PALESTINIANS; FROM VILLAGE PEASANTS TO CAMP REFUGEES:

ANALOGIES AND

DISPARITIES IN THE SOCIAL USE OF SPACE

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who made this research a reality. Special appreciation goes to my advisor, Dennis Doxtater, who generously showed endless support and guidance. Many thanks go also to my committee members: Professor Anne Betteridge and Professor Corky Poster. Finally, I fail to express my gratitude to my professor and mentor, Laura Hollengreen, whose advice has been invaluable during my two years of study at the School of Architecture-University of Arizona.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, who have been making generous sacrifices for a better life of us, to my brother and sisters who are always there in times of crisis and happiness, and to the millions of Palestinian refugees waiting for their return.

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GLOSSARY

Dars. Religious lesson.

DPA. Department of Palestinian Affairs in Jordan which is sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Dunum. Measurement indicating land area and roughly equals 900 square meters.

Hadith. A tradition handed down orally through a reliable line of sources relating a saying or deed of the Prophet Mohammad for the guidance of Muslims.

Hamula. Descendant group related to a common ancestor.

Hara. Living quarter.

Iftar. Breaking the fast.

Khutba. Islamic sermon.

Kuttab. An elementary school attached to a mosque or located in it where students get their Islamic education.

Mahram. Group of men who are unlawful for a woman to marry due to marital or blood relations.

Mash'a. Ancient form of collective tenure through which land held by village families was equally distributed and rights of grazing, wood, and water were organized communally.

Mihrab. Niche in the mosque indicating the direction towards Mecca.

Mufti. Governor.

Mulk. Privately owned land.

Nahiya. Sub-district consisting of a number of villages with a chief one called the throne village.

Minbar. Pulpit in the mosque.

Sanjaq. Administrative district within a province.

Shari'a. The body of Islamic law.

Shaykh. An elder. Also used for sub-district chiefs, clan leaders, or village heads.

Sijill. Ottoman record.

Sufi. Muslim mystic.

Tabun. Traditional oven.

Tanzimat. Ottoman reforms legislated in the second half of the 19th century.

UNRWA. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Waqf. Religious endowment, either charitable or for the benefit of the family and descendants of the endower.

Wely. Saint.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS*

* All photos were taken by researcher

ABSTRACT

This study compares the social use of space in the Palestinian village around the beginning of the 20th century to that in the Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan around the beginning of the 21st century. It examines the transformation from small-scale egalitarian social practices in the village of Deir Ghassanah to external discourses controlled by large-scale institutional powers in al-Baq'a Refugee Camp. It analyzes the ways through which refugees have been able to reinvent their village life after being forcefully relocated in spaces that may not respond to their ritual practices and integrative social system but created by external institutions. Transformations in leadership structure, ownership patterns, and religiosity in both cases will be traced to establish a dialectical framework between the symbolic interpretation and social use of the two spaces.

INTRODUCTION

In her movie, *Frontiers of Dreams and Fears (Ahlam al-Manfa)*, the Palestinian filmmaker Mai Masri portrays the life of Manar. Manar is a Palestinian teenager from the West Bank refugee camp of Dheisha. After many years of waiting, Manar got the chance to visit her home village of Ras Abu Ammar near Jerusalem with her grandfather, whose house is the only one partially standing in the destroyed village[1]. The village is not there anymore, neither are the people. Yet the camp and the village are twins intertwined by people and their narratives.

The guiding metaphor of this research comes from the idea of twins in its relation to maintaining a practice or creating a discourse. The metaphor seeks to aid in the analysis of two different life experiences in two different places at two different times. The first is that of the Palestinian village around the beginning of the 20th century, and the second is that of the Palestinian refugee camp around the beginning of the 21st century. The connection between the two cases is the assemblage of the subjects themselves: the Palestinians who turned from peasants in 418 villages in Palestine to refugees in 59 camps in the Middle East.

The analysis examines the transformation from local practice in the village to a rhetorical discourse in the camp. It focuses on issues of spatial autonomy, leadership structure, and religiosity in both cases. It examines the reflection of the small-scale egalitarian social groups or large-scale political powers on spatial settings and social interactions. This is not to evaluate the built environment aesthetically or functionally, but to look at the symbolic interpretation of space and its effect on social relations.

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[1] *Frontiers of Dreams and Fears*, prod. and dir. Mai Masri, 57 min., ITVS, 2001, videocassette.

It is the change from pre-exile village life to post-exile camp life: rural-urban, egalitarian-hierarchical, stable-temporary, that will be questioned. This framework might be contextualized within the drastic transformation in space and its reflection on social patterns. This research revitalizes village narratives in an attempt to show continuities, or discontinuities, between people's past and their present.

Have peasants/refugees after being forcefully relocated in spaces created by external rhetorical institutions — without respecting their ritual practices and integrative social system — been able to reinvent their village life? This study highlights a few practices that may have vanished due to many factors including the absence of village space and the hegemony of external institutions. However, the study highlights a few other practices that may have been maintained despite the drastic spatial changes.

Are the indirect and domestic remnants of village practices maintained due to the incapability of the external institutions to exhibit absolute control over the refugees? Are these practices individual, hesitant, or tactful? How would these practices differ if the external powers were absent? Could these practices be portrayed as distinctive from the territorial control created by the United Nations and the Jordanian government in order to keep discipline in the camps? Could these practices be differentiated from the whole non-spatial discourse created by the Palestinian Diaspora as a way of maintaining collective memory? Can social practices, being created in certain spatial settings, be accommodated in different settings as social groups are maintained?

Answers for such questions will help understanding whether space did play a role in recreating peasant social practices and if it did help in creating a discourse in the camp

through becoming a metaphor or an object of memory defined by external hierarchical Jordanian, Palestinian, Islamic, or international powers.

By the turn of the19th century, Palestinian villages enjoyed relative social stability and autonomy. The Palestinian village was an integrative and cooperative social unit that lacked class-consciousness and external hierarchical authority. It was a fragile relation that connected the village to the Ottoman Empire. Landownership was dominantly communal and the village head was frequently elected. Moreover, it was not Orthodox Islam that dictated village life but a set of popular and egalitarian shrine practices.

All these circumstances had created sets of symbolic spaces maintained by local practices. The first one was gender division. While men had the fields, mosque, guesthouse, and plaza as their domain, women had the springs, shrines, and dwellings as theirs. The second symbolic space was kinship. Dwellings, fields, cemetery, and olive press were divided by kinship lines where each kin group symbolically opposed the others. The third symbolic space was the village as a one unit separated from other Palestinian villages. Each village enjoyed a substantial level of autonomy. Village communal spaces enhanced the peasants' sense of belonging to their own village and placed them in opposition to other settlers in Palestine. Yet, pilgrimage to regional shrines in Palestine united those villagers with other Palestinians while pilgrimage to Mecca united all the Muslim Palestinians with the Muslim community all over the world.

By moving to the refugee camps, peasants have witnessed drastic transformations from the small-scale rural and independent community to a large-scale, semi-urban, and dependent one. Simple territoriality might have replaced spatial stability. The cooperatively built stone houses were replaced by small universal cement structures.

Hierarchical authority was imposed on refugee life as the United Nations and Jordanian government buildings replaced the guesthouse, and schools and mosques replaced village shrines. Times and spaces of festivity shrank or diminished and hegemony of external modern institutions increasingly influenced space. Spatial boundaries were manipulated by discipline and order imposed on the whole body of refugees as distinct from the Jordanian civil society.

Yet, by tracing those new territories the research examines the extent to which the village socio-spatial schemes or the national Palestinian belonging has been constructed or reconstructed in the camps. Also, the study examines ways through which space acquires its symbolic value through a local power like an egalitarian society or through an external power like a hierarchical institution. This study offers answers in many cases, yet it poses questions in many others. Those questions shall be considered as a set of hypotheses for future research that relies on more extensive fieldwork.

CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCHING THROUGH A DISCOURSE

While Palestinian villages by the late 19th century show integrative social groups maintained by local practices, the discourse that was created to commemorate these villages seems to be a discursive one fashioned by large-scale, non-spatial media, including the space itself as an object of memory. This discourse has been serving as a mental space for Palestinians in exile who have been trying to use the art of memory to preserve their national identity.

This art of memory is a collective one especially in times of crisis and threat. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in his book *Les Cadres Sociaux de le Memoire* portrays the significance of communal remembrance through belonging to a certain social group[2]. This collective memory is not a passive one, but an active field in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political or social meaning.[3]

Selectivity makes the issue of memory problematic. Usually, it is not the small-scale and local powers that shape this memory, but it is the large-scale hegemonic ones that use the invention and reinvention of tradition as a rhetorical force to tie members of society together under one umbrella. This complex perspective towards memory applies to a great extent to Palestinian villagers who were driven out of their homes after the creation

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[2] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 44-49, 77-78, quoted in Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), xi.

[3] Edward Said, "Palestine: Memory, Invention and Space," in *The Landscapes of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry,* eds. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Roger Heacock, and Khaled Nashef (Birzeit: Birzeit University Publications, 1999), 13.

of the State of Israel in 1948[4]. Between 1948 and 1967 Palestinians in exile did not exist

as administrative and political entities. Crystallization of such entities had never taken

place in Jordan after 1970, but it did in Lebanon until the Israeli invasion of Beirut in

1982[5]. Being fragmented in space, what bound all Palestinian refugees together were the

socio-historical traditions that drove them to reinvent memory collectively. Those

Palestinians, as part of the whole Palestinian nationalism, have been trying to create a

mental space, a metaphor, or a discourse that would guarantee their *cultural survival* in

front of the spatial domination by their conqueror.[6]

According to Foucault, a discourse is a body of thought and writing that is united by

having a common object of study, a common methodology, and/or a set of common terms

and ideas[7]. The one goal that united all Palestinians is their striving for *cultural survival*

in front of the threat of cultural and human genocide. The Palestinian discourse has been

varied and has included literature, visual arts, and material culture.[8]

This discourse has a strong spatial reference, which is the home that all Palestinian

refugees belonged to and which they all lost. This concept has been discussed by Julie

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[4] Yet Palestinians were not the first to produce memorial books. Other groups that faced a threat in their survival have done so. Those include Armenian survivors from the 1915-1920 genocide took place by the Ottoman Empire, the Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s genocide by the Serbian forces, and European Jewish survivors of the holocaust. The latest is of a special significance to the Palestinian cause. This is because the holocaust victims have been intertwined with another tragedy they created for the Palestinians. One difference between the two tragedies is that while the Jewish tragedy has been passed and those who were victimized have almost come part of a living history, Palestinian tragedy is continuous and its victims are still alive waiting for a final destination. Cited in Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 2.
[5] Edward Said, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Janet Abu-Lughod, Muhammad Hallaj, and Elia Zureik, "A Profile of the Palestinian People," in *Blaming the Victims,* eds. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London and New York: Verso, 2001), 247.
[6] Ted Swedenburg, "Occupational Hazards: Palestine Ethnography," *in Cultural Anthropology* 4, no. 3. (1989): 265-272.
[7] Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. pp. 124-127.
[8] Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), XII.

Peteet who concludes that the home village in the Palestinian consciousness ties a person to the space of Palestine.[9]

Complexity of memory is more prevalent when it is related to geography. Edward Said, in his introduction to *The Landscapes of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry* submits that over the past decade, there has been a burgeoning interest in two areas. These are memory and geography, or more to what he refers specifically as the study of '*human space*'[10]. Memory and geography are spots of competition that both the conquerors and the conquered struggle to invent: the former as a means of domination and the latter as a means of survival.

Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani, who had to flee from Acre to Lebanon, raises questions about the relationship of tragically losing space to that of losing one's social group in his novel *Returning to Haifa* ('*¯A'id ilá Hayf¯a***)** (1970). In this novel Kanafani portrays the spatial and cultural threats that Palestinians have been facing due to the Israeli domination. A Palestinian family who had to flee home in 1948, leaving their little child within, had the chance to go back to see their home after 1967. The parents realized that not only is the home no longer theirs, but the child is no longer theirs as well. Their Palestinian son called Khaldun has turned into an Israeli soldier called Dov.[11]

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[9] Julie Peteet, "Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment Among Palestinian Refugees," in *Mistrusting Refugees*, eds. E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 170.

[10] Edward Said, "Palestine: Memory, Invention and Space," in *The Landscapes of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry,* eds. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Roger Heacock, and Khaled Nashef (Birzeit: Birzeit University Publications, 1999), 13.

[11] Muhammad Siddiq, "On Ropes of Memory: Narrating the Palestinian Refugees," in *Mistrusting Refugees,* eds. E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), __ , Ghassan Kanafani**,** *¯A'id ilá Hayf¯a* (Returning to Jaffa) (Beirut: D¯ar al-'Awdah,1970).

Palestinian artist Ismael Shammout, who had to leave his home village of Acre in 1948, portrayed three spatial experiences in his works; that of the lost village, exhausting journey of exile, and unsettled camps in Lebanon.

Palestinian memorial books of art, despite their great significance in uniting the Palestinians in Diaspora, do not provide a subjective documentation for life before exile. In these books, space has been turned into an object and a metaphor that is invested to revitalize a past life. Like other memorial books, Palestinian memorial books of art are highly selective and subjective in their narration and they lack the sensitive spatial analysis that architects rely on when analyzing space.

Another type of memorial book related to scholarship and research of documentation. Many works have been dedicated to the destroyed villages in an attempt to revitalize them. The problem with these works is that those villages are destructed, while the rest are either inaccessible or have been transformed into destinations for tourists. In the latter, culture has been transformed into a commodity for sale to tourists without respect for the original use of space. Old mosques have been transformed into bars and restaurants for the sake of attracting more tourists to what is considered as a human heritage.[12]

These memorial books generally were created by Palestinian and sometimes by Israeli scholars who tried to document the depopulated and destroyed Arab villages. The first of those scholars was historian Arif al_Arif in his *Catastrophe (Al-Nakba)* (1956-1960). Next came *Our Homeland, Palestine (Biladuna Filastin)* (1972-1986) by the historian Mustafa al-Dabbagh. This eleven-volume book included geographical,

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[12] Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 135.

historical, and cultural data for each region in Palestine, including profiles of villages both destroyed and existing. In 1984 geographer Basheer Nijim and architect Bishara Muammar compiled extensive tables of land and population statistics in their book *Toward the De-Arabization of Palestine/Israel 1945-1977* (1984). The most distinguished work was the encyclopedic reference by the Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (1992). In his introduction to the book Khalidi summarizes his goal:

> *It is an attempt to breathe life to a name, to give body to a statistic, to render to these vanished villages a sense of their distinctiveness. It is, in sum, meant to be a kind of "in memoriam".[13]*

Khalidi's book provides a profile for the 418 destroyed villages, including data about each village before 1948, occupation and depopulation, the Israeli settlement on the village land, and recent photograph(s) of the remains. The list of destroyed villages was based on the *Palestine Index Gazetteer*, compiled by the Survey Directorate of the Palestine Government in 1945, and included more than 10,000 places located on maps. Since 1983, the Center for Documentation and Research for Palestinian Society in Birzeit University has launched a program entitled *Destroyed Palestinian Villages: A Reign of Terror & Systematic Expulsion* to document the destruction of Palestinian villages. This documentation has been based upon oral history and field visits in addition to other available literature.

In addition to studies conducted by Arab scholars, a number of Israeli writers have compiled a body of literature about the subject. Israeli historian Benny Morris, in his work *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugees Problem 1947-1949*, touches on the mass

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[13] Walid Khalidi, ed., *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), xvii.

destruction and displacement of Palestinians and discusses causes and consequences. Yet, Morris does not provide historical documentation for pre-exile life. On the other hand, the American anthropologist from a Jewish tradition, Susan Slyomovics, in her book, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village,* talks about Ein Hud, a Palestinian village going back to the 12th century, that was occupied and depopulated in 1948[14]. While Arab inhabitants had to find another place to settle, an Israeli artists' colony was constructed in 1953 in the same houses that had been inhabited by the Arabs. In this work, Slyomovics concentrates on the concept of memory and its effect in reading a specific place. In her introduction, she submits that:

> *The power of the past as it was lived and is remembered, as it is commemorated and represented, continues to limit, define, and inspire current narratives of Arabs and Jews.*[15]

The significance of Slyomovics' work does not come from its documentary quality for the built environment *per se* in that it does not specifically reconstruct a detailed image of the old village; rather, it comes from its comparative approach that draws parallels and disparities between the meaning of the same place for two different groups of people: the displaced Palestinian peasants and the colonizing Israeli artists.

All the mentioned works looked at the larger scale of geography and history and yet none of these adequately documented the built environment. Palestinian architect Suad A'amiry was the first to launch such a research project. In her dissertation, *Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine* (1983),

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[14] Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), XII.
[15] Ibid.

A'amiry documented the village of Deir Ghassanah, a throne village of *Nahiya* of Bani Zeid located 45 kilometers to the northwest of Jerusalem.[16]

Of interest for us in A'amiry's work is the documentation of social use of space in the village by the turn of the19[th] century. In addition to the literature review, A'amiry did extensive interviews documenting the remnants of the built environment and interviewing old villagers who had the chance to live in the old village. The product was a huge number of detailed drawings of the built environment for this village, comparing the village at the end of the 19th century with the first half of the 1980s. A'amiry's study is considered a seminal resource in the documentation of the villages. A'amiry is a Palestinian architect who had the ability to communicate with the villagers. In addition, she made good use of other European references like the *Survey of Western Palestine* and Palestinian works such as those of Taufik Canaan. Other resources about the built environment in Palestinian villages suffer from major shortcomings due to their dependence on old and imprecise documents and on the oral history of peasants from villages that do not exist anymore.

Given the fact that Deir Ghassanah was neither occupied nor destroyed in the year 1948, since it is located in the West Bank, the study gives a clear image about the social use of space in Palestinian villages by the end of Ottoman Empire. A'amiry followed her dissertation with *The Palestinian Village Home* (1989) coauthored with the Palestinian artist Vera Tamari.

Despite all these works in creating a discourse, there have been other discourses intended to oppose and renounce. There is no doubt that writing Palestine into history is

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[16] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 43-47.

problematic. Beshara Doumani ascribes this to two main factors. The first is its symbolic and religious significance for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The second is its exposure to the Arab Israeli conflict which he describes as an "intense political drama that pits two nationalist forces in a struggle over the same land"[17]. Doumani points to the results of these two highly central factors in shaping the discourse of modern history of Palestine:

> *Throughout the 19th century, the interplay of power and knowledge has produced a series of tunnel visions, each questioning the legitimacy of the other.[18]*

Yet, these are not the only obstacles in contouring the history of modern Palestine. There are many problems that are related to the availability, subjectivity, and organization of sources. These sources come from the *sijill*s (Ottoman records), European travelers, and Palestinian and Israeli scholars.

In addition to being inaccessible pieces of information due to political factors, the *sijill*s do not provide systematic information about Palestinian villages. It might be said that this information was not made possible till 1870 when the *Survey of Western Palestine* was conducted by Palestine Exploration Fund. Yet, British sources, just like other colonial ones, suffer from many flaws. Rashid Khalidi warns us of part of these flaws:

> *Because those we have focused on could not speak for themselves in the sources which are left to us after seven or eight decades, we have seen their actions through a glass darkly, largely via records left by foreigners who did not speak their language or understand their culture, who had little sympathy for them, and who often were their enemies. [19]*

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[17] Beshara Doumani, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2. (1992): 5-28.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Rashid Khalidi, "Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism before World War I," in *Blaming the Victims,* eds. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London, New York: Verso, 2001), 228.

In the same context, Sarah Graham-Brown in *Palestinians and their Society, 1880-1946: A Photographic Essay,* questions the objectivity of photographs taken by European travelers to the Holy Land during the last 70 years before the creation of the State of Israel. Many of these photographers sought marketable products about the Holy Land and its timeless people. It was very common to manipulate the label of a photo and to omit its date so that it could serve the photographer's purposes.[20]

Edward Said was the first to highlight the inaccuracies of a wide variety of assumptions in his theory in *Orientalism* and its roots:

> *When a learned Orientalist traveled to the country of his specialization, it was always with unshakable abstract maxims about the 'the civilization' he had studied; rarely were Orientalists interested in anything except proving the validity of these musty 'truths' by applying them, without great success, to uncomprehending, hence degenerate, natives. Finally, the very power and scope of Orientalism produced not only a fair amount of exact positive knowledge about the orient but also a kind of second-order knowledge – lurking in such places as the 'oriental' tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability – with a life of its own.[21]*

Photos, even though dominant, were not the only means for *orientating the orient* of the Holy Land. There were also books and journals. An example is Elizabeth Finn's work. Finn was the British consul's wife in Palestine during the mid-nineteenth century. Her book was compiled by her son who shows his judgmental remarks about Palestinian peasants in his introduction:

> *It will be seen that the lack of anything like national unity among them (the peasants), and their dense ignorance, and altogether backward condition, would render the entrusting them with a measure of self-government a somewhat hazardous experiment.[22]*

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[20] Sarah Graham-Brown, *Palestinians and their Society, 1880-1946: A Photographic Essay* (London: Quarter Books, 1980), 1.
[21] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 52.
[22] Elizabeth Finn, *Palestine Peasantry: Notes on their Clans, Warfare, Religion, and Laws* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1923), 6.

In his conclusion, Finn the junior asserts that "the fellaheen are apparently an aboriginal people, and there is no tradition or record to show that they are anything else."[23]

Moreover, many of those travelers were frequently missionaries and had their religious biases when describing the Holy Land and its inhabitants. An example is Charles Wilson's book *Peasant Life in the Holy Land*. Wilson's biases are apparent when talking about village mosques which "are for the most part miserable buildings, dark and dirty, with nothing whatever in their outward appearance to show that they are sacred edifices."[24]

Other sources of biases are politically driven. Alan Taylor discusses these sources of biases in his book, *Zionist Mind: The Origin and Development of Zionist Thoughts*. Taylor concludes that there "was a trial by Zionists to dehumanize the image of the Palestinians which the Zionists developed and propagated."[25]

As mentioned earlier, Palestinian villages and the entire Palestinian discourse that was created to commemorate them have been acting as one mental space for Palestinians in Diaspora. Related to this mental space is a group of scattered social spaces of Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East. Noam Chomsky in his introduction to Rosemary Sayigh's seminal work *Palestinians: From Peasants to Refugees* submits that "history is the property of the winner". The losers were those who were transformed from a majority in their land to a group of minorities scattered all over the world, mainly in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Yet, these camps might be fertile fields for social and ethnographic studies. They might carry social practices that could be analyzed in relation

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[23] Ibid. 95.
[24] Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1906), 21.
[25] Alan Taylor, *Zionist Mind: The Origin and Development of Zionist Thoughts* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974), 48.

to those of the pre-exile villages within a framework of controversy between the pre-exile and the post-exile: rural-urban, egalitarian-hierarchical, and stable-temporary.

Studies of Palestinian refugee camps have been dominated by political history (Benny Morris, Salman Abu Setta, and Benjamin Schiff) and have been to a lesser extent addressed by sociologists, anthropologists, planners, and architects. Excluded from this orientation are studies conducted by Rosemary Sayigh, Julie Peteet, Hana' Jaber, Randa Farah, Blandine Destremau, Aseel Sawalha, Rema Hammami, and a few others.

Rosemary Sayigh wrote her seminal work on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon; *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (1978)[26]. Sayigh followed her book by a number of other studies on refugee women in Lebanon including *Remembering Mothers, Forming Daughters: Palestinian Women's Narratives in Refugee Camps in Lebanon* (2002)[27] and *No Work, No Space, No Future: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (1981)[28]. Julie Peteet studied the attachment to place in the village and camp and ways to unveil it in *Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment among Palestinian Refugees* (1995)[29]. Randa Farah has written her Ph.D. dissertation about the popular memory and reconstruction of Palestinian identity in al-Baq'a Camp (1999)[30]. Farah followed her dissertation by further studies on the subject drawing analogies between the experiences of refugees from Western Sahara and Palestine. Also, Farah had conducted many studies

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[26] Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979).
[27] Rosemary Sayigh, "Remembering Mothers, Forming Daughters: Palestinian Women's Narratives in Refugee Camps in Lebanon," in *Women and the Politics of Military Confrontation: Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation*, ed. Nahla Abdo-Zubi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).
[28] Rosemary Sayigh, "No Work, No Space, No Future: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Middle East International*, August 2001.
[29] Julie Peteet, "Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment Among Palestinian Refugees," in *Mistrusting Refugees*, eds. E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[30] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999).

evaluating the outcomes of overcrowding among refugees in many camps in Jordan and the West Bank. Hana' Jaber has conducted her study about the genesis of al-Wehdat Camp. Rema Hammami carried out her dissertation about discourses and practices of religiosity and work among peasant women in southern coastal part of Palestine from 1920-1993 (1994)[31]. Blandine Destremau had many studies on land status and use in al-Wehdat Camp.

Despite the existence of all these studies and many others, very few scholars have addressed the role of Palestinian camps in submitting to a rhetorical discourse or in maintaining a local practice. In general, a lack of studies on refugee camps might relate to their controversial nature, given the fact that the future of these camps, as well as that of their running agency, is subject to uncertainty and ambiguity. Excepted from this influence are a few scholars like Musallam Abu Helwa who did his studies about housing conditions in refugee camps in Jordan. In addition, my research has failed to locate studies conducted by architects. Aesthetically, camps are not compelling spaces to be studied by architects. They have always been associated with poverty, unemployment, and harsh living conditions. These realities have always been exhibited under a political debate about the Right of Return taking place since the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem.

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[31] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994).

CHAPTER TWO

VILLAGES IN PALESTINE; THE CASE STUDY OF DEIR GHASSANAH

By the end of the19[th] century, villages in Palestine enjoyed relative autonomy despite the drastic administrative transformations of the Ottoman Empire. Autonomy was reflected in the villages' relation with other settlements as well as with political, economic, and religious authorities of the Ottoman Empire. The autonomy was reflected in social practices that dictated village life. These practices prove to be generally egalitarian and local, and rarely hierarchical or authoritarian.

Spatial layout and division of the Palestinian village reflected egalitarian social practices. Landownership was dominantly communal, leadership was for the *shaykh* according to local inherited law, and social relations as well as places of work and residence were based on kinship structure while there was a clear demarcation between men's domain and women's domain according to clearly assigned duties.

Spatially and socially, the village was divided into *hamula*s (descendant groups related to a common ancestor) that competed with each other at certain times and spaces but celebrated their belonging to their village at other times and spaces. The *saha* was the center for local male celebrations as well as the authoritarian representative of the village to the world. In this center, egalitarianism of Islam was reflected through the mosque. On the other hand, village shrines were fertile domains for women to celebrate their unity as opposed to that of men. The Islamic shrine tradition went along with the textual resources of Islam. Yet, Islam was manifested through egalitarian practices without being invested by external hegemonic forces.

Settlements in Palestine

Through examining the social, spatial, and legal relationships between Palestinian villagers from one side and Palestinian urbanites and Bedouins from the other, studies show a high level of independency. Despite the fact that Palestinian villages were going through gradual transformations due to the *tanzimat* (Ottoman reforms), our interest here focuses on the era before transformations were accomplished, when villages were enjoying an egalitarian social system and relative autonomy.

In 1516 Palestine became a province of the Ottoman Empire. The empire did not treat the land of historical Palestine as a singular entity. Palestine was divided into two *sanjaq*s (administrative districts within a province). Each *sanjaq* had a capital in addition to a number of cities and *nahiya*s (sub-districts each consisting of a number of villages with a chief one called the throne village). Division of *sanjaq*s did not follow any geographical or historical pattern. It was an anonymous division for administrative purposes including tax collection and conscription.

There were three forms of settlements in Palestine: urban centers, villages, and nomadic settlements. Urban centers in Palestine were located along two main axes that stretched from north to south. The first was the coastal highway and the second was the major highland road. The coastal highway was exposed to the external world through the sea and had strong commercial relations with other Mediterranean centers. Palestine had 20%-25% of its inhabitants living in urban centers in 1900. They worked in trades, education, and administrative careers.[32]

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[32] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 11.

In 1923, Bedouins composed 7% of the population[33]. As semi-nomads, Bedouins lived in tents and depended on grazing, raising animals, and cultivating lands on a seasonal basis. They moved from one place to another once land was exhausted. Bedouins usually sought arid plains with scarce rain and moderate wind. Their areas of control were well-defined tribally. As can be seen, Bedouins did not compete for land with the peasants, but did launch raids for the sake of gaining crops[34]. Usually those raids were not on the village but on the cultivable boundary between the village and the Bedouins' settlement. Bedouins did not recognize the authority of the weak central Ottoman administration but obeyed their tribal heads. Yet Bedouins started losing power in the second half of the 19th century due to the new Ottoman legislations. To protect themselves from Bedouin raids, villagers sought alliance with other villages, powerful urban centers, or with the Bedouins themselves in the form of paying annual fees for protection.[35]

The period between 1850 and 1870 was an important era in the history of Palestine and the Ottoman Empire. A series of new reforms called *tanzimat* were legislated by the Ottoman Empire and were partially caused by pressure from European countries to push the state towards modernization. *Tanzimat* aimed at modernizing the armed forces, centralizing political power, and increasing revenues. All of this required more knowledge about and greater control of population counts, conscription, taxes, and the establishment of political institutions that could facilitate direct central control[36]. These

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[33] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 13.
[34] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 14.
[35] Ibid.16.
[36] Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 49.

tanzimat affected the peasants' lives through changes in landownership and taxes. Even though they did not take place immediately, *tanzimat* furnished the way later for European colonization through subjecting Palestinian settlements to hierarchical systems of control[37]. *Tanzimat* caused gradual transformation in many aspects i.e. leadership from the *shaykh* to the *mukhtar*, landownership from *mash'a* (an ancient form of collective tenure through which land was equally distributed among kinship lines) to *mulk* (privately owned land), and taxes from grains to cash. The following sections will focus on an era before transformations were accomplished when leadership was invested in the *shaykh*, ownership was *mash'a*, and taxes consisted of grains.

Village Leadership and Egalitarian Organization

Leadership structure in the Palestinian villages lacked hierarchical or institutional external authorities. It was the *shaykh* and his council that had authority in the village. The *shaykh* gained his power through support of other villagers and he practiced this power within the limits of local inherited laws that all the villagers had been practicing for generations rather than external institutional laws issued by the central administration.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *shaykh* means a "venerable old man, a chief, the head of an Arab family, or of a clan or a tribe also, the chief magistrate of an Arab village"[38]. Traditionally, the *shaykh* was an old man of wealth and social authority in the village who had usually inherited the position from his father. He had many responsibilities according to a customary law known among Palestinian villages as *urf* or

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[37] Basheer K. Nijim and Bishara Muammar, *Toward the De-Arabization of Palestine/Israel 1945-1977* (Dubuque: Kedall/Hunt, 1984), 1.

[38] __, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Accessed on April 24, 2004 <http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl>

Shari'at al-Khalil instead of a written law taken from the central administration. The *shaykh* was usually helped by a council of highly respected elders.

The situation started to change in 1864 when the *Ottoman Law of Vilayets* created the position of the *mukhtar* to replace the traditional one of the *shaykh*. Baer explains this as the desire of the Ottoman legislators to keep the power of the *mukhtar* according to territorial divisions formed by different *hamula*s. The *mukhtar* had to be elected and the governor had only to confirm the elections.[39]

Tanzimat were far from crystallization by the end of the 19th century. Very few villagers would participate in the elections, and inheritance of the *shaykh*'s position continued to take place. Moreover, the burden of the administrative responsibilities assigned to the *mukhtar* according to the government instructions was never fully accomplished. These responsibilities included tax collection, serving as a communicator between the central government and villagers, and keeping updated records of births and deaths in the village. On the other hand, non-administrative but traditional forms of the *shaykh*'s responsibilities continued to take place. Those included extending hospitality to visitors and solving disputes among villagers.

Communal Land Ownership

Inconsistency of data characterizes research of landownership in Palestine by the end of 19th century. Part of this is due to lack of awareness of the transformations that had been taking place at that time due to many factors including the Ottoman *tanzimat,* British colonization, and the Jewish migration. Part of this inconsistency is driven by a political agenda that obscures historical facts. Another part is due to generalizations of

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[39] Gabriel Baer, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in the Social History* (London, Totowa: Frank Cass, 1982), 109-125.

studies conducted about peasants outside the Ottoman Empire, which portray the peasants usually as independent and small landowners unconditionally possessing the land on which they worked.[40]

Many writers dwelled on the evils of the *mash'a* system on the peasant life and described socio-economic ills of its land fragmentation. Kenneth Stein concludes:

> *Most fellaheen lacked interest in improving their temporarily held land when the fruits of improvement would be taken from them. Mash'a was described by **every** (emphasis added) major authority on land in Palestine as the most delineating factor affecting the (fellah's) economic betterment.[41]*

On the other hand, Scott Atran argues that *mash'a* was a social and economic organization that persisted as a protective method against social ills[42]. He proves that the British Mandate had no real understanding of the flexible system of *mash'a* and its relation to social organization.[43]

Despite these controversial views, the Ottoman Land Law of 1858 ignored by many references about Palestinian peasantry, shall be considered as an important date in the legal system of land tenure[44]. The Ottoman Land Law required registration for individual owners for agricultural land formerly communally owned. Also it indicated that the peasant might be deprived of the right of using the land if he fails to register.

The activation of this law took place very slowly. Gabriel Baer mentions that 70% of the land of Palestine was *mash'a* by the end of the century and that the Ottoman Land

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[40] Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration Around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12.

[41] Kenneth Stein. *The Land Question in Palestine: 1917-193,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 14-15.

[42] Scott Atran, "Hamula Organisation and Masha'a Tenure in Palestine," *Man* 21, no. 2. (1986): 271-295.

[43] According to Atran, this is evident in the absence of records and studies about *mash'a* agriculture in Palestine except to that brief and generic record prepared by the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement in late 19th and early 20th century. Scott Atran, "Hamula Organisation and Masha'a Tenure in Palestine," *Man* 21, no. 2. (1986): 289.

[44] Rashid Khalidi, "Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism before World War I," in *Blaming the Victims,* eds. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London, New York: Verso, 2001), 212.

Law remained tangential to the peasantry until the mandate period except for areas around big cities[45]. Joel Migdal mentions that the weak administrative control of the Ottoman Empire allowed the peasants to go around the law.[46]

Despite the controversy in the historical argument, analysis of life style and the use of space will prove correctly the value of communal landholding in the social and economic life in the village and the composition of the *hamula*. It is true that peasants were not usually able to own the land, to sell it, to transfer to their heirs, or to donate it as *waqf* (a religious endowment, either charitable or for the benefit of the family and descendants of the endower). Yet, it was not individualism that the peasants were looking for but collectivism where they had the right to use the land freely in coordination with their social sphere.[47]

Autonomous Villages

As mentioned earlier, there were two groups of villages in Palestine: 100 coastal ones and 498 highland ones. Villages varied greatly in area and population. In 1922 the population of 'Ain Qinia was 56 while that of Dura was 5834. At the same time the area of Khirbet Jibia was 560 *dunum*s (each *dunum* equals 900 square meters) while that of

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[45] Gabriel Baer, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in the Social History*, (London, Totowa: Frank Cass, 1982), 68; Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 51.

[46] Joel Migdal, *Palestinian Society and Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 15.

[47] Despite the fact that they did not usually own land, peasants were very resistant to land sale to Zionists and were aware of the dangers of having strangers taking over their land. Rashid Khalidi convincingly carries out this argument where he borrows from resources that show that peasantry contribution to land sold to the Zionists between 1878 and 1907 was only 6%; from Rashid Khalidi, "Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism before World War I," in *Blaming the Victims,* eds. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London, New York: Verso, 2001), 225.

Tubas was 306,936 *dunum*s[48]. Villages in the coastal plains were generally larger and more concentrated than the scattered ones in the highland areas.

Despite the mentioned differences, villages generally enjoyed substantial rural autonomy from towns and from Ottoman administrative centers. This autonomy was reflected in and a reflection of a number of external and internal spatial and non-spatial factors.

Spatial factors included the geographically distant central administration of the Ottoman Empire in general, the difficult topography of the Palestinian highlands and mountains, and the weak system of roads between the different settlements. Suad A'amiry discusses the proximity of villages to the main roads. Among the 498 villages in the highland area, she found that there were only five that were located directly on a main road [49]. This helped protect these villages from Bedouin raids and from government authorities seeking taxes from the peasants. Amy Singer stresses this autonomy when discussing the relation between peasants and the state:

> *Peasants in the Ottoman Empire, except in very rare circumstances, did not belong to anybody. They were attached to a particular place and not to a person. They could be restricted in their movements, but they seem to have been tied to the land practically as a function of the dearth or plentitude of agricultural labor.[50]*

Due to this autonomy, Rema Hammami concludes that most peasants could be born, marry, redistribute land, or get into conflict over property, and never come into contact with any of the Ottoman institutions.[51]

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[48] Shukri Arraf, *Al-qarya al-arabiya al-falastiniya: mabna wa iste3malat aradhi* (The Palestinian Arab Village: Building and Land Use) (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1985), 187, 207-208, 217.

[49] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 12.

[50] Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration Around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 65.

[51] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 51.

Autonomy veiled relations with urban centers; contacts were minimal as two forms of direct interaction were established on a seasonal and occasional basis. These two forms emphasized belonging to a larger group through competition between villages. The first was through the *shaykh* and village elders who paid visits to cities in times of crisis and official ceremonies. The second was through the regional shrine festivals that will be discussed later. Also, contacts between villages and cities were established indirectly through Western visitors who had composed a huge body of literature about village life in the Holy Land and who visited cities more frequently than the villagers. Yet, those travelers usually lacked the ability to speak Arabic which minimized their role in cultural communication between the village and the city.

Selecting the village site reflected village autonomy and depended on many local factors. Those included security, fertile land, and the availability of water resources. Many scholars, e.g. Charles Wilson and Abner Cohen, overemphasize the importance of security issues when selecting a village site. Yet, Suad A'amiry, by showing that 25% of villages were situated on the fertile plains and not on the mountaintops, argues that security was a concern among many others that were taken in consideration when selecting a village site[52]. One of these might be religious needs for establishing contacts with the spirits from elevated places. We find many sacred spaces on the hilltops close to the villages, even though it is not clear if those sacred spaces predated the surrounding villages.

Other factors that caused village autonomy included the peasantry lifestyle and local traditions that villages all over Palestine shared. This lifestyle was highly influenced by

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[52] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 44.

working in agriculture and by the strong cultural factors that bound members in each egalitarian village community together. Those included ancestral relationship, religious beliefs, ethical values, coordination of cultural activity, absence of class-consciousness, burdens of taxes, cropping arrangements, and communal landownership. Spatially, the village was the domain for marriage, work, establishing contacts with the spirits, socializing with family, finding friends, and obtaining education. In the light of this, life in the village was dictated by a set of local egalitarian powers rather than external hierarchical ones.

Villagers also had their own legal autonomy. They had a set of norms that differed significantly from the application of *shari'a* (the body Islamic law) that was prevalent in urban centers. Those norms were called *urf* and were commonly accepted legal and cultural norms of unwritten customs, which spelled out rights and responsibilities and revealed the mechanisms for conflict resolution. *Urf* also reflected the "tribalization" of peasant society since the laws originated in Bedouin communities[53]. *Urf* correlated with the *shari'a* in many cases, but disconnected from it in many others.

Naming villages reflected village autonomy and was influenced by local causes. Those included social, religious, geographical, and historical factors. Some villages were named with *deir*, which means monastery, indicating its function as a monastery at a certain period of its history (Deir Ghassanah). Others had names that were influenced by their topography. *Ras* means head, indicating the elevated location of the village (Ras Karkar). *Wadi* indicates the location in a valley area (Wadi al-Bireh) while *ein* indicates the existence of a water spring (Ein Hud) and *bir* indicates the existence of water well

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[53] Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 28.

(Birzeit). Other villages were associated with the name of a saint or a prophet (Kofor Kasem), or with a plant (Deir al-Balah).[54]

As mentioned earlier, each village belonged to a *nahiya*, which was a sub-administrative district for a number of villages. Ottomans used the *nahiya* to organize tax collections through the throne village head, or the *shaykh* of the *nahiya.* Yet, it seems that the division of the *nahiya* predated the Ottoman Empire and the division of the *sanjaqs*[55]. Suad A'amiry supported this view by pointing to the fact that three villages of the *sanjaq* of Nablus belonged to the *Nahiya* of Bani Zeid, part of the *Sanjaq* of Jerusalem.[56]

Each *nahiya* had a throne village, the political representative for the *nahiya* through its *shaykh*, who was also the tax collector for the whole *nahiya*. For example, Deir Ghassanah was the throne village of the *Nahiya* of Bani Zeid that included 19 villages and was placed on 12,000 *dunum*s with a population of 6,271. These villages varied greatly in size and population. The smallest village was Khirbet Jibia, with a population of 62 inhabitants and an area of 560 *dunum*s. The largest village was 'Abboud which had a population of 754 and was placed on 5600 *dunum*s.[57]

Despite its role as a throne village for its *nahiya*, Deir Ghassanah was not spatially centralized in the *nahiya,* neither did it have the largest population among other villages. Shukri Arraf mentions that the number of inhabitants of this village was 625 in the year 1922, while the village of 'Abboud in the same *nahiya* had 745 inhabitants[58]. This gives

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[54] Shukri Arraf, *Al-qarya al-arabiya al-falastiniya: mabna wa iste3malat aradhi* (The Palestinian Arab Village: Building and Land Use) (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1985), 140-143.
[55] Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration Around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 77.
[56] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 77.
[57] Shukri Arraf, *Al-qarya al-arabiya al-falastiniya: mabna wa iste3malat aradhi* (The Palestinian Arab Village: Building and Land Use) (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1985), 206.
[58] Ibid. 205.

support to the idea that *nahiya*s were old, indigenous divisions and were only managerially influenced by the Ottoman taxation system imposed on them through the *shaykh* of the throne village.

Each village had a number of *hamula*s. The word *hamula* originates from the word *haml* meaning "carrying" and "supporting". The *hamula* system played an important role in the peasant's life[59]. Each *hamula* had its own *hara* (living quarter) and its designated adjacent working fields.[60]. Disputes among *hamula* members were settled by *hamula* elders according to the *urf* rather than the administrative law of the Ottoman Empire.

*Hamula*s varied in size and in power. The number of adult males in each *hamula*, the internal cohesion in their ranks, the size of the lands they controlled, and the efficacy of their alliances determined their overall power and authority. Because each village was usually home for the same *hamula*s for generations, Palestinian peasants developed a strong sense of village identification, which still survives in the camps.

A *hamula* provided a supportive system for its members in times of crisis, as well as in times of celebration. Each *hamula* was a cohesive unit that competed with other *hamula*s at certain times, while celebrating the unity of the whole village against other villages at other times.

Hamula ties did not exhaust all social relations, as there were other links sustaining the strong fabric of the village social life. One such link is that formed in the course of

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[59] Abner Cohen, *Arab Border-Villages in Israel: A Study of Continuity and Change in Social Organization* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1965), 3.

[60] The *hamula* was also an economic unit. The tax system, even though created and maintained by the Ottoman Empire, reflected the role of *hamula* in village economic life. Villages were subjected to a burden of taxes that, in addition to conscription, was the only linkage between the peasant and the Ottoman Empire, especially in the period predating the *tanzimat*. Paying taxes started with each head of a household adding his taxes to those of other households in the *hamula*. Then each *hamula* would add its taxes to those of other *hamula*s to pay it for the village as one unit. Each village would pay its taxes to that of the *shaykh* of the *nahiya,* who would take part of the taxes and send part to the Ottoman Empire.

communal religious activities on many levels: the village (the Friday prayer), the *nahiya* (some shrine pilgrimages), the national (regional shrine pilgrimages and later on national revolts), and global Islamic level (pilgrimage to Mecca).

It is true that the peasant had his village as the center of the world and did not establish continuous relations with the larger world. Yet, as opposed to Cohen's argument about peasants lacking national consciousness, it will be proven that village ties did not exhaust all social relations in Palestine. There were still relations between villages. Three regional shrine festivals that will be discussed later used to attract people from all over Palestine. Later on, in 1936, peasants were the ones to announce the revolution and riots against the British Mandate. Perhaps the peasants did not demonstrate their national consciousness unless there was a need to.

The Village of Deir Ghassanah: Location and Layout

The village that we will examine in this study is Deir Ghassanah. The reason for choosing this village is the relative availability of a detailed description of the built environment in this village by the end of the 19th century. This description is obtained mainly from Suad A'amiry's study on the village. Deir Ghassanah is located in an area that was occupied by Israel in 1967 and not in 1948 as were many other villages. Differences between its built environment and that of the coastal villages will be highlighted and discussed. Deir Ghassanah might be additionally different from other villages since it is the throne village of the *Nahiya* of Bani Zeid. The availability of other sources about destroyed villages in the coastal area, even though none is comprehensively detailed, never the less helps understand the differences. The spatial analysis aims at tracing local egalitarian practices and their relation to space. In these

practices there was a clear division among gender lines, *hamula* belonging, and age group according to space and time.

Fields surrounded the village from all sides. They usually occupied 89%-90% of the larger village area and stood in sharp contrast with the built up area, lying not at the center, but to the east. Fields were usually free from man-made structures, except for the *kusur* (storage huts), used for storing agricultural products. Peasants, usually males within *hamula* division, showed a regular pattern of movement between their living headquarters and their fields[61]. This pattern was changed biannually according to the land designated to each *hamula* by the *mash'a* system. It was usually early in the morning when men moved from their *hara*s to the fields where they spent the whole day working, each with his sons in his designated land. In certain seasons, like harvesting and olive collection, it was common for women to join men in the fields. Also, women provided men in the fields with food during lunchtime.

Hawakir is the plural of *hakura*, taken from *hokor*, which means border. *Hawakir* were the borders that separated the built up area from fields. Arraf mentions that *hawakir* occupied up to 4% of the village area during the British Mandate. The *hawakir* had value since they were close to the built up area and the distance between them both did not exceed one kilometer; this facilitated transportation of animals and goods between the two spaces. Despite the fact that some *hawakir* soil was not rich enough for agriculture, peasants usually worked extensively to improve soil conditions. This made it feasible for peasants to plant fruits and vegetables for domestic use in the *hawakir*. The short distance between the *hawakir* and their homes, where villagers stored crops for domestic

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[61] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 47.

consumption, made it much easier for them to do so. *Hawakir* were women's domains since they were related to domestic consumption.

The *hawakir* included also the cemetery conventionally to the east or the south of the village according to Arraf[62]. In Deir Ghassanah there were three cemeteries located to the north of the village. Each cemetery belonged to a kinship group. Unfortunately, the available data does not provide insights about which *hamula* used each of the cemeteries. Arraf indicates that each village had one cemetery. Abdelrahemm al-Mudawwar, just as al- A'amiry in Deir Ghassanah, mentions the existence of many cemeteries in the village of Kanun. It could be concluded that the number and the size of cemeteries was not a fixed norm, but depended on the number and size of *hamula*s inside each village.

Shukri Arraf touches on the concept of autonomy when he discusses the evolution of the village which started by a nucleolus that expanded spontaneously according to local social norms and needs without prior planning[63]. It was the need of security and the cohesion between social groups that lead to the clustering of the village built up environment that took up 5%-7% of the village area.[64]

The division of land holdings and living quarters in the village went along kinship lines and was influenced by local hierarchical system of control. Within each *hara* and within each household, the same modes of small-scale hierarchical control are replicated. Those modes of hierarchy were gained from local traditions and based on paying respect according to age and social status.

Nobody mentions the existence of market in the villages except for Wilson:

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[62] Shukri Arraf, *Al-qarya al-arabiya al-falastiniya: mabna wa iste3malat aradhi* (The Palestinian Arab Village: Building and Land Use) (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1985), 109.
[63] Shukri Arraf, *Al-qarya al-arabiya al-falastiniya: mabna wa iste3malat aradhi* (The Palestinian Arab Village: Building and Land Use) (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1985), 11-15.
[64] Ibid.105.

The village shop, as in more civilized lands, plays an important part in village life. In all but the smallest hamlets[65], one or two of these shops are to be found, while in the larger places, especially those that are centers of trade, there will be many of them. Here may be bought clothing…. The housewife will find coffee, sugar, tobacco, soap…..and hardware. Much of the buying and selling is done by barter, money being a very scarce commodity.[66]

The absence of a discussion about the market place might indicate the limited role of such a space in village life. This role might have been functional since other spaces, i.e. the *saha* and *madhafah* were the places where spontaneous relations among villagers were established.

Village *Saha* and *Madhafah*

The village center of Deir Ghassanah was a complex space. While it reflected egalitarian practices of gatherings and prayers, it reflected hierarchical authority that was gained from inherited traditions. Such traditions gave authority to elders over youth and to men over women. These traditions also paid high priority to the exhibition of hospitality to outsiders during a competition of wealth and social status that took place among different villages. It will be shown that the village center provided a way to emphasize village unity and was a space where men socialized spontaneously as an expression of belonging to their village.

The center of the densely built-up area is the village *saha*. In Deir Ghassanah, as in other villages, the *saha* did gain a great importance in village life. This importance went beyond its function as a gathering space for village men as it united villagers in their

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[65] He means *khirbeh*s

[66] Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1906), 74.

spatial mapping as well as in their collective activities. The *saha,* with its surroundings, was the space for collective religious practices and social ceremonies.[67]

The importance of the *saha* was reflected in and a reflection of its spatial layout. It occupied the "acropolis" site in the village. Despite the fact that many historical sites did occupy the acropolis site for security reasons, such a fact does not seem to be the case with the *saha* as the village center was protected from any external raids. The *saha* was surrounded by the two most important communal buildings in the village: the mosque and the *madhafah*. The mosque was located to the north and the *madhafah* was located to the east. From the west there was the *shaykh*'s dwelling. The entrance that led to the *saha* from the east was the entrance that the outsiders used to get into the village. The *saha* was an open space, highly differentiated from the surrounding compacted built-up area. All of these spatial amenities helped establish the importance of the *saha* and the surrounding buildings in the social life of Deir Ghassanah.[68]

The word *saha* was used interchangeably with the word *madhafah*. This interchangeable use of words is explained by similarities in social and symbolic significance of both spaces. Both were secular spaces where men had daily meetings. These were the places through which the authority of the village was represented. The Arabic word *madhafah* is used for the guesthouse. It comes from *dhaif,* which means a guest; *madhafah* is the place where a guest stays. Yet, the *madhafah* was not only used for guests but was also a multipurpose place used by different social male groups, depending on the time of the day and year. In the morning it was used by all men to have the breakfast. During the day it was used by the elders as an office, courthouse,

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[67] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 172-174.
[68] Ibid.

discussion forum, and reception area for official delegates. In the evening it acted once again as a communal space for all men seeking entertainment and relaxation through poetry reading, singing, and *Qur'an* recitation. In the month of Ramadan the *madhafah* was the place of communal *iftar* (breaking the fast). In the two Islamic feasts and in the case of death, it was the assembly space after doing prayers and visiting cemeteries as well as the reception area for visitors from other villages.[69]

Wilson mentions that each Palestinian village had at least one *madhafah*. The number of *madhafah*s in a village depended on the number and power of its *hamula*s. In some villages the *madhafah* was a mere room in the *shaykh*'s house and in other cases the mosque was used as a *madhafah*.[70]

As can be seen, the *madhafah* was an assembly space for the whole body of male villagers, and one where religious ceremonies and activities mingled with daily secular ones. Time and social occasions dictated the way of using the *madhafah*. It was a fluid domain for different social groups and different purposes.

As it was the space where social hierarchy was enacted, the *madhafah* was the space where the territorial forces of architecture were exercised. From the outside, the *madhafah* was an articulate piece of architecture if compared to other structures in the village, including the mosque. The *madhafah* was a rectangular room that measured 11m X 5m from the inside and stretched from north to south. It had its entrance from the village *saha* and was covered by two domes that were six meters high from the outside and belonged to two construction phases, as did the room itself. Domes indicated

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[69] Ibid.180.
[70] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 179; Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1906), __.

significance and were almost exclusively used on shrines. In addition to the domes, the *madhafah* had articulate workmanship in the façade through using an oculus and decorated stones[71]. This articulation was probably borrowed from other urban centers where stone architecture and craftsmanship flourished. It did not reflect the power that a certain authority in the village wanted to exert on the villagers, but the power that the village as a whole wanted to reflect to other villages.

From the inside, the *madhafah* was a simple room without furnishings except for straw mats and a few other items like the coffee set. Yet this simple interior was subjected to forces of social hierarchy in the seating arrangements. It had a number of invisible and fluid boundaries of ranking that were manifested not only in the seating arrangements designated indirectly to each man, but also in the manner of offering food and coffee and in the welcoming of outsiders. The *shaykh* had his designated place on the southern wall of the room. This spot correlated with the *mihrab* (a niche in the mosque indicating the direction towards Mecca) in the mosque, as if both represented the focus point and power. Seating arrangement of other men depended on their status and on the presence of others. It reflected a series of oppositions between different actors: the guest and the host, the young and elder. The step between the two parts of the room symbolized this opposition. Visitors usually sat on the right side next to the village elders and in the southern part of the space. Yet, these arrangements were neither fixed nor pre-expected and they all depended on the presence of others.[72]

The *madhafah* was the space for showing authority to visitors from other villages. As mentioned earlier, the ranking pattern was demonstrated in the manner of welcoming a

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[71] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 179.
[72] Ibid.181-190.

visitor. The distance the *shaykh* walked to welcome a visitor and the number and status of men accompanying him reflected the visitor's status. The ranking pattern was also expanded in the way of offering coffee, the words used for offering, and even in the type of food offered. [73]

The *madhafah* was the window through which male villagers understood the outside world. It was the place where they met outsiders and heard news about other villages, urban centers, the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic world, and the colonizing forces. There was a mode of hierarchy and rhetoric that reflected a social pattern that was almost absent in the egalitarian system in the Palestinian village. Yet, the *madhafah* had also a significant role in uniting the village community of men. It was the place where men socialized with each other on a daily basis. Despite the hierarchical model of seating inside it, the *madhafah* could be the space that destructed the boundaries between male villagers and renewed their relations. It showed each one of them the significance of belonging to his village, rather than his *hamula*, on a daily basis.

The *madhafah* was an exclusive space for men. Women were symbolically and physically absent from such a space despite the fact that they contributed food and discussion at home with their husbands about *madhafah* issues. A woman would enter the *madhafah* only if she had a complaint that she wanted to deliver to the *shaykh* and his council.[74]

While it is beyond the scope of this work to discuss domestic spaces, it should be mentioned here that in some villages where power needed to be represented to other villages, the *shaykh*'s dwelling was a means for achieving such a goal. In the case of a

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.184-185.

throne village like Deir Ghassanah, the *shaykh*'s dwelling was located on the other side of the *saha* in front of the *madhafah*. It was a huge and articulate piece of architecture that had spaces to accommodate outside visitors. This dwelling can be easily contrasted with other villagers' dwellings which were generally simple and lacked articulation in appearance.

Village Mosque

While the *madhafah* was the window through which the villagers exhibited their unity and knew about events taking place in their larger world, the mosque represented their belonging to the larger Muslim community. This world community has been using the same time periods and orientation towards Mecca to perform the same prayers. The mosque symbolized belonging to a larger and external discourse of the Orthodox Islam. Yet, the part of the discourse that it reflected was of an egalitarian and not a hegemonic character as might be noticed in city mosques where Islam might be used as a political power. While the mosque was part of the religious grid that will be discussed extensively in the coming section, the present section discusses the spatial layout, function, and symbolic value of the mosque in relation to creating an egalitarian set of practices in the village.[75]

The mosque was a male domain used for prayers and education on ritual basis. It was used each Friday noon by all male villagers who would assemble to listen to the sermon, pray the noon prayer led by the village *imam*, and socialize with each other. Muslim men are asked in the *Qur'an* to leave all their work and to join this prayer:

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[75] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 200-206.

O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew! [76]

It is not clear if the mosque was used by villagers to perform their five daily prayers. But it is evident that it was used for many other prayers during the two Islamic feasts, Ramadan nights, and funerals.

The mosque was also the school that male children attended in order to get an education with the help of the village *imam*. This system of education was called *kuttab* and was the only means of gaining education in most Palestinian villages before schools were introduced and teachers were recruited from urban centers by the end of the 19th century.

From the outside, the mosque was a simple building. It had an imperfectly rectangular shape that was roofed with four crooked vaults. As opposed to most urban mosques, the mosque in Deir Ghassanah did not have a minaret; neither did it have a dome. It was five meters high, and the interior space measured 12m X 8m. In addition, the mosque lacked any architectural articulation in its façade. It was built of rubble stone with a southern façade that lacked articulation except for a small niche indicating the *mihrab*.[77]

The mosque was located to the north of the village *saha*. It extended in the east-west axis. This orientation, as in other mosques, gave room to the *mihrab* in the longer side of the structure. Consequently, it was possible to have a larger number of supplicants facing Mecca in the first row. According to a *hadith* (a tradition handed down orally through a reliable line of sources relating a saying or deed of the Prophet Mohammad for the guidance of Muslims), praying behind the *imam* in the first row is much more rewarding

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[76] *Qur'an*, 62.009, Trans. Yusuf Ali.
[77] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 200-206.

than praying in other rows[78]; this is why a Muslim competes to arrive at the mosque earlier so that he can find himself a place in the first row.

The mosque had an open space as an extension to be used in the Friday and feast prayers. This was the courtyard located in the northern side. The courtyard had a direct, but discreet, access to the village *saha* and led to the mosque interior space through two doors. Also, the courtyard had a well for ablution in its northern end. It could be said that this well, located in the northern end of the courtyard, opposed the *mihrab*. Both were symbols for purity. The former was a marginalized space used for physical purity where dirt is removed while the latter was a central space facing Mecca used for spiritual purity where God is asked for forgiveness.

There is no literature about the architectural details of the mosque interior space. It was one room with a *mihrab* in its southern end and a column located near the center. This simple interior is imperative in the spatial layout of a mosque where all Muslims are supposed to stand as equals in front of God. Except for the *imam* leading the prayer, it was not one's status that dictated the row in which he would stand, but it was his time of arrival. What dictated the religious status of a man was neither his social authority nor his wealth, but the degree to which he feared God and obeyed his orders. In addition, at prayer time all men would go through the process of ablution, either in their homes or in the mosque courtyard using the well. All of them would take off their shoes when

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[78] Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "If the people knew the reward for pronouncing the Adhan and for standing in the first row (in congregational prayers) and found no other way to get that except by drawing lots they would draw lots, and if they knew the reward of the *Zuhr* prayer (in the early moments of its stated time) they would race for it (go early) and if they knew the reward of *'Isha'* and *Fajr* (morning) prayers in congregation, they would come to offer them even if they had to crawl." A *hadith* of the seventh-century Bukhari, quoted from Muslim Student Association-University of Southern California Hadith Database. Accessed on April 25 2004 < http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html>

entering the mosque. Those two stages are liminal ones that a man would pass through before standing in front of his God in His house.

This simplicity and absence of architectural embellishment in the village mosque could be justified through many facets. The mosque is believed to be an old church that villagers reused and had no control over its poor quality of building[79]. More important, Islam is an egalitarian religion that neither admits clergy nor accepts social hierarchy based on power between Muslims[80]. This egalitarianism was reflected in the undifferentiated and simple space of the mosque. On the other hand, the secular hierarchical system that the village wanted to exhibit to other villages was symbolized in the *madhafah* and in the *shaykh*'s dwelling which stand opposed to the mosque.

According to Rema Hammami, the village *imam* was informally elected. He was in charge of leading the communal prayers, delivering the Friday sermon, teaching the children in *kuttab*, documenting marriage contracts, and washing the body of the deceased[81]. His limited authority was religious and legal rather than social or economic. He gained this authority through his performance in the communal prayers and through his ability to read and write, since literacy was not common in Palestinian villages till late 19th century when schools were introduced to a number of these villages.

Both the *madhafah* and the mosque shared many similarities. They both were the only communal buildings used on a regular and constant basis for the gatherings of male villagers. They both symbolized the unity of the village as a separate part of the world, or as a small unit belonging to the Muslim community. This collectiveness in function of the two spaces was exhibited by the way the *imam* and the *madhafah* guardian were paid.

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[79] Ibid. 47.
[80] Ibid. 200-205.
[81] Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1906), 14-16.

According to Raphael Patai, these two men were paid collectively by all villagers and in kind rather than in cash. At the end of the harvest season each villager would pay both men a number of grains according to the amount he agreed upon at the time of land division. In addition to the payment, both men used to have parcels of land assigned for them and cultivated by the communal help from other villagers since the former did not have the means to do so by themselves.[82]

As could be seen, the mosque and the *madhafah* were two spaces where the unity of society was exhibited. Both spaces reflected direct correlation between their form and their social use. The *madhafah* was a reflection of power and wealth in front of the outsiders. On the other hand, the mosque was a place for communal, but direct relation with God, according to the egalitarian rules of Islam.

Religious Grid

Palestinian peasants were Sunni Muslims, with a minority of Orthodox Christians[83]. This section addresses the religious practices of Muslims in Palestinian villages by the end of the Ottoman rule. It aims at analyzing the spatial use of the Islamic religious grid through two interwoven traditions: a dominant local practice and an external textual discourse. The analysis will furnish a way for comparing the spatial use of religious traditions in the village to those in the camps.

The local shrine tradition was that of the village life, with each having its own grid of shrines accentuating its autonomy. It was through this tradition that villagers enjoyed

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[82] Raphael Patai, "Musha'a Tenure and Co-operation in Palestine," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, vol. 51, no. 3. (Jul. - Sep., 1949), 437.

[83] Edward Hagopian mentions that prior to 1918, Muslims were 80% of the population of Palestine. Edward Hagopian and A. B. Zahlan, **"**Palestine's Arab Population: The Demography of the Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3, no. 4. (1974): 32-73.

local rituals and emphasized their autonomy and unity on a daily basis. This level of practice interacted deeply with the social traditions of the village, i.e. the identification of the *wely*s (saints) through their *hamula* or village of origin. It was an egalitarian tradition where authority was for the deceased *wely*, and not for a living governor. This level of religiosity was deeply rooted in the material culture of the village and in its spatial layout. The shrine tradition emphasized belonging to the *hamula* in the case of local *wely*s, belonging to the village in the case of regional *wely*s, and belonging to Palestine in the case national *wely*s.

The external discourse was national and global, uniting the village with the larger Muslim community. This tradition also enjoyed the egalitarian practices of Islam. It was rarely driven by political agenda as opposed to the case in the camps. The external discourse of Islam and the local shrine tradition played an interchangeable role in enhancing the village collective practices.

Orthodox Islam

Orthodox Islam, or what is referred to by Rema Hammami as the textual one[84], was to a certain extent the same tradition that the Ottoman state and urban centers adopted. This tradition was associated with the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* as the primary sources of religious teachings. Textual tradition organized village life in part through the *shari'a* which formulated the peasants' life through a clear demarcation between the permissible, obligatory, recommended, and the forbidden.

This textual tradition was reflected spatially through two lenses. The first one was through spatial grid created by places of daily prayers, mosque, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

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[84] Ibid. 33.

These sets of practices showed to be egalitarian in character and they lacked exhibition of political identity. In this case, textual Islam in the village was not driven by hegemonic authorities but was practiced unconsciously by the villagers who inherited their religion through generations.

The second lens was through the law of *mahram*. According to this law, a Muslim woman shall not be in a space alone with a man unless he belongs to her circle of close relatives of *mahram*s (a group of men who are unlawful for a woman to marry due to marital or blood relations) defined by the *Qur'an*. This law was reflected in most spatial practices where there was a clear segregation among gender lines.[85]

Despite the importance of the law of *mahram* in shaping the forms of social interaction among the villagers, it is suggested here that this law was not the only influence that caused such segregation. Another cause of gender segregation might be the oppositional framework between duties of men and duties of women in a local society where each group had its inherited and defined role.

A Muslim performs five prayers a day. She is allowed to perform the prayer facing Mecca in any clean place. Temporarily, this place would be a sacred one. The prophet Mohammad said:

> *………and the earth has been made sacred and pure and a mosque for me, so whenever the time of the Prayer comes for anyone of you he should pray wherever he is,………*[86]

The prayer gave each villager a spatial and temporal pattern in his daily life where he would individually locate a sacred spot to establish contacts with his God. While the

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[85] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), __.

[86] A *hadith* of the seventh-century Bukhari, quoted from Muslim Student Association-University of Southern California Hadith Database. Accessed on April 25 2004 <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html>

prayer emphasized the individualism of each villager through a unique relation with his God, it united him with other villagers and the whole Muslim community in his ability to turn any place into a sacred one connected to Mecca on a timely fashion.

On the other hand, the religious functions of the mosque enhanced unity between male villagers. This was due to the location of the mosque in the village center and its adjacency to the *madhafah*. Also it was due to the egalitarianism of Islam which was reflected in the collective prayers in the mosque. These included the Friday prayer, the *taraweeh* prayer of *Ramadan*, and the funeral prayer[87]. These prayers turned all participants into an undifferentiated body of Muslims. It united participants through ritual practices that reminded them of their obligations towards each other and towards their God.

This role was exclusive for men spatially and textually. Women did not have access to the mosque for collective prayer, nor did they read the *Qur'an*[88]. Women, who were illiterate and did not go to schools, gained their knowledge about the *Qur'an* and Islamic teachings indirectly through their husbands and through their conversations with each other and not by joining the *kuttab*. It seems that the textual tradition of Islam remained an abstract idea for village women and the mosque remained a forbidden and mysterious domain that enhanced an opposition between domains of men and domains of women.

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[87] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), __.
[88] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 34.

Shrine Practices

The shrine tradition was most profoundly rooted in the material culture of peasantry[89]. Scholars date it back to Christian traditions in the Byzantine era. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Muslims and Christians shared this tradition through many practices and icons[90]. A temporal correlation exists between regional shrine festivals and Christian feasts.

The shrine tradition was deeply rooted in the daily life of the village and reflected the ability to invent and reinvent the sacred past spatially. Rema Hammami describes this tradition:

> *The tradition was extremely egalitarian and flexible, being able to imbue and locate sanctity in a wide array of sites and practices because it was profoundly connected to the daily-lived experience of a relatively autonomous peasantry.[91]*

*Wely*s were believed to be mediators between God and the human beings that could be contacted through certain spots of built spaces or natural landscapes. They were prophets, friends of prophets, characters from the *Qur'an*, *Sufi* (Muslim mystic) *shaykh*s, village founders, or distinguished men[92]. Many of these *wely*s gained their sanctity after their death. These *wely*s differed from the 25 prophets mentioned in the *Qur'an* and recognized by Palestinian Orthodox Muslim urbanites. Saints were not abstract constructs

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[89] Ibid. 51.
[90] Ibid. 56.
[91] Ibid. 59.
[91] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), ___.
[92] Taufik Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London: Luzac: 1927), 234-240; Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 59.

but recognized descendants from certain *hamula*s, villages, or regions[93]. They gained special status through narrations associated with specific material culture.

Socially, this tradition was a means for emphasizing social cohesion and solidarity as well as a means for practicing collective rituals. It was a medium to guard the village against personal and social ills through asking the *wely* for curing illnesses, solving problems, guarding people and properties, and judging in cases of disputes. Also it was a medium for exhibiting commitments and making promises after having problems solved through paying pledges to the *wely*s. These pledges would vary in scale from individual donations to communal ones where one would exhibit her gratitude to the whole village community in many ways, e.g. distributing goods. As can be seen, the shrine tradition transcended its religious meaning to add cohesion and solidarity among the village members.

Hierarchy between *wely*s reflected different levels of influence. While regional *wely*s united the Palestinians and differentiated them from other Muslims in surrounding countries, other local *wely*s had their influence confined to the kinship level. This hierarchy was reflected in different degrees of articulation exhibited in *wely*s' burial spaces, as will be discussed later. The articulation of a *wely*'s burial space might not be an attempt to reflect hegemony over local villagers since these villagers or their ancestors might be the creators of such a space. Rather, it might reflect the status of a village in a trial to compete with other villages or sets of villages.

From Wilson's description of the sacred grid in Palestinian villages, one can conclude that shrines gained their symbolic value through their narratives rather than their

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[93] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 210.

territorial spatiality. Shrines generally seemed to be simple spaces that lacked exhibition

of external powers. The location of the shrine on hilltops might be due to the need for

establishing contacts with the sacred, and not for the need for exhibiting hegemony:

> *The traveler to Palestine will often see a little clump of trees with the white dome of a low stone building peeping out of the dark-green foliage, and on inquiring what it is will be told that it is a Wely, or waly, that is, his reputed tomb.*

> *The shrine itself usually consists of a plain stone building, for the most part windowless, but having a mihrab, or prayer-niche. It is kept in fair repair as a rule, and whitewashed from time to time both inside and out. Occasionally a grave is to be found inside, under the dome……*

> *Occasionally there is no building over the tomb, and in such case, where it is one of great sanctity, the most extraordinary collection imaginable of odds and ends is to be found on the ground of the grave, having been placed there by way of honoring the dead wely, and of claiming his intercession at the day of judgment on behalf of those who have thus reverenced his memory on earth. Things there are left quite safe, as they are considered to be under the protection of wely.*[94]

In Deir Ghassanah the religious grid of shrine practices could be analyzed into local,

regional, and national ones.

Local *Wely*s

Local *wely*s had their authority and influence at the place where their followers lived.

Tombs and shrines were built on top of high places and honored by Deir Ghassanah or

one of its clans on a daily basis but to a lesser extent than the regional *wely*s. Some local

*wely*s had tombs or shrine tombs in cemeteries. These tombs were situated in vacant

lands that eventually became cemeteries. Often a blessed man would be buried in the

village cemetery and his tomb would later become a shrine. Other tombs were located

near old ruins that probably existed long time before the shrine. Other *wely*s were

associated with sacred landscapes of lesser transformations. A tree, a rock, or a well

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[94] Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1906), 25-27.

might be believed to be a spot of sanctity representing a *wely* who would be of a lower rank than those associated with the shrines.[95]

Two of the village *wely*s were female *wely*s who had a status similar to that of male *wely*s, a fact that indicates the egalitarian character of village life. In this case women *wely*s had authority over ordinary men. Yet, it is neither clear if women *wely*s were addressed by men or by women, nor how they were addressed.

Local *wely*s emphasized belonging to a certain *hamula* and enriched its competition with other *hamula*s. It was honorable for a *hamula* to have *wely*s among its members. In this case, division of space, existence of local *wely*s, and belonging to a *hamula* were three stimulating factors that divided the village into a number of competing units, as opposed to celebrating its unity when honoring the regional *wely*s.

Regional *Wely*s

Regional *wely*s were revered by Deir Ghassanah and its neighboring villages to commemorate *wely*s from the region on a daily basis. Regional *wely*s had shrines located outside the village and had visitors from many villages. They had a role in creating a sense of belonging to a certain village as opposed to the surrounding villages in the region. Also, regional *wely*s were the means through which a group of villagers in one region celebrated the religious and spatial autonomy of their region as opposed to other regions of Palestine collectively.

Regional *wely*s around Deir Ghassanah were al-Khawwas, al-Rifa'I and al-Majdoub[96]. The shrines were on hilltops[97] where contacts with the holy were believed to

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[95] Ibid. 210.
[96] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 208.

be established[98]. The shrines were covered with a dome. In Arabic, a dome is called *qubbah*, a word that is used as interchangeably with the shrine showing the latter's significance. Most of shrines were plastered and whitewashed from the interior. Many had an exterior arcade, one or many *mihrab*s, carpets, kitchen, storage room, or a living space for the guard. The existence of such additions depended on and reflected the status of the *wely* as well as the way the space was used for collective and secular activities.[99]

There were some analogies between al-Khawwas shrine and the village mosque. Both had a *mihrab* or two facing Mecca and an entrance from the northern part. Yet, the shrine was a domain for women not only on a daily but seasonal basis. The *wely* was celebrated annually by *Mawsim al-Banat*, the season of the girls. This festival took place on each Thursday of April while men were celebrating Nebi Saleh regional festival. Women and children from Deir Ghassanah moved in groups in their best clothes and carried food to the al-Khawwas shrine where they would sing, dance and go inside the shrine for prayers. This was an occasion to pray, get blessings, and be out with other women.[100]

The analogy between al-Khawwas shrine and the mosque could be expanded to the opposition that these two spaces reflected. While the first was mainly a female domain in the periphery of the village, the second was a male domain in the village center.

National *Wely*s

On the national level, there were three shrine festivals that took place on an annual basis. These were called *mawasem*. The word *mosam* means "season, mart, fair or time of assembly of pilgrims. In the case of Deir Ghassanah, it is the season of visiting a

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Taufik Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London: Luzac: 1927), 276.
[99] Suad A'amiry, "Space, Kinship and Gender: The Social Dimension of Peasant Architecture in Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 216.
[100] Ibid. 211-217.

sanctuary"[101]. These *mawasem* were for Nebi Musa in Jerusalem, Nebi Rubin near Jaffa, and Ayyoub in Jura. They were the means of spontaneously interacting with each other and exhibiting Palestinian unity as well as unity of each village in its competition with other villages.

Yet a major difference exists between the festival of Nebi Musa and that of Ayyoub. While the first was influenced by hierarchical authorities of the Ottoman Empire and of the governor of Jerusalem, the latter was more egalitarian in all its phases and ceremonies. Nevertheless, both festivals exhibited high level of communal interaction among Palestinian villagers.

Nebi Musa was a spontaneous pilgrimage festival held annually in Jerusalem in the spring before Easter. This festival was attended by thousands of peasants coming from villages nearly and afar. These peasants dressed up in their best and moved in groups of adults and children according to their villages. Each village group held red or green silk banners embroidered with verses from the *Qur'an*. Groups were also accompanied by cymbals and drums to gather in the holy compound of the Dome of the Rock where they had huge collective prayers. This was followed by a trip to the house of the *mufti* (governor) of Jerusalem. The *mufti* at this time was from al-Husseini family, a nationally well-known family from Jerusalem. The *mufti* was the trustee of the Nebi Musa shrine, believed according to the Islamic faith to be to the west of the Jordan River close to Jericho[102]. The *mufti* was in charge of maintaining the shrine and covering festival expenses through tax money designated for the shrine endowment. The *mufti* carried a green banner in the procession towards the shrine where the week-long festival took

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[101] Taufik Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London: Luzac: 1927), 193.
[102] Ibid. 193-200.

place. During this week peasants celebrated at the shrine and ate at the expense of the Nebi Musa *waqf*. [103]

The Nebi Musa shrine seems to be an authoritarian structure where al-Husseini family stayed while peasants slept in tents. The shrine, on the top of a hill, was composed of many buildings with large gates. It was divided into two parts: the sanctuary itself and serving rooms where elite sponsors stayed[104]. It was very important for al-Husseini, as an elite urban family, to sponsor such an event. This sponsorship reflected al-Husseini's status on the Palestinian landscape.

The festival of Nebi Musa exhibited a profound ability to synthesize the shrine tradition with the textual one among Palestinian peasants and urbanites. This is because it was a commemoration for prophets mentioned in the *Qur'an* despite the fact that the pilgrimage itself was a part of the shrine tradition. The festival was also a means of representing Ottoman authorities. Realizing its importance, they inserted their military representatives in its commencement as a symbolic presence[105]. Moreover, the procession from Jerusalem down to Jericho was observed by the Ottoman army[106]. This sponsorship by urban elites and by Ottoman authorities dates back many centuries ago when a number of villagers dedicated part of their taxes to the maintenance of these regional shrines and for the organization of these festivals. This duty continued with al-Husseini later on.

However, national shrine festivals do not seem to originate from higher authorities, but from popular religious beliefs. These festivals were different from spectacles that

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[103] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 68; Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land*, (London: John Murray, 1906), 24.

[104] Taufik Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (London: Luzac: 1927), 194.

[105] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 67.

[106] Ibid. 69.

were created in the Ottoman Empire at a later date in major urban centers as a rhetorical means of enhancing authority.[107]

Ayyoub's Wednesday was another festival held annually three days before the Christian Good Friday in the village of Jura, located to the southern part of the coast. This festival narrated a prophet's story and reproduced the past. It was believed that prophet Ayyoub, suffering from incurable illness, bathed in the shore of Jura and was cured. People from surrounding villages commemorate the event. [108]

Ayyoub's Wednesday was truly a popular festival. It was not sponsored by secular urban authorities or by *imam*s, but by villagers for themselves. Each group of villagers came to Jura carrying banners representing their village. This entry was followed by groups dancing and singing while peddlers sold sweets and toys. Some groups started randomly mingling with each other while others started competing with each other through signing. This was followed by the final stage of throwing themselves to the sea to reenact Ayyoub's bathing. [109]

Women were advised to wash themselves in the sea during this festival so that they guarantee their fertility for male children, a gift that each peasant woman should be able to exhibit. Rema Hammami argues that this specific practice "represented a recognition of the oppressiveness of the social value put on woman to produce many male children."[110]

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[107] Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 1. (1993): 3-29.
[108] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 65.
[109] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), 65.
[110] Ibid. 66.

Generally, shrine practices were a domain for women on a daily and seasonal basis. This shows opposition with the textual tradition, which was constructed through the mosque, *Qur'an* recitation, and pilgrimage to Mecca almost exclusively by men.

Through these different festivals, peasants kept alive their belonging to a national community. They re-narrated their sacred past, met their religious needs, created social cohesion, and deconstructed their structural roles in society. It was a long, costly, and exhausting journey that achieved such goals.

Conclusion

By the end of the 19th century, Palestinian villages were going through rapid transformation due to political, social, and economic factors. Yet, these villages were still enjoying a substantial level of autonomy reflected in their leadership patterns, ownership structures, and relation with urban centers and other villages. Also, this autonomy was reflected in the social use of space through local practices.

In Deir Ghassanah, the village center was a set of spaces that reflected an autonomous and egalitarian structure of society that competed with other societies. The *saha*, *madhafah*, and mosque were spaces that reflected social practices and beliefs. In such a village, spaces acquired their meaning through symbolic values and practices that were created and maintained by people and for themselves.

Moreover, these spaces reflected a series of symbolic domains that provided a balance between hierarchy and equality in society. While the *madhafah* reflected a hierarchical and secular system of divisions between different social groups, the mosque showed an egalitarian and religious one. Yet, both were domains for men, while women were confined to their shrines, *hawakir* and domestic spaces.

When analyzing the two traditions of Orthodox Islam and shrine tradition in the spatial layout of the village, we can trace oppositions between mosque and shrine, men and women, text-based religion and inherited myths, village center and village periphery. Both textual and shrine traditions affected individual and communal life in the village on a daily basis and on a seasonal one to different degrees. Palestinian villages had their clearly marked religious grid which was set to accommodate sacred times. Through celebrating religion, peasants were able to maintain their social stability and cohesion. Religious practices were a means to emphasize certain social symbolic spaces at certain times, and to deconstruct others at other times. They were a vehicle for maintaining relations among members of different social groups: village men, village women, village men and women, the village as a whole with other surrounding villages, the national landscapes, or the Islamic global ones.

CHAPTER THREE

PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN JORDAN; THE CASE STUDY

OF AL-BAQ'A CAMP

The previous chapter correlated social practices and spatial layout of the Palestinian village around the beginning of the 20th century with an emphasis on Deir Ghassanah. It showed an emphasis on forms of autonomy, leadership, ownership, and religious practices and their manifestation on the spatial setting of the village. The chapter showed also how space in the village was generally used to reinforce egalitarian practices in a small-scale and integrative community.

The coming chapter analyzes Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan by the beginning of the 21st century with an emphasis on al-Baq'a Camp. The analysis questions some possible continuity of village practices and signs of a Palestinian identity. More extensively, the analysis addresses ways through which space in the camps might have been used to exhibit power, to guarantee discipline, and in short to reinforce large-scale, non-spatial discourses that unite refugees with other external social groups. These groups include an international body of refugees, the Muslim community, and Jordanian society.

Remnants of village practices as well as a Palestinian national discourse might have been created or recreated discretely inside the camps. Remnants of village life include using Palestinian peasantry icons from the material culture, absence of personalization of spaces around entrances due to the lack of class-consciousness, spontaneous use of space in the market where different social groups interact with each other, and a keenness among the refugees to keep themselves segregated in the camps.

The use of space to help create a Palestinian national identity is clear through the exhibition of Palestinian national icons in the living spaces and through naming streets and shops after Palestinian icons, cities, or villages. Generally, the Palestinian national discourse has been almost limited exclusively to domestic spaces; common spaces typically lack any exhibition of Palestinian identity.

Despite traces of village life or Palestinian belonging, I question if camps have been institutionalized by two modern political entities to the extent that they have failed to preserve the refugees' small-scale peasantry practices as well as the large scale Palestinian national identity. This is partially due to the institutionalization of space by the United Nations and the Jordanian government.

Institutional exercise of power relates to the territorial ambiguity in the camps that have been treated as transitional and temporary spaces through many means, e.g. land ownership laws. Effects of such an ambiguity on the social relations between refugees and their relation with space will be questioned. This state of ambiguity will be compared to village life where space had been securely inhabited for hundreds of years.

Also, related to the institutional exercise of power is a religious discourse. While the shrine tradition was deeply embedded in the spatial culture of village religious practices, religious resources might have been transformed in the camp to furnish a way for a more text-based religious process. This discourse might have been a unifying factor between different social groups in the camp as well as between the body of refugees and the Jordanian society. Spatially, the role of Islam in the camps is uncertain as one can notice two forms of mosques there; a large-scale mosque located in the center, and small-scale ones located seemingly randomly in other areas of the camp.

The most apparent aspect in the spatial exercise of power is the appearance of institutional buildings and their relation to surveillance and control. Both the United Nations and the Jordanian government are territorial institutions that seek control over the camps through many means, including the rhetorical use of space.

Finally, I question if the discourse of the United Nations and Jordanian government has been stronger than the attempts to reinvent village life or to show belonging to the Palestinian nationalism. The main question that I seek to answer is whether Palestinian camps enjoy an egalitarian character, or if they have been turned into institutional spaces to enforce order and discipline. The discussion of these issues will furnish a way for a better understanding of the social use of space in the camp and the way it is influenced by external forces. This will show that *space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power[111]*. Yet it will also show that space is just a means among many others in the creation and practice of this power.[112]

Historical Background

In 1948, 560,000 Palestinians fled to Gaza and the West Bank, 104,000 to Lebanon, 100,000 to Jordan, 82,000 to Syria and 12,000 to other countries. This is all in addition to 60,000 Palestinians who were displaced inside the land of historical Palestine to be turned into a minority called Arabs of Israel[113]. Refugees were deprived of their belongings as well as their visible and unified presence in geography.

While the middle and upper class refugees, mainly city dwellers, were able to accommodate themselves in urban centers among the host societies, villagers found it

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[111] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 252.
[112] Names in interviews in this chapter have all been changed are not real names per request of the interviewees.
[113] Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979), 65.

hard to do so[114]. Peasant refugees were estimated to compose 35% of the Palestinian

refugee body[115]. Upon their arrival in host countries, peasant refugees were supported by

humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, League

of Red Cross Societies, and the American Friends Service Committee. Yet, these

organizations feared a lengthy responsibility. Consequently, they turned the responsibility

over to the United Nations, which created an umbrella called the United Nations Relief

for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) in November 1948 to extend aid and relief to

Palestinian refugees and to coordinate efforts of nongovernmental organizations and

other bodies of the United Nations such as the United Nations International Children's

Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Refugee Organization[116]. Late in

1949 voluntary organizations announced the end of relief operations to the refugees, an

act that drove the United Nations to create a new acting umbrella called the United

Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWAPRNE), usually referred to as UNRWA[117]. This agency was created to provide

relief operations and development projects to improve the refugees' living conditions.

UNRWA has been in charge of providing educational, health, and social services in the

camps. Also it has been in charge of improving the housing conditions for a limited

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[114] George Bisharat, "Exile to Compatriot: Transformations in the Social Identity of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in critical anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997), 216.

[115] Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979), __.

[116] Benjamin Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation: UN aid to Palestinians (*Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 3-4.

[117] Ibid.

number of extremely deprived families by supporting them with money through Special Hardship Cases.[118]

According to UNRWA, "Palestine refugees are persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict"[119]. Yet, this definition is not comprehensive since it excludes many Palestinian refugees, e.g. those who were internally displaced within the geography of Palestine. Also, it excludes those who were displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, many of whom ended up in camps established in response in the neighboring countries, such as the six established in Jordan. Finally, the definition excludes Palestinians who were outside their homeland between June 1946 and May 1948 seeking jobs or education in other parts of the world and who were not able to return due to the depopulation or destruction of their original homes.[120]

In 1950, the number of Palestinian refugees was recorded as 914,000 and in 2002 it was recorded as four million[121]. This number continues to grow rapidly especially inside the camps where population growth is higher than that in cities. This growth is accompanied by large family size, a high percentage of children and youth, and consequently a low number of breadwinners. Given the fact that they were deprived from their lands and their means for making a living, camp refugees started working as daily laborers in construction and manufacturing. Many refugees started working in the service

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[118] UNRWA Website. Accessed on April 25 2004 <www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/whois.html>
[119] Ibid.
[120] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 89.
[121] UNRWA Website. Accessed on April 25 2004 <www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/whois.html>

sector, mainly with UNRWA[122]. In al-Baq'a Camp these employees are estimated to be 722, supporting 7000 refugees[123]. Despite the fact that these employees are paid much less than the international staff members, they still appreciate working with UNRWA. This is due to the fact that UNRWA is an established institution with low layoff rate. Also, these employees' salaries are higher than government employees' and they get a standing sum of money upon retirement.[124]

Today, there are 59 Palestinian refugee camps recognized by UNRWA in the Middle East[125]. In Jordan, there are ten camps that accommodate around 400,000 refugees[126]. In a study conducted in 1997 by FAFO Institute for Applied Social Science about the living conditions among Palestinian refugees and the displaced in Jordan, researchers showed that:

> *While the refugees and the displaced who are settled outside the camps live in conditions not very different from those of other households in Jordan, the camp dwellers are worse off with regard to almost all aspects of what are considered relevant indicators of a good life. They have poorer housing conditions, more physical and mental health problems, higher unemployment levels, and lower income.[127]*

Camps were established in deserted and barren areas. Some camps were built at abandoned campsites left by the British army while others were simply sited in the rough desert[128]. Processes for generating plans for the camps are not documented and were carried out by the UNRWA and the Department of Palestinian Affairs. It was an instant

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[122] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 131-132.
[123] Ibid. 139.
[124] Ibid. 136.
[125] UNRWA Website. Accessed on April 25 2004 <http://www.un.org/unrwa/overview/p02.html>
[126] UNRWA Website. Accessed on April 25 2004 < http://www.un.org/unrwa/overview/p02.html>
[127] *On the Margins: Migration and living conditions of Palestinian camp refugees in Jordan*, by Marwan Khawaja and Age A. Tiltnes, eds. (Oslo: Fafo, 2002) , __.
[128] Mussallam Abu Helwa, "An Investigation of Palestinian Refugees and their Housing in Amman, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Southampton, 1990), 41-45.

plan based on the grid as opposed to the local and gradual one of the village and its transitional spaces.

Each camp was located on a main transportation road connecting it to a city. The location of UNRWA buildings was specified, and most of the lots were assigned as shelters. In 1990, Mussallam Abu Helwa estimated that 95% of land in the camps was used for residential purposes.[129]

Camps vary greatly in area, population, and proximity to other settlements. The largest in area and in population is al-Baq'a Camp which is located on 1307 *dunum*s and hosts 85,500 inhabitants. The smallest in area and in population is the Talbieh Camp which is located on 133 *dunum*s and hosts 4,500 inhabitants[130]. Both camps were established after the 1967 war. Notably, 1948 camps were established on the cities' periphery and in part blended with the cities' physical structure, e.g. al-Wehdat and al-Hussein camps. On the other hand, 1967 camps were established in rural areas and many of them are segregated spatial entities to this day.

The spatial composition of al-Baq'a Camp, as well as others in Jordan, shows the camp as a grid of blocks with undifferentiated residential cement structures. This grid accommodates in a central location the huge institutional buildings while the market place, mosques, and other local businesses located less prominently around the camp.

Land in the camps has been owned by or leased to the government from private landowners after 1948 or 1967 for a few Jordanian dinars per *dunum* a year[131]. It has been

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[129] Ibid. 46.

[130] Department of Palestinian Affairs, *Atlas of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan* (Amman: __, __), 9-12.

[131] Blandine Destremau, "Les camps de réfugies palestiniens et la ville, entre enclave et quartier," in *Amman: Ville et Société*, eds. Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami (Beirut: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Moyen-Orient Contemporain, 1996), 532.

a minimal flat rental rate that does not reflect the new land value, which is estimated to be 100-400 times the original one. Neither does the flat rental rate take in consideration the depreciation in the Jordanian dinar which took a drastic fall in 1987.[132]

Refugees were not awarded land in the camps, but they were awarded the right of use. Upon their exile, the male head of each family was assigned a lot of less than 100 square meters to live in[133]. At this time, UNRWA provided refugee families with tents. Later on, when the refugees' settlement has prolonged under harsh weather conditions, it was realized that replacing tents by permanent shelters would be feasible and convenient. Refugees started building their units in the assigned lots using brick and concrete.[134]

Construction of shelters was incremental depending on resources and needs. Most families started with one room and added kitchens and toilets later. Also many shelters were roofed with reinforced concrete instead of the original corrugated sheets. In addition, many shelters had new and gradually added stories or rooms. The incremental expansion in the shelters depending on needs reflects a gradual growth of refugee families. At a certain point shelters could expand no more while families continued growing. The demographic landscapes inside residential units have been drastically transforming. Within 55 years most refugee families have multiplied 4-5 times in their numbers. It is almost the same tiny land lot that used to accommodate a nuclear family of 5-6 in the 50s that now accommodates an extended family of 20-24.

After this historical background about the creation of the camps, the following section will discuss aspects of spatial change that the refugees have been subjected to and related

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[132] Ibid. 533.
[133] The area was as small as 64 square meters in Talbieh Camp and Irbid Camp, Department of Palestinian Affairs, *Atlas of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan* (Amman: __, __), 9-12.
[134] Samar Taleb from al-Baq'a Camp, interview by researcher, May 20 2003, Amman, note taking, private collection, Jordan.

effects on social relations. The main question that I seek to answer is whether Palestinian camps enjoy an egalitarian character, or if they have been turned into institutional spaces to enforce order and discipline. The coming sections will focus on peasantry practices and Palestinian discourse in refugee camps and their role in creating or maintaining memory via metaphoric use of space and objects of material culture. The analysis transforms gradually from remnants of egalitarian practices to large scale discourses in an attempt to question the role of each on the socio-spatial relations in camp life.

Reinventing Village Life; Looking for Palestinian Discourse

Many scholars have indicated the rise of a Palestinian discourse in the camps. Julie Peteet, in her studies about Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, asserts that refugees continue to identify themselves by reference to their villages of origin. The challenge among refugees to reinvent the place of origin appeared first when they tried recreating the landscape of pre-1948 Palestine in the camps by grouping themselves along clan or village lines[135]. For Peteet, these villages represent *place* which is different from *space*:

> *What bound people to a "place" is an ontic force. This force constitutes a way of being in the world. This is significantly different from space to which people would be bounded by epistemic force which provides one with a way to see the world rather than a way to be in it.*[136]

Randa Farah highlights the refugees' immediate efforts to reinvent their places of origin by reproducing familiar surroundings through using the *tabun* (traditional oven),

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[135] Julie Peteet, "Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment Among Palestinian Refugees," in *Mistrusting Refugees*, eds. E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 174.
[136] Ibid. 170.

growing vegetables, and raising animals in their shelters[137]. In this case, the place is an object that is to be observed through a discourse and not space to be used for practices.

There is no doubt that the recreation of village space goes beyond functional significance to symbolic one. Um Mohammad from al-Baq'a Camp continues to keep her *tabun* in her tiny courtyard, even though she has not used it for many years. Um Mohammad, just like many other refugees, continues to keep the key to her destroyed house that she inhabited before exile. For Um Mohammad, the oven and the key are symbols that remind her of origin (Fig. 3.1).

Another means of reinventing the village space through a spatial discourse is by exhibiting Palestinian icons in living spaces which have turned into fertile lands for demonstrating Palestinian identity[138]. In each living room one probably will find a Palestinian symbol: a Palestinian flag, photo of the Dome of the Rock, or common phrases about belonging to Palestine. When Yasser Arrafat was deported from Beirut to Tunisia in 1982, it was his picture that filled the interiors of refugee shelters.[139]

These national icons might be intertwined with religious ones. Living spaces are also rich domains for exhibiting the Qur'an as a Holy Book or phrases from the Qur'an as sources of empowerment. While it is not uncommon to find these icons inside homes in non-refugee settlements also, it might be true that religious icons have been an escape for refugees. Related to refugees' loss of land is the loss of many Islamic holy places of which the Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock are most significant. For refugees, it

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[137] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 106.

[138] Julie Peteet, "Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment Among Palestinian Refugees," in *Mistrusting Refugees*, eds. E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 171; Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 106.

[139] Ahmad Issa from al-Baq'a Camp, interview by researcher, May 25 2003, al-Baq'a Camp, tape recording, private collection, Jordan.

could be that the threat that they have faced should be shared by the whole Muslim community since the conflict in Palestine has taken a religious dimension (Fig. 3.2).

As can be noticed, the spatial efforts to maintain village life or a Palestinian belonging have been almost limited exclusively to domestic spaces; common spaces typically lack any exhibition of Palestinian identity. An exception to this is the discreet efforts at naming shops and even popular naming of streets[140]. Names of Palestinian villages, cities, and icons are easily recognized among many shops that range from small kiosks to large retail stores.

Despite all these traces, were the camps institutionalized by two modern bodies to the extent that they have failed to preserve the refugees' small-scale peasantry practices as well as large-scale Palestinian national identity? Could the discussed domestic efforts by the refugees be described as hesitant and tactful? Could these practices be portrayed as distinctive from those invested by UNRWA and the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) in order to keep discipline?

The Market: Looking for Spontaneousness

Villagers had their guesthouse as a window through which they interacted with the outside world. Also they had their *saha* gatherings and shrine festivals as opportunities to act spontaneously with each other. The situation in the camp might be different. It is suggested here that the market place in the camp might be the space of spontaneous interaction. There is a need to investigate places where people interact spontaneously

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[140] George Bisharat, "Exile to Compatriot: Transformations in the Social Identity of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in critical anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997), 214.

with each other in the camp, if there are any, in future research. Also there is a need to investigate if these spaces are exclusive to refugees or specific social groups among them.

There are two main commercial streets inside al-Baq'a Camp. The first one is located on the main transportation route leading to Amman. This street usually is a center for men from inside and outside the camp, mostly merchants and their patrons. On the other hand, the commercial street inside the camp is a commercial center for many social groups. The patrons are insiders and outsiders from both genders who seek products of good quality and low prices.

It could be true that these two streets help create a sense of spontaneousness among the refugees, especially in the internal street where men and women interact with each other. Also, it could be true that this street helps deconstruct social barriers between refugees and outside patrons using the market. This street is a source of income for many refugees. It is a means to achieve a self-sustaining economy as villagers used to do in the village. Even though the market is not exclusively for agricultural crops, it might be reminiscent of an inherited profession not easily maintained in the camps.

Lack of Personalization; Lack of Competition

A windshield survey over residential streets of the camps reveals an absence of personalization of space around entrances. Is the phenomenon a remnant of an egalitarian and integrative society as opposed to a hierarchical and segregated one? It neither reflects the situation inside the residential units nor a likeness in economic status between the refugees. Moreover, the phenomenon might not be justified by financial limitations since personalization might need minimal cost. It is unlikely that it is due only to the fear of Jordanian intelligence forces since personalization might cut across lines of

nationalism. The tendency among the refugees to refrain from personalizing their entrances might indicate collective belonging to an egalitarian society where competition is balanced by cooperative focus (Fig. 3.3, Fig. 3.4).

Camp refugees seem not to be conscious of any social classes among themselves[141]. They do not divide the camp into affluent neighborhoods and underprivileged ones as in modern settlements. This might be due to the fact that all refugees started many decades ago with fairly similar levels of education and economic status. Yet today great disparities exist. When they started life in the camps, refugees divided themselves along village lines and the same landscape has endured. As mentioned earlier, excluded from this tendency are those who leave the camp seeking to express their improved economic status by separating themselves from the body of refugees.

Refugee Camps: Segregated Territories

As mentioned earlier, each camp has its own legal boundaries set by the government at the time of its establishment. This idea of a sharp boundary created by an outside force contradicts with that of the village where fields surrounded each village and created patterns of daily living practices among villagers. Yet, when discussing territoriality of the camps, a distinction can be made and investigated between camps established on the periphery of the city in 1948 and those established in rural areas in 1967. Socially and spatially, is the first group more integrated with the surrounding areas than the second one? This integration is indicated by the porosity of the camp and the way it is conceived and used by outsiders as well as refugees. Consequently, the social effects of camps'

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[141] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 130.

territoriality and its role in achieving segregation of the refugees from the rest of Jordanian society are questioned.

Controversy is embedded in the use of space in the camps. While camp refugees have the right to move around and live in any part of Jordan like other citizens, this right seems to be a legal construct rather than a social norm. George Bisharat indicates that the rate of economic improvement among camp refugees in the West Bank does not correlate with the rate of leaving camps to better housing conditions. There are many reasons for a tendency among camp refugees to keep themselves spatially segregated. One reason is the discrimination against the refugees in education opportunities and in the work market due to their marginalized social status[142]. Other refugees explain segregation by the large population size in many camps and their distance from urban centers[143]. Despite the credibility of these factors, they are not perhaps the main reasons for such segregation in many cases. Is it belonging to a Palestinian national discourse that separates the refugees from the rest of society, or the partially presumed autonomy they used to enjoy in their villages?

Despite the harsh conditions in the overcrowded and substandard housing units, living in camps is a source of convenience for many families. While it is a "free rent" for registered refugees, it is a rent that is less expensive than that of other areas for non-registered refugees. Many refugees work in the UNRWA facilities inside their camp and do not need to travel long distances to get to work. Also, refugees can usually leave their

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[142] Al-Qutub, Ishaq. Refugees Camp Cities in the Middle East: A challenge for urban development in *International Sociology* 4. no. 1 March 1989. pp.91-108.
[143] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 129.

children with the grandparents if mothers work[144]. Finally, shopping in the camp is less expensive and one can make purchases in the camp for prices that are lower than those in other areas. All these factors of convenience create a high demand on the camp housing units.

The demand for housing units, accompanied by the slight movement outside the camp and the emergence of commercial streets within the camp, has transformed the camp into a real-estate market. This market fluctuates depending on availability and demand. It is an independent market not formulated by the real-estate costs in surrounding areas[145]. Seekers are newly married couples leaving their extended families' overcrowded units. Also, they might be merchants seeking to establish or to expand their businesses in one of the promising commercial streets.

Despite all the demographic, economic, and spatial transformations in the camps, legally, camps are frozen lands[146]. All transactions are informal ones recognized by a notable person but not by the courts or cadastral services[147]. Also, there are no accurate or updated records about camps' inhabitants.

Two crises have created an extraordinary demand on residential units inside camps[148]. The first was the 1967 exile which forced 350,000 Palestinians to leave the West Bank to Jordan[149]. The second was the Gulf crisis of 1990, which forced 300,000 Palestinians to

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[144] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 115.

[145] Blandine Destremau, "Les camps de réfugies palestiniens et la ville, entre enclave et quartier," in *Amman: Ville et Société,* eds. Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami (Beirut: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Moyen-Orient Contemporain, 1996), 533.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid. 534.

[148] Ibid. 533-534.

[149] Randa Farah, "Palestinian Refugee Camps; Reinscribing and Contesting Memory and Space," in *Isolation: Places and practices of exclusion*, eds. Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 193.

leave Kuwait to Jordan[150]. Many of these displaced Palestinians were originally refugees and 10% of them found in al-Baq'a Camp the least expensive refuge they can afford.

Visualizing the camp as a refuge for those forcefully displaced seems to be a commonality among most international refugee groups. As it will be discussed later, the camp could be analyzed as a temporary and transitional space that exists to the contrary for a lengthy period of time.

Those who pass this stage of temporariness are those who voluntarily and spatially leave the camp. They are families with improved financial and social status or young women who get married to outsiders. Yet, those form a small group. There are young couples who reluctantly leave the camp due to the overcrowded family units without being able to find their own suitable units in the camp[151]. Those couples usually leave to areas surrounding the camp. Blandine Destremau has described those newly emerging spaces around the camps as the *suburbs of the camps*[152]. This contradicts strongly the dominant image of the camp as a marginalized space. In this case, and for the moving couples, the camp is the social and spatial center of the margins.

In the case of Um Hassan, it is the lack of financial resources that confines her family to the camp. Um Hassan is a mother of four daughters, two sons, and four stepsons. She has been living in al-Wehdat Camp since she got married. Now, her unit accommodates a total of 5 families and 30 individuals:

We have no money, but we have been able to manage. Each of the married sons has his unit with his family. But we do not know what to do with our son who plans to get

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[150] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), __.

[151] Blandine Destremau, "Les camps de réfugies palestiniens et la ville, entre enclave et quartier," in *Amman: Ville et Société*, eds. Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami (Beirut: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Moyen-Orient Contemporain, 1996), 533.

[152] Ibid. 540.

married next year. It is hard to find a rental place inside the camp and rents outside the camp are extremely expensive.[153]

Yet, for Um Mohammad, it might not be an issue of money, but of national belonging and family attachment. Um Mohammad, with her four sons, has been living in al-Baq'a Camp since 1968 after her second exile from Tulkarm to the Jordan Valley in 1948. While one of her sons is a physician in Europe, the rest are engineers living in the same shelter with her. They neglected the law and built a second story and a room in the third story. Um Mohammad and her married sons, despite their financial capabilities, do not want to leave the camp; nor do they want to be separated from each other. We are peasants, she said, we are refugees and we are waiting for a solution.[154]

Except for the commercial streets, the camp might not be a place to be visited by outsiders. It might be hard to find a stranger along the alleys of the camp. Since the majority of UNRWA employees in the camp are camp residents, the camp might be an enclosed entity and not a porous one.

Refugee Camps: Ambiguous Future

What makes a great difference between the village and the camp is the feeling of local security and stability, prevalent in the former but almost absent in the latter[155]. While village peasants had ancestral relations with their space and never considered leaving it, the situation with the refugees is greatly different. The relation between the refugees and their space has been formed by more "modern" means.

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[153] Um Hassan from al-Wehdat Camp, interview by researcher, May 27 2003, al-Wehdat Camp, tape recording, private collection, Jordan.

[154] Um Mohammad from al-Baq'a Camp, interview by researcher, June 1 2003, al-Baq'a Camp, tape recording, private collection, Jordan.

[155] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 115.

Many scholars recognize land status in refugee camps as a key issue in differentiating camps from other spaces[156]. Again, refugees were not awarded land in the camps, but the right of its use. Refugees have enjoyed this right for several decades now. Land status inside the camps draws parallels with the *mash'a* system in the Palestinian village by the end of the 19th century. In both cases, ownership was neither individual nor permanent even though the right of use was secure. In the village, land was communally and temporarily divided among clan lines and the right of use was secure even though not owned by the peasants. In the camp, the division was affected by external institutions with an attempt by the refugees to divide themselves along village lines. It has been a permanent division since the establishment of camps despite its legal transience.

Have the refugees lost trust in space that has been successively disrupted due to political conflicts? How does a novel relation with space affect the refugees' social relations? How does the disturbance by a political agenda like the Right of Return and generally, the conflict in the Middle East, affect the use of space in the camp? Would land ownership in the camp, if awarded, have changed the feeling of stability among the refugees?

Even though refugees own their residences, and in many cases have built them themselves, refugees do not call their residences *homes* or *houses* but *shelters* or *units*[157]. While homes reflect stability and permanence, shelters reflect temporariness and need. Randa Farah has called these residences *hesitant structures* due to the controversy

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[156] Amal Awad from al-Baq'a Camp, interview by researcher, May 28 2003, Amman, tape recording, private collection, Jordan.
[157] George Bisharat, "Exile to Compatriot: Transformations in the Social Identity of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in critical anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997), 212.

between their transitory and permanent character. Farah has noticed the half-finished structures and justified their state:

> *In addition to economic imperatives, there is another reason why almost all housing units are half-finished. Most of the first generation of refugees living in camps have refused to invest in anything durable and permanent because they hoped they would return and because such improvements to shelters would signify acquiescence to integration.*[158]

Territorial ambiguity is reflected also in the regulations that do not define these shelters like residences in other settlements. According to the regulations, it is illegal for the refugees to add second and third stories to their units. It is not only the limited capacity of the infrastructure to handle the demand that may result from such an addition, but it is also the limited capacity of the structural systems in these units constructed only for a temporary use[159]. In 1987, the government issued a law that allowed the construction of a storage room in the second story. Yet some refugees went further beyond the storage room and built a complete second and sometimes even third story. Appreciating the refugees' harsh living conditions, government authorities usually neglect such practices and do not enforce the law unless neighbors file a complaint.[160]

Further research needs to be done to question ways through which territorial ambiguity in the camps might have affected social relations among refugees. Also needing investigation is the possibility of spatial ambiguity cutting across the clan or village line thereby uniting all refugees more communally than competitively.

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[158] Randa Farah, "Palestinian Refugee Camps; Reinscribing and Contesting Memory and Space," in *Isolation: Places and practices of exclusion*, eds. Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 198.

[159] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), __.

[160] Blandine Destremau, "Les camps de réfugies palestiniens et la ville, entre enclave et quartier," in *Amman: Ville et Société*, eds. Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami (Beirut: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Moyen-Orient Contemporain, 1996), 539.

Directed Religious Discourse

As mentioned earlier, shrine tradition was deeply embedded in the spatial culture of village religious practices while the textual tradition had a mere limited role in and narrow access to the village life. Were religious resources altered in the camp to facilitate a way for textual tradition to replace shrine practices? Has space played a role in this drastic transformation of religiosity between small-scale local practice and large-scale textual discourse? Has transformation of religiosity furnished a way for turning camps into spaces of discipline and order?

Rema Hammami's study about transformations in religiosity among Southern Palestinian peasant and refugee women between 1920 and 1993 found that the political systems in Gaza, like Nasserism and later the Islamic movement Hamas, had played an important role in forming a religious discourse in Gaza.[161]

While there are no studies about religiosity in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, it might be appropriate to question if a textual Orthodox discourse has replaced popular shrine practices. When exiled, refugees lost their physical connection with their *wely*s by being spatially displaced far away from the shrines. It is very likely that the location of those shrines had played a role in locating the village and shaping its ritual practices. On the other hand, the location of camps was determined by the availability of barren land without taking in consideration its symbolic or religious significance.

Future research should explore the existence of any shrines in or around the camps and the role that those possible shrines have played in camp life. The shrine value in village life was not associated with aesthetic value. On the contrary, it was associated

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[161] Rema Hammami, "Between Heaven and Earth: Transformations in Religiosity and Labor Among Southern Palestinian Peasant and Refugee Women, 1920-1993" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1994), __.

with the shrine's religious symbolic significance inherited through generations and acquired through popular practices.

In Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, religious sources perhaps became textual and obeyed the Orthodox Islamic trend that dominates Jordanian civil society and its governmental system. Palestinian refugees and Jordanian urbanites have been sharing a religious discourse through mass media, printed materials, Friday *khutba*s (Islamic sermons), *dars*es (religious classes), and curricular systems. While this religious discourse was exclusive to men in the village, it has been inclusive for men and women in the camp. Women are not only exposed to curricular educational system and mass media, but they visit mosques on a regular basis to attend the *dars*es. Has belonging to a religious discourse been a unifying factor among men and women in the camp as well as between the camp refugees and Jordanian civil society?

Richard Antoun's study of the role of sermon in Jordan differentiates between two styles of delivering Islamic teachings in the mosque. The first is through the *dars* and the other is through the Friday *khutba*. While the first is small-scale and seemingly egalitarian, the second is large-scale, authoritarian, and rhetorical. Yet Antoun argues that both forms complement each other. Through the *dars,* the *imam* speaks in colloquial Arabic and sits on the floor surrounded by active attendees who engage in a constructive dialogue. The *dars* addresses theological, practical, and ritual themes that Muslims need to apply religion in their daily lives. On the other hand, the Friday *khutba* involves a standard Arabic where the *imam* stands on the *minbar* (pulpit in the mosque) while all other attendees sit passively in rows listening without participating. Antoun finds that the

khutba does not address politics except as relating to leadership and social control[162]. Has the *khutba* been used as an indirect political tool for controlling the camps where the *imam* has an authority of knowledge and religious leadership to reflect on the passive attendees, as distinct from his effect when sitting in the *dars* surrounded by other active recipients?

The Palestinian refugee problem might have been interwoven with an Islamic loss. Research needs to be done to examine whether refugees look at religion as an avenue for solution to their national problem. This would explain the intertwined symbols of national and religious identities in the living rooms of refugee camps. In these living rooms, religious symbols like the Qur'an will be exhibited side by side with national ones like the Palestinian flag.

Is Islam a means of keeping order and a form of institutionalization created by the government in refugee camps and used through mosque, education, and media? How does its strength compare with other governmental means such as surveillance or exhibition of power in space?

This uncertainty of the role of Islam in disciplining the camp is clear in the external physical characteristics of mosques in al-Baq'a Camp. In this camp, there is a main central mosque that exhibits rhetorical forces through its prestigious appearance achieved by stone sheathing, decoration, and relative monumental size (Fig. 3.5). On the other hand, the other mosques in the camp seem to be very simple structures. Many of them could not be recognized as mosques except through their small minarets. These mosques are small structures with discreet entrances and minimal ornamentation, if any at all (Fig.

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[162] Richard T Antoun. "Themes and Symbols in the Religious Lesson: A Jordanian Case Study," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 4. (Nov 1993), 607-624.

3.6). Like most structures in the camp, mosques are mostly concrete structures with a few of them sheathed with stone. These mosques are reminiscent of the village mosque where territoriality and rhetoric were minimal.

Each of the eleven mosques in al-Baq'a Camp needs to be investigated in terms of their location, design characteristics, spatial gender division, and patterns of use. Do the patrons of each mosque come from the surrounding areas? Is convenience the determining factor when selecting the mosque to be visited? Is it a local decision that the individual makes rather than a rhetorical one advocated by institutions?

UNRWA and DPA

While leadership structure in the village was not hegemonic but egalitarian and integrative one, leadership in camps is more complex and relates greatly to a larger discourse created by different external powers. There are two hierarchical actors in the camps; the UNRWA and the DPA. This section questions ways through which these two institutions have used space to guarantee discipline from the refugees and to exercise power over them.

Jordan had been the only host country to award Palestinian refugees the Jordanian passport that could be kept along with the refugee identification card issued by UNRWA. While the former facilitates daily life logistics for the refugees, including travel visas and work permits, the latter indicates their temporary status and belonging to the international body of refugees as well as to the scattered body of Palestinians. The UNRWA identification card was provided to the male head of each family as a prerequisite for the

acquisition of tents[163] and eventually became the refugees' means to access services provided by UNRWA[164]. Controversy is embedded in the coexistence of the Jordanian passport and the UNRWA identification card as the first indicates permanency while the second indicates temporariness.

The UNRWA could be described as a global discourse and a transitional space. It belongs to the United Nations and accommodates international staff members[165]. Yet, Schiff mentions that by 1991 an international staff of 160 employees supervised the work of 18,000 local employees who were paid much less than their international supervisors even with the same qualifications[166]. This situation might create a different perspective on UNRWA as a colonizing institution that operates across a vast separation of power[167]. Yet this power might have been slightly manipulated to meet the refugees' interests. While UNRWA started investing in development projects at a certain point of its history, many refugees believe that it was forced to change its mission to education and health by the refugees' demands.[168]

The UNRWA is an institution offered services to large and undifferentiated masses of people, a situation reflecting the international identity of refugees in many places of the world. The creation of a new vocabulary when discussing refugees' needs like

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[163] George Bisharat, "Exile to Compatriot: Transformations in the Social Identity of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in critical anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997), 210.

[164] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 99.

[165] Ibid. 294.

[166] Benjamin Schiff, Refugees *unto the Third Generation: UN aid to Palestinians*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 6.

[167] Ibid.

[168] George Bisharat, "Exile to Compatriot: Transformations in the Social Identity of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in critical anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997), 212.

"empowerment" and "self-help" emphasizes UNRWA's paternalistic character[169]. A group of refugees who are UNRWA employees have been mediating between UNRWA as a modern and paternal institution and the refugees[170]. Schiff has drawn analogies between UNRWA and a welfare state that provides services to its citizens. For Schiff, UNRWA is a state for the stateless people within a territory of another state.[171]

Yet, the complexity of UNRWA's character penetrates into the political debate. Schiff discusses part of this complexity:

> *Because there is disagreement about the outcome of the Arab Israeli conflict, there are no neutral grounds for judging UNRWA. UNRWA has been the vehicle for international actors seeking to deal with the refugee problem, the processor of material resources converted by regional actors, a political symbol and a tool for Palestinians, and a successful humanitarian organization.[172]*

The presence of UNRWA as a controlling institution can be seen in the spatial existence of UNRWA in the refugee camps. There is no doubt that UNRWA buildings including schools, health centers, and administrative offices, manifest power in the camps through their location, volume, and design details. These buildings occupy a central location in the camps. They are the largest in area and the highest in elevation as landmarks to be distinguished from a distance. Moreover, these buildings are highly institutional in character. This is apparent in the strict regularity of the exteriors and in the use of prefabricated concrete blocks. In addition, all the UNRWA buildings are marked by the United Nations flag. For the powerless refugees, these buildings might be reference points representing power, charity, and paternalism (Fig. 3.7).

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[169] Benjamin Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation: UN aid to Palestinians* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 6.

[170] Randa Farah, "Popular Memory and Reconstruction of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq'a Refugee Camp, Jordan" (Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto, 1999), 142.

[171] Ibid. 172.

[172] Benjamin Schiff, Refugees *unto the Third Generation: UN aid to Palestinians* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 5.

The Jordanian government has been in charge of administering the camp, keeping security, and providing infrastructure. By welcoming refugees to its land, the Jordanian government has been keen to show the international community that the refugees' numbers are a burden and require greater funds for compensation[173]. The government has created al-Baq'a Camp Service Committee composed of notables from the camp. Despite its nominal egalitarian character, the Department of Palestinian Affairs names the committee members and funds its activities. Moreover, the honorary president of this committee is the Governor of the municipal area and not a member from the camp. For the government, refugee camps are spaces that exhibited unrest and political conflict; as a consequence, camps are spaces to be controlled.

The Jordanian government has a few buildings inside the camp. These include the Department of Palestinian Affairs Office, the post office and the police station. Al-Baq'a police station is clearly an institutional building calling to mind the Jordanian ministries. It is one of the very few three story buildings. It is sheathed in stone as opposed to the concrete or brick exteriors of other buildings in the camp. It occupies a major access point on the main commercial street connecting the camp to Amman (Fig. 3.8). The building is new and there is no available documentation for its predecessor that was on the margin of the camp. The same situation applies to the location and design features of al-Wehdat police station.

Does the appearance of such powerful police stations give support to the idea that UNRWA is cutting off its services to the refugees and clearing the stage for the government inside the camps[174]? The relation between UNRWA and the Jordanian

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[173] Ibid. 149.
[174] Ibid. 150.

government has been described as competitive[175]. While the former tries to control the camp from the center, the latter tries to control it from the periphery.

This brief analysis about leadership in camps reveals many gaps in knowledge as a motivation for future research. Many refugees mentioned the existence of a *mukhtar* in the camp. If true, how is he appointed? How are his duties, power, and social status formed? In addition, it will be of paramount importance to map the spatial settings that the *mukhtar* occupies, particularly his residence and office. This will examine rhetorical forces or territoriality that the *mukhtar*'s settings might exhibit. The aim will be to investigate whether the *mukhtar*'s settings are communal and egalitarian spaces or if they are more territorial ones. Such findings would create a comparison with the *shaykh* in the village and the spatial settings he used to occupy.

Conclusion

By moving to camps in Jordan in 1948 or 1967, Palestinian villagers faced drastic transformations in space that may have challenged them to preserve their social structure or national identity. The spatial displacement the Palestinian refugees have been confined to, accompanied by the influence of external powers, may have pushed the role of local practices to the margins and facilitated a way of an institutional power.

Remnants of village practices could be traced mainly to objects from the material culture that have been turned into symbols, the absence of class-consciousness, lack of personalization of exterior spaces, division of the camps according to villages of origin, keenness among the refugees to keep themselves segregated in the camps, spontaneous

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[175] Ibid.

interaction in the market place, and existence of small-scale simple mosques around the camp.

Palestinian national memory has been exhibited in the camps through Palestinian icons in domestic spaces and through naming of streets and shops after Palestinian cities and villages. Generally, these efforts occur at the domestic and private scale rather than communal and public one.

The failure of the camps to save the Palestinian identity among the whole body of refugees might have been due to the institutionalization of camps and to the creation of a large-scale discourse. Spatial signs of external discourse created by hegemonic authorities are exhibited through central mosques, territorial buildings of the United Nations and the Jordanian government, ambiguity of the camps, and their legal segregation.

My hypothesis here, based on the available data about institutions in the camps, questions if camps are spaces of peasantry practices, collective memory, or collective oppression. Camps might have been turned into institutional spaces where the whole body of refugees is to be disciplined. According to Foucault, a discipline is a technique for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities[176]. Therefore, discipline is a type of power used to maintain the hierarchal order in a society. Surveillance is one of the instruments to aid discipline[177]. Community members know that they are always being watched and that they could be punished for immoral actions at any time:

> *In places like housing projects and military bases, the dwelling unit is architecturally created to make constant surveillance possible. Entrances to houses all facing the inside of the community so that people can be observed doing practically*

[176] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 218.
[177] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (NY: Vintage Books 1995) 195-228

everything. This observation is constant and is permanent. That is what makes it an effective instrument towards achieving order.[178]

It is worth mentioning here that al-Baq'a Camp was established on a site previously suggested for a prison.

Such surveillance raises questions about the relation between the refugees and their space in which, as mentioned earlier, they might have lost trust. The idea of discipline and order in the camp might relate to the creation of a discourse, where external and large-scale powers take place, as opposed to the existence of local practices, where communal and small-scale social systems operate.

My hypothesis suggests that camps might have been turned into institutional spaces, where the collective body of refugees is to be disciplined and a hierarchical order is to be maintained. This hierarchical order is between the whole body of refugees and exterior modern institutions. While the former might have a desire to maintain egalitarian practices, the latter might have a desire to guarantee discipline and to maintain a discourse through many means including the rhetorical use of space.

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[178] Center for Integrative studies at St. Olaf College Website. Accessed on May 25 2004 < http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/cis/examples/fillinga/web_essays/foucault_discipline.html >

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM PRACTICE TO DISCOURSE: THE BIG PICTURE AGAIN

"In Ramallah, I studied in U.N. refugee schools where they gave us cod-liver oil capsules and nauseating milk in tin cans. I poured the milk on the dirt when teachers were not watching. I learned what daily hunger felt like.

But in Ramallah, I also learned from other girls to secretly draw a Palestinian flag. My mother and teachers would have beaten me had they seen it. It could have led them to prison."

Ibtisam Barakat
Ramallah then and now

During the last years there has been a burgeoning interest in space and the ways through which it interacts with social groups among environmental psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, philosophers, and architectural historians. This interest has opened wide interdisciplinary approaches to research for designers. Unfortunately, this privilege has not yet been invested wisely as a huge gap between "design" and "research" can be easily observed among both academicians and practicing professionals. The present research has suggested that such a gap could be bridged if designers have a deeper respect for a broad array of social influences on the use of space. I have argued that the analysis of space requires us to examine it as a product of local, national, or international powers. Rather than taking the notion of a "building" or a "volumetric space" as a point of departure, we should address much broader conditions under which the built environment functions.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach where social and political histories as well as ethnographic studies are engaged, this thesis has analyzed the drastic transformation in space of Palestinian refugees. This transformation engages two kinds of social space: the space of small-scale egalitarian or "traditional" societies and the space of large-scale

"modern" societies influenced by media. Both kinds of space can be analyzed within the dialectical framework between the pre-exile village life and the post-exile camp life: rural/urban, egalitarian/hierarchical, and stable/temporary.

This exploratory study has underlined a gap in interdisciplinary research that distinguishes the space of practice from the space of discourse. It has shown a need for interdisciplinary research projects that theoretically integrate the two. The Palestinian example is a unique one because it shows that these two kinds of space have been inhabited by the same group of people forcefully and abruptly displaced from a life based on practice to one influenced by discourse.

In addition, the study has brought to light a gap in research about the social use of space in Palestinian villages and in Palestinian refugee camps, each taken as a separate subject of inquiry. Bridging such a gap is of paramount importance for the Palestinians since both spaces are bookmarks in a history that has been put into question.

Palestinian villages are witnesses to a cultural heritage in rural Palestine many centuries old. These villages have experienced drastic change within the last one hundred years. While villages located in the land of historical Palestine are either destroyed spaces or inaccessible ones inhabited by Israeli residents, villages in the West Bank have suffered from destruction, occupation, and division due to Israeli policies.

On the other hand, Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East are extremely controversial spaces. They are spaces of powerlessness, marginalization, and poverty. Many scholars have established analogies between refugee camps and squatter areas in developing countries and with Native Americans' reservation lands in the United States. Other comparisons have been established between Palestinian refugees and those of

Western Sahara or Afghanistan. What makes the case of Palestinian refugees significant though is that they compose the majority of a population forced into Diaspora 56 years ago.

On a broader perspective, Palestinians inside the land of historical Palestine, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip are facing cultural and human genocide where it is not only the "space" that is threatened, but it is also the culture and society by whom "space" is used. A few days ago, Israel demolished 100 shelters in Rafah Refugee Camp in Gaza Strip, leaving 1500 Palestinian refugees homeless. The state of "refugeeness" has become a norm among the international community where Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are not called refugees anymore. Neither does the word "camp" call to mind transience and emergency in their case.

Just as important, refugee camps represent an international growing problem. The United Nations estimates the number of world refugees to exceed 11 million. Those refugees face different facets of threat that relate to their life, property, and culture. Forced spatial displacement as well as potential cultural and human genocide is a commonality among the whole body of refugees.

This study has suggested that Palestinian peasants might have been able to reinvent aspects of their village life on a small scale after being forcefully relocated in territorial spaces that may not respond to many traditional ritual practices but created by external rhetorical institutions. It has been suggested that a Palestinian peasantry identity and Palestinian nationalism are still rooted in the refugees' shelters despite the institutional control over space in the camps. Palestinian refugees in camps are still waiting for a political solution. Their camps have become witnesses to the injustice assigned to

Palestinians through many decades. Also, refugee camps witness refugees' unwillingness to be assimilated in the host societies.

It is my hope that this study will be the basis for launching a broader research that questions the spatial transformation of "belonging" or "identity" among the refugees in the camps:

> *Most of the refugee camps today look like urban slum areas as the tents have disappeared. For an outsider, the boundary is a mirage and refugee camps are sometimes invisible.*
>
> *For Palestinians, however, the camp boundaries and the social, political and physical space within are real and crucial for the nation. Indeed, one of the main reasons why the Oslo framework for peace failed because it marginalized refugees. In this political landscape, the refugee camp is the potent symbol of a struggle that has lasted over half a century. Without confronting the issue and referring back to international legitimacy and principles, the inhabitants will continue to map out their memory and identity on its space and within its boundaries. Over half a century, camp inhabitants have reappropriated the practice of 'exclusion' in their political struggle for the right to return to their homes and Homeland.* [179]

Future research that compares Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan to those in Lebanon or the West Bank might prove correctly that a Palestinian peasantry practice or national identity is rooted in the camps, even though to different degrees depending on the host country, no matter what forms of exclusion or inclusion are imposed on the refugees.

Related to the struggle for cultural survival by the Palestinians is the flourishing electronic communications which allows all Palestinians in Diaspora, including the camps, to form national communities and to record their history. An exchange project based on using the internet has been established between refugee children from Chatila

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[179] Randa Farah, "Palestinian Refugee Camps; Reinscribing and Contesting Memory and Space," in *Isolation: Places and practices of exclusion*, eds. Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 205-206.

Camp in Lebanon and their peers from Dheisha Camp in the West Bank. In this case, the cyberspace might be the metaphoric space where all Palestinians can gather, record their history, and save their heritage in an international context.

For future research, I pose the following questions to be explored further. This study has given a chance to touch upon many of the following issues but not to explore them through systematic and intensive fieldwork:

- Practice and religious discourse: How do communal religious rituals influence individuals and societies? How does the religious grid reaffirm the social structure by renewing its ties? How did the religious grid affect the allocation of villages? How are mosques in the camps used? Has religious discourse been reflected in the space of refugee camps and has it been a unifying factor between the refugees and the Jordanian civil society.

- Gender and space: How does the law of the *mahram* apply in the refugee camps given the fact that spaces are usually extremely overcrowded and that many women live in the same domestic units with non-*mahram*s? How does gender issue affect the use of alleys, streets, and market? How does the emerging equality between men and women affect the society due to the fact that women have greater access to education, work, and religious discourse in the camps?

- Representation of the village: How do Palestinian refugees symbolize space in the camps to recreate their village life or to emphasize their belonging to a national discourse? Is it belonging to a Palestinian national discourse that separates the refugees from the rest of society, or could it be the preserved remnants of autonomy they used to enjoy in their villages?

- Simple territoriality: Have refugees lost trust in traditional cultural space that has been successively disrupted due to political conflicts? How is this reflected in their use of space? Would land ownership in the camp, if awarded, have changed the feeling of stability among the refugees? How does spatial ambiguity in the camps affect social relations among the refugees? Does spatial ambiguity cut across clan or village lines to unite all refugees under a communal existence instead of a competitive one?

- Representation of the state: How do refugees perceive institutional buildings inside the camps? What strategies for surveillance do these institutions follow to achieve control over the space? How does this surveillance affect the use of space?
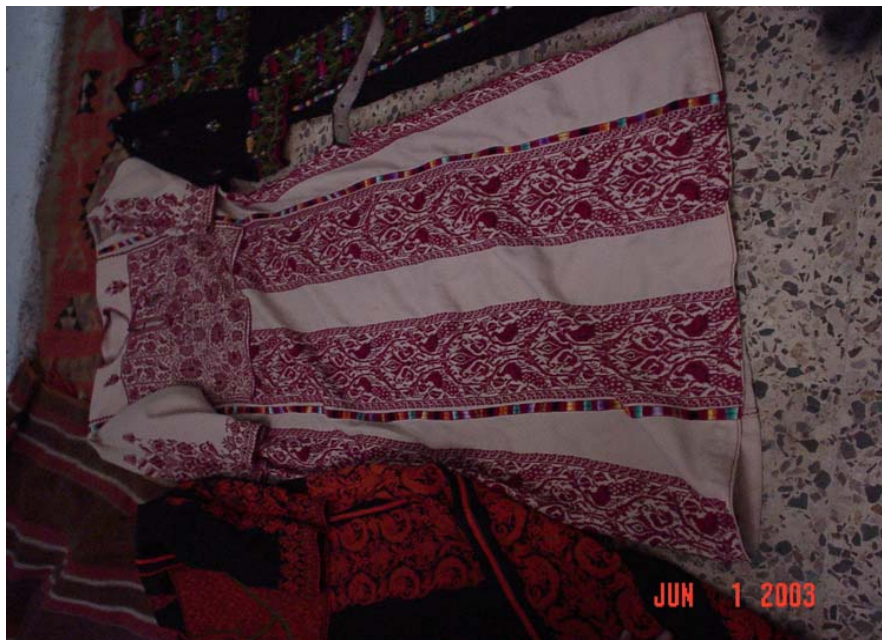
FIGURE 3.1: Sources of material culture inside domestic spaces in al-Baq'a Camp

FIGURE 3.2: National and religious symbols inside domestic spaces in al-Baq'a Camp
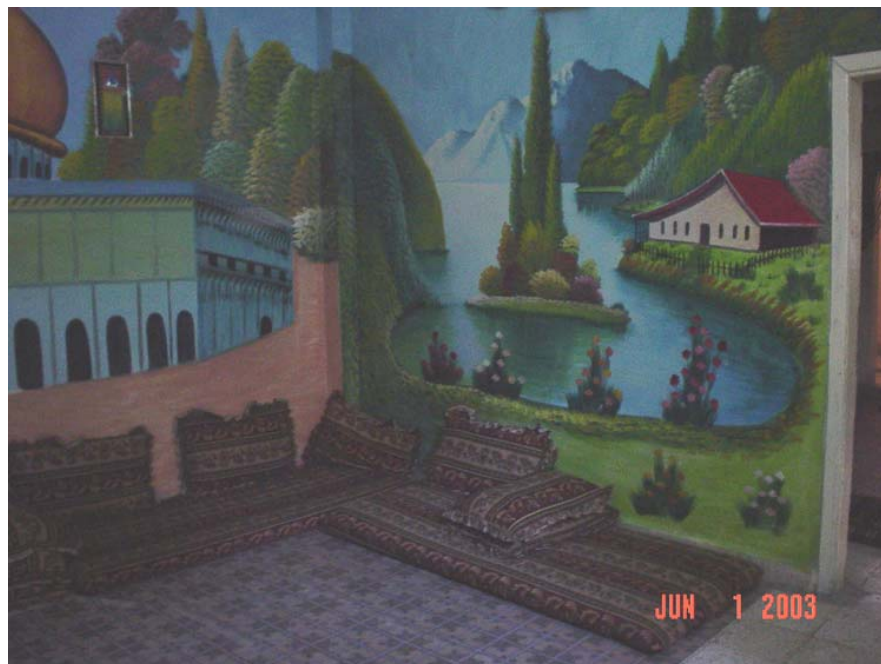
FIGURE 3.3: Decoration of domestic spaces in al-Baq'a Camp.

FIGURE 3.4: Lack of personalization of external spaces in al-Baq'a Camp.

FIGURE 3.5: Central mosque in al-Baq'a Camp.

FIGURE 3.6: A small mosque in al-Wehdat Camp.

FIGURE 3.7: UNRWA school in al-Baq'a Camp.

FIGURE 3.8: New police station in al-Baq'a Camp.

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