult to place in the whole disorienting confusion of night and morning raids on Palestinians evacuated from their beloved homes. Childhood memories remain vivid of their rush to safety, but children have different memories than adults. Parents and other elders received harsher treatment or had prior knowledge of the ethnic cleansing occurring around them, leading some to assume postures of disbelief or helplessness – frozen amid the violent conditions in which they found themselves.[1]

It took days for families lucky enough to remain together to arrive at a cave or another village distant from the expulsions and explosions. Sometimes, it took weeks before a family felt safe and at peace. It took years, however, for many Palestinians to absorb the consequences of the expulsions, including the loss of family members or separation from them in the confusion and chaos of the moment. Daoud Jabr, for example, was arrested in Jerusalem on 15 May 1948 by an Israeli militia due to his work with electronics and radios. He was released days later, during which time his family in Ramallah presumed that he had been killed.[2]

The loss of a father, brother, mother, or sister was felt immediately. The loss of home, land, and livestock soon became evident. Realization of the extent of their losses, their haplessness, and their dimmed future crept into family discussions slowly over time. Soon, every tree, every rock, every spring, and street corner began to be woven into the individual and collective memories of Palestinian families, adults and children. The Nakba was verbalized using metaphors, such as the shattering of Palestinian society or the smashing of Palestinians' identity, name, and self-esteem, by an earthquake or the wrecking ball of Zionism. Held together by the social and cultural fabrics of common experiences, taking shape from Palestinians' pre-Nakba memories, as well as photographs and other objects associated with a previous life, the Nakba became the national watershed of Palestinian life, history, culture, and society.

Memory is also a tool with which to contest "official" versions of the past. Yet, as a historian, my interest in memory is not only framed by an opposition between the subordinate truth versus the dominant lie, but by a concern with the ways in

which particular versions of an event may at various times and for various reasons be promoted, reformulated, or silenced.[3]

History and Historiography

> History is a process, an argument, and is composed of true stories about the past.
>
> — John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*[4]

History is both a process and an argument about the past. It is also an exercise in memory and remembrance. We might divide historical sources into three types: (1) *archival sources* such as diaries, reports, parish records, letters, broadsheets, posters, photographs, and paintings; (2) *living sources* or people whose autobiographical pasts are filled with events, places, peoples, and traditions; and (3) *material sources* such as coins, statues, buildings, streets, neighborhoods, coastlines, forests, and tombstones. The first is produced by people in documentary form, while the second is present in people's minds or in the collective retelling of the past; the last manifests in material form shaped by nature or by human contact. In the best scenario, all three kinds of sources may be available to the historian.

In each case, historians have methods and techniques to question, analyze, and interpret the "true stories of the past." No single historical source is entirely and unquestionably valid or historically "true" in itself. For that reason, historians are forever seeking corroborative primary, or timely sources to substantiate their various evidence. Palestinians' written memoirs and autobiographies provide insight on various aspects of twentieth-century Palestine, for example, and can often be used to corroborate or complement oral histories.[5] Other works have brought memoirs, autobiographies, and oral histories into conversation with archival and material sources to reconstruct local histories of Palestine, histories of Palestinian social movements before the Nakba, or particular events within the Nakba itself.[6]

In recent decades, historians have begun to pay closer attention to the context of historical remembrance or memorialization – public versus private and individual versus collective. In the United States, especially since 2017, national discussions and protests revolved around the presence of Confederate monuments, historical markers, and battle flags in public places, opening larger questions of how the remembered histories of Black and Brown Americans, Asians, and Native Americans challenged accepted White American national narratives. The American poet Walt Whitman stated that the horrors of the U.S. Civil War would never be properly written but deeply remembered.[7] The same may be said of the Palestinian Nakba.

Memories of the Palestinian Nakba might generally be seen as having four features:[8] Firstly, due to the fact that expulsions, brutal occupation, and armed conflict continue today throughout historic Palestine, it can be said that "the story is not over yet."[9] Secondly, the principal consequences of the Nakba reshaped the social,

economic, political, and cultural life conditions of *all* Palestinians, whether refugees or not, both in historic Palestine and in the diaspora. Thirdly, traumatic memory is a social matter insofar as memory involves both an individual and a collective such as a family, neighbors, a village or town, or a larger community. Finally, traumatic memories of the Nakba continue to shape the lives and identities of descendants of its eyewitnesses.

History is filled with problems, gaps, and silences that make little sense when left alone. (That is to say, that without a nuanced or broader context added to a historical narration, other meanings may be missed.) Some questions are persistent: Why did particular events occur at a specific time and place? Why did peoples act in a certain way? How and why do people as individuals or as communities seek to remember certain historical events or actors via commemoration? Indeed, if the past was an intelligible and coherent narrative in itself, there would be no need for historians. The historian's task is to examine the problems of the past, sift through the historical evidence for explanations and interpretations, and produce a coherent narrative that is supported by the evidence. If the results resolve some problems or fill some gaps, well and good. But chances are that the historian's work is never complete. As new historical evidence emerges, new questions about past narratives challenge older interpretations, and active exchanges between historians and social scientists, as well as scholars in other humanities and, more recently, the natural sciences, raise new questions and offer new tools.

Thus, historians constantly engage in arguments over the availability or validity of evidence, propose theories to explain past changes and continuities, and establish schools of interpretations of the past. In a sense, historians shape history from the sources about events, traditions, activities, and lives of peoples. The past is yet unborn in texts we call primary or contemporary sources. Once the interpretation of the historical evidence is made known, we then have a "history," or approximately true stories of the past. As the Italian historian Benedetto Croce reminds us, all history is essentially "contemporary history." Or as another often repeated maxim puts it, every generation shapes its own history.

Historians' digging up historical evidence in pursuit of solving historical problems and creating historical narratives show why history may rightly be considered *a social product*, that is, an intimate interaction between the researcher and the peoples, events, and things of the past. In each generation, this interaction has addressed social, economic, and cultural topics unattended by earlier generations. A field once dominated by the political and military decisions of elite men has been reshaped by studies that center women, workers, peasants, and the long-term impact of religion, rituals, and culture. New questions are being asked about the environment and climate, diseases and pandemics, and the power and production of history.[10] Social history has expanded its horizons with social scientific methodologies and new uses of oral history and memory studies, innovations that have changed how historians approach the past.[11]

By the twenty-first century, historians had looked well beyond written accounts as

the *only* sources available for analyses and interpretation of the past. In their search to know the true stories of the past, they drew on material evidence, such as coins, gravestones, buildings, memorials, maps, soil and agricultural patterns, and evidence of changing coastlines, wind patterns, and climate. Earthquakes, abnormal weather changes, and famines have become important benchmarks for devising chronologies. For example, the July 1927 earthquake in the vicinity of Jericho, measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale and causing nearly six hundred casualties, including two hundred deaths, in various towns and villages from the Jordan Valley to Nablus, Ramallah, and Jerusalem, became a moment inscribed in Palestine's history. A Franciscan priest who at the time was living in the San Salvatore monastery inside the New Gate of Jerusalem's Old City wrote: "On 11 July 1927, in the afternoon, an earthquake struck with great force shaking the building. Pieces of plaster from the ceiling fell on our heads and we got up and fled the area."[12] More than a half-century later, several individuals with whom I conducted oral histories for my 1993–96 research project "Voices from the Schoolyard" noted with uncanny accuracy the date, day, and time of the 1927 earthquake. Farid Jouzi, born in 1917 and living in the Musrara quarter in East Jerusalem near the Dominican Monastery of Saint-Étienne, told me that the "July 11 earthquake hit around 3:00 PM" since he remembered that "it knocked me off my swing and I never fell off that swing."[13] Another oral history reciter told me that she remembered well the earthquake of "July 11 that came around 3:05 PM to Jerusalem since I was having my afternoon snack with my brothers and I was sitting against the wall when the shelf of my mother's cups came tumbling down on top of me!"[14]

Historians now rely increasingly on the autobiographical memory of peoples and their eyewitness accounts of what they saw, remembered, reflected upon, and recited collectively with others. Social movement activists in the United States began to use oral history research seriously in the 1960s; professional historians were slower to adopt its techniques until the 1970s, gaining prominence in England and the European continent through the efforts of public historians, in particular Paul Thompson.[15] African and then Asian historians achieved successes with living memories and oral traditions, using the former to present twentieth-century African and Asian voices as the continents emerged from an era of elitist and racist colonial historiography, while oral traditions, handed down over for more than four hundred years, experienced a rebirth as an indispensable historical research tool.[16] Aided by exemplary work in the field of memory and cognition along with the continued popularity of oral history among activist and professional historians, oral historiography found a firm place among historians worldwide.[17]

Oral and Social History

> [I]t is precisely in revealing the ways in which memory, even when it seems most real and definite, is not a certain guarantee of truth, that oral history has developed into such a fruitful area for thinking about memory.

> . . . The focus of historical analysis shifts from the notion of memory as either "true" or "mistaken," to an emphasis on memory as process and how to understand its motivation and meaning. How do people recollect events they were involved in or witnesses to, and what can be learned from their narratives. These are the questions now posed by oral history.
>
> — Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, in John Tosh, ed.,
> *Historians on History*[18]

Exploring the effects of fascism upon the Italian working class in Turin in 1979, Luisa Passerini concluded that oral testimonies needed a far more sophisticated conceptual approach with which to understand the ways in which culture and psychology influenced memory. She argued that historians "should not ignore that the raw material of oral history consist not just in factual statements, but is preeminently an expression and representation of culture, and therefore includes not only literal narrations but also the dimensions of memory, ideology and subconscious desires."[19]

In examining Palestinian schools during the British Mandate, it became clear that the voices of the school children were generally exuberant and optimistic. Reckless and absorbed in their songs, sports, and field trips, these children resembled so many the world over. Ihsan Abbas, the renowned Palestinian literary intellectual, spent four years at the prestigious al-Kulliyya al-'Arabiyya (Arab Government College) "playing ping pong every waking hour," staying up secretly at night to finish English and Latin lessons, and taking daily walks to the nearby village of Sur Bahir with faculty such as the Oxford-trained historian Albert Hourani.[20] Hala and Dumia Sakakini, the daughters of Khalil Sakakini, an inspector for the Mandate Education department, were feared by their Arabic literature classmates when they first arrived at the Jerusalem Girls College – the classmates assumed naturally that their classical Arabic was nearly perfect given the importance of their father. But Hala and Dumia had spent their first years at the German Deutsche Schule and were soon being tutored privately at home to catch up with the other students. Such memories inform us of the historical processes that shaped and continue to shape Palestinian lives and aspirations.[21] It was in the schoolyards of Jerusalem that many Palestinians learned their "real life" lessons, and the memories of those school days shaped the interpretations of those lessons. The arrival of British military forces along with the imperial pomp and ceremony of British colonial administrators left a deep impression in Palestinians' memories of their youth.

Oral history is a social historian's strategy to harvest the memories, feelings, and aspirations of the living autobiographical past through eye-witnessed accounts. Oral history testimony represents a living archive of historical data about major and minor events in the daily lives of Palestinians, young and old. Following some interview techniques of social scientists, the historian sets out to resolve a problem or an argument with a set of questions; that is to say, to establish and prove a thesis. The memory of a political demonstration, the destruction of a home or village, or a street clash with Jewish or British troops – or even a more mundane confrontation, as when

Hala Sakakini related her encounter with Jewish students in the early 1940s on her way home via Rehavia, during which the Jewish students shouted that she should go back to her own land[22] – is interesting in itself, but the oral historian will also be searching for patterns of demonstrations, destruction, or confrontations from accounts in order to say something about the reasons for those events occurring at that time and in that place. The oral historian might also draw on other primary or secondary sources, asking eyewitnesses to try and explain what they saw and how they interpreted an event in the time and place it occurred. Material and written primary sources, as well as other oral recitations, can also be used to corroborate oral histories.

With the permission of those who have given their oral history, historians may record, publish, or place these histories in a depository for public access and use. Oral history then becomes not only the autobiographical past of the reciter but also a living memory archive of events, families, and communities. By definition, then, oral history is a social history of people, communities, places, and events.

Traumatic and Emotional Memory

> An increasing number of cognitive and clinical researchers have been concerned with the characteristics and functions of autobiographical memory for traumatic experiences over the last two decades. This field of research has to do with how people encode, process, and retrieve highly stressful events occurring in the real-life, and how memory for these events may affect their health and psychological functioning.
>
> — Igor Sotchu and Maria Louisa Rusconi, "Autobiographical Memories,"
>
> *Journal of Psychology*[23]

Psychologists and neurobiologists have devoted considerable time to a range of issues surrounding cognition and memory, including traumatic and emotional memories. Intense psychological stress caused by unwanted, troublesome memories can cause brain structures such as the amygdala, hippocampus, and frontal cortex to become activated as they process the memory. Studies involving post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have offered evidence that trauma stemming from natural disasters (such as earthquakes and tsunamis) or human violence (riots, war, rape, and so on) is linked to a reduction in the size of the hippocampus. Studies also show that children who have experienced trauma suffer fragmentation of memory, intrusive thoughts, dissociation, and flashbacks, all of which may be related to hippocampus dysfunction.[24] In the field of memory studies, research indicates that:

> Traumatic experiences were remembered more consistently over time relative to positive [emotional] experiences – in particular, vividness and overall memory quality associated with traumatic experiences is not significantly changed between the first and the second interview, whereas a decline was observed for positive experiences.[25]

Thus, long-term traumatic memories of survivors may be seen as "more reliable" than other memories recorded by the oral historian. The lingering impact of trauma on Palestinian memories of the Nakba can be seen in a number of oral histories that I collected. For example, Tony Bakirjian, who sought refuge during the first days of the battle for Jerusalem known as "the May days," remembered in detail the number of shells and mortars fired into the Armenian Convent in the Old City – "May 16 being the worst day."[26] Zuhdi Hashweh, a lawyer in the Jerusalem courts, remembered well his land cases in the Jericho region before and after the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, particularly the cases involving upper-class Palestinians such as Musa 'Alami and the Husayni family. These continued into the 1950s, though Zuhdi's work in Jerusalem ended with the 1948 war.[27] But we can also see how trauma, even if it preserves memory, can suppress the transmission of "true stories of the past," as in the case of Farid Jouzi, who did not report that he had had a nervous breakdown in June 1948, as many others had who suffered the impact of the Nakba – including the loss of land and lives – in silence.[28]

As Rosemary Sayigh points out, meanwhile, studies of traumatic memory have generally not examined field recordings or oral history evidence collected on the Palestinian Nakba. Instead, scholars have focused on post-traumatic experiences of the Holocaust, the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, or the Armenian genocide during World War I.[29] Like the Holocaust and the Nanjing and Armenian massacres, the Nakba occurred in both colonial and wartime contexts, and was characterized by nationalist violence undertaken by militias and paramilitary groups. In all four cases, villagers and townspeople suffered an invasion into their lives, manifesting in rape, unmitigated violence, and the loss or destruction of personal items. However, whereas international intervention brought the violence to an end in Germany, China, and Ottoman Turkey, the 1947–49 expulsion of 750,000 Palestinian villagers and townspeople did not mark the end of traumatic experience. As Rosemary Sayigh writes:

> Any argument that the Nakba was minor because it did not involve – at the time – as great a loss of life as at Hiroshima, the Holocaust, or the Armenian *Aghed* is invalidated, first by the proliferation of Palestinian suffering since 1918, and second by the absence of rational hope that their suffering will end in a just settlement.[30]

Expulsions and exile, military and settler violence, destruction of homes and other property, and surveillance and other mechanisms of occupation continue into the present, shaping Palestinians' memories and their written and oral testimony.

Oral History and Palestinian Youth

Given the ongoing nature of the Nakba, it may be worth thinking about the role that youth have played as both narrators and collectors of oral history in the last three or four decades. Three examples come to mind. The first is a two-staged oral history of Palestinian *shabab* (youth) and the first Palestinian intifada (1987–92) collected by

Adel Yahya and Mahmoud Ibrahim from participants in the Ramallah and Nablus regions. The former Birzeit University historians first interviewed youth who were actively involved in the confrontations with the Israeli occupation forces in the early stage of the intifada and then conducted a second set of interviews several years later. The resulting publication was divided into four parts: a chapter by Yahya on the technique of oral history interviewing; a chapter by Ibrahim on the particular significance of oral history as a research tool during the intifada; my own chapter on the theory and practice of oral history; and a chapter of transcriptions of a number of the oral histories collected at both stages of the interview process.[31]

The two oral histories published by Rawan and Dima Damen stand out as a second example. Wishing to learn more about the lives of the Palestinian refugees before 1948, Rawan and Dima interviewed a large number of Palestinians in UNRWA camps in Jordan, resulting in a publication titled *Atfal Filastin* (Children of Palestine).[32] They then followed up on that publication with a second oral history of refugees' childhood memories of the Nakba itself. The second publication, like the first, is deeply moving in its recitation of events unfolding in the hours and days following the Palestinians' expulsion and subsequent banishment from their homes and villages.[33] These two energetic and highly resourceful Palestinian women were twelve and fourteen years old, respectively, when they conducted their first oral history project, and then fifteen and seventeen when they completed their second publication. As young researchers, they quickly learned both the methods and strategies of oral history research through their oral history work. More importantly, they breathed life into the stark statistics about Palestinian refugees in Palestine and Jordan and uncovered through their interviews the depths of the refugees' painful memories and the degree to which these recitations affected the Damen sisters and their own views of the past.[34]

A third example of oral history practices involving Palestinian youth was a collaboration between the Arab Educational Institute (AEI), a local community institute in Bethlehem, and the Bethlehem St. Joseph's School for Girls (SJSG) during the second Palestinian intifada (2000–05) Coordinated by Toine van Teeffelen from AEI and Susan Atallah, an English teacher at SJSG, the "memory project" resulted in three publications. The first presented diary entries of eleventh-grade girls from SJSG about their memories and reflections on the street protests and battles with Israeli troops in the military occupation of the Bethlehem area, accompanied by a series of essays by teachers, principals, a university student, and the staff of AEI.[35] The second publication was an oral history project by the eleventh-grade girls of SJSG, in which they collected their parents' and grandparents' memories of Palestine's past. One of its objectives was "to document real life experiences and personal stories from the different periods that Palestine was occupied, and compare that life with the present situation (2001–2)" and thus "to preserve our history." The majority of those students involved said that they enjoyed "being part of their grandparents' past."[36] In a sense, the capstone project of SJSG and AEI was the publication of the diaries that eleventh-grade girls at Terra Sancta/SJSG had begun to write from 2000 to 2004 while in Susan Atallah's English classes. The project was created to help the "students gain a feeling

of control and . . . to deal with personal insecurity and traumatic experiences in a constructive way"; to help "create a sense of identity and . . . meaning to an uncertain world"; "to help building community and empower students in searching for shared solutions to their problems," and finally to "encourage students to get a voice and to communicate the Palestinian experience to a broader public."[37] The ultimate success for the three publications came in 2005, when ten of the St. Joseph high school girls were invited to the annual international Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2005 to present a seven-act play, "Our Diaries through the Wall," based on their family oral histories and personal diaries.[38]

Conclusion

For historians who live in an era of global change, it is important for us to see the value of oral and social historiography in our work. It is also critical for us to view oral and social history as part of the new global history whose contributions and contributors worldwide continue to grow. As oral and social historians, our contributions to the Arab, Islamic, and Middle Eastern past within the growing body of local, regional, and global histories is not only pressing but necessary. The voices from the Middle Eastern past and present need to be heard in all their forms. Careful documentation, vigorous research and argumentation, and close association with oral and social history colleagues in the region and beyond can address many of the difficulties of historiography while illuminating the shadows and voicing the silences of the past.

Thomas M. Ricks, a former visiting professor of history at Birzeit University (1983–85), taught Middle East history for thirty-five years at Macalester College, Georgetown University, Villanova University, and the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to authoring numerous academic articles and translating and editing collections of modern Persian prose, belle lettres, and poetry, he is author of Notables, Merchants, and Shaykhs of Southern Iran and Its Ports *(Gorgias Press, 2012) and editor of* Turbulent Times in Palestine: The Diaries of Khalil Totah, 1886–1955 *(Institute for Palestine Studies, 2009). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies' fifth historical studies conference, "Seventy Years since the Palestinian Nakba," held in May 2018 in Doha, Qatar.*

Endnotes

1. See: Rawan al-Damen and Dima al-Damen, *al-Tahjir fi dhakirat al-tafula: shahadat Filastiniyya hayya* [Displacement in childhood memories: Palestinian living testimonies] (Ramallah: National Palestinian Fund for Education, Culture, and the Arts, 1997); Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, "Introduction: Claims of Memory," in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, ed. Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1–22.

2. Author interview, Daoud Jabr, in his home, Nablus Road, Jerusalem, 27 August 1995.

3. See: Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, "Introduction," in *Contested Pasts*, ed. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–6, reprinted in John Tosh, ed., *Historians on History: Readings* (London: Routledge, 2017), 271–77.

4. John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13.

5. See, for example: Staughton Lynd, Sam Bahour and Alice Lynd, eds., *Homeland: Oral Histories of Palestine and Palestinians* (New York: Olive Branch, 1994); John H. Melkon Rose, *Armenians of Jerusalem: Memories of Life in Palestine* (London: Radcliffe, 1993); Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Vintage, 1999); Hala Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I: A Personal Record* (Amman: Economic Press, 1990); Jamil I. Toubbeh, *Days of the Long Night: A Palestinian Refugee Remembers the Nakba* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998). Memoirs and autobiographies have proven to be valuable historical sources for social history in other Middle Eastern societies, too. Leila Ahmed's autobiography places her family's history within the social history of Cairo from the 1940s to the 1970s: Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America: A Woman's Journey* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2000). Sattareh Farman Farmaian's memoir narrates her maturation within one of Iran's elite families in Tehran and the United States from the 1930s to the 1970s: Sattareh Farman Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem through the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Bantam, 1992).

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8. David Rubin, ed., *Remembering Our Past* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 219; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, "Introduction," 5–15.

9. See Rawan al-Damen, dir., "al-Nakba 1948," *al-Jazeera*, 2008.

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12. Zacharie Farwagi, *Dans et aux alentours de Jérusalem pendant le mandate britannique (1922–1948)* (Araya, Lebanon: Imprimerie Catholique, 1994), 25.

13. Author interview, Farid Jouzi, at his home at 7 St. James Road, Old City, Jerusalem, 29 August 1995.

14. Author interview, Mary Saadeh (b. 1920, Musrara), at her home in Bayt Hanina, Jerusalem, 20 August 1993.

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21 Author interview, Hala and Dumia Sakakini, at their home on Nahda Road, Ramallah, 16 July 1994.

22 See Sakakini, Jerusalem and I.

23 Igor Sotchu and Maria Luisa Rusconi, "Why Autobiographical Memories for Traumatic and Emotional Events Might Differ," Journal of Psychology 148, no. 5 (2014): 523–24.

24 See: Sotgiu and Rusconi, "Why Autobiographical Memories"; and John A. Robinson, "Perspective, Meaning, and Remembering," in Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory, ed. David C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 199–217.

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26 Author interview, Tony Bakirjian, at his home near Bab al-Asbat, Jerusalem, 22 June 1994.

27 Author interview, Zuhdi Hashweh, at his Ramallah home, 1 July 1994.

28 Author interview, Farid Jouzi, at his home in the Old City, Jerusalem, 29 August 1995.

29 See, for example, Moshe Zeidner and Eynet Aharoni-David "Memories of Holocaust-related Traumatic Experiences, Sense of Coherence, and Survivors' Subjective Well-bring in Late Life: Some Puzzling Findings," Anxiety, Stress and Coping 28, no. 3 (2015): 254–71; Zhang Lianhong "The Nanjing Massacre and the Traumatic Memory of Nanjing Residents," Chinese Studies in History 50, no. 4 (2017): 258–65; and Ayhan Aktar, "Debating the Armenian Massacre in the Last Ottoman Parliament, November–

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31 Adel Yahya, Ibrahim Mahmoud, and Thomas Ricks, al-Tarikh al-shafawi li-l-intifada [Oral history of the intifada] (Ramallah: Tamer Institute, 1994).

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36 Susan Atallah and Toine van Teeffelen, eds., Your Stories Are My Stories: A Palestinian Oral History Project (Bethlehem: Arab Educational Institute, 2002), 8–9.

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38 The performance was funded by the American Friends Field Service. Susan Atallah stated that "the play was a hit. We did 14 performances instead of [the planned] 12 because of the number of people lining up to attend it. We had full-house attendance during all 14 of them. We were given 3 stars in the Guardian newspaper and 4 stars out of five that is, in the Scotsman newspaper. They were great reviews about the Palestinian teenagers telling their stories. People were stunned by the beauty and elegance of the girls who excelled. I'm very proud of them. They did a wonderful job. We have two performances this month in Bethlehem for the teachers, school students and parents." Email correspondence with author, 10 October 2005.

Archaeology
Past Meets Present

Serge Nègre

Abstract

The École biblique et archéologique française (EBAF) in Jerusalem possesses an abundant collection of several thousand photographs, glass plates of different sizes, glass slides for educational projections, and paper photo prints. This has been enriched with images from other communities and/or collectors in Palestine who entrusted documents to the school for digitization and processing, which were then returned. The owners granted EBAF rights to use the images and receive the digital version. Some original images have been donated to EBAF and are carefully conserved according to Photographic Activity Test standards. Over fifteen years ago, the author began to discover the plentiful collection of glass plate negatives, ranging from small formats up to 20 cm x 30 cm negatives, nineteenth century prints, to glass slides. The subjects are diverse, including images of religious communities and their schools, the friars' journeys through the Near East, and archaeological and even ethnographic research. Working on these photographic collections, the author imagines myself as if with them in the field, spending long hours with the workers who were doing the laborious work of digging, clearing, and searching. In text and photo montage, Serge Nègre shines a light on the anonymous workers responsible for the hard work on the digs.

Keywords

École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jerusalem (EBAF); Dominican friars; archaeology; photographic library; montage; Palestinians; Father Antonin Jaussen.

Figure 1. Father Antonin Jaussen at a well. Photo courtesy of EBAF.

Dominican Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange, the founder of the École biblique et archéologique française (EBAF), conducted excavations between 1885–1892 to uncover and restore the remains of the Byzantine Saint Stephen (Saint-Etienne) Basilica in Jerusalem. Since its creation, the EBAF has been at the forefront of excavations in Palestine, its efforts guided by a desire to know the land and its inhabitants as described in the Bible. Scientific programs and field research disciplines were also initiated by the school.

Father Paul-Marie Séjourné and Lagrange undertook explorations that became a specialty of the school, and were continued by Lagrange, Father Antonin Jaussen, and Raphaël Savignac. Other friars included Roland de Vaux on the site of Qumran, accompanied by the young Hugues Vincent and Félix-Marie Abel. The exploratory trips made with students – the "biblical caravans" – were always the occasion of an archaeological, epigraphic, and photographic harvest carefully reported in *La Revue biblique*.

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then returned. The owners granted EBAF rights to use the images and receive the digital version. Some original images have been donated to EBAF and are carefully conserved according to Photographic Activity Test standards.

Over fifteen years ago, I began to discover the plentiful collection of glass plate negatives, ranging from small formats up to 20 cm x 30 cm negatives, nineteenth century prints, and even glass slides. The subjects are diverse, including images of religious communities and their schools, the friars' journeys through the Near East, and of course archaeological and even ethnographic research.

Figure 2. Father Antonin Jaussen and Raphaël Savignac under the tent. Photo courtesy of EBAF.

EBAF's collection includes its own images, and some images in danger of being lost that were recovered from private collections.

Palestinian Archaeology's Unsung Heroes

In the archaeological images and technical photographs, we note the permanent presence of workers. Bit by bit, I undertook a journey into the past when the passion and study of a few individuals opened up encounters and exchanges with others from different backgrounds.

Archaeology, at its best, seeks out and explains ancient people and societies. For the first archaeologists of the EBAF, it did not exclude improving their knowledge of the inhabitants of the country who were working with them. For this reason, learning Arabic was the first step toward understanding the descendants of these populations.

During meetings in parishes, visits, shared meals in tents, knowledge was exchanged. In addition to the images of archaeological sites and landscapes, the work of Father Antonin Jaussen on Nablus is more ethnography than archaeology, motivated by a genuine desire to know the people, their environment, and their history. He published his research in Paris in 1927, in a book titled *Naplouse et son district*.

For these reasons, I began to use these documents to make montages, that I call *chrono-photo-fusion* to shine a light on the anonymous workers responsible for

the hard work on the digs. Over the years, Palestinians were hired on digs to lift blocks of stone, dig the earth, and haul thousands of tons of rubble that covered many archaeological sites in the country. Looking at those photos for so long, one can start seeing the workers asking themselves, **"**What deep-buried treasure could be so important to come from across the seas for it?" or "What were these foreigners looking for?"

Nonetheless, these foreigners and their digging and hauling jobs were usually welcome, as they brought salaries to the families and therefore a means of survival in an often harsh and difficult existence, in this region scorched by sun.

Figure 3. A sample of the working log, with workers' finger stamps attesting to receiving payments. Photo courtesy of EBAF.

Working on these photographic collections, I imagine myself as if with them in the field, spending long hours with the workers who were doing the laborious work of digging, clearing, and searching. Under the watchful eye of the archaeologist clearing a shard, the men at the bottom of an excavation load and hoist buckets of earth or rubble to the top. Processions of men and women could be seen carrying heavy baskets on their heads with the remnants of their history and those of their ancestors, of whom they knew nothing. These projects provided a temporary source of income for Palestinians, their families, and friends, often from the same neighborhood. The sites also facilitated social exchanges outside of work, so the friars could get to know the workers.

Why Were These Workers Forgotten or Unknown?

From my research of ancient documents on Palestine, and the numerous publications that exist, I am not aware of any images kept by the families of former archaeological workers. There are several reasons for this: first of all, this was more than one hundred years ago, and we know that while taking photographs in the field was possible at the time, developing them was another matter. The photographer's job there was to document the excavations and therefore had to follow closely what was happening in the field. Second, the reproduction or representation of the faces of the workers, men or women, could also pose a problem. The friars were presumably aware of this, and therefore acted with respect and consideration for the workers when photographing and using images. Furthermore, the workers would have never had the opportunity to see the photographs, as they were developed long after they had been taken in the field, when it would have been difficult to return them to the location to show to the workers. This explains the rarity of showing these photographs to the workers on the excavation site, and therefore the workers are "unknown." Most often, these documents have remained in the archives of the different institutions, but there are probably more to discover.

These explorers of the Near East provided well-documented archaeological research, and had an ethnographer's approach, with interest in their fellow human beings.

Likewise, this was my motivation in making these composite photographs.

Serge Nègre is a French photographer and founder of the Photographic Museum Arthur Batut. He is involved in research of nineteenth-century photography in Palestine at the photographic collections of EBAF, using photographs to compose what he calls chrono-photo-fusion. When working as a nurse, he photographed Romani people in France over a thirty-year period. He also participated in polar expeditions for ten years with Dr. Jean-Louis Etienne.
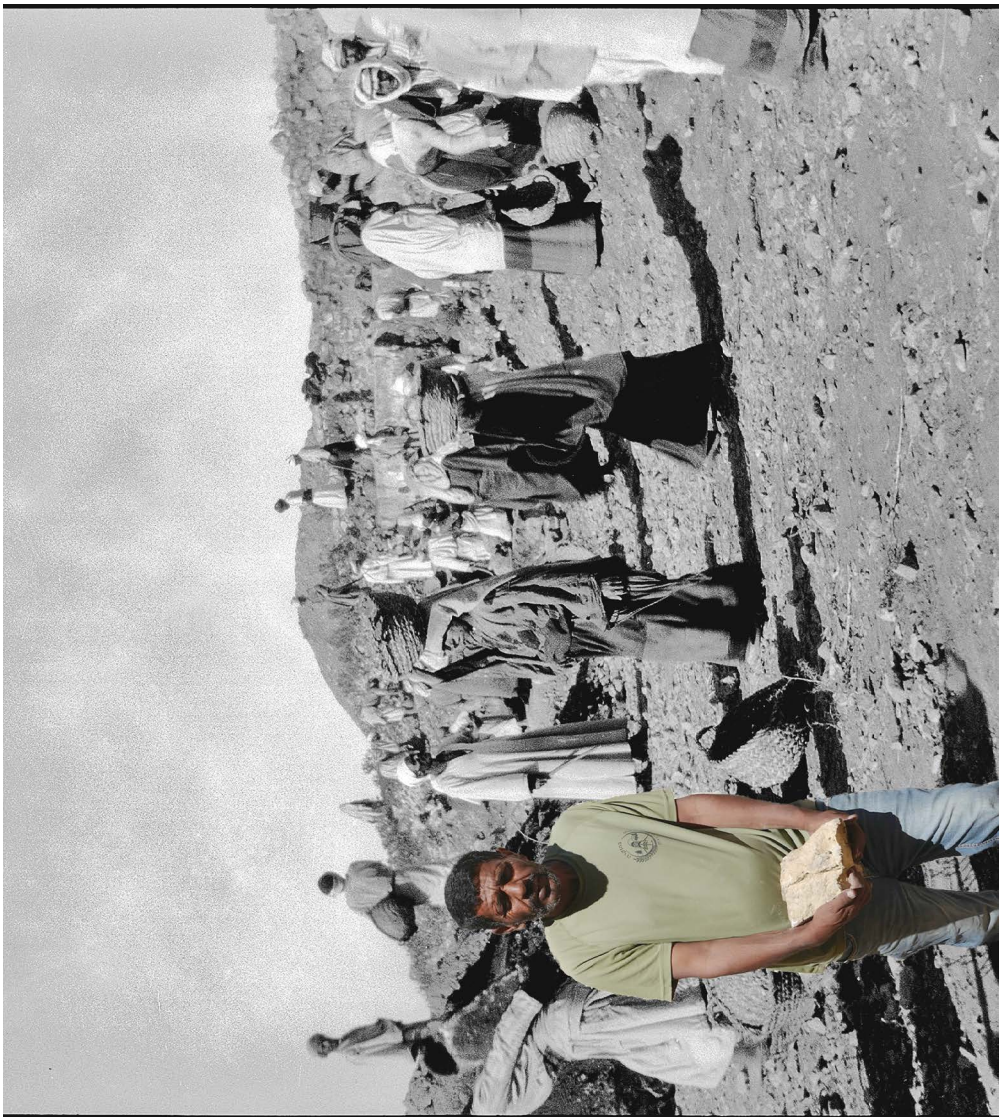
Figure 4. Beth Zur (Khirbat Burj al-Sur) and Jerusalem. Montage by author; photo courtesy of the American Society of Overseas Research.

Figure 5. Tal Bayt Mirsim and Dayr al-Balah. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.

Figure 6. Father Antonin Jaussen visiting Bedouins. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.
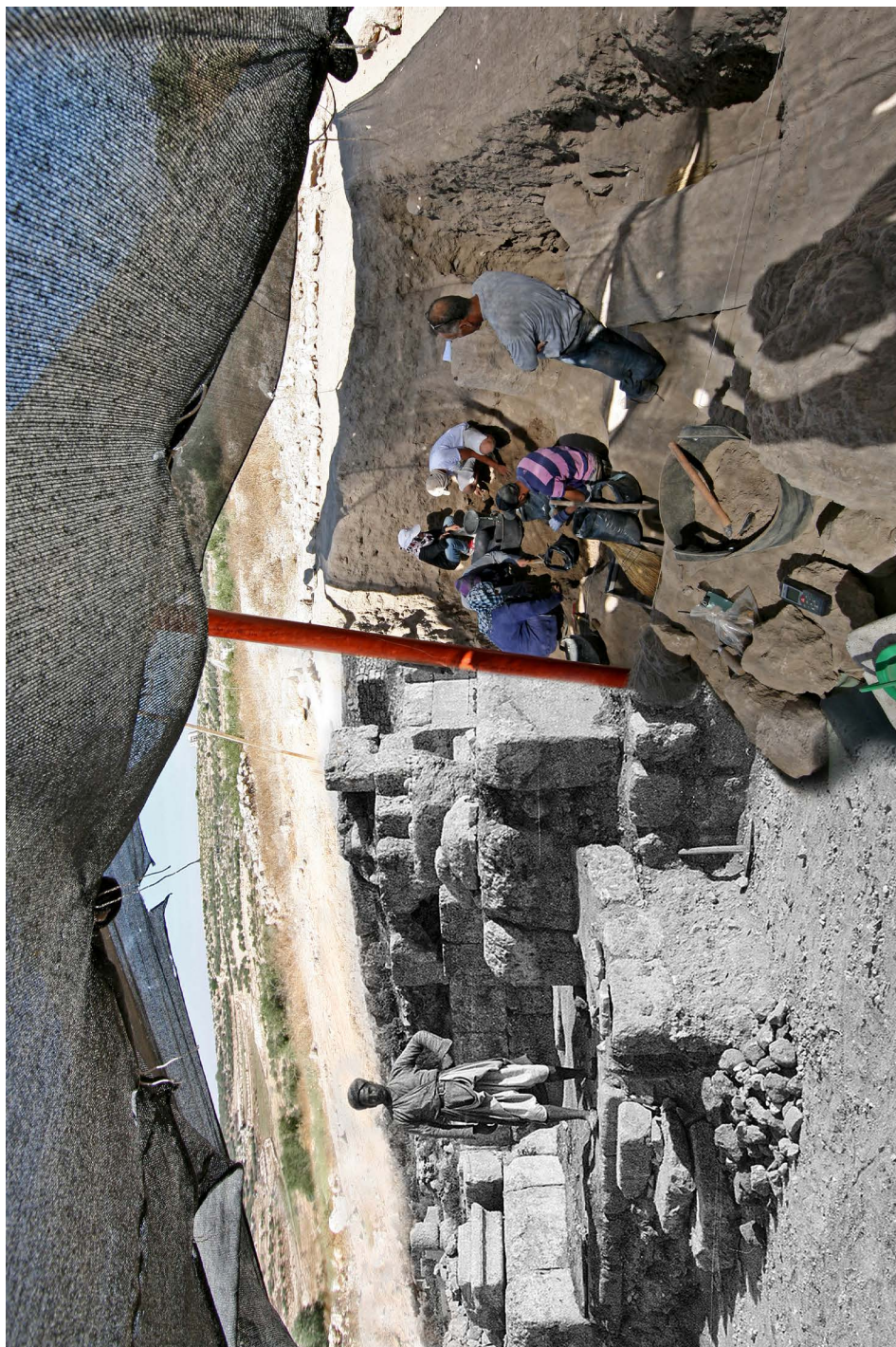
Figure 7. Amwas and Tal Qila. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.

Figure 8. Father Roland de Vaux at Tal al-Farah and Tal Qila. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.

Figure 9. Tal al-Farah, Father Roland de Vaux, on the right, and Gaza, Midan Falistin excavations. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.

Figure 10. Bayt Jimal and children in Gaza at Midan Falistine excavations. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.

Figure 11. Teleilat el-Ghassul (Tulaylat al-Ghassul) Pontifical Biblical Institute excavations and Hebron. Montage by author; photo courtesy of EBAF.

Lost in Jerusalem

The Nabi 'Ukkasha Mosque and Tomb

Penny Johnson
and Raja Shehadeh

Abstract

An exploration of the deserted Nabi 'Ukkasha mosque and tomb in western Jerusalem that only one hundred years ago welcomed worshippers to the shrine of a companion of Prophet Muhammad. The significance of the site, its history, including its desecration in 1929, and its current lack of protection are highlighted. The essay is part of the authors' ongoing book project of lost or forgotten memorials, monuments, and places in historic Palestine.

Keywords

Jerusalem; mosque; shrine; Buraq/ Wailing Wall; religious protection.

At last, we spy a minaret rising over an empty parking lot. We were looking for the Nabi 'Ukkasha mosque, built in late Ottoman times in the nineteenth century on the site of the tomb of Nabi 'Ukkasha. 'Ukkasha bin Muhsin was a companion of Muhammad who came to Jerusalem during the Islamic conquest in the seventh century and is said to have been buried here. In the thirteenth century, the Mamluks, rulers of Jerusalem after Salah al-Din defeated the Crusaders, erected a mausoleum over 'Ukkasha's tomb, indicating it as a shrine (*maqam*) for a holy man or prophet (*nabi*).

On our quest, we had left the familiar streets of eastern Jerusalem over an hour before and had been wandering through the narrow alleys of Mea She'arim, a neighborhood of Haredi and Hasidic Jews in western Jerusalem that still retains a feel of Eastern Europe. It was a sunny Saturday in late winter and

we were partly enjoying the absence of cars and seeing families strolling on Shabbat toward prayer or play until we became unnerved by the signs warning visitors not to enter certain streets. One sign asked visitors not to enter "because it disturbs the residents here." Penny decided to cover her hair with the hood of her coat, but quickly felt uncomfortable in the bright sun and wondered if the wigs the Orthodox women wore had the same effect. She pulled off her hood.

Our sense of crossing a border into a place where we did not belong was then compounded by our inability to find the main artery, Strauss Street, in this part of a still divided city. Was it this way, we wondered, spying a sign that said Strauss – but not noticing immediately that it was to Strauss Square. And who was Strauss anyway?

Figure 1. Nabi 'Ukkasha minaret. Photo by authors, 2022.

Out of place, we hesitated to ask anyone in the vicinity about a mosque and tomb honoring an Islamic holy figure. Like many Palestinian sites in western Jerusalem – whether homes, businesses, or religious sites – the mosque adjacent to the tomb had been abandoned in 1948 when its shaykh, the sole remaining guardian of the mosque, was forced to flee. A busy ultra-Orthodox neighborhood seemed an alien place to find this lonely site. Several years ago, we had stumbled on the shuttered mosque during a long walk, but we were beginning to feel Nabi 'Ukkasha with its melancholy history was now lost forever.

But then, we see an Ottoman domed tower with a characteristic peak – the minaret. It dominates the otherwise undistinguished rectangular mosque building. We walk through the empty parking lot – no one was driving on the Jewish Sabbath – and into a bustling playground. The late afternoon sun was shining through the pines lighting the limestone mosque. The playground, with olive trees on the side, was packed with children. Young boys, all Hassidim, ultra-Orthodox Jews, ran joyfully around. One of the boys on the swing swung so fiercely his shoe flew off. Fathers in heavy coats and broad-brimmed felt hats sat in the sun.

Figure 2. Nabi 'Ukkasha mausoleum. Photo by authors, 2022.

We did not remember the playground from an earlier visit in a cold autumn; perhaps it had been still under construction or was empty. At that time, we had picked our way over the stony ground to the mosque where a guard told us the mosque was closed.

But now there was no guard. In front of the mosque and on the edge of the playground, there was a raised stone grave (but not a mausoleum) protected by iron grating. We think, perhaps this is a grave of one of the officers in Salah al-Din's army who were buried in the mosque compound;

Figure 3. Nabi 'Ukkasha mausoleum in August 1929. Photo courtesy of Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

without a marker, his name is erased from history. But where is Nabi 'Ukkasha's tomb?

We walk around the mosque, on the eastern edge of the playground, trying to find a way to look inside. The mosque has high walls, but otherwise is not particularly impressive in a city that boasts the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. All of the windows are completely blocked by metal; one charred wall shows evidence of fire. We almost felt we should be thankful to find the graceful minaret still standing. A boy had clambered up one of the mosque's walls to the roof and stood glorying in his achievement.

But the worn building itself seemed steeped in the desolation of desertion and its own highly troubled history. In 1929, during the Buraq/Wailing Wall clashes, a Jewish mob – perhaps more aptly called raging vandals than directed militants – attacked and partially destroyed it, desecrating sacred books, stripping a silver nameplate inscribed "'Ukkasha" that had been made in Istanbul, and stealing a sum of money and a store of cheese from the home of the mosque's imam, as he detailed a week later in an appeal to Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the head of the Supreme Muslim Council. He asked the council to help rebuild the tomb and to provide four or five rooms for Muslim pilgrims. He also appealed for them to build a wall to protect him and his family.

Figure 4. Nabi 'Ukkasha mausoleum in August 1929. Photo courtesy of Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

When the imam wrote his appeal in 1929, he and his family were the only Arabs left in what at the turn of the century had been a mixed Jewish-Arab neighborhood. Substantial numbers of Jewish immigrants began moving in during the first decades of the twentieth century, particularly the Orthodox, due to the fact that the hill on which the mosque compound stands is associated in Jewish religious tradition with Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob and Rachel. The shaykh must have sought the security of a spiritual community by requesting rooms for visitors, as well as consolidation of his physical location.

We wander back behind the mosque and investigate another iron grating on a concrete hut. The lone window is shuttered, and we wonder if the squat building might contain the grave. Perhaps whoever is in charge from the municipality or the government had covered the grave in gray cement to prevent its desecration – after all,

religious right-wing Israelis last attacked the mosque in winter 2011. The graffiti echo what are all too familiar from current settler attacks on mosques in the West Bank: "Muhammad is dead." "Muhammad is a pig." "The only good Arab is a dead Arab." Here, the desecration has another older echo as if the events of 1929 had come alive again. History indeed haunts this compound.

Figures 5 and 6. Damages during the riots of August 1929. Photos courtesy of Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

But surely Nabi 'Ukkasha could not also have been swept out of history, we say out loud, as we leave the playing children for more familiar territory in eastern Jerusalem. It is only later, when we look at photographs, that we discover a domed turbeh – the mausoleum! One of the photos of the turbeh or tomb (Arabic, *turba*; Turkish, *türbe*) is fairly recent. Could we have missed this impressive structure or had the domed building vanished like so much else?

Humbled, we return several weeks later. Perhaps on our earlier visit we were dazed by the twists of history, known and forgotten, by our many detours, or even by the rising playground noise. We did not turn around and walk through the playground to what should have been obvious to us – a domed structure opposite the mosque, an impressive turbeh, the oldest and most important building on the site – the mausoleum of Nabi 'Ukkasha. Indeed, a lesson in what can be missed when one looks away – whether at physical structures or historical events.

We learned that the domed building might also contain the grave of Husam al-Din al-Qaymari, a commanding officer in Salah al-Din's army, and perhaps someone else from his family. Indeed, the mausoleum is sometimes named al-Qubba al-Qaymariyya. But whether Nabi 'Ukkasha lies there is, like for many of the maqams around Palestine, a belief, rather than a certainty. In this ancient land, there are multiple sites claiming to be the burial places of holy figures, prophets, saints, and sinners. Indeed the pioneering Mandate-era ethnographer and physician Dr. Taufiq Canaan wrote that a number of holy figures that are worshipped in maqams in Palestine were buried elsewhere. And he suspected Nabi 'Ukkasha did not die in Jerusalem, but that, "it is said" (a very useful phrase) that the ghostly nabi appeared to a person praying at the

spot and ordered him to construct a maqam. Over time, claims were made at various times that Moses, Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad were buried in the (crowded!) Nabi 'Ukkasha compound, leading a British high commissioner to name a nearby avenue the Street of the Prophets (share' al-anbiya'). That is still the street name, evoking a more companionate version of the three monotheistic religions, although the worshippers at the Nabi 'Ukkasha are lost to memory.

After arriving at the tomb, we hesitated before approaching the door. An elderly ultra-Orthodox rabbi and his attendant were peering at two notices in Hebrew. We wait for them to leave and walk around the tomb. In the back, a large depression is filled with years of garbage. Two kippa-wearing boys have climbed over the wire fence and are happily crushing cans with their feet, enjoying the pop and crackle of metal. Desecration of a holy site, boys' pleasure? We cannot really say.

When the rabbi and his companion drive off in a cheery golf-cart, we return to the main door, with its large lock, notices in Hebrew, and two faded inscriptions carved in stone on the walls beside the large iron door. One in Arabic reads: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger. This is the shrine of our master 'Ukkasha, the companion of the Messenger of Allah."

At home, Google translate produces completely incomprehensible texts from the two Hebrew-language paper notices pasted on the tomb's door. We turned to an Orthodox friend for assistance. He did his best to help us understand but, as he explained, it is not easy to comprehend these texts without all the associations, biblical and legendary – and indeed he was right. Both texts concern Benjamin, Rachel and Jacob's youngest son, whose tribe is associated with Jerusalem. The eldest son of Jacob, by the way, was Reuven or Rubin, whose putative tomb near Jaffa was a site of one of the largest annual Muslim festivals until 1948, drawing Christian and Jewish revelers as well. Prophets feted rather than desecrated, a memory to hold on to.

At home we scrutinize our friend's valiant efforts to translate and explain the Hebrew flyers. The first offers a plea to the Almighty to enable the devotee to love everyone as Benjamin did and concludes by asking: "I and all my friends and the whole house of Israel will be privileged to see the coming of our righteous Messiah and the building of the Temple, may it be soon in our days, quickly as the blinking of an eye." The second is mainly a collection of sources showing the greatness of Benjamin.

But what to make of these flimsy Hebrew flyers stuck on

Figure 7. Hebrew language flyer affixed to the tomb's door. Photo by authors, 2022.

an Islamic holy site? Building the temple sounds a trigger warning for Palestinians, given campaigns by extremist Jews to destroy al-Aqsa and erect the Temple on that compound – and the "blinking of an eye" is not reassuring. But our Orthodox friend is of the opinion that "the text was not written by a nationalist temple fanatic," but reflects the traditional Orthodox view that "it is for God to rebuild the Temple." Still, the site itself brings worry. It is on the "hill" of the mosque and tomb where Orthodox Jews believe Benjamin will prepare the ground for the coming of the Messiah. Troubled ground indeed.

Like the boys crushing cans on ground that once was holy, the flyers could have simply been pasted on a convenient surface as religious messages for all those observant Jews strolling in the playground. But the recent attacks on the mosque and tomb – whether in 1929 or 2011 – give no comfort. A few weeks later, travelling north, we visit the Mazor Mausoleum National Park by the side of a bustling highway where a *maqam* stands amid older Roman-era ruins. The Israeli Nature and Parks Authority has erected a sign in English, Arabic, and Hebrew that explains "The building became a holy place for Muslims, known as Makam [sic] Nebi Yihiya and remained intact due to its sanctity." Someone has crossed out the word "sanctity" in all three languages.

In 2004, Adalah, the Legal Center for Minority Rights in Israel, petitioned the Israeli High Court, on behalf of Islamic religious leaders, to issue an order to compel the relevant Israeli authorities to enact regulations for the protection of Muslim holy sites in Israel, as had already been regulated by law for approximately 135 Jewish holy sites. The petition was rejected in March 2009 after five years of litigation with the court ruling that the designation of Muslim holy sites was a "sensitive issue."

It is hard not to worry that, without any protection, Nabi 'Ukkasha may yet witness another siege.

Penny Johnson, a writer and researcher based in Ramallah, is a member of the JQ *editorial committee. Her most recent book is* Companions in Conflict: Animals in Occupied Palestine *(Melville House Publishing, 2019).*

Raja Shehadeh is a lawyer and author based in Ramallah. His latest book is We Could Have Been Friends, My Father and I *(Profile Books, 2022). This essay is from the authors' ongoing book project exploring lost memorials, monuments, and places in historic Palestine.*

Upheaval of the Latin Catholic Community in Palestine (1946–1949)

Attempts of Reorganization and Consolidation in Jordan and Israel (1950–1956)

Review of: *A Liminal Church: Refugees, Conversions and the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem, 1946-1956*, by Maria Chiara Rioli. Leiden, Brill, 2020 (*Open Jerusalem* 2). Xiv+387 pp. $204 (hardback), ISBN 978-90-04-42372-5; $155 (e-book), 978-90-04-42371-8.

Reviewed by Paolo Pieraccini
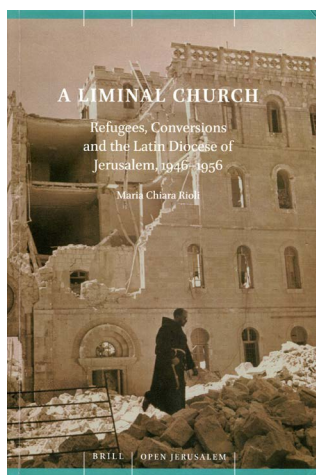
Abstract

A Liminal Church by Maria Chiara Rioli brings significant new historical information to the history of contemporary Palestine. Her central themes are the disruptions suffered by the Latin patriarchal diocese in Jerusalem following the war of 1948–49 and the efforts to reorganize this Church in Israel and Jordan. The chapters dedicated to the period 1946–1949 deal with the position of the Christian churches on partitioning Palestine, Catholic fears about the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arab reaction, Israel's occupation of Catholic properties, and accusations of Israeli desecration of Christian symbols. Of particular interest is the examination of the internal upheaval within the Latin patriarchal diocese of Jerusalem following the exodus of Palestine's Arab population as a result of Israeli military operations and forced expulsion. From 1950 to 1956, the Palestinian Latin Church faced a number of Israeli and Jordanian laws limiting the activities of the Christian communities. The author focuses as well on the symbolic phenomenon of a number of Jews married to Christians that began the controversial process of conversion to Christianity. The book also addresses Catholic anti-communism in Israel and Jordan and the attempts of the Latin and Greek Melkite churches to fight it.

Keywords

Israel; Jordan; Palestine: Holy See; Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; Custody of Holy Land; Palestinian Refugees; Zionism; Communism; Judeo-Christians in Israel.

Maria Chiara Rioli's exceptional book *A Liminal Church: Refugees, Conversions and the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem, 1946–1956* falls under the categories of Church history and Catholic studies, but it goes far beyond these, offering crucial insights on the history of Palestine in the mid-twentieth century. The book's two central themes are the upheavals suffered by the Latin patriarchal diocese of Jerusalem following the Palestine war of 1947–49 and the efforts to reorganize this Church – small but influential locally, with a global reach – while both Israel and Jordan sought to consolidate their own status in Jerusalem and beyond. Rioli's volume eschews Orientalist and Eurocentric approaches that still permeate various areas of Church history and Catholic studies, offering a narrative devoid of stereotypes and "common knowledge." The Latin Patriarchate lends itself to such a study: it is a local church of Latin rite directly subordinate to the Holy See and, at the same time, a global diocese made up of Arab and foreign clergy, Arab faithful, and a small group of Catholics of Jewish origin. This cultural multiformity, Rioli notes, requires a polyphonic historical reconstruction that accounts for differences and political divisions without neglecting the general trends that characterize Christian life in Palestine, Israel, and Jordan.

Rioli's research examines several neglected aspects of Palestinian history. The chapters dedicated to the period between 1946 and 1949 deal with the position of the Christian churches on partitioning Palestine, Catholic fears about the establishment of the State of Israel and the inevitable Arab reaction, Israel's occupation of many Catholic properties, and accusations of desecration of Christian symbols levelled at the Israeli army (and, by contrast, the churches' appreciation of the behavior of Arab troops). Of particular interest is Rioli's examination of the internal upheaval within the Latin patriarchal diocese of Jerusalem following the exodus of Palestine's Arab population as a result of Israeli military operations and forced expulsion. Many parishes located in what had become Israeli territory drastically downsized, and a number closed, while the number of parishioners within the kingdom of Jordan grew exponentially. Jaffa, Haifa, Qana, Lydda, Mujaydal, Tiberias, and Bisan were emptied of parishioners, while the Franciscan parish of Nazareth grew with the arrival of a large number of refugees. Parishes located in territories that fell under Jordanian control, like Ramallah, Bayt Jala and 'Abbud, and the Franciscan parishes of Jerusalem and Bethlehem also witnessed a rapid increase in their numbers. Beyond the Jordan, the increase was even greater; to cope with the influx of refugees, the Latin Patriarchate opened three new parishes, in Zarqa', Irbid, and Amman, with the latter numbering about seven thousand people – the largest in the diocese, surpassing even Bethlehem and Jerusalem, which had for centuries been the most significant. Meanwhile, the Patriarchal See sat vacant from 1947 to 1949, as the Holy See debated whether to create a single Catholic diocese, uniting the Latin Patriarchal See with the multiple Melkite ecclesiastical districts of Palestine and Jordan. The former Custos of the Holy Land, Alberto Gori, was called to manage this delicate situation, which involved a relatively small number of Catholics but was perceived as a tragedy for the land and its people.

From 1950 to 1956, the Palestinian Latin Church faced, among other complicating factors, a number of Israeli and Jordanian laws limiting the activities of the Christian communities, especially in the sensitive areas of education, welfare, and, in the case

of Israel, marriage (in Israel mixed marriages are not recognized, though they can be registered by the Interior Ministry if contracted abroad). Each state, for different reasons, saw Christians as a threat to its character. In this context, Rioli focuses on a quantitatively insignificant, but symbolically potent phenomenon: a number of Jewish individuals married to Christians living in Israel and Jordan began the controversial process of conversion to Christianity. Initially, the church hierarchies – including the Custos of the Hoy Land, Giancinto Faccio – showed little interest in these new followers. Shown scant interest by the Patriarchate and the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, a few priests who had come to Israel in the late 1940s and had provided some covert pastoral care to converts decided to act independently. By the early 1950s, the Church hierarchy became aware of this clandestine pastoral work, and Cardinal Eugène Tisserant, Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Church, pushed the Latin Patriarchate to act, beginning the long and tortured process of recognizing and providing for Jewish converts. The church worked to establish private spaces (*foyers*) in which converts could gather and practice their faith. In the mid-1950s, the Association of Saint James the Apostle – named after the first bishop of Jerusalem to link the newly formed group to the early Judeo-Christian community – was established "to organize and coordinate the various apostolate and assistance activities in favor of families already Christian or converted from Judaism in Israel." Almost nothing has been written about the Association of Saint James and Jewish converts, as these have drawn negative attention and at times threats of physical violence. Rioli's excellent discussion of this group expertly navigates the controversies that may have prevented other scholars from writing about them.

A Liminal Church also addresses Catholic anti-communism in Israel and Jordan and the anti-Communist meaning naively attributed by the Franciscan Custody to the construction of the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Despite their differences, the Church approached communism in Palestine and Israel as the same as communism in Europe (perhaps because Church leaders were from Italy, where the Communist Party was the second largest political force). Communism found traction among Palestinians in the Galilee, particularly in Nazareth, where the arrival of large numbers of refugees combined with strict military rule negatively affected living conditions. Communist-dominated trade unions controlled access to the few job opportunities available to Palestinians in the Galilee, and the party also presented the only non-Zionist political faction tolerated by the Israeli state. Communism's spread among the Palestinian population combined with the association of Zionism and Bolshevism, exacerbated by the expansion of the collectivist kibbutz model, spurred fears of an alliance between Jewish and Arab communists – many of them Christians, including local leaders.

Given the dearth of publications dedicated to the Catholic Church in Palestine covering this period, Rioli's work will certainly be scrutinized by political and Church leaders, as well as scholars. She is careful not to make any accusation or allege collaboration between Arabs and Jews, but her findings suggest the need to look more carefully into the intellectual history of this period and its practical repercussions. Already in 1948, Antonio Vergani, the Latin patriarchal vicar in the Galilee, put forward practical proposals to remove the faithful from the influence of organizations linked to the Israeli Communist Party. Together with the Melkite archbishop Georges Hakim, Vergani promoted a

Catholic trade union (*al-Rabita*) that, officially recognized by the Israeli state, affiliated in 1951 with the Histradrut, the most important Israeli trade union. Rioli suggests that the Church co-opted those who supported socialist ideas by offering a space to promote their demands, following a similar path to that taken in post-war Italy.

The final chapter is dedicated to 1956: during this year, news spread of a possible abolition of the Latin Patriarchate in favor of a single Eastern Catholic diocese; rumors played on dissensions and traditional rivalries between Latins and Melkites and to a certain extent represented the reality of an uneasy coexistence. Nasserism's influence accentuated claims about the election of ecclesiastical hierarchies of Arab origin and the participation of the laity in the financial administration of the Patriarchate. In response, priests met with the highest political leaders of Israel and negotiated the recognition of Christians of Jewish origin in the Israeli state – a group now viewed with a certain favor, due in no small part to these converts' Zionism, which contrasts starkly with the pro-Arab positions of most of the diocese clergy and faithful. This led to some improvement in relations between the state and the Latin Vicariate of Galilee and to a gradual reconsideration of Israel by the Holy See in the last years of Pius XII, foreshadowing the transformation in Jewish–Catholic relations launched by John XXIII (1958–1963). For the Latin Church of the Holy Land, therefore, 1956 heralded a number of significant phenomena that the Second Vatican Council, the 1967 war, and subsequent events would bring fully to light.

Overall, Maria Chiara Rioli approaches her subject with clear language, effective presentation, and extensive archival research. Rioli conducted research in more than forty different archives: first and foremost, she draws on the precious and almost underexplored archive of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but she also makes use of private, diocesan, municipal, Zionist, and diplomatic archives, as well as the records of various international and ecclesiastical organizations. Rioli also uses the Vatican archives and those of various Catholic congregations in the Holy Land, examined at the General Curia in Rome and locally in Jerusalem; these latter archives are sometimes difficult to access and poorly inventoried (when not completely lacking in research aids). *A Liminal Church* also presents for the first time material from the archives of the pontificate of Pius XII (1939–58), newly released in March 2020. The book's use of images is also rich, including a letter from the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem to Pope Pius XII via Georges Hakim, and a number of photographs from the 1947–49 war, concerning the relief work for refugees, and documenting important Christian religious, educational, and welfare institutions. In sum, *A Liminal Church* constitutes a reference to understand this important period in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Palestine, Israel, and Jordan. Yet is also succeeds in combining "local" and "global" history, placing the events of the Latin diocese of Jerusalem within the international history of years of crucial importance for the Middle East.

Paolo Pieraccini holds a PhD in the history of international relations (University of Florence) and in law (University of Paris XI). He has authored several books on the policy of the Great Powers and the Holy See towards Palestine, on Palestinian Catholicism, and on political, diplomatic, juridical, archaeological, and religious aspects of the question of Jerusalem.

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