

IDENTIFYING PALESTINIANS: PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND THE POLITICS OF  
ETHNO-NATIONAL IDENTITY IN JORDAN

By

Michael Vicente Pérez

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **IDENTIFYING PALESTINIAN: PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND THE POLITICS OF ETHNO-NATIONAL IDENTITY IN JORDAN**

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Based on extensive research (January 2006 – January 2008) among Palestinian refugees living within United Nations Relief and Works Agency camps in Amman, Jordan, my dissertation examines how the contingencies of local and transnational politics constitute particular forms of identification that underscore the possibilities and limits of Palestinian ethnicity and nationhood. My dissertation underscores three critical issues within the process of ethno-national identification among diaspora Palestinians. First, my research shows how Palestinian ethno-national identifications reflect two critical issues: (1) the exclusionary discourse and practices of Transjordanian nationalists and the Jordanian State and (2) the desire to identify as Palestinians, not Jordanians. To challenge their marginalization in Jordan, Palestinians rely on pan-Arab and religious identifications that emphasize their ethno-religious commonality with Jordanians while preserving their distinct ethno-national identification as Palestinians.

Second, my research demonstrates how categories of national and religious identification among refugees indicate the intersections between local concerns and transnational politics. I show how the idioms of religious nationalism articulated by refugees concerning the homeland reflect the significance of Palestinian homeland politics in Jordanian camps and offer

Palestinians an opportunity to assert national identifications in a context where Palestinian nationalism is strictly controlled.

Finally, my dissertation examines how the unique experience and meaning of life as a refugee in Jordan facilitates national identifications defined in terms of displacement and exile. As I show, refugee status constitutes a central point of identification among Palestinians that enables specific forms of ethnic and national belonging grounded in the experience of prolonged displacement and the myth of return.

This dissertation reflects a central concern over the impact of transnational migration and displacement upon the formation and meaning of ethno-national communities and their location within the nation-state. My work examines how ethnic and national categories, whether at the level of the state, national elites, or everyday people, are produced within the nexus of local and transnational struggles that underscore the often contentious position of migrant communities within host states and homeland politics. By recognizing that the process of identification among displaced peoples reflects transnational realities, my research highlights the instability of social categories and the conditions under which they are represented, resisted, and claimed.

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To my mother, Magdalena Medel, and father, Alfredo Pérez, whose families brought them to the United States and made my education possible. To my loving and supporting wife, Fatima Bahloul, who sacrificed her time and ambitions in order to support me in the field. Her patience and love were essential for this dissertation. Finally, to my sons, Joaquín Pérez-Bahloul and Māzen Pérez-Bahloul, who I pray will draw inspiration from my work and will exceed me in all endeavors.

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

DPA	Department of Palestinian Affairs
EU	European Union
FAFO	FAFO Institute for Labor and Social Research
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNA/PA	Palestinian National Authority
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
WHO	World Health Organization
1951 Convention	1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
1967 Protocol	1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

There are many different kinds of Palestinian experience, which cannot all be assembled into one. One would therefore have to write parallel histories of the communities in Lebanon, the Occupied Territories, and so on. That is the central problem. It is almost impossible to imagine a single narrative: It would have to be the kind of crazy history that comes out in *Midnight's Children*, with all those little strands coming and going in and out.  
*Edward Said, 1986*

### **Context and Concerns:**

For over sixty years, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been home to one of the largest Palestinian refugee populations in the world. Beginning with the Palestine War in 1948, or *Al-Nakba* (the tragedy), approximately 105,000 Palestine refugees crossed the Jordan River into the East Bank of what was then Transjordan (Mishal 1978a). Following King ‘Abdullah’s decision to annex the unconquered area of central Palestine including East Jerusalem (the West Bank), another 450,000 refugees were brought into what became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In 1967, the East Bank absorbed another 400,000 Palestinian refugees primarily displaced from the Israeli conquered West Bank and, to a lesser extent, from the Gaza Strip. Categorized as “internally displaced persons,” many of these refugees lost their homes for a second time, first in 1948 and again in 1967. Finally, in 1991, another important yet less known influx of refugees occurred following Saddam Hussein’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait. During this migration, approximately 285,000 Palestinians “returned<sup>1</sup>” to Jordan after being expelled from Kuwait (Troquer and al-Oudat 1999). Altogether, estimates suggest that Palestinian refugees and their descendants today constitute more than half of the Kingdom’s

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<sup>1</sup> Many of these Palestinians established their homes and livelihoods within Kuwait. Their expulsion from Kuwait to Jordan thus undermined the only social and economic existence they knew. Thus the idea that they “returned” to Jordan risks obscuring their deep connections within Kuwait.



population of five million<sup>2</sup>. At least 330,000 of these refugees live within United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) camps throughout Jordan<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to its sizable refugee population, several factors distinguish Jordan from other countries in which Palestinians live. First, Jordan is the only Arab State to offer its citizenship to Palestinian refugees. Although the decision to nationalize Palestinians reflected an expansionist policy concerned more with extending the borders of the Hashemite Kingdom than with the fate of the refugees, the act nevertheless afforded refugees practical benefits unavailable to Palestinians in other countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt<sup>4</sup>. Second, until the 1970 War of Black September between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Jordanian military, Jordan served as the nucleus of Palestinian national organizing and activities (Cobban 1985; Sirriyeh 2000; Yezid Sayigh 2000). Indeed, it was after the mythologized battle of Karameh in Jordan that a new generation of Palestinian *fedā'īyyīn* (guerillas/freedom fighters) ended their hopes for external Arab support and prepared to take the struggle for Palestine into their own hands (Terrill 2001; Khalidi 1998). Third, before the signing of the Oslo Accords between the PLO and Israeli government and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PA) in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Jordanian government engaged in a long and perilous struggle against Palestinian nationalists to assert its representational authority over Jordan's Palestinian refugees. Ruling over a significant Palestinian population and, until

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<sup>2</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics suggests that 3.24 million Palestinians currently reside in Jordan ([http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/nakba\\_e.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/nakba_e.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> UNRWA estimates that at least 1.9 million Palestinians in Jordan are registered refugees (<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=100>).

<sup>4</sup> The territorial and legal union between central Palestine (the West Bank) and the East Bank of Transjordan did not necessarily translate into formal equality between Palestinians and Transjordanians. For a discussion of the union and its implications for Palestinians and Transjordanians, see Massad, 2001 and Mishal, 1978.

1988, the entire West Bank, King Hussein challenged the PLO's position as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people through a variety of policies that exacerbated tensions between the Kingdom's Transjordanian and Palestinian populations.

Despite the demographic and political significance of Jordan's Palestinian refugee population, surprisingly little work has been done to document or understand the history, politics, and lives of this community<sup>5</sup>. Whether on questions of identity and nationalism (Khalidi 1998; Abu El-Haj 2006; Muslih 1988; Lybarger 2007; Jamal 2005), the refugee crisis (Fischbach 2003; Peteet 1992a; Peteet 2009a; Bowker 2003; Masalha 2005; Masalha 1992; Masalha 2008; Hammer 2005; Aruri 2001; Rosemary Sayigh 2008a; Rosemary Sayigh 1994a), history and memory (Slyomovics 1998; Sa'di 2002; Swedenburg 2003; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003), or the conflict with Zionism (Pappe 2006; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003; Rubenberg 2003; Chomsky 2004), Palestinian studies have largely ignored the Jordanian context focusing instead on the more urgent circumstances of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, Gaza, Israel, and Lebanon. In this case, the necessity of addressing the extremes of occupation (Finkelstein and Finkelstein 2003; Makdisi 2008; Bucaille 2006; Rosenfeld 2004), colonization (Zureik 1979; Said 1992; Piterberg 2006; Fayeze 1992; Masalha 1992), and armed conflict (Taraki 2006; Abufarha 2009; Hasso 2005b) unwittingly led to a serious neglect of the less dramatic albeit important stories of Palestinians living in places like Jordan. Save for the occasional reference to refugee profiles and demography (Schulz 2003; Shibliak 1996; Akram 2002), historical studies of Jordan-Israel relations (Shlaim 1988; Satloff 1994; Stewart 2007; Nevo and Pappé 1994a; Shwadran 1959; Abu-Odeh 1999a), or attention to the pre-1970 Palestinian nationalist period

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<sup>5</sup> Some notable exceptions include Marshood, 2009; Hart, 2002; Massad, 2001; Farah, 1999; Brand, 1988; Plascov, 1981; and Mishal, 1978.

(Cobban 1985; Yezid Sayigh 2000; Rubenberg 1983), the Hashemite Kingdom remains an academic blind spot in the field of Palestine studies.

This dissertation seeks to address this lacuna by examining the situation of Palestine refugees living in three camps in Amman, Jordan<sup>6</sup>. In particular, this work considers the significance of local national and transnational politics for understanding ethnic, religious, and national identifications (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) among refugees. As citizen-refugees, Palestinians occupy a liminal (Turner 1982) position in the Jordanian national context: they are at once included as citizens and excluded as nationals. Thus as Jordanian citizens, they enjoy relative social, political, and economic equality with Transjordanians. Yet as Palestinian refugees, they are also excluded from the Jordanian “nation” and important aspects of social life through the chauvinistic discourse of Transjordanian nationalists and an entrenched policy of discrimination by the Jordanian State. Palestinians’ liminality also extends into the nationalist context in Palestine, where a divided national movement competes for authority while struggling against rapid colonization, an international embargo in Gaza, and a 43-year occupation. Under such conditions, neither the Hamas government in Gaza nor the Fatah-dominated PA in the West Bank seem capable of, or willing to, offer more than nominal consideration for the hopes of refugees to “return” to Palestine. It is within this context that my dissertation explores several key questions concerning the politics of identification among Palestinian refugees in Jordan. As displaced refugee-citizens of Jordan, how do Palestinians affirm their “identity” as Palestinians? What can account for the meaning of this identification and what does it reveal about the social conditions and political imperatives of a marginalized population? Grounded in the context of everyday life in Jordan, my research examines the extent to which ethnic, religious, and national

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<sup>6</sup> My primary data comes from three particular refugee camps in Amman. However, throughout my research period, I visited numerous camps in both Amman and Irbid.

identifications among Palestinians suggest the possibilities and limits of a unified Palestinian nation.

This dissertation focuses on the ways in which Palestinian refugees articulate ethnic, religious, and national identifications within the context of everyday life in Jordan. Within Palestinian identity discourse, ethnicity, religion, and nationhood function in a variety of ways that, I argue, reflects the dynamic interplay between two essential components. The first concerns Palestinians' location within the social-political context of Jordan. Faced with the marginalizing discourse of Transjordanian nationalists and the discriminatory practices of the Jordanian State, Palestinians assert ethnic and religious identifications to normalize their status as non-national citizen refugees. While claiming an essential commonality (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) with Jordanians as Arabs and Muslims, Palestinians identify in national terms as a unique community distinguishable from their Jordanian co-citizens. The second element concerns the aspirations of a refugee community marginalized from Palestinian national objectives and struggling to preserve their claim to an indissoluble right of return. Within this context, ethnicity and religion function as important symbolic resources within a nationalizing discourse (Brubaker 1996) that claims Palestine as a sacred national homeland and represents the nation as an ethno-religious national community. Moreover, Palestinians have turned their refugee status into a critical point of commonality grounded in the experience of displacement and an ongoing condition of exile. Palestinians thus identify as refugees in ways that sustains the idea of a Palestinian national community in Jordan with a collective right to return to their national homeland, Palestine.

## **The Politics of Identification:**

The central thesis of this dissertation is that ethnic and national identifications among Palestinian refugees in Jordan are political; that is, they are constituted within a transnational field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) reflecting the exigencies of the local social-political context and the imperatives of a refugee community frustrated by their marginalization from Palestinian national life and inability to return. At the core of this study is an attempt to provide a more nuanced approach to questions of identity—a “thick description” of identity (Geertz 1977)—through an analysis that can account for the ways in which individuals identify themselves and what these identifications tell us about larger social and political processes. As Dhooleka Raj has noted, identities have qualities that give them form, substance, and meaning in everyday life. People speak about themselves or others, or fill out government forms and job applications in ways that give identity an existence seemingly independent of contextualized social action (Raj 2003, 6). But the fact that individuals experience or claim an identity as a fixed, stable feature of their personhood should not lead us to treat their “identity” as such. Instead, it is the analyst’s task to understand the process and meaning of that claim—the identification—within the social context in which it emerges.

To this end, my research employs an analytical vocabulary grounded in recent studies of ethnicity (Brubaker 2006; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993; Jenkins 1994; Raj 2003; Hopkins 2007; Bloul 1999; Brubaker et al. 2008) and nation (Billig 1995; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Calhoun 1998; Calhoun 1997; Brubaker et al. 2008) that move beyond the idea of identity as a static thing that people have or share to consider how identity works as something people resist, subvert, internalize, or claim. In particular, I draw on several key terms that facilitate an approach to identities as sociocultural categories (Raj 2003) that are fundamentally processual

and contingent (Brubaker 1996) and situated within specific socio-political contexts. One of the most basic terms I use throughout this dissertation is *identification* (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000)<sup>7</sup>. As an alternative to identity, identification refers to an active process formulated within the variety of circumstances in which an individual is called upon to identify herself, to characterize herself, to locate herself vis-à-vis known others, to situate herself in a narrative, or to place herself in a category (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 14). It reflects the basic idea that how an individual identifies herself, and how she is identified by others, varies from context to context and is therefore situational. Throughout this dissertation, I primarily focus on categorical modes of identification, which suggest a claim to membership in a class of persons in virtue of some shared categorical attribute including race, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, nationality, citizenship, etc. (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15). The second analytical term I use is *commonality*, which refers to the sharing of some attribute that facilitates both a claim of membership and feeling of belonging or togetherness. Much like Max Weber's description of a "sentiment of solidarity" (Weber 2009, 172), commonality refers to an affective tie or a sense of affiliation and connectedness between an individual and particular others. As Brubaker and Cooper note, such a feeling may indeed depend in part on the degrees and forms of commonality, but it will also depend on other factors such as particular events, their encoding in compelling public narratives, prevailing discursive frames, and so on (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 20).

Central to what I call the "politics of identification" among Palestinian refugees are three particular identifications: ethnic, religious, and national. The literature on ethnicity is vast and includes a variety of theories and approaches that consider its primordial, subjective, objective,

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I also use the terms *self-identification*. By self-identification I mean to emphasize the fact that it is the individual agent who is identifying herself as opposed to being identified by others, which is also called external identification (Jenkins 1994, 198-199; Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15).

essential, symbolic, and constructed qualities (Geertz 1977; Gans 1979; Anthony D. Smith 1991; Nash 1993; Barth 1998; Connor 1993; Grosby 1994; Weber 2009; Abner Cohen 2003).

Scholarly work on nations, nationalism, and nationhood is equally great and reflects similar theoretical and methodological approaches (Gellner 1998; Gellner 2009; Marx 2005; Benedict Anderson 2006; Chatterjee 1993b; Anthony D. Smith 1991; Verdery 1993; Hobsbawm 1992; Bhabha 1990; Duara 1997; Geertz 1977; Herzfeld 2004; Handler 1988). Common to both literatures is the idea that ethnic groups and nations are substantive entities in the world. The theoretical challenge has thus been to produce a framework capable of explaining the origin and continuity of ethnic and national groups. Recently, however, interdisciplinary work has begun to look more closely at ethnicity and nationhood not as distinct expressions of group being but as common forms of categorization and classification (Brubaker 2002; Jenkins 1994; Eriksen 2002; Brubaker et al. 2008; Billig 1995; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993; Barth 1998). Within this literature, ethnicity and nation have been seen not as substances, things, groups, or collective entities but as practical categories, cultural idioms, discursive frames, institutional forms, and contingent events (Brubaker 2006, 167). Moving beyond theory to analysis, work within this approach has asked not what ethnic groups and nations *are* but what ethnicity and nation *do* in the world (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004; Brubaker 2009). Brubaker, for example, has examined the ways in which ethnic and national categories have been mobilized at specific times for specific purposes.

Ethnic category membership can be invoked to account for—to explain, justify, or excuse—an action, stance, or opinion; to hold others accountable for actions or stances imputable to them as category members; to establish one’s standing as an “insider” in order to criticize fellow category members or to advocate an unorthodox, controversial, or potentially discrediting view; to account for an unexpected category membership of a third party; to police the boundaries of a category; or to mark or qualify membership status (Brubaker et al. 2008, 224-225)

Emphasizing the importance of structural factors, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, have also showed how ethnic identifications do not always rely on the presumption of shared cultural properties. Ethnicity can also involve partaking in shared social conditions reflecting unequal access to resources that position individuals as groups and promote particular forms of difference (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, 9). In this case, ethnic identifications can cut across class, gender, and other social markers of distinction and facilitate “group” homogeneity grounded in material exclusions.

In this dissertation, I draw on this literature and examine the function of ethnicity and nation as social categories within the process of self/other identification and within the constitution of social boundaries based on ideas about commonality and difference. By doing so, I emphasize the fact that, at any given time, what counts for ethnicity and/or nationhood could be different. At any specific time and in some particular context, for example, there may be a dominant view of the “essential” character of the putative ethnic or national group grounded in language, religion, or race (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, 8). At another, ethnicity and/or nationhood may reflect a commonality of history, traditions, descent, or a claim to a homeland and/or state. What matters for my analysis is therefore not *if* the meaning of “Palestinian identity” is ethnic or national (or, as I believe, both); rather, my focus is on how ethnic and national identifications function within particular settings and under particular circumstances. I am interested in how the cultural resources constitutive of such identifications (language, memories, descent, homeland, claim to a state) *work* within the context of Jordan in the claim to a distinct “Palestinian identity”<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> As Walker Connor noted in his work on ethnonationalism: [when] analyzing sociopolitical situations, what ultimately matters is not *what* is but *what people believe is* (Connor 1993, 93)



Interspersed throughout the literature on ethnicity and nations/nationalism is the issue of religion. Concerning the subjective qualities of ethnicity, for example, Max Weber listed religion as one of several features of everyday life, such as language, that was capable of promoting feelings of ethnic affinity<sup>9</sup>. According to Weber, common language and the ritual regulation of life, as determined by shared religious beliefs, everywhere are conducive to feelings of ethnic affinity, especially since the intelligibility of the behavior of others is the most fundamental presupposition of group formation (Weber 1978, 390). Similarly, Geertz characterized religion as one of the “givens” of social life and elements of what he called “primordial attachments.” Primordial attachments, according to Geertz, stemmed from the givens of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices (Geertz 1977, 259). Cynthia Enloe extended the Weberian and Geertzian approach to religion by focusing on its use by ethnic “groups” in the promotion of an ethno-religious community. According to Enloe, it may be futile and unrealistic to separate religion and ethnic identity since many individuals behave as if their ethnic affiliation and professed religion are one and the same: to be born Croatian is to be born Catholic (Enloe 1996, 199).

While most scholars have been willing to admit religion into conceptualizations of ethnicity, few have been as readily accepting of religion’s role within the field of nationalism (Mihelj 2007). Drawing a line between *ethnies* (Anthony D. Smith 1991) as “pre-modern formations” and nations as “modern,” most approaches to nationalism have emphasized the secular dimensions of national formations to the exclusion of religion. Weber, for example,

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<sup>9</sup> Manning Nash went further to claim that religion, or what he referred to as a *common cult*, was one of the most common and pervasive markers of ethnic boundaries (Nash 1993).

defined the nation as a community of sentiment “which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own (Weber 2009, 176).” Although Weber accepted the idea that religion could function as one of many sentimental bonds between the members of a “nation,” he nevertheless saw the modern political quest for a state as one of the nation’s defining features. Other scholars have characterized the relationship between religion and nationalism in less flattering ways. In his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson described nationalism in terms of a world marked by the break with a “traditional” past and the development of “modern” processes<sup>10</sup>. According to Anderson, nationalism appeared when the two large cultural systems that preceded it—the religious community and the dynastic realm—disappeared (Veer 1994, 15). In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Eric Hobsbawm took a similar approach suggesting that religion, although often intertwined with nationalism, nevertheless represented an oppositional force capable of threatening the nation’s essentially secular character. According to Hobsbawm:

[Religion] is a paradoxical cement for proto-nationalism, and indeed for modern nationalism, which has usually (at least in its more crusading phases) treated it with considerable reserve as a force which could challenge the ‘nation’s’ monopoly claim to its member’s loyalty (Hobsbawm 1992, 68).

My own approach in this dissertation looks at religion in two ways. At a general level, my analysis situates religion within a nexus of identifications, including ethnic and national, that function to promote particular meanings of the “Palestinian people.” In this sense, I consider religious identifications only to the degree to which, as Walker Connor noted, they contribute to a “notion or sense of self-identity and groupness (Connor 1993, 104).” I thus look at how Palestinian identifications as “Muslims,” or through the idioms of “Islam,” work within an overall discourse of difference and commonality through which ideas about who the Palestinians

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<sup>10</sup> “What I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being (Benedict Anderson 2006, 12).

*are*, and what Palestine *means*, become possible. In a more specific sense, however, I take religion as a constitutive feature of national discourse or nation-talk (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Thus whereas some scholars see religion in competition with nationalism, I look at how religion functions *within* national frameworks to generate particular forms of nationhood through what Mark Juergensmeyer has called religious nationalism. According to Juergensmeyer, religious nationalism represents the inclusion of a religious perspective within a broader prescription about the social and political destiny of “the nation” (Juergensmeyer 1994, 6). In this sense, I avoid the substantialist question of what a nation is (ethnic, religious, modern, etc.) and instead emphasize how the “nation” looks in symbolic terms when religious ideas are constitutive of that formation. Echoing the work of Katherine Verdery, who argues that the “nation” should be conceived as a symbol having multiple meanings, offered as alternatives and competed over by different groups maneuvering to capture the symbol’s definition and its legitimating effects (Verdery 1993, 39), I examine how religion facilitates particular symbolic meanings of the Palestinian nation.

Concerned with the meaning and function of ethno- national identifications, my dissertation also draws on recent work focused on the significance of gender for the social construction of nations and nationalism (Gocek 2002). One of the key problems within the literature on nationalism concerns the failure to consider the importance of gender for understanding nationalist imaginings and projects. As Yuval-Davis noted in her seminal work *Gender and Nation*, most of the hegemonic theorizations about nations and nationalism, even including, sometimes, those written by women, have ignored gender relations as irrelevant (Yuval-Davis 1997, 1). Recent attention to the relationship between gender and nationalism, however, has shown the extent to which gender ideas and relations are implicated within

nationalist projects (Yuval-Davis 1997; Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Campling 1989; Mosse 1997; Layoun 2001; Chatterjee 1993b; Jayawardena 1986; Kaplan, Alarcon, and Moallem 1999).

Concerning the role of women in nationalist movements, for example, Anthias, Yuval-Davis and Campling have identified at least five major ways in which women are involved: as biological reproducers of the members of ethnic/national groups; as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; as ideological reproducers of the collectivity and its culture; as signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of ethnic/national categories; and as participants in national struggles (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Campling 1989). In her analysis of Greek Cypriot and Palestinian nationalism, Mary Layoun has argued that gender, much more than a mere feature of nationalism, is essential for its very emergence. Its boundaries constitute the basis for the imagining of the nation and its practical expression, the nation-state. As Layoun has noted, to speak of “the woman question” in nationalism is to miss the point.

The question of woman—and of women, and of men—is the foundation of nationalism. The very basic rhetorical and organizational principles of the nation are tropes for and expressions of gendered power. They familiarly include rhetorical notions of, and sociopolitical organization based on, a homosocial community of heterosexual men (who protect women, children, and land from foreign threat); the primary identification and allegiance of individual (male) citizens who congregate in the public sphere to rally, lobby, and legislate for the continued (often near fictive) sequestering of a private sphere where women, children, sexuality, and family reside; the genesis of the nation-state as the (masculine) principle that brings regulatory order to the undisciplined and excessive (feminized) masses (Layoun 2001, 14-15).

Working in the field of Palestinian studies, several authors have examined the ways in which gender and nationalism are mutually constituted within the context of nationalist projects of liberation and state-building (Peteet 1992a; Abdo and Lentin 2002; Fleischmann 2003; Kanaaneh 2002; Sharoni 1994; Hasso 2005b). Joseph Massad (1995), for example, has

examined gender within the discourse and practice of the Palestinian national movement led by the PLO. According to Massad, despite the anti-colonial focus of nationalisms within the Middle East and Asia, they have nevertheless entailed gendered narratives of expression reflective of their epistemological origins in European philosophy. Thus the metaphor of the nation as mother- or fatherland, the practice of defending and administering it with homosocial institutions like the military and the bureaucracy, and the gendered strategies of reproducing not only the nation and its nationalist agents but also the very anti-colonial culture defining it, have all been constitutive features of nationalist discourse (Massad 1995, 468). Looking at the discourse expressed within the Palestinian National Charter, Massad examines how gender is configured through metaphors of Palestine as the “mother-land,” Palestinians as its/her “children,” and Zionists as the masculine force that “raped” the land. Beyond discourse, Massad also considers the gendered meaning of nationalist agency during the national uprising or Intifada of 1988. Examining the communiqués of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, Massad reveals the masculinization of agency and, more significantly, the ambiguities surrounding the meaning and role of women as national agents.

In some communiqués, women are listed with occupational groups such as merchants, peasants, students, and workers. This gives the impression that these occupational groups include men only, or that “women,” unlike “men,” constitute a separate occupational group, taking for granted women’s roles as housewives and denying this role the dignity of an occupation. In other communiqués, women are mentioned together with vulnerable sectors of the population, mainly children and old people. Women are listed with men only in the context of resistance and struggle, thus recognizing men’s agency as their *only* defining attribute, while women (who are not mothers) possess limited agency (Massad 1995, 475)

In her work on the politics of reproduction among Palestinians in Israel, Rhoda Kanaaneh has also examined the role of gender albeit within the context of birthing policies of the Israeli state and Palestinian nationalist strategies. In looking at family-planning processes among

Palestinians in the Galilee, Kanaaneh argues that it is important to recognize how reproduction, in its biological and social sense, is inextricably bound with the production of culture.

The negotiation of reproductive decisions in the Galilee has recently become a struggle not only over women's bodies and lives but also over significant social concepts such as "the feminine," "the masculine," "the household," "our culture," "the nation," and "progress. Family planning is now part of the social processes in which these concepts are daily defined, changed, and redefined in people's lives; in which gender is configured, communities are imagined, and boundaries of the modern are drawn (Kanaaneh 2002, 1).

What the work of Massad, Kanaaneh, and other scholars concerned with the relationship between gender and nationalism show is that gender, far from being a single feature of nationalism, is often the very basis from which nationalism becomes possible. They show how nationalism is always *already* constituted within a generalized sexual politics that finds expression within its own particular historical context (Kaplan, Alarcon, and Moallem 1999).

This dissertation draws on the insights offered by the literature on gender and nationalism to examine how gender is implicated within ethnic and national identifications among refugees. Although my research does not concern the specific topic of gender or examine the activities of any particular nationalist movement or mobilization, I nevertheless consider how the sexual politics of ethnic and nationalist discourse is constituted within the claims of a population identifying in national terms. In particular, my analysis examines how ethnic and national identifications are gendered in ways that underscore key distinctions between men and women's roles in the biological and social reproduction of the ethno-national community of Palestinians. According to the gendered logic of ethnic and national identification among Palestinians I researched, women are essential for the biological and social reproduction of the ethno-national group: they reproduce the members of the group and ensure that the culture of the group is passed on to the younger generation (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Campling 1989). In so doing,

women are not only promoting the biological “continuity” of the group but also reinscribing the ethnic and national boundaries that distinguish them as an imagined ethno-national collectivity. But women alone are insufficient for performing their reproductive roles; it is only through a Palestinian man’s contribution—both biological and social—that a woman can birth the nation (Kanaaneh 2002). Thus it is only through marriage to a Palestinian male, identified by his lineage’s historical presence in the mother-land—Palestine—that a Palestinian woman can reproduce the group. Gender also emerges within conceptions of nationalist agency. Much as Massad has shown within the secular rhetoric of the PLO, the religious nationalism espoused by Palestinian refugees I met also promoted distinct forms of agency in which women’s reproductive roles were reconstituted as nationalist acts of devotion. By reproducing the imagined community of Palestinians, women were also described as serving the national cause. Moreover, their particular contribution of sons to the cause is hailed as the gift of martyrs who will defend and/or liberate the mother-land from Zionist invasion or die in the process<sup>11</sup>.

Taken together, my analysis situates ethnic, religious, and national identifications among Palestinians within what Brubaker, drawing on the work of Bourdieu, has called a relational nexus (Brubaker 1996) or political field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). For Bourdieu, to think in terms of a field is to think relationally between positions within something like a game<sup>12</sup>.

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation in the structure of the

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<sup>11</sup> For an examination of female martyrdom in the Intifada see (Hasso 2005a)

<sup>12</sup> “We can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game...[Thus] we have stakes, which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an investment in the game: players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (doxa) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98).”

distribution of species of power...as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97).

Understood this way, nationalism is not engendered by nations; rather [i]t is produced—or better, it is induced—by *political fields* of particular kinds (Brubaker 1996, 17). It is, as Prasenjit Duara has described, a relational “identity”<sup>13</sup>, representing a relationship among constituents, not the realization of an original essence (Duara 1997, 15). Within the context of “multi-ethnic” states such as Jordan, we can therefore understand ethno-national identifications as “happenings” or as “events” occurring within a field constituted by a triadic nexus involving three mutual and often antagonistic nationalisms: the nationalizing nationalisms of host states, the nationalizing nationalisms of external homeland nationalists, and the nationalizing nationalisms of minorities. Nationalizing nationalisms involve claims made in the name of a “core nation” or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole (Brubaker 1996, 5). It is visible within the discourse and practice of nationalists who, because they are the core nation, claim the state as their own and deny it to others.

Homeland nationalisms refer to the nationalisms of elites in “external national homelands” who claim to represent, support, and protect “their” ethno-national kin in other states (Brubaker 1996, 5). Engaging in trans-national politics, homeland nationalists assert certain rights and responsibilities to their co-nationals abroad in ways that transcend geopolitical borders and often rub against the claim by host states that their national minorities are an internal matter. Finally, there are the nationalizing discourses and practices of national minorities who make their own claims on the grounds of their ethno-national status. National minorities are not, according to Brubaker, internally unified, externally sharply bounded groups (Brubaker 1996, 62). Rather,

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<sup>13</sup> According to Duara, identity can be understood as referring to subject positions produced by representations in relation to other representations (Duara 1997, 7)



like the nationalizing nationalism of the state and the nationalizing nationalism of the homeland, national minorities represent a political stance: they are political stances taken by agents within a relational field that “ethnicize” and “nationalize” people in particular ways<sup>14</sup>.

Within the context of my own research, I apply Brubaker’s notion of a political field and use the constituent elements he identifies within the context of Eastern Europe to examine ethno-national identifications among Palestinians, albeit with minor revisions. First, I do not consider the position of Palestinians as that of a national minority. Indeed, in Jordan there is no single party, organization, or institution involved in any forms of nationalist politics claiming to work on behalf of Palestinians. Nonetheless, my research shows that Palestinians do engage in ethnicizing and nationalizing discourses and practices that indicate a discernible political stance within the context of everyday life. Second, Brubaker’s idea of the nationalizing nationalism of host states has to be slightly modified. In Jordan, I look at the nationalizing nationalism of Transjordanian nationalists and the practices of the Hashemite state not as a single “element” but rather as mutually reinforcing stances that function together within a broader political field. In addition, my analysis does not necessarily focus on the nationalizing practices of either Hamas or Fatah vis-à-vis Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Rather, I look at how nationalist politics in Palestine are brought into the local context by refugees seeking to claim a place within homeland politics and assert a stance relevant to their situation as refugees in Jordan.

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<sup>14</sup> Using this notion, developed and employed by Pierre Bourdieu in an impressive variety of studies, we can think of a national minority not as a fixed entity or a unitary group but rather in terms of the field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual political entrepreneurs, each seeking to “represent” the minority to its own putative members, to the host state, or to the outside world, each seeking to monopolize the legitimate representation of the group (Brubaker 1996, 61).

### **The Imagined Homeland:**

Recent studies have shown the importance of putative homelands for understanding ethnic and national claims among migrants, refugees, and displaced peoples (Sheffer 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Burawoy et al. 2000; Appadurai 2001; Robert Smith 2005; Vertovec and Robin Cohen 1999; Al-Rasheed 2005; Vertovec 2009; Michael Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Malkki 1995; Brettell 2003). For scholars of nationalism like Anthony Smith, the homeland plays an important role in the formation of ethnic and national communities. In his view, the homeland constitutes an historic or ancestral land that not only provides the setting upon which the “nation’s” history is inscribed<sup>15</sup> but, like the nation itself, takes on its own particular identity distinguishable in its landscapes from “other” territories and histories. Thus Smith has argued that every nationalism seeks to cultivate and preserve its own special values in its own manner and on a territory it considers a historic homeland (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 33).

Beyond questions of ethnicity and nationhood, the homeland concept has often appeared among scholars interested in transnationalism, globalization, and the formation of diasporas (Sheffer 2006; Brah 1996; Clifford 1994; Robin Cohen 1996; Safran 1991; Robin Cohen 1997; Hear 1998; Patterson 2006). Concerned with transnational cultural flows, the mass movement of populations, and the increasing deterritorialization of peoples, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson described the homeland as one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 11). According to them, attention to the “pulverized space of post-modernity” reveals that the meaning of “home” and “homelands” no longer reflects the stable relationships anthropologists once assumed between people and places. Instead, the

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<sup>15</sup> According to Smith, the homeland provides the “arena and indispensable setting for the great men and women, and the turning points, in the nation’s history – battles, treaties, synods and assemblies, the exploits of heroes and the shrines and schools of saints and sages (Anthony D. Smith 2002, 32).”

situation of migrants, refugees, and stateless people underscores the ways in which home and homelands serve as symbolic anchors for dispersed communities who use memories of place to imaginatively construct their new lived world (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 11).

For scholars like Robin Cohen and William Safran, the homeland concept is at the center of all diaspora communities in at least two ways: (1) as an idealized ancestral territory grounded in collective memory and tied to a myth of return and (2) as a putative ancestral home demanding a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity (Robin Cohen 1996; Robin Cohen 1997; Safran 1991). Taking the Jewish diaspora as the paradigmatic case, both Cohen and Safran understand the homeland as a key concept not only for identifying diasporas but also for determining the *kind* of diasporas they might be: victim, labor, trade, imperial, or cultural.

More recently, critics have revealed several limitations within the idea that homeland connections are sufficient for characterizing the relationship between people and place in diasporic terms (Dufoix 2008; Brubaker 2005; Anthias 1998). By emphasizing the more general idea of a connection *to* the homeland, these critics argue that diaspora scholars have often ignored the complex meanings *of* that homeland for the various populations living in distinct circumstances. In so doing, scholars have precluded their ability to account for how the specific local conditions affecting each population factor into the production of homeland connections and, in some cases, politics. As Stephane Dufoix noted, studies of “diasporas” often fail to present the workings of the thing they ought best describe: the relationship to a “referent-origin”(Dufoix 2008, 2). Such inadequacies in diaspora accounts often result in a flattening of difference whereby the concept of homeland remains unspecified and otherwise disparate populations are forced into bounded categorical groups that need to be explained, not assumed

(Dufoix 2008, 2). Moreover, Floya Anthias has argued that the application of the diaspora category often reflects a failure to specify the distinct conditions under which populations migrate and, more importantly, ignores the impact of local conditions upon these populations. Putative diasporas have thus appeared in ways that suggest far more homogeneity than actually exists and have essentialized the relationship between people and place (Anthias 1998, 564).

Among the Palestinians I researched, Palestine emerged as an important feature of ethno-national identifications. For them, it was the ancestral homeland representing a fundamental commonality that enabled particular forms of ethno-national belonging grounded in ideas about culture and descent. In this sense, my work is consistent with the findings of other scholars whose work within Palestinian communities has revealed a strong and enduring connection to their former homeland (Peteet 2009a; Said 2002; Hammer 2005; Schulz 2003; Staughton Lynd, Bahour, and Alice Lynd 1998). Yet my research departs with these studies in an important way. Whereas most scholars have looked at the importance of the homeland for the meaning of “Palestinian identity,” few have considered the meaning of the homeland itself. Thus the idea of the national homeland remains an underanalyzed feature of Palestinian life.

In this dissertation, I consider the homeland in two ways. First, I examine the homeland as a referent-origin (Dufoix 2008) linked to what Stephan Dufoix has called an atopic mode of being. According to Dufoix, atopic modes of being refer to a way of being in the world between states that is built around a claim to a common origin, ethnicity, or religion and that does not reduce one to being a subject of a host country (Dufoix 2008, 63). Second, I examine the function of the homeland within an ethno-national discourse grounded in genealogical ties (Ho 2004) and reflecting what Anthony Smith described as a common community of descent. According to this idea, whether an individual is within her community or has emigrated to

another, she remains ineluctably and organically a member of the community of her birth and is forever stamped by it (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 11).

### **The Chapters:**

This dissertation consists of eight chapters, six of which present my methodological approach and data analysis. In the following chapter, titled “Research Methodology: The Sites, The Process, and The Anthropologist,” I present my key methodologies and offer an overview of my research field sites. The chapter opens with an explanation/exploration of my dissertation topic: how I came to decide on my topic and the challenges I faced in realizing my research. The next section of the chapter provides a detailed account of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. It presents some of the demographic and socio-economic features of the camps and their location within Jordan. In the next four sections, I articulate my specific research methods and address what questions they attempted to answer in the field. The final two sections offer an exploration of my positionality within the field highlighting some of the interactions between myself and my interlocutors and what these encounters suggested for my own position as an anthropologist in the field.

In the first substantive chapter of this dissertation, “Chapter Three: Identifying Refugees: The Claims of Exile and the Meaning of “Palestinian Refugees,” I offer a critical examination of the meaning of displacement and exile among Palestinian refugees in three UNRWA refugee camps and several urban areas of Amman. Of particular concern are cultural meanings of “refugees” and “the camps.” In the first sections of this chapter, I provide a brief account of Palestinian displacement and its connection to the creation of an official definition of a Palestine refugee articulated by the UNRWA. I also consider the context of UNRWA refugee camps through demographic data. The next section moves to examine the meanings of refugee

identification claimed by Palestinians in two particular settings: the refugee camps and the city. In both contexts, I argue that Palestinians claim to be refugees in ways that transcend the official status of a refugee ascribed by UNRWA. For Palestinians, it is both the experience and persistence of displacement and its inheritance that identifies one as a refugee.

But claiming refugeehood is about much more than simply identifying oneself as a refugee; it is an important link established to a particular place and people that, in turn, marks one as “matter out of place” (Malkki, 1995). Reinscribing the idea that people belong naturally in particular places, Palestinians claim refugeehood as a way of articulating their non-belonging to Jordan. As refugees, they are in exile: a condition of being outside of one’s normal existence. Also, being a refugee means that one is going to return, that the only negation of refugeehood is through the restoration of Palestine and its people in it. In the final section of the chapter, I examine how refugee identifications are implicated within cultural ideas about the relationship between identity and place. Although the shared experiences of displacement and exile established an important link between Palestinians across space and time, I argue that the material and symbolic boundaries between the city and the camps nevertheless have significant consequences for what it means to *be* a refugee living in both spaces.

The second substantive chapter of my dissertation, “Chapter Four: Nationalizing States: Transjordanians, the State, and the Palestinians,” examines how Palestinians articulate their position in Jordan in light of the exclusionary discourse and practice of Transjordanian nationalists and the Hashemite state. My aims in this chapter are twofold. First, this chapter seeks to provide a background on two elements constitutive of the political field in which

Palestinian nationhood takes place in Jordan<sup>16</sup>. The first element concerns the nationalist stance taken by Transjordanian nationalists. As the “true” nation of Jordan, Transjordanians claim that the state belongs exclusively to them and thus represent Palestinians as a foreign presence on Jordanian soil. The second element I discuss concerns Jordanian state policies towards the Palestinians and its importance for the meaning of Palestinian identity. In the Jordanian context, discriminatory treatment of Palestinian citizens has not only reinforced the idea that Palestinians and Jordanians represent distinct ethno-national communities but has also given practical meaning to such distinctions in terms of access to political and economic resources. The state has thus played a critical role in the establishment of ethno-national boundaries that underscores Palestinians’ unequal status as citizens and reinforces an important aspect of their shared condition as a group.

In the next chapter, “Chapter Five: Citizenship Without Nationality: The “*Ins*” and “*Outs*” of Palestinian Jordanians,” I focus on the impact of the Transjordanian political field upon the meaning of Palestinian identity among refugees in Amman as expressed through ideas about nationality and citizenship. Faced with the exclusionary politics of Transjordanian nationalists and the discriminatory practices of the state, Palestinians engage in a tenuous form of ethno-national discourse. As citizens of Jordan confronting prolonged displacement and the unlikelihood of any immediate return, Palestinians assert a universalist form of discourse that seeks to normalize their presence in Jordan as Arabs and Muslims and challenge the exclusivist

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<sup>16</sup> As noted by Brubaker, “nationalism is not engendered by nations. It is produced—or better, it is induced—by *political fields* of particular kinds. Its dynamics are governed by the properties of political fields, not by the properties of collectivities (Brubaker 1996, 17).

claims of their Transjordanian peers. Through pan-Arab<sup>17</sup> and religious discourse, Palestinians thus identify with Transjordanians and claim a legitimate right to belong in Jordan as Arabs and Muslims. But Palestinians also promote a particularist claim to Palestine and Palestinian nationhood. They thus assert a unique ethno-national identity as Palestinians that allows them to disidentify with Jordan and claim a stronger sense of belonging to Palestine and the idea of a Palestinian nation. These two positions form an important part of the meaning of Palestinian nationhood in Jordan. Together, they underscore the interactive stances Palestinians take within Jordan vis-à-vis the state and Transjordanian nationalists. More importantly, they suggest the basic idea that forms the central claim of this dissertation, namely that Palestinian nationhood in Jordan should be understood not as something that is produced but rather induced by interacting factors in a broader political field.

The following chapter, “Chapter Six: Homeland Matters,” examines the meaning of the Palestinian homeland for refugees in Jordan and considers its significance for understanding how Palestinians identify in ethnic, religious, and national terms. Divided into four sections, this chapter aims to elucidate several features of the Palestinian homeland as conceived by camp refugees. In the first section, I begin with a brief history of the colonial and post-colonial geography of Palestine giving particular attention to its shifting territorial borders and location within the regional context. The next section considers how descriptions of the homeland among two particular categories of refugees—those born in Palestine and those born in Jordan—reflected the widespread idea of an unchanging Palestinian geography. Despite their location within distinct generational groups, both articulated a similar conception of the homeland rooted

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<sup>17</sup> According to Rashid Khalidi, Arab nationalism is the idea that Arabs are a people linked by special bonds of language and history (and many would add religion), and that their political organization should in some way reflect this reality.



in the colonial borders of the British Mandate. The third section of this chapter considers the significance of the homeland for the maintenance of an ethno-national Palestinian identity. As I show, for Palestinian refugees, identifying the homeland was no trivial matter. It not only indicated a commitment to preserving a connection to a particular territory but also reflected a common will to resist the ongoing erasure (Piterberg 2001) of that place by a population claiming the land as its own. In the final section of this chapter, I consider the homeland within the context of everyday life among Palestinian refugees. Looked at ethnographically, I show how material representations of the homeland reflect what Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss have called “everyday nationhood” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). In Jordan, where public expressions of Palestinian nationalism are strictly monitored and controlled, I argue that representations of the homeland offer refugees an important opportunity to engage in the practice of nationhood.

In the next chapter, “Chapter Seven: Muslim Palestine: Homeland, National Politics, and the Islamic Nation of Palestine,” I examine the significance of religious nationalism for Palestinian refugees in Jordan. In particular, I explore how the religious nationalist discourse of Hamas in the Palestinian context of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been adopted by Palestinian refugees in Jordan and is reflected in local identifications of the Palestinian people, homeland and struggle. I argue that national identifications among Palestinian refugees in Jordan not only reflect the influence of Hamas in the camps but also the willful engagement of Palestinians with homeland politics. Despite their marginal status as refugees living beyond the center of Palestinian national politics, Palestinians are not passive spectators of homeland nationalism. Rather, they stake meaningful claims within homeland politics from afar in ways that underscores the significance of national politics for their specific situation in Jordan.

In the final chapter of this dissertation titled “Chapter Eight: Conclusions,” I present some of my key findings and highlight their significance for larger issues within the discipline of anthropology. Divided into three sections, I review my dissertation chapters thematically considering their relationship to questions about refugees and citizenship, ethnicity and nationhood, and homelands and diasporas. Together, these sections underscore the various intersections of this dissertation with different literatures that are united by a common interest in understanding how “identities” are constituted within and by particular politico-cultural conditions.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology: The Sites, The Process, and The Anthropologist**

### **Research Routes and Trajectory:**

A research project always defies the boundaries we typically assign it in our proposals. If this is true, then understanding the constitution of a project requires that we transcend the limits of the academic proposal to include a variety of decisions, experiences, and efforts that establish the basis for engaging with a particular topic. In my own case, the formation of my research project took a dramatic turn that ultimately changed the place and purpose of my fieldwork. Originally, my research did not concern nationalism nor was it grounded in the refugee camps of Jordan. In the following section, I aim to provide a brief, personal background of my research project detailing its awkward routes of production. My reasons for doing so are not without academic purpose. To be sure, by writing this section I aim to highlight an often neglected dimension of the research project that, I believe, is essential for understanding the vicissitudes of doing fieldwork in contentious times and places.

My original research project concerned the topics of violence and suffering. Upon completing my second year of graduate studies in 2004, I was interested in conducting an ethnographic study of violence within the Occupied West Bank in Palestine. My interest in the topic reflected my growing concern over the breakdown of the Peace Process<sup>18</sup> and what Baruch

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<sup>18</sup> The terms “Peace Process” are often used to refer to the period following the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israeli and PLO representatives in Oslo, Norway on August 20, 1993. Throughout this dissertation, I will use the terms Peace Process more broadly to refer to the period of negotiations between the PLO and Israeli government that began with the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords and have ostensibly continued until the present day.

Kimmerling called the politicide<sup>19</sup> (Kimmerling 2006) of the Palestinian people. Since the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsā Intifāda*<sup>20</sup> in September 2000, I was engulfed by the almost daily spectacles of violence flickering on the mainstream news networks and their often simplified and ahistorical analyses. Suicide bombings, home demolitions, air strikes, and other forms of routine violence compelled me to consider how an anthropologist might make a meaningful contribution toward understanding the escalating conflict between the Israeli military and a consortium of organized Palestinian militias that, by 2008, had killed over 4,500 Palestinians and 400 Israelis<sup>21</sup>. How, I wondered, do communities under siege understand and survive the routine violence of daily life under military occupation and a thriving resistance? Is normal life possible?

Awarded a National Science Foundation pre-dissertation research grant by the Anthropology Department at Michigan State University in the summer of 2004, I left the comforts of Michigan in order to conduct the first phase of my ethnographic study of violence and survival in the Occupied West Bank. Although the grant was designed to ease students into their new field sites and facilitate the development of the much longer experience of dissertation fieldwork, my departure was neither unfamiliar nor new. The previous summer I traveled to the West Bank with a local peace organization called The Michigan Peace Team. Through the

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<sup>19</sup> According to Kimmerling, politicide refers to the process that has, as its ultimate goal, the dissolution of the Palestinian people's existence as a legitimate social, political, and economic entity (Kimmerling 2006, 3-4).

<sup>20</sup> The Al-Aqsa Intifada derives its name from the site of clashes that many commentators use to mark the start of the post-Oslo period. Al-Aqsa is the name of one of the mosques located in Jerusalem within the *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* (The Noble Sanctuary). It is widely known as the third holiest mosque for Muslims as its location was the first *qibla* (direction of prayer for Muslims) for Muslims until the shift to the *Ka'ba* in the city of Mecca. It is also the site of the Prophet Muhammad's *Al-Isrā' wal-Mi'rāj* (night journey).

<sup>21</sup> B'Tselem. <http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp> (11 January 2010).

generous financial and moral support of local peace advocates within the Lansing community, I and several Michigan activists joined the International Solidarity Movement in Palestine and other non-governmental organizations in the Palestinian cities of Jenin and Nablus in order to promote peaceful alternatives to violent resistance and document Israeli abuses against Palestinian communities.

As a result of my experiences that summer, I wrote and presented a paper on violence and resistance in the West Bank at the 2003 annual meeting of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA). The paper was well received and formed the basis of a preliminary research paper. Suffice it to say that I perceived both my initial visit to Palestine and subsequent participation in the MESA conference as two logical steps towards building an academic project that, in 2004, was ready for a new phase. As I was soon to learn, however, the seemingly logical trajectory of my research plans had unexpected consequences that not only changed the entire course of my academic studies but also revealed the inherent risks and uncertainties of doing research in the politically charged field of Palestine studies.

In a sense, my fieldwork ended before it began. As a fieldsite, Palestine is a bounded territory strictly monitored and controlled by the Israeli military. In practical terms, this means that getting into the West Bank and leaving it is determined by the Israeli authorities. Contrary to the celebrated flows of globalization, Palestine is located within a tangible matrix of military control. Borders in Palestine are solid. This is true whether one arrives at the Jordanian Allenby Bridge, the Egyptian-Israeli border, or Tel Aviv: Israel controls the Occupied Territories. My experience of arrival one year earlier brought this reality into sharp focus. Entering the West Bank via Israel involved a complex set of connections and deceptions that together established a credible purpose for visiting Israel. This time, however, I believed a more truthful declaration

about my intentions in Palestine were a sure ticket in. When I arrived at the Ben Gurion International Airport of Tel Aviv, two Israeli security agents began their routine questioning of select passengers. As anticipated, I was selected. But what began as a series of short and simple questions soon became a 17-hour experience of waiting and queries that culminated in an interrogation of Orwellian qualities. After more than 12 hours of isolation in the airport, I was escorted through a long, narrow corridor into a cold white room with two agents, a computer, and a chair. Within the next five hours, I was forced to board a British Airways flight back to the United States from where I came. The reason: security concerns.

Once in the United States, I began a critical evaluation of the viability of my current research project. After serious consideration over the uncertainties of returning to Palestine and the possibilities of formulating a new topic in Palestine studies, I determined that Jordan offered a feasible and important alternative. My new research topic thus shifted from the lived experience of violence in the West Bank to the core of the Palestinian predicament: displacement. The new turn in my research wasn't a complete break from my anthropological concerns. While studying the history of the conflict, I had developed an interest in the issue of Palestinian refugees. In particular, I was struck by their protracted condition of exile and statelessness and felt it provided an important opening for examining questions about displacement and community, human rights, and the structures and function of the international refugee regime. Notwithstanding the significance of the refugees to the Palestine question during my original studies, I nevertheless felt that the urgency of military occupation and violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip demanded immediate attention. This led me to concentrate, as many scholars do, on the occupation. More importantly, the U.S. war on terror and recent invasion of Iraq made questions of violence, Islam, and the Middle East particularly salient. To be sure, it

wasn't long after the 9/11 attacks that former Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, began to situate Israel's military strikes and destruction within the discursive frame of the war on terror. For these reasons, I developed a project within the West Bank.

My decision to change topics and fieldsites proved to be a good one. For the next three years (2005-2007), I traveled to and from Jordan with few obstacles. Not without some sense of irony, it was the constitutional monarchy of Jordan that welcomed me into its borders and allowed me to complete my fieldwork. That is, despite the sensitivity of the Palestinian issue in Jordan, my research experience was mostly unhindered and proved a serious challenge to the myth of Israel's exclusively liberal character. Often hailed by U.S. pundits for its openness and democratic uniqueness within the region, Israel was in fact the less welcoming and free of the two states. As I learned, the state's intolerance of critique not only constrained my own research ambitions but proved that restrictions of movement and the suppression of truth are not the exclusive province of monarchies and authoritarian governments in the Middle East<sup>22</sup>. On the contrary, my own assessment is that Israel, like other states, understands the importance of criticism and thus decided that the benefits of prohibiting one anthropologist from conducting his research was well worth the seemingly trivial costs.

The preceding narrative is meant to provide a background to my research project in Jordan. It is an attempt to construct a short but detailed representation of my research routes and how I arrived in Jordan. Although any account is always incomplete insofar as the selection of some facts entails the silencing of others (Trouillot 1997), it nevertheless highlights some of the contingencies of fieldwork that constitute the research project as a whole. As Occupied Palestine

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<sup>22</sup> Upon discussing my experience with several friends and colleagues, I learned that my situation was not uncommon in the context of the new Intifada. Both activists and scholars were being deprived access to the territories.

so compelling illustrates, unstable places are unstable fieldsites. While this should not deter anthropologists from conducting research in such locations, it does require a certain kind of flexibility unnecessary in other contexts. It also shows that fieldsites are not the passive, accessible places we often imagine them to be. Many research projects are formulated far from the actual sites we intend on visiting. From texts, conversations, media, and our own imaginations, we construct our sites in the absence of its tangible and uncertain dimensions. My own experience taught me the limits of my ethnographic imagination and that fieldsites are constituted by and through powerful forces well beyond the control or manipulations of a well-intentioned anthropologist.

### **Research Sites: The Fields**

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan shares the longest border with the Occupied West Bank and Israel. Unsurprisingly, it also shelters the largest number of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and world. At least seventeen percent (approximately 400,000) of Palestinian refugees in Jordan live in and receive services from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)<sup>23</sup> in the Middle East. Throughout the Kingdom, UNRWA provides shelter and services in ten official camps and services in three unofficial camps<sup>24</sup>. Not all refugees live within camps. In 2008, UNRWA estimated that a total of 1.5 million registered refugees did not live in any refugee camp. This number does not account for Palestinians who are not registered

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<sup>23</sup> Established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of December 8, 1949, UNRWA is responsible for the implementation of direct relief and works programs for Palestine refugees. It began its operations on May 1, 1950. Since 1949 and in the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate.

<sup>24</sup> There are currently three neighborhoods in Amman, Zarqā' and Madaba that are considered refugee camps by the Jordanian government and "unofficial" camps by UNRWA. See UNRWA.org for more information.



with UNRWA but are nevertheless refugees displaced during the Palestine War of 1948 or Arab-Israeli War of 1967.



**Figure One: Map of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan<sup>25</sup>**

Conducting an ethnographic research project on Palestinian national formations among such a large and dispersed population required an expansive definition of a fieldsite. At times, the ethnographic field included anywhere I happened to be. Indeed, whether riding the bus

<sup>25</sup> From <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>

through the circuitous streets of Amman or walking through the narrow Siq of Petra, the question of Palestine and the Palestinians emerged in unexpected and often serendipitous moments. On other occasions, the field was confined to the space of the refugee camps I visited while conducting interviews or other more focused endeavors. Despite the elusive boundaries of my fieldwork, there were nevertheless several sites that constituted the basis of my fieldwork and thus deserve particular attention.

Primarily, my research sites were confined to the Jordanian capital, Amman. Although several cities in Jordan could have provided a productive site for my research, there were several reasons for choosing Amman. First, it has the largest number of refugee camps in the country. Second, the greatest concentration of Palestinian refugees and their descendants live within the capital. These two facts of Amman facilitated my access to the Palestinians I hoped to meet, engage, study, and learn from: camp refugees and non-camp refugees. Amman also provided several institutional advantages that eased the research process. For example, Amman housed The Jordanian-American Commission for Educational Exchange (JACEE) run by The Bi-national Fulbright Commission in Jordan. As a Fulbright recipient, the friendly staff and institutional affiliations offered through JACEE proved an invaluable resource throughout my research period. In addition, UNRWA had several offices spread throughout the city including their central headquarters. Finally, the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) was also located in Amman. As the main government agency responsible for the administration of the Kingdom's refugee camps, the DPA controlled access to all non-UNRWA projects within the camps. This included providing security clearances for researchers like me. Suffice it to say that access to the DPA office in Amman was essential for obtaining all the permits necessary for conducting my research.

Most of my research data among registered Palestine refugees<sup>26</sup> comes from three specific refugee camps in Jordan: the *Wihdāt*<sup>27</sup> camp, the *Baqa'a* camp, and the *Hittīn*<sup>28</sup> camp. The Wihdāt refugee camp is located slightly south east of Amman. Although the camp is not technically considered part of Amman, it is nevertheless contiguous with other urban areas within the city. Less like a camp, it better resembles an urban slum characterized by high population density, poor infrastructure, tightly-packed houses made of concrete and often zinc roofs, and narrow streets. It was established in 1955 following the 1948 Palestine War and today houses a variety of refugees including those displaced in 1948 and 1967. In addition, the camp now has a small section in which Iraqi refugees have begun to settle. As one of the older camps in Jordan, it has a population of approximately 50,000 registered refugees, thirteen primary schools, and two health centers<sup>29</sup>. In addition, Wihdāt has approximately 14 NGOs including cultural activities centers, Islamic charities, a community rehabilitation center, and a woman's program center.

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<sup>26</sup> UNRWA's official definition of a Palestine refugee includes all "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." This definition, however, does not assign refugee status per se. Rather, it provides the parameters for determining who can receive services from UNRWA. According to UNRWA, "[its] definition of refugees is necessarily restricted to those eligible to receive its aid, as the definition explicitly states that the refugee must have lost both home and means of livelihood to be eligible for registration with UNRWA." Currently, the universally accepted definition of a "refugee" expressed by Article 1A (2) in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees does not apply to the majority of Palestinian refugees (Rempel 2006).

<sup>27</sup> The official UNRWA name of the camp is Amman New Camp. However, all of my participants and locals referred to it as Wihdat. Throughout this paper, I will refer to it as the Wihdat camp.

<sup>28</sup> The official UNRWA name of the camp is *Marka* Camp. However, all of my participants and locals referred to it as the *Hittīn* and *Schlinner* camp. Throughout this paper, I will refer to it as the Hittīn camp.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/jordan/newamman.html> (11 January 2010).

Camp	Number of Registered Refugees
Baqa'a	93,916
Wihdāt	51,443
Marka	45,593
Jabal el-Husseini	29,464
Irbid	25,250
Husn	22,194
Zarqā'	18,509
Souf	20,142
Jerash	24,090
Talbīyeh	6,970

**Table One: UNRWA Refugee Camp Profiles in Jordan<sup>30</sup>**

The Wihdāt camp was my first research site and I spent a considerable amount of time shopping, talking, and observing life and institutions within the camp. Indeed, a significant number of my participants lived within the camp. Originally, one of my early contacts in Jordan, Hāzim<sup>31</sup>, suggested that I visit the camp and begin my interviews there. A camp resident himself, he situated the camp within a broader historical context taking particular pride in its short-lived autonomy during the peak of PLO power in Jordan. Through Hāzim and other helpful Palestinians, I was able to visit the camp regularly and set up several interviews with individuals and families. I was also able to establish a critical relationship with two Islamic charities within the camp. These institutions provided an ideal opportunity to examine how

<sup>30</sup> From <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=66>

<sup>31</sup> Hāzim is a pseudonym used to protect the participant's identity. Throughout this dissertation, I use pseudonyms for participants in order to preserve their anonymity.

religious education and nationalism mingled within the context of social services. In addition, several residents in the camp were relatives of our close friends in Michigan. This not only facilitated research goals but ensured that we made regular visits to the camp for casual interaction with new-found friends. On a more practical level, Wihdāt offered an important context for observing and participating in camp life and movement. Throughout our residence in Jordan, my wife, Fatima, and I took the local *servīs*<sup>32</sup> to the *Raghadān* bus station in the valley, jumped on the *Kullīyāt Hittīn* bus, and traveled up *Jabal Amman* (Amman Mountain) in order to reach the camp. Once there, we'd join hundreds of camp residents and 'outsiders' in the busy *sūq Al-Wihdāt* (Wihdāt market) to buy cheap vegetables, meats, olives, and imported products. We also bought several furniture items and often visited our friends in the *sūq* for tea, coffee, and stimulating conversations.



**Figure Two: Aerial View of Wihdāt Camp (New Amman Camp)<sup>33</sup>**

Not long after visiting Wihdāt, my contacts in Amman helped me establish new connections with refugees in the Baqa'a camp. Located in a wide valley 20 km north of the

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<sup>32</sup> *Servīs* is the Arabic term used by locals to refer to fixed-route taxis that hold up to four passengers at a time.

<sup>33</sup> From <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=129>

capital, Baqa'a is the largest and most populous camp in the country. Unlike Wihdāt, the Baqa'a camp was built in response to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and thus provided emergency shelter for thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons<sup>34</sup> (IDPs) primarily fleeing hostilities in the West Bank. According to UNRWA, Baqa'a was originally a temporary camp set up to accommodate approximately 26,000 refugees and IDPs in only 5,000 tents. After the war, however, it became clear that no immediate return of the refugees was likely and, given the harsh weather conditions, something slightly more permanent was necessary. In 1969-1971, with the support of the Federal Republic of Germany, UNRWA constructed about 8,000 prefabricated shelters. Today, the camp shelters almost 100,000 registered refugees, has 16 primary schools, its own bus station, market, and youth center, and two health centers<sup>35</sup>.



**Figure Three: Aerial View of Baqa'a Refugee Camp<sup>36</sup>**

Like most camps in Jordan, the Baqa'a camp was easily accessible through local transportation. Unlike most camps, however, the journey was long and tiring. My visits to the

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<sup>34</sup> In the Jordanian context, IDPs are Palestine refugees originally displaced in 1948 who, after settling in the Jordanian-ruled West Bank, were subsequently displaced in 1967 into the East Bank. For more on the legal status of Palestinian IDPs, see: [www.badil.org](http://www.badil.org)

<sup>35</sup> From <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/jordan/baqaa.html> (12 January 2010).

<sup>36</sup> From <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=123>

camp were thus strictly organized around research purposes. There were, of course, notable exceptions. Depending on the receptivity and curiosity of my participants, my wife and I occasionally returned to the camp for friendly engagements over coffee, lunch, or dinner (and sometimes all three). Of all my research participants in the camp, two particular families stood out for their generosity and help. From them, I learned about various camp details that would have otherwise passed unnoticed. For example, Rāmī introduced me to the small, tightly-knit community of Shiite Muslims in the camp. A low-key minority in a predominantly Sunni Muslim context, it was Rāmī's introduction and trust that allowed me to interview several Palestinian Shiites whose thoughts and experiences provided me with important insights into the shifting boundaries of the Palestinian national ethos. Beyond the few but productive relationships we established with Baqa'a families, the camp provided an important institutional context for examining particular issues within my research. It was in Baqa'a that I observed how the activities and spirit of a children's summer camp organized by camp residents captured the tensions of homeland politics. While conducting a focus group interview with several camp organizers, for example, I was invited to attend a daily ritual of national expression and pride. In this case, two separate lines of primary school children chanted their praise for both Hamas and Fatah as national movements. Furthermore, it was in Baqa'a that my research in a small Islamic charity exposed me to teenage activists peacefully representing their political allegiances to Fatah and Hamas. Unlike the bloody encounters of the Gaza Strip, these teenage refugees debated homeland politics without the trappings of power faced by Palestinians back home.

Although not the last refugee camp I visited<sup>37</sup>, Hittīn was the final site of considerable ethnographic research among camp refugees. Officially known as Marka Camp, the Hittīn refugee camp was also established to address Palestinians' immediate need for shelter in the wake of the 1967 war. Like the Baqa'a camp, it primarily houses Palestine refugees and IDPs. There are, however, a significant number of Gaza refugees living within the camp. Unlike Palestine refugees who crossed into the East and West Bank in 1948 or East Bank in 1967, these refugees were displaced from the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war and subsequently denied Jordanian citizenship. Because Gaza was under Egyptian administration until Israeli forces occupied the territory, Jordanian authorities argue that their status is an exclusively Egyptian problem. Currently, these refugees reside primarily in the Hittīn and Gaza camp in the northern city of Jarash. UNRWA estimates that approximately 45,000 refugees and IDPs reside within the camp. Because the surrounding neighborhoods also contain a significant population of unofficial refugees, UNRWA extends some of its services to Palestinian neighborhoods beyond the borders of Hittīn making these areas unofficial camps.

My decision to include the Hittīn camp as a research site was largely determined by two factors. First, the camp was the closest in proximity to where we lived for the first nine months of fieldwork. Whereas reaching the Wihdāt and Baqa'a camps by servīs and bus took 30 and 60 minutes respectively, getting to Hittīn camp took only 15 minutes. The camp thus offered a convenient location for short observational visits long before contacts were ever established. Second, the opportunity to broaden my participant pool by including Gaza refugees within my research made Hittīn all the more appealing. This is not to say that my visits to Wihdāt and

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<sup>37</sup> My research also includes visits to the Jabal Al-Hussein Camp, Zarqā' Camp, Irbid Camp, Gaza Camp (officially known as the *Jarash* camp) and the unofficial *Naser* camp. Here I am only highlighting three camps because of the preponderance of data derived from these particular camps.



Baqa'a did not offer similar opportunities. Indeed, while in both camps I met and interviewed several stateless<sup>38</sup> refugees displaced from the coastal territory in 1967. Nevertheless, Hittin has a significant population of Gazans living within the same area. This eased access to the the Gaza community and provided a chance to explore a set of particular questions within a consistent research period<sup>39</sup>.

Wihdat, Baqa'a, and Hittin provided the primary setting for exploring my research questions among registered refugees living in camps. In addition to my interest in camp refugees, my research interests included Palestinian refugees (both registered and unregistered) living in urban, non-camp settings. This aspect of my research project did not require any sustained focus on a particular area of Amman. Palestinians reside throughout the city in all areas including the affluent neighborhoods of West Amman and the more *sha'bi*<sup>40</sup> sections of the east side. Because I wanted to access a diverse sample of non-camp Palestinian refugees, I intentionally broadened my efforts to various areas of Amman. Admittedly, this often depended on my contacts; who I interviewed and what I observed was primarily an extension of who I knew. But the overwhelming presence of Palestinians in Amman allowed for numerous

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<sup>38</sup> All Palestine refugees in Jordan have full Jordanian citizenship with the exception of about 120,000 refugees originally from the Gaza Strip, which up to 1967 was administered by Egypt. They are eligible for temporary Jordanian passports, which do not entitle them to full citizenship rights such as the right to vote and employment with the government. See: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/jordan.html>

<sup>39</sup> I later conducted several interviews with Gaza refugees in the Gaza camp in Jarash. My interviews during this phase of my research project expanded to include a new set of questions concerning human rights and statelessness.

<sup>40</sup> The Arabic word "sha'bi" has various connotations. In this context, the closest meaning in English is "folk-ish" or "ghetto." The term is multi-layered and can include both a class element (poor or lower class) and cultural element (uneducated, simple-minded, and uncultured). The term was often used by locals living in the west side of Amman and, at times, by locals from the area itself to refer to other, less fortunate members of the same community.

opportunities to encounter individuals through daily interaction that ultimately became part of my research. Despite the expansive borders of my non-camp fieldwork, I can nevertheless provide a rough description of the research sites using the local division of east/west Amman.

For the first nine months of my fieldwork, my wife and I lived in a small section of the *Hāshmī Shamālī* in east Amman. Known by locals as *Abu Jissār*, our residence and experiences in the area made it a productive research site. There are many reasons for choosing this site but I can identify two particular reasons that informed my decision at the time. First, it was a location known for its high concentration of Palestinians. I reasoned that living in such an area would provide an ideal setting for getting the feel of a small, non-camp urban setting. It also broke with the expat tradition of living in the wealthy, more familiar context of west Amman. Second, and more importantly, the area was rich in ethnographic data derived from the innumerable experiences of hanging out, daily prayer at the local mosques, visiting friends for video games, chess, and lunch, and all of the daily encounters that constitute the anthropological metaphysics of “being there”<sup>41</sup> (Borneman and Hammoudi 2009, 19). In the *Hāshmī*, I had close ties with a Palestinian family that, the previous year, allowed me to live with them while studying Arabic at the University of Jordan. I originally contacted and met the *Khalīlī* family through close friends in Michigan. Throughout my summer studies, they were warm and supportive. It was through *Fāris*<sup>42</sup> and his brothers that I learned how to navigate the complex arrangement of local transportation and was able to establish a visible presence in an area tourists never frequented.

By the time I returned to the *Hāshmī* in 2006 to begin my fieldwork, I was well acquainted with

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<sup>41</sup> According to Borneman and Hammoudi, fieldwork encounters offer experiential insights that come not only from the formal process of observation and interviews but also from the linguistic exchanges, (mis)translations, feeling of attraction and repulsion, discussions and arguments, and fights and power tactics that make up the ethnographic experience as a whole.

<sup>42</sup> *Fāris* is a pseudonym used to protect the participant’s identity.

locals in the area including the staff at the local bakery and sweets shop, the owner of the internet café where I spent countless hours chatting with my wife the previous year, several fast food shops, and the local bread shop two blocks from my apartment. Moreover, I knew several residents in the area who I met through the Khalīlī brothers and mosque.

West Amman offered various opportunities for conducting interviews with Palestinian refugees. Some of my contacts with individuals and families were built from contacts in Michigan. Others were established through expats and acquaintances we made during our two-year residence in Jordan. But the majority of my research with Palestinians on the west side extended from my contacts at a local secondary school where I taught for a full academic period. The school was located in one of the more affluent areas of Amman, just a few kilometers from the newly built King Hussein mosque in *Dābūq*. Students at the school were from elite families and many of them and their families were dual citizens of the United States and Canada. Their curiosities and interest in their Islamic History and English instructor's research allowed me to form friendly relationships with them and their families. Also, the opportunity to invite an American-Muslim researcher to their homes for dinner and conversations was as attractive to them as it was to me. Suffice it to say that my experiences at the school and the relationships I formed with my students and their families enabled me to conduct a large chunk of my research with non-camp Palestinian refugees throughout west Amman in areas including *Khālda*, *Um Utheina*, and *Sweifīyeh*.

### **Interviews:**

The decision of who to interview and why is always complex. Long before reaching the field, anthropologists formulate manageable categorical criteria for determining who would be the ideal candidate for an interview or long-term observation. Then, upon our arrival and often

within the first few attempts at conducting research, we basically start from scratch accepting any individual willing to speak with (and listen to) an eager anthropologist. My own situation was, fortunately, not so rudimentary. I had the luxury of what proved to be reliable and supportive individuals who understood who I was looking for and, more importantly, how to contact them. At the most basic level, I wanted to arrange as many interviews as I could with two primary categories of Palestinians related to the concept of place: camp refugees and non-camp refugees. As Julie Peteet noted in her insightful study of Palestinian identity among refugees in Lebanon, place is critical to those excised from particular places; it is central to their subjectivity and sense of location in the world (Peteet 2009b, 18). Concerned with similar issues, I felt that researching the lives and experiences of refugees necessitated particular attention to the places Palestinians inhabited. Although broadly conceived, thinking in terms of camps and non-camps allowed me to develop a good starting point for determining who I should interview and why.

In addition to location, there were several other characteristics important for determining who I wanted to include in my research. Because my research concerned questions of national identity and connections to the homeland among a large population, it was important that I include Palestinian refugees according to the many experiences that constituted their status as such. This included three particular groups: (1) Palestinians displaced either in 1948 or 1967 (or both) who, subsequent to their displacement, became official refugees according to UNRWA's operational definition and resettled in a refugee camp; (2) Palestinians displaced either in 1948 or 1967 who, subsequent to their displacement, became official refugees and (a) temporarily resettled in a refugee camp or (b) never resettled in a refugee camp; and 3) Palestinians displaced either in 1948 or 1967 who, subsequent to their displacement, did not register with UNRWA or

resettle in a camp but nevertheless were (a) displaced and (b) self-identified as refugees. In addition to these three groups, I included their descendants within the participant pool. This ensured that I address generational location and its impact upon the process of identification and connections to the Palestinian homeland.

More general considerations included that my participants reflect—to the extent possible—a balanced sample of women and men. The significance of gender to the study of the construction of nation has been well documented. For example, the collection of oral histories with women and men can reveal the ways in which gender and memory converge to produce specific forms of the national community. Thus women tell history as witnesses and participants of political events as mothers, wives, and community members whose roles also reflect political, ideological, economic, and social change (Abu-Lughod 2008; Rosemary Sayigh 1998; Atiya 1982; Mahmood 2005). Furthermore, I was interested in building a participant pool that included Palestinian refugees from various economic backgrounds. As I discovered in the field, my interest in class distinctions was significant for constructing a diverse participant pool and, more importantly, was irreducible to the economic divisions between camp and non-camp refugees. Despite their overall poverty, for example, Palestinian camps revealed considerable economic diversity among their inhabitants. Moreover, urban settings in Amman such as the Hāshmī Shamālī also reflected a variety of economic situations. Within the area, for example, Palestinians identified several class positions including the *masākīn* (poor people) and (the) *Al-Aghaniyā'* (wealthy families). Finally, interview participants were also selected according to their association with particular institutions including UNRWA, the DPA, and Islamic charities.

Two years of living, working, and researching in Amman provided a wealth of opportunities to meet, contact, and arrange interviews with Palestinians throughout the city. In

total, my wife<sup>43</sup> and I conducted approximately 70 structured and semi structured interviews and oral histories with individual camp and non-camp refugees in both Arabic and English<sup>44</sup>. I also interviewed several officials working with the DPA and UNRWA. When possible, interviews were recorded using audio equipment. Methodologically, individual interviews and oral histories allowed for examining how personal experiences and perceptions were organized into narratives of national identity and history. Narrative activity during interviews provides tellers of history with an opportunity to impose order on otherwise disconnected events and to create continuity between past, present, and an imagined future (Ochs and Capps 1996). Moreover, the collection of oral stories provided an opportunity for examining the ways in which gender, religion, and history converged to produce specific forms of the nation, its history, and cause.

Individual interviews were conducted in various locations including participants' homes, Islamic charities, professional offices, and UNRWA schools and offices. The interviews generally consisted of two procedural steps. First, we began an interview with preliminary structured questions used to elicit general information including a participant's age and place of birth (generation), marital status and family size, education and employment (class status), and religion. Second, we used this general information to conduct semi-structured and structured interviews and oral histories. For example, if an individual was a female registered refugee displaced from Palestine in 1948, we proceeded with a set of specific questions appropriate for that participant's age and experiences or conducted an unguided oral history.

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<sup>43</sup> Throughout my research period, my wife, Fatima, was an invaluable research assistant. The majority of the research included her assistance in various capacities. At times, she was able to assist me with interviews through interpretative support and, at others, conducted interviews with women who were uncomfortable sitting alone with a foreign, male researcher.

<sup>44</sup> All interviews were transcribed/translated by the author and/or his loving and supportive research assistant, Fatima.

In addition to individual interviews, we conducted five focus group interviews with both small and large groups including family members, youth organization members, and community friends and neighbors. Focus groups were semi-structured and recorded. As Esther Madriz noted, focus group interviews provide an alternative to the individualistic research method by shifting attention to the multivocality of participants' attitudes, experiences, and beliefs and facilitate a context in which to examine the process of social interaction (Madriz 2000). In the context of my own research, this method allowed me to observe how families, friends, and affiliates discussed and debated history, connections to the homeland and the broader Palestinian nation. The majority of participants were selected through snowball sampling methods. Prior to arriving in Amman, I had established various contacts in the city through friends within the Lansing community. None of the individuals referred through my Lansing friends were used as research participants. That is, I decided not to include them within the research pool as either interviewees or subjects of observation. This decision reflected two concerns. First, I felt that their immediate connection to people within my community and social obligation to assist me might prejudice their interactions. In order to help me with my research, I feared they might act out of what they perceived were my needs rather than the more distant approach of a person hitherto unknown to me. Second, I wanted to limit the inconvenience of my presence and believed that a few infrequent visits and requests for contacts within the camp were enough to ask. Other participants were selected according to my own pool of contacts within Amman. Whether while living in Hāshmī Shamālī or working at the school in Dābūq, I used the best of my judgment to meet, observe, and interview Palestinians who met my research criteria.

Finally, institutional access was often established through two means. First, as a Fulbright researcher, I often relied on the generous support of the JACEE director to access and

research institutional settings. Through the director's intimate knowledge of the institutional fabric of Amman and, more importantly, his strong ties to government and non-government organizations, I was able to interview a key official in the DPA and access several UNRWA sites. Additionally, informal contacts established through participants and my own personal relationships with locals facilitated opportunities to meet two key UNRWA officials who supported my research in a vocational center and a children's summer camp reunion held outside of Amman.

	<b>1948 Refugee – Laji'</b>	<b>1967 IDP – Nāzih</b>
<b>Registered Refugee – Citizen of Jordan</b>	Displaced from Mandate Palestine and resettled in UNRWA camp in East Bank	Originally from West Bank and displaced to East Bank, settled in UNRWA camp
<b>Non-Registered Refugee – Citizen of Jordan</b>	Displaced from Mandate Palestine and resettled in East Bank	Originally from West Bank and displaced to East Bank, resettled in Amman
<b>Registered Refugee – Non-citizen of Jordan</b>	NA	Displaced from Mandate Palestine and resettled in UNRWA camp in Gaza Strip; Displaced from Gaza Strip and resettled in UNRWA camp in East Bank

**Table Two: Criteria for Participant Selection**<sup>45</sup>

### **Participant Observation:**

Participant observation is a key methodology for anthropologists and formed an essential component of my research. Although living, working, and traveling throughout the country offered innumerable observational opportunities for research, there were nevertheless several critical periods of participant observation worth mentioning. First, during my nine-month stay in the Hāshmī Shamālī, my engagement with friends, neighbors, and community members provided several experiences that contributed to my understandings of national belonging among non-camp Palestinians. For example, my wife and I attended several weddings in the area between

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<sup>45</sup> Although this table does not include the descendants of all categories, they were included within the research.



Palestinians. We also frequented local mosques and shared considerable time with a family whose trust allowed us to observe intimate details about how siblings negotiate their connections with Palestine. After accepting a teaching job at a local baccalaureate school and moving to *Fheis*, a predominantly Christian area outside of Amman, the school environment quickly became a site for important observations. The tensions between instructors and students at the school provided invaluable experiences for considering how Palestinians and Jordanians negotiate contentious issues of national pride and loyalty. In addition, the school employed several camp Palestinians as janitors whose treatment by upper staff revealed significant dimensions to the social and economic hierarchy between camp and non-camp Palestinians and Jordanians.

Beyond the insights offered by the informal experiences of daily life, interviews provided an essential avenue for participant observation. Within the camps, interviews were often day-long affairs that enabled us to spend lengthy periods within the camps among families and individuals. They also allowed us to acquaint ourselves with important features of camp life including festivals and mosques. In the Wihdāt camp, we also observed two key Islamic charities and a women's Islamic center in east Amman that provided a wealth of data about how religious studies and national identity are integrated into one broad experience. Second, I was able to visit and observe a children's summer camp in the Baqa'a camp where local Hamas and Fatah activists blended politics with recreational activities. While in Baqa'a we also visited an orphanage in which several Hamas and Fatah activists attended. Finally, of the many UNRWA institutions we visited, it was the 2007 summer camp finale that gave us an opportunity to observe various national performances and activities among children, teens, and upper-level

officials. This experience was unique insofar as it allowed us to observe an annual event in which dramatic depictions of the nation were performed and represented.

### **Document Research:**

Documents were primarily collected from UNRWA and the DPA. Most of these documents concerned various aspects of the refugee camps and their inhabitants. Demographic information, for example, was important for understanding the broader context of the camps. Such information included data concerning the establishment of the camps, their territorial composition (area in square kilometers and/or dunnums), their population size across time, their institutional configurations (schools, clinics, women's centers, etc.), their infrastructure, social conditions (health, economics, etc.), etc. In addition to UNRWA, I also acquired several documents and brochures from the DPA concerning their research and data on the Palestinian refugee camps. While many of their reports reflected research originally conducted by UNRWA, there were several cases in which their own data was provided. In particular, their documents offered an important insight into what the Jordanian government's involvement is and has been in the administration of the camps. To broaden data on the camps I also acquired reports from Fafo<sup>46</sup> concerning the social and economic constitution of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. Their status as an NGO allowed for an interesting reference for comparing UNRWA and DPA data. Throughout my research periods, I have also collected newspaper clippings and internet reports from local and regional press (*Jordan Times*, *Al-Rai'*, *Al-Ghad*, *Al-Jazīra*) and reviewed and collected articles and postings from the internet (Jordanian Department of Statistics, *Al-Baqa'a blog*, *The Arabist*). Finally, when relevant, I relied on satellite television

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<sup>46</sup> According to their website and informational brochure, Fafo describes itself as "an independent and multidisciplinary research foundation focusing on social welfare and trade policy, labor and living conditions, public health, migration and integration, and transnational security and development issues."

news networks including Al-Jazīra and *Al-‘Alam*. As two of the leading news networks in the Middle East, they provided important updates on events important for my research including daily news on the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and the Hamas elections.

### **Research Questions and Answers:**

My dissertation research can best be described as an ethnographic study of Palestinian nationalism in the diaspora. As such, my research questions and methods were designed to examine what it means to *be* national as a refugee confined to the existential condition of exile and the physical borders of a state with its own distinct national project. Although my study reflects attention to a diverse tradition of scholarly ideas and approaches to nations and nationalism, the development and scope of my research questions were particularly influenced by what Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss referred to as the politics of everyday nationalism (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Breaking with conventional studies of nationalism that focus exclusively on elite representations and the institutional productions of the state, their work instead looks to the more mundane and everyday idioms of ordinary people for determining how the nation is both invoked and constituted through discourse. Attention to the politics of the everyday allows us to examine the ways in which ordinary people talk *about* and *with* the nation in ways that matter to them (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 539). Relying on well-established methodologies including individual interviews, focus groups, and oral histories, it is the task of the researcher to facilitate critical engagements with ordinary people about what the nation is and means in their lives. With these methods, the anthropologist can provide a richer and more balanced picture of the scope, depth, and content of the everyday meanings of the nation (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 555).

My own research was an evolving project constituted by and through the process of fieldwork. Research questions were thus fluid and attuned to the shifting trends and experiences discovered throughout my ethnographic encounters. Nevertheless, two primary research questions included:

1. Given over 40 years of exile, what is the meaning of the Palestinian nation, homeland, and cause for refugees in Jordan?
2. In what ways do the contingencies of life in refugee camps and in urban areas of Amman contribute to Palestinians' (dis)connections with the nation, homeland, and its cause?

To answer these questions, my research methods included semi-structured and structured interviews (individual, focus groups, oral histories) and participant observation (Islamic charities, festivals, daily interactions, etc.). Although never fixed, my research questions were organized around three broad areas of concern designed to examine how individuals discuss, represent, contest, and deny their national connections. First, I constructed several questions surrounding the theme of "Palestinian identity." Questions in this section concerned why (if at all) an individual considered his or her self a Palestinian and what it meant to be such. Examples of interview questions included:

1. Why do you consider yourself Palestinian?
2. Do you consider yourself anything else? Why?
3. Palestinians today live all over the world. Are they all one nation?
4. Who are the Palestinian people?
5. Is there a Palestinian nation?
6. When did you realize you were Palestinian?
7. Are there differences between Palestinians? If so, like what?
8. Are there differences between Palestinians and other Arabs?
9. Are there differences between Palestinians and Jordanians? How do you know one from the other?

Second, I constructed several questions according to the issue of Palestine (the homeland). In this section, I presented various questions about Palestine in order to examine the kinds of representations and meanings emerged. Examples of these questions included:

1. Where is Palestine? What are its borders?
2. What is your earliest memory of Palestine?
3. Do you fear that Palestinians will forget (have forgotten) Palestine?
4. What do you know about Palestine?
5. Have you ever visited Palestine? Describe that experience?
6. If you could talk about Palestine for two minutes, what would you want to say?
7. Is Jordan your country? Why or why not?
8. Is Palestine your country? Why or why not?

Third, my interviews focused on the relationship between place and identity. This section included several specific questions about the meaning of the term “refugee” and the “refugee camp.” Some examples of questions in this section included:

1. Are you a refugee? What makes you a refugee?
2. Who lives in the refugee camps? Why?
3. Why are there refugee camps?
4. Are there differences between the refugee camps? If so, like what?
5. Are there differences between the refugee camps and other areas of Amman? If so, like what?
6. Are there differences between refugees? If so, like what?
7. What is life like for refugees who live in the camps?
8. What is life like for refugees who do not live in the camps?

The answers to these questions and others were organized according to participant categories (see above) and compared using thematic analysis. In examining participant responses, I paid particular attention to continuities and ruptures in representations of the nation, homeland, and history. Responses were also situated within broader fields of discourse and practice including the two leading representatives of Palestinian nationalism: the PLO (mainly Fatah) and Hamas. The Islamic charities, for example, were intimately connected to the political and religious vision of Hamas. Throughout the Wihdāt orphanage, the walls were thus decorated with stickers of Hamas’s martyred leaders including Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn and Sheikh Abdel

‘Aziz Al-Rantīsī. Interviews with participants within these institutions could therefore not exclude attention to the instructional and religious practices of the organization in which participants were members.

Participant observation allowed for critical investigations into both the representation and practice of the Palestinian nation. Whether through observing weddings, festivals, the institutional practices of the *Markaz Ridhwān*, or UNRWA, the experience of being there and observing were important for gathering a multitude of data. For example, while attending the grand conclusion of the UNRWA summer camp, I was able to observe several musical and theatrical performances made according to “Palestinian tradition.” The musicians’ clothing and the songs they sung were thus reflective of particular local traditions in pre-Israel Palestine. Also, observing and participating in the build up to an ultimately failed wedding between a Palestinian from the Hāshmī Shamālī and the Nāser refugee camp provided invaluable opportunities to examine the politics of class, gender, and place. As the wedding crumbled, it was the would-be bride who took the blame as her camp status explained why the union failed.

### **Positionality and Fieldwork in Jordan:**

#### ***Background in Jordan***

My decision to change research topics and fieldsites required serious deliberation. As I discovered in 2004, accessing the West Bank was no longer certain and the stakes were simply too high to risk being refused entry a second time. But the question of where else to conduct my research project wasn’t easy to answer. Through local friends and acquaintances in Michigan, I had connections to Lebanon, Jordan, and possibly Syria—all of which were important countries for considering the status of Palestinian refugees. Lebanon, for example, is well known for its discriminatory policies towards its Palestinian refugees. Its governments have consistently

refused to offer Palestinians citizenship and have strictly regulated their economic opportunities within the country. In addition, during the 15-year civil war, Palestinians were the subjects of extreme forms of violence including the infamous Sabra and Shatila massacres, during which approximately 800 refugees were slaughtered by Christian militias under the auspices of the Israeli military<sup>47</sup>.

Like Lebanon, the Syrian government has also refused to extend its citizenship to Palestinians living within its borders. For over 40 years now, Palestinian refugees have thus lived as stateless refugees within UNRWA camps subject to state scrutiny and limited opportunities<sup>48</sup>. Unlike Lebanon, however, the Syrians have allowed Palestinians greater economic mobility and, to some extent, facilitated their social integration into the country. Finally, there was Jordan. Since the 1948 Palestine War and the creation of the State of Israel, the Jordanian relationship to the Palestinians has been arguably the most intimate of all the Arab states. After the war, for example, the late King Abdullah I annexed what remained of central Palestine (the West Bank) extending Jordanian citizenship to all of its inhabitants including hundreds of thousands of refugees on both sides of the Jordan River. After Abdullah's assassination in Jerusalem in 1951, his grandson, King Hussein ibn Talāl, maintained Jordanian control over Palestinian territory and its population well beyond the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Notwithstanding the creation of the PLO in 1964, its bloody conflict with the Jordanian military in 1970, and its recognition as the "sole legitimate representative of the

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<sup>47</sup> For research on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon see: (Peteet 1992b; Borneman 2004; Haddad 2003; Rosemary Sayigh 2008b; Rosemary Sayigh 1994b).

<sup>48</sup> This includes a more recent wave of Palestinian refugees who fled Iraq in 2003-2006 following the U.S. invasion and occupation. See IRIN report: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77645> and Amnesty report: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/comments/19950/>

Palestinian people” in 1974<sup>49</sup>, the late King Hussein continued to vie for representational power over his Palestinian subjects until the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994 and the subsequent disengagement plan of 1988<sup>50</sup>. Yet despite the formal separation between the two banks, Jordan continued to shelter the largest Palestinian refugee population in the world.

Suffice it to say that all three countries offered a significant opportunity for addressing important questions about the Palestinian refugee crisis in all of its complexity. Despite their suitability as fieldsites, however, I decided that Jordan presented the best situation for conducting my research project. My decision reflected several considerations. First, Jordan was unique insofar as it formally extended citizenship to all Palestinian refugees. Second and relatedly, the historic decision to include Palestinians within the national body of the Jordanian state ultimately facilitated particular forms of instability. Palestinians in Jordan were and remain a majority. This uncommon imbalance—a state with a resident “nation” larger than its own—made Jordan an exceptional and intriguing context for looking into national formations<sup>51</sup>. Third, Jordan has the greatest number of refugees of all Middle Eastern countries and the most populous refugee camps in the region. Baqa’a, for example, has a population exceeding 100,000. In addition,

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<sup>49</sup> At the 1974 Arab League Summit in Rabbat, Morocco, leaders of 20 Arab states agreed to a resolution recognizing the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

<sup>50</sup> On July 31, King Hussein announced the severance of all administrative and legal ties with the Israeli occupied West Bank and stripped all Palestinians within the territory of Jordanian citizenship.

<sup>51</sup> It is true that the parameters “Jordanian” and “Palestinian” identity are not always concrete or distinguishable. As I discovered in my research, there was considerable overlap in these concepts of national identification. However, these concepts were not always fluid and even in cases where intermarriage had occurred and the familial lines blurred, there was nevertheless particular ways of drawing new ones.



although most of the Kingdom's Palestinian refugees are citizens, they are nonetheless inextricably linked to the quasi-state apparatus of UNRWA and thus live the peculiar existence of citizen-refugees. Finally, of the three countries, Jordan presented the fewest practical challenges. In domestic terms, Jordan was politically stable and faced nothing similar to the tense and often violent political scenarios found in Lebanon. Regionally, the Kingdom had not fought a war since its bloody conflict with the PLO in 1970. It had also signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 and thus avoided territorial conflicts like those fought over Israeli-occupied territory in Lebanon. Moreover, its treaty with Israel strengthened its political and economic relationship with the U.S. Internationally, Jordan was on the "right side" of the war on terror assisting the U.S. military in Iraq and, unlike Syria, was excluded from former President George W. Bush's "axis of evil"<sup>52</sup>.

### *Arrivals*

My trip to Jordan in January 2006 was not the first. The previous summer, I lived in the Hāshmī Shamālī with the Khalīdī family during my enrollment in an intensive summer Arabic language program at the University of Jordan. During my brief stay in the Kingdom, I admittedly did little traveling. With the exception of a brief trip to 'Aqaba in the south, I spent the bulk of my time within the Hāshmī getting to know my hosts, their friends and family, and the social life of the community in which they lived. The decision proved a good one; the Hāshmī was an energetic place providing plenty of opportunities to get a sense of what I later discovered were shared features of life in east Amman. For example, summer was the season of

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<sup>52</sup> George W. Bush originally used the terms in his January 29, 2002, State of the Union Address to describe Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. For the full text of the speech, see: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>. In a later speech by former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., John Bolton, Syria, Cuba, and Libya were added to the list. On January 20, 2006, former Israeli Defense Minister, Shaul Mofaz, referred to Iran and Syria as the "axis of terror." See: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4630650.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4630650.stm)

weddings. Fireworks, music, and impressive gatherings of friends and families were thus daily occurrences in the Hāshmī. The Hāshmī also had its own public spaces where locals gathered for daily social intercourse. Joining the building boom throughout Amman, for example, the newly built *Plaza Mall* was the center of gravity attracting legions of young men and women interested in eating, shopping, and occasional flirting. For all these reasons and more, I was content to confine my experience to the Hāshmī and realized the benefits of my decision when I returned six months later to begin my first phase of dissertation research.

Less than two months before my wife and I arrived in Jordan in 2006, at least 57 people were killed and 300 injured in carefully coordinated suicide attacks in Amman<sup>53</sup>. The attackers targeted three “western” hotels including the Grand Hyatt, the Radison SAS, and the Days Inn. According to the international press and Jordanian authorities, Abu Musab Zarqāwī, a Jordanian national and member of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, was responsible for the attacks. Watching from afar, the gruesome assaults suggested that Jordan was not immune to the ongoing violence in Iraq. It also suggested that the Kingdom’s support for the U.S. occupation of Iraq was being used by a dangerous set of new enemies to “legitimize” their attacks. Indeed, one of the suicide bombers captured after her belt failed to detonate was of Iraqi nationality and Zarqāwī cited Jordan’s support for the U.S. war on terror and occupation of Iraq as a motivation for the attacks. What, I wondered, did the attacks mean for the possibility of research in Jordan? Could this be the beginning of the end of Jordan’s reputation as the most stable country in the Middle East?

Surprisingly, little had changed in Amman since my last visit. Despite the attacks, our entry into the country was relatively smooth and there were no obvious signs of increased security or tension. My wife’s Algerian passport, for example, presented no particular

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<sup>53</sup> See: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4423008.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4423008.stm)

challenges and airport security had few questions about the nature of our stay. Not without a hint of irony, fears over our personal security or a new wave of suicide attacks were the least of our immediate concerns. On the contrary, the most difficult aspect of our first week in the city concerned our living arrangements. Through a friend in Michigan, we connected with a Jordanian professor who found us a spacious apartment near the University of Jordan in *Al-Sweilih*. Given recent influx of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, apartments were scarce when we arrived. We were thus appreciative of the fact that someone put aside their own time to facilitate our living needs. The apartment was relatively clean and we were excited about its close proximity to the university. There was, however, one important, unanticipated problem: the weather. My last visit to Jordan was in the summer; days were thus sunny and warm. In January, the weather is cold and wet. Unprepared for the bitter cold of Amman's winter, we quickly discovered that the absence of central heating made life in the apartment simply unbearable. Within two week's time, we were back with my original summer hosts, the Khālīdī family, in the familiar surroundings of the Hāshmī Shamālī. Their generosity and assistance facilitated new living arrangements within the community I came to know the previous summer and helped us learn the tricks of confronting the cold.

After three weeks of adjusting to our new apartment and the cold weather, we began establishing our research contacts. The first step was to visit the Fulbright office in Amman and begin acquiring all the necessary permits for my research in the camps. Having lived in Amman for years with his wife and daughter, the Fulbright director, Alain McNamara, suggested that I pay a courtesy visit to the DPA in order to introduce myself to the director, His Excellency Wajīh Azaizeh. I wasn't the first Fulbright researcher to request permission to enter and research the camps. I therefore had to follow the well-established tradition of bureaucratic rituals and

performances and “introduce” myself to H.E. Azaizeh and “assure” him that my research concerned a benign topic. As I later learned, what we actually did in the camps was of little importance to the DPA. What was important was that I didn’t “present” my research in any way that sounded controversial or critical of the Jordanians. Not long after my visit to the DPA and formal introduction to H.E. Azaizeh, I received a nine-month permit to conduct an ethnographic study within the Palestinian refugee camps of Jordan.

The second step of my research efforts included contacting the many people my Michigan friends had informed of my travels and research in Amman. Although several contacts proved helpful for my research, there was one particular individual whose relationships with Palestinians in the camps were extensive. A local writer and editor for a popular Muslim-oriented publication, Sādiq<sup>54</sup> introduced me to many Palestinian refugees in both Wihdāt and Baqa’a. We originally met in his office during work hours. Sādiq was a middle-aged Palestinian whose close friendship with and respect for my Michigan contact made our interaction feel smooth and comfortable. I discussed my research interests at length with him and offered a background to my travels and experiences within the Middle East. From then on, Sādiq was a regular contact who referred me to Palestinians in the camps who, in turn, introduced me to other Palestinians, and so on. Although not exactly a random sample, Sādiq’s many friends in the camps provided various unrelated connections with refugees of diverse social, economic, and religious backgrounds.

### ***Positionalities and Challenges in the Field***

In her 2002 critique of reflexivity, Jennifer Robertson discusses several problems with the *positioning* of the self in ethnographic writing. One problem with positionality, she argues,

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<sup>54</sup> Sadiq is a pseudonym used to protect the participant’s identity.

concerns its reliance on ready-made identities that tend to not only stereotype ourselves but also our interlocutors. In this sense, the meaning of being an “academic white female” in a particular context is taken for granted as the ethnographer proceeds to describe its pre-packaged relevance for understanding her experience in the field. These categories also tend to imply an imbalance of power in which the ethnographer’s status as a [insert identity category here] render her more powerful than her [insert identity category here] interlocutors (Jennifer Robertson 2002). For example, representations of positionality often exclude any consideration of what power meant in a particular context and instead present an unproblematic picture of the powerful First-world researcher and the passive Third-world participant. More importantly, by writing according to such specific categories, Robertson states that the ethnographer risks making two problematic assumptions. First, the ethnographer assumes that multi-sensory human beings with unique personal histories are reducible to, or universally intelligible as, one or several “ready to wear” identities (Jennifer Robertson 2002, 789). Second, Robertson argues that ethnographers assume that their research participants and the communities in which they live and work are only capable of reacting to her presence. The implication, she suggests, is that people everywhere, regardless of every possible distinguishing variable, are susceptible to the whims of the puissant ethnographer, whether she is doing fieldwork in her own country or elsewhere (Jennifer Robertson 2002, 790). In her concluding remarks, Robertson challenges ethnographers to break with traditional categories of our essentialized *position* in the field and to pay more attention to how particular *positions* emerge in the process of fieldwork.

The foregoing summary of Robertson’s critique of reflexivity and positionality offers an important preface for discussing my own positionalities in the field. There is no single way to describe myself that can adequately represent my position in the field. To be sure, throughout

my research I engaged in numerous discussions with diverse individuals in various contexts. How, then, can I reduce my position to any particular set of identities that can both account for all of my experiences and satisfy the necessity of reflexive writing? In what follows, I will attempt to meet Robertson's challenge by writing about my positionalities in the field. In order to do so, I will avoid discussing positionality as a unified categorical representation that encompasses the entire fieldwork experience. I will not say, for example, that my Muslim or Cuban-American identity led to any one reaction among Palestinians. That would be both too simplistic and basically untrue. Rather, I will offer a few illustrative examples in which my positionality emerged and mattered in particular ways that offers insights into the meaning of an ethnographic encounter and the complexities of doing fieldwork. For obvious reasons, I cannot provide a comprehensive summary of all my experiences. There are simply too many to describe. But I will nevertheless show how some patterns emerged and how they presented challenges and opportunities within the field.

One of the most important aspects of my positionality in the field was my status as an *Amrīkī* and Muslim. What being an *Amrīkī* and Muslim meant, of course, was diverse and it compelled particular kinds of reactions in different settings. It also underscored the various attitudes and ideas Palestinians held about the American people and its culture and the U.S. government and its policies. In some cases, for example, my *Amrīkī* status was complicated by other features of my identity: Muslim, child of Cuban immigrants, married to an Arab-American Algerian citizen, scholar, etc. In other cases, it was singled out, scrutinized, and even ridiculed. In the following section, I will provide just a few brief examples of how my status as an *Amrīkī* and Muslim (or both) were understood and constructed by Palestinians and what it suggested about their relationship to me and whatever they felt I represented.

## ***Muslim Amrīkī***

Rāmī was a Palestinian resident of Baqa'a. We met him through Sādiq, who suggested we visit Rāmī after our first connection in Baqa'a fell through. Rāmī agreed to meet with us on a Friday, the first day of the weekend for Muslims in Jordan. After attending the local Juma' prayer in the Hāshmī, Fatima and I boarded the crowded bus at the 'Abdali station and headed for the camp. Sādiq had explained my research to Rāmī prior to our arrival in Baqa'a but, after meeting him, I felt it important to restate my interests. Shortly after introducing ourselves, I therefore explained my research interests and questions. He invited us to join him in his home for lunch and thereafter introduced us to his wife and two children. Rāmī was a soft-spoken and gentle personality who listened attentively to each question I asked. He also seemed unintimidated by my research questions and showed comfort and interest throughout the interview. But after the interview, Rāmī showed great interest in my conversion to Islam. He was struck by the fact that an Amrīkī had accepted Islam. "How, he asked, did you become a Muslim?" I fumbled through a short explanation in Arabic that I thought satisfied his curiosities. It didn't.

"Muslim Amrīkī." It must have been a fascinating combination of words for someone observing the hostilities of the Bush Administration towards the Arab Muslim world. What exactly it meant to Rāmī, I can only speculate. But his actions suggested some interesting and common reactions that illustrated one way of understanding the meaning of being a Muslim Amrīkī in a Palestinian refugee camp. For example, Rāmī could have let the interview conclude our interactions permanently. Yet, after our interview and a filling lunch, Rāmī walked us through the narrow streets of the camp to visit a close friend. After we arrived, he introduced me as the Muslim Amrīkī interested in the *qādhīyya filistīnīyya* (Palestinian situation). We never

asked him for any new participants. On the contrary, both Fatima and I were satisfied with our lengthy interview for the day and didn't want to overstay our visit. But shortly after the *maghrib* (sunset) prayer, we began another interview with two more camp Palestinians courtesy of our Palestinian interlocutor. As both a Palestinian and Muslim, Rāmī wanted to help his newfound Muslim Amrīkī. After the interview, Rāmī invited us to return to his house the following Friday for lunch and a trip to the mountains to watch the sunset over tea and *bizir* (nuts). We returned the next week and enjoyed another pleasant experience.

For Rāmī, my status as a Muslim Amrīkī suggested a simultaneous nearness and distance. As a Muslim, for example, he felt very comfortable discussing his religious views about the Palestinian conflict and Islam's significance for the moral community of Muslims. Given the recent attacks in Jordan and the government's anxiety about the growing influence of Muslim politics (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004) in the region, not everyone was comfortable discussing religious politics. In this regard, Rāmī's confessions were an indication of (at least) some level of comfort. Even more telling was Rāmī's declaration of faith as a devote Shiite. Shiites are a minority in Jordan and most of them are Iraqi refugees. With the ongoing sectarian violence in Iraq, popular Sunni attitudes in Jordan towards Shiites were, from my experience, far from friendly. In this sense, Rāmī offered an unsolicited and potentially dangerous bit of information about his status as a Muslim. But Rāmī's interactions also hinted at a significant space between our Muslim bonds. "Why, he asked, did America hate Muslims?" "What were America's ambitions in Iraq?" "What do *you* think about *us*?" The questions were not a request for speculation. In both his tone and sincerity, Rāmī requested an answer from an Amrīkī. I, more than Fatima, was an Amrīkī and thus could "speak" for America. Such inquiries were common among the Palestinian Muslims I met. Even in the Hāshmī, Muslims regularly expected the



Amrīkī to explain America. To differing degrees, then, my status as Muslim allowed for frank responses from one “brother to the next” and intense questions from “one Muslim to an American.”

Being a Muslim in a context where Islamic idioms and practices were becoming a more salient feature of everyday life did seem to have some practical advantages. For example, trips to the local *masājīd* (mosques) were seen as a natural extension of my identity as a Muslim. No one in the Hāshmī or Wihdāt was thus surprised to find me sitting near the Imam during Friday prayers especially after several visits with locals like Fāris. In this regard, the question of access was resolved; as a Muslim space, the masjid was open and available. Once in the masjid or immediately after the prayers, I could readily engage in conversations relevant to my research questions without raising (too many) suspicions about my presence. By attending the masjid regularly, I also increased my social capital as many Palestinians were attentive to who did or didn’t participate in regular prayers. Prayer was thus an important practice for establishing an acceptable and, in some cases, respectable presence among both participants and the community in which we lived.

But my status as a Muslim didn’t always make things easy. On the contrary, it often frustrated attempts to get beyond the question of religion and on to issues of nationalism, dispossession, and politics<sup>55</sup>. In some cases, discussions digressed to questions like “Why did you come to Islam?” or “Are there many American Muslims?” These queries not only revealed some of the challenges of conducting an interview but also underscored the fact that, contrary to the idea of the passive subject, participants often talk back. Through their own manipulations

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<sup>55</sup> This is not to suggest that “religion” and “politics” are mutually exclusive categories of speech. But there were several clear instances in which discussions revolved around the most mundane aspects of Islam that had nothing to do with my research questions or interests.

and insatiable curiosities, participants can direct the flow of an ethnographic encounter in ways that disrupt the simple binary of researcher/subject. In other cases, participants turned discussions into challenging debates in which my knowledge of Islam and its history were tested. On several occasions, for example, Muslims questioned if I read the Qur'an or lectured me about what "Islam says" about numerous topics including prayer, fasting, and Muslim dress. Particularly upsetting were the more extreme ideas about the *kufār* (infidels) and their *harām* (prohibited/sinful) behaviors in the U.S. With little knowledge of the diverse moral systems according to which Americans live, some Palestinians ridiculed the loose sexual behaviors of the nation of infidels. From these experiences, I learned that my status as a Muslim could be used by my participants as much as it could be used by me. Each engagement was an unpredictable flow of discourse that opened some doors while shutting others.

### ***Inta Amrīkī?***

For the first year of fieldwork, my research focused primarily on Palestinian refugees in the camp or in the Hāshmī Shamālī. In both cases, interviews were often combined with a dinner invitation and informal conversations over tea, coffee, and sweets. Without giving it much thought, we allowed our hosts to determine the appropriate etiquette. For example, if everyone ate with their hands and bread, then we did the same. After months of home visits and generous meals, we grew accustomed to the manners and methods of eating, talking, and relaxing in both the camps and the Hāshmī. Palestinians in both cases were unassuming and rarely scrutinized our eating habits or manners. Eventually, however, we began interviewing Palestinians in the wealthier areas of Amman. Some of these experiences revealed some interesting dynamics about our class status as *Amrīkān* (Americans) in Jordan. One particular experience captured what we later discovered were some common ideas among affluent Palestinians about "real" Americans.

Through mutual friends, we met a high ranking Palestinian UNRWA official who invited us to join her and her relatives for dinner. Leila<sup>56</sup> worked at an UNRWA vocational school and her husband was a sailor involved in imports and exports. They lived in an affluent area of west Amman and had two children and a maid. They were also fluent in English; a skill they used to preclude their maid from learning Arabic and understanding what they discussed in private. For dinner, Leila and her maid prepared an elaborate meal including fish and other more common Arabic dishes. She invited several relatives including one of her brothers and his wife. During the meal, I found myself struggling with the fish and proceeded to pick out the bones with my hands. Leila and her brother turned in my direction and laughed. “You eat with your hands,” they asked? I was as stunned as them. “I’m comfortable eating with my hands,” I replied. For the rest of the evening, I realized that Leila and her brother were constantly asserting their privileged status in ways that revealed both insecurity and confidence. Her brother, for example, constantly referred to his children living in Australia and “the West.” He also discussed the differences between Cuban Spanish and the “correct” Spanish of the Spaniards. Extending his arrogance to my wife, he claimed that the French occupation of Algeria had thoroughly polluted their Arabic and needed the *Shāmī* (Levantine) Arabs to help them relearn what they forgot. Among many Arabs, a snub of this sort can be highly offensive.

Our encounter with Leila and her brother occurred after our interviewing her and she nevertheless facilitated important interviews with other Palestinians at an UNRWA vocation school. It didn’t, in other words, compromise my research. But it did show me that my status as an Amrīkī often came with various expectations about how who I was supposed to be, how I was supposed to speak, eat, and dress. As I discovered, wealthier families often expected an Amrīkī

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<sup>56</sup> Leila is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of my participant.

researcher to behave in ways that, in some cases, was crucial to establishing both the seriousness of my research and the credibility I had as a researcher. They expected an articulate, “mannered” Amrīkī. Although they were impressed by my Arabic and willingness to speak it, they nonetheless wanted to speak in English. Although they were impressed by my familiarity with Arabic cuisine, they nonetheless wanted to “show me something new.” And finally, although they were impressed by my knowledge of the camps, they nonetheless expected an Amrīkī researcher to behave like an Amrīkī.

### *Spies Like Us*

Few anthropologists can conclude a discussion of positionality without a good spy story. Of all my readings in anthropological reflexivity and positionality, I think it is the “spy” label that has received the most attention. In this regard, my discussion is no exception. Like many anthropologists in the field, I too encountered several experiences in which the spy accusation was made and debated. I should say, however, that such experiences were actually few and presented no substantial complications. With the exception of my encounter with the Jordanian *mukhābarāt* (security and intelligence), no serious challenges resulted from the few instances in which my potential status as a spy emerged. In most cases, the *mukhābarāt* were mentioned within the context of joke or invoked to confirm the truth of a statement. For example, some participants would say things like “I don’t care if the *mukhābarāt* hears me.” Such declarations, as I understood them, indicated the participant’s willingness to express a statement that they understood could be controversial and/or to suggest its truth. It also underscored that the assumed omnipresence of the *mukhābarāt* served as a tool of censorship that ostensibly precluded certain kinds of conversations. “I don’t care if the *mukhābarāt* hears me” was thus an act of defiance and a willingness to utter a truth that might otherwise be unspeakable. The idea

that the mukhābarāt might hear a participant also implied that a spy might be present or “they” might be listening. This could mean that either I was a spy or that the mukhābarāt were following me. In both cases, such “possibilities” never precluded an interview.

In general, the idea of the mukhābarāt was something stated in passing; it received little attention and didn’t inhibit the flow of an interview. On the one occasion in which a participant’s friend interrupted an interview by accusing me of working for the mukhābarāt, I simply challenged him to give one reason why the intelligence services would care about him. Admittedly angered by the absurdity of his accusation, I insisted that my research could do more for Palestinians than anything he could or would do in his life. Suffice it to say that my anger (however inappropriate) and confidence ended the discussion and the interview continued uninterrupted. But beyond the concerns of my participants, my potential status as a spy was of interest to another set of actors: the Jordanian government. For the first year and a half, my research proceeded unhindered by any visible acts of the government. Then, upon returning from a brief trip to the U.S. in the spring of 2007, two peculiar things occurred. First, my request for a renewal of my research permits for the camps was taking unusually long. Second, I was detained at the airport for two hours and released only after receiving an “invitation” to the mukhābarāt offices in Amman.

Resolving the delay on my permits required some creative solutions. First, I visited the DPA offices in order to speak with someone about the process. They denied responsibility for the delays stating that the requests were with the security division. Until they received an approval from them, I was told, the permits could not be approved. More importantly, no one told me where I could go to speak with the security division. This stage of the process was “an internal matter” and thus could not be addressed by from the outside. Faced with a bureaucratic

roadblock, I revisited McNamara at the Fulbright office in Amman and asked for some advice. Despite the fact that my term with the Fulbright had expired, he prepared an official letter expressing his support for my research and requesting that my renewal requests be expedited. A few weeks later, the permits were renewed. The reasons for my visit to the mukhābarāt offices were also unclear. While waiting at the airport, no one informed me about the nature of my detainment. Upon my release, they gave me a slip of paper indicating where to go and when. Once at the mukhābarāt offices, the agent I spoke with only informed me that this was “routine.” Why this invitation came over one year after my arrival in Jordan was left unexplained. The interview took about one hour and covered a range of personal questions including what high school I attended to when I became Muslim. While the implications of my interview never became fully clear, I couldn’t help but think that the delay in my permits and the interview were related. For the final eight months of my research, I never saw the mukhābarāt again.

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **Identifying Refugees: The Claims of Exile and the Meaning of “Palestinian Refugees”**

##### **Introduction:**

When I first set out to conduct my research among Palestinians in Jordan, I assumed that the conceptual distinction between the camp and the city<sup>57</sup> would be useful for distinguishing between *Palestinian refugees* and *Palestinians* living throughout the urban areas of Amman. The term “refugee,” I assumed, would be a category of identification reserved for those living within the camps. Influenced by Liisa Malkki’s work in Tanzania, I thought that the camp, as the quintessential symbol of displacement, represented the lived experience of a refugee: a space beyond the “national order of things” marked by humanitarian interventions, dependence, and marginalization (Malkki 1995). In the city, I believed that Palestinians could—and would—shed their refugee identity and existence through assimilation into mainstream Jordanian society. I thus believed that determining the status of my research participants would be an easy task: if a Palestinian lived in a refugee camp, then he or she would identify as a refugee. Conversely, if a Palestinian didn’t live in a camp, then he or she wouldn’t identify as a refugee. Although the issue of refugee identity proved to be much more complicated than determining where an individual lived, the reasoning appeared sound at the time. Where else would Palestinian refugees be if not in a refugee camp? Or perhaps more precisely, why else would Palestinians identify as refugees if they weren’t living in a camp? Of course, I was aware that United Nations estimates indicated that approximately two million registered refugees lived in the Kingdom. I also knew that Palestinians constituted slightly more than half of the entire population of

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<sup>57</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms “camp” and “city” to distinguish between the context of refugee camps and areas of Amman that are not refugee camps. Although some of the refugee camps are integrated areas of the city, they are nevertheless distinguishable from the surrounding area by the presence of UNRWA institutions and those who receive its services.

Jordan<sup>58</sup>. But being a “registered” refugee in the city and living that status in a camp, I believed, had to be fundamentally different experiences and constitutive of unique forms of identification.

Living within an area of Amman primarily populated by Palestinians, I quickly learned the limitations of my research assumptions. I soon discovered that just about everyone I interviewed in the city identified as a “Palestinian refugee.” On many occasions, Palestinians claimed the identity without solicitation. Being a Palestinian and a refugee seemed inextricably linked regardless if the individual lived in a camp or an urban area of Amman. “*I am a refugee*” became an oft-repeated phrase that expressed an important idea about the meaning of displacement and its relationship to being Palestinian in Jordan. Whether one was rich or poor, first generation or third, female or male, or living in a camp or the city, Palestinians were in some sense all identifying as refugees. The claim to *refugeeness* thus cut across social and economic milieus providing an unexpected category of identification between Palestinians throughout Amman. Much like the *fellah* in Ted Swedenburg’s analysis of Palestinian nationalism and resistance to Israeli colonization in the West Bank (Swedenburg 1990), the category “refugee” in Amman functioned as the basis of an important commonality grounded in claims about historical dislocations from the homeland and the myth of return.

Intrigued by the widespread assertion of a refugee identity, I decided to look deeper into this newfound phenomenon. Could the self-categorization as a refugee provide the basis of a commonality that united Palestinians across the diverse circumstances of Amman? As I soon learned, the almost unanimous claim to refugee identity was not without its complexities and

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<sup>58</sup> In its 2005 report, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimated that approximately 29.4% of the Palestinian population (10.1 million) lived in Jordan. Estimated at 2,969,400 Palestinians, this number is slightly more than half of the total population of Jordan estimated at 5,100,981 by the 2004 Jordanian Population and Housing Census. According to the MAR Project (Minorities at Risk), an extension of the Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Palestinians constitute more than half of Jordan’s population.



contradictions. Despite the fact that Palestinians identified as refugees, the meaning of that identity differed in ways that reflected an important cultural distinction between the refugee *min Al-Mukhayyam* (of the camp) and the refugee of the city. While Palestinians within both the mukhayyam and the city claimed to be refugees, cultural understandings about the relationship between people and place generated conflicting ideas about what being a refugee actually meant. According to Palestinians in the city, there were camp refugees and there were city refugees. In the camp, Palestinians were *masākīn* (poor/unfortunate ones) since displacement forced them into dependence and a marginal space of moral despair and decay. Refugees in the city, however, were in a better social space: their social and economic challenges were not so grave as to compromise the fabric of the moral community. Reflecting the cultural logics of being in place (Low and Lawrence-Zunigais 2003; Carter and Donald 1994; Tuan et al. 2001), city refugees understood the camps as bounded homogenous spaces constitutive of a life marked by particular forms of social, economic, and political difference.

In the mukhayyamāt<sup>59</sup>, Palestinians were less reluctant to claim unity. Within the refugee camps I conducted most of my fieldwork between 2006-2008, Palestinians drew no similar distinctions between refugees of the mukhayyam and the city. A Palestinian refugee identified either as a *lāji*<sup>60</sup> (Palestinian displaced in 1948) or *nāzih*<sup>61</sup> (Palestinian displaced in 1967), terms reflecting the origin of one's displacement in time. It was the experience of displacement, in other words, that formed the basis of a Palestinian's identification as a refugee

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<sup>59</sup> Mukhayyamāt is the Arabic plural for "camp". Mukhayyam/Muhkayyamāt translates in this context as "refugee camp/refugee camps."

<sup>60</sup> In Arabic, the word *lāji* can be used to refer to an individual who is seeking refuge, a refugee, emigrant, or inmate of an asylum.

<sup>61</sup> In Arabic, the word *nāzih* stems from the word *nazuha*, which means "to be far from." However, within the discourse of Palestinian refugees, *nāzih* refers to the internally displaced refugees of 1967.

and established an “essential” commonality with other Palestinians. Indeed, it seemed that the very claim to being “Palestinian” often necessitated the commonality of displacement. Neither the context of displacement nor its specific consequences for those living in it mattered when identifying who was or wasn’t a refugee.

To be sure, Palestinians living in the camps were fully aware of the unique hardships of camp life and never denied it. As I will show below, they readily commented on the widespread poverty, poor infrastructure, overcrowding, and limited services in the camps. In some cases, camp refugees described these conditions as serious challenges and the cause of problems among the youth. But these *dhurūf Al-Ma’isha* (living conditions), as they were described by participants, were often understood as material obstacles to living a better life and not constitutive of who or what a refugee was. If there were any differences between refugees, many Palestinians explained, it was the better services and economic opportunities available for those living beyond the borders of the UNRWA camps. In their view, while the mukhayyam did structure a particular kind of existence, one could not draw any specific conclusions about the moral makeup of those raised within those structures. Difference, in other words, was a material condition.

The difference between Palestinian conceptions of the relationship between “refugeeness” and the place in which that status was lived speaks to a broader literature on questions of identity and place. Concerned with the question of place in anthropological writing, Margaret Rodman, for example, argued for a multivocal approach that considers its multiple social, political, and historical meanings. According to Rodman, places should be understood as socially constructed; that is, each place should be seen as having multiple meanings grounded in the physical, emotional and experiential realities they hold for their inhabitants (Rodman 1992,

641). In this sense, Rodman urged anthropologists to move beyond their own constructions of place to consider how individuals construct their own meanings of place. Rather than places becoming exemplars of *our* concepts, they should be seen as, to varying degrees, socially constructed products of *others'* interests (material as well as ideational) and as mnemonics of *others'* experiences (Rodman 1992, 644). By examining the role of participants in the place-making process, Rodman suggested that anthropologists could better understand how the meanings of particular places reflect specific forms of competition and struggle. Although place may have a unique reality for each inhabitant, and while the meanings may be shared with others, Rodman argued that the views of place are often likely to be competing and contested in practice (Low and Lawrence-Zunigas 2003, 15). Thus place can be seen as a multivocal project reflecting competing interests and claims over its meanings and significance for its inhabitants.

In the following analysis, I draw on Rodman's insights to consider the social construction of the refugee camps among Palestinian refugees in both the camps and the city and its role in the constitution of refugee identifications. My aim in this section is to broaden the scope of multivocality by examining how Palestinian refugees understand place both from within its boundaries and without. By juxtaposing the views of city refugees with those of the camp, I will show that where one is located within space matters for the social construction of place and community<sup>62</sup>. Specifically, I examine how Palestinians construct and contest the meaning of place and how these constructions are implicated in ideas about Palestinianness in Jordan.

According to Palestinians in the city, to be a refugee *of* the camp is to be a refugee of a particular

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<sup>62</sup> Drawing on Julie Peteet's approach to place, I will avoid the space/place binary used within much of the literature on place. As Peteet noted, "If place is crafted through the imposition of human meaning and daily practices, space is, and perhaps can only be, defined and take shape through being exterior to place. Thus from an anthropological perspective, with its focus on meaning, practice, and agency, place and space are mutually interactive and constitutive (Peteet 2009a, 28-29)."

kind: one marked by the social and economic poverty distinctive of that place. Thus conceived, the camp provides a symbolic boundary understood by Palestinians in the city as a dividing line between themselves and the refugees of the camp. From within the camps, however, Palestinians see themselves not as constituted by the camp but as trapped by or struggling against its material conditions. They are no more or less a part of the Palestinian community of refugees. The material circumstances of the camps notwithstanding, they are of the same social fabric as every other Palestinian in Jordan.

The following chapter thus offers a critical examination of the politics of meaning (Geertz 2000) among Palestinian refugees in UNRWA refugee camps and several urban areas of Amman. Of particular concern are cultural meanings of refugee identification and the refugee camp. In the first two sections of this chapter, I provide a brief account of Palestinian displacement and its connection to the creation of an official definition of a Palestine refugee articulated by the UNRWA. The following two sections offer a brief description of refugee camp conditions including demographic factors. In the next section, which is sub-divided into two sections, I examine the meanings of refugee identification claimed by Palestinians in two particular settings: the refugee camps and the city. The final section extends the analysis to include how refugee identifications are implicated in cultural ideas about the relationship between identity and place. Although the shared experiences of displacement and exile established an important link between Palestinians across space and time, I argue that the material and symbolic boundaries between the city and the camps nevertheless had significant consequences for what it meant to *be* a refugee living in both spaces.

## **The Unmaking of Palestine and the Making of Palestine Refugees:**

The existence of Palestine refugees now exceeds 60 years. Their genesis is grounded in the devastating results of the Palestine War of 1948, during which approximately 600,000-900,000<sup>63</sup> Palestinian Arabs were ethnically cleansed (Masalha 1992; Pappe 2007; Morris 2004; Rogan and Shlaim 2007) from their homes, villages, and cities in Palestine and prevented from returning. Known to Palestinians as *Al-Nakba*<sup>64</sup> (the catastrophe), the exodus of 85% of the indigenous population of Palestine and the establishment of the Israeli state within its borders fundamentally altered the geographic constitution of the Palestinian people. In the aftermath of the war, three particular sets of circumstances defined the context of the fractured Palestinian community. First, there was a relatively small but significant population of Palestinians who remained in what became Israel. Estimated at 160,000, these Palestinians either remained within

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<sup>63</sup> The precise number of Palestinians displaced in 1948 is unknown. The most widely accepted sources reflect a number between 600,000 and 900,000. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, for example, provides an estimate of 750,000 Palestinians. This figure only includes the number of documented refugees who were, in 1950, receiving aid from the agency. Relying on figures provided by the British Foreign Office in 1949, Israeli historian, Benny Morris, estimates that 600,000 to 760,000 Palestinians became refugees in 1948 (Morris 2004). According to the Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Badil, the number provided by the Final Report of the United Nations Survey Mission for the Middle East was 750,000. However, this number does not include Palestinians who were displaced and lost their livelihoods but did not lose their homes. If this population is included, then the number of refugees rises to approximately 900,000 (Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. n.d., 34).

<sup>64</sup> In a recent editorial in Egypt's *Al-Ahram*, Joseph Massad cautions scholars and activists about the risks in describing Al-Nakba as a singular event in the past. Instead, he argues for an expanded conceptualization of Al-Nakba as an historical epoch beginning over 100 years ago and continuing into the present. According to Massad, "the year 1881 is the date when Jewish colonization of Palestine started and, as everyone knows, it has never ended. Much as the world would like to present Palestinians as living in a post-Nakba period, I insist that we live thoroughly in Nakba times (Massad 2008)."

their homes and villages or were internally displaced<sup>65</sup> from their homes to other areas within Jewish-controlled territory (Morris 2004). The second group of Palestinians was displaced to areas of Palestine unconquered by Jewish forces. These Palestinians became refugees temporarily resettled within the Gaza Strip or the area of central Palestine annexed by Jordan and known today as the West Bank<sup>66</sup>. Finally, thousands of Palestinians displaced during the war became refugees within the borders of the surrounding Arab states including Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Like Palestinians internally displaced within the new-found Jewish state or to the remaining areas of Palestine, these externally displaced refugees were denied the ability to return to their homes losing both their properties and livelihoods.

The massive displacement of Palestinians from their territorial homeland in 1948 necessitated a response far beyond the will and capabilities of the international non-governmental organizations (INGO) on the ground and the governments of the surrounding Arab states. Immediately following the outbreak of hostilities and subsequent flight of Palestinian refugees, several INGOs including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies, and the American Friends Service Committee responded to the crisis by providing basic services including food, health care, and temporary shelter. Plagued by the growing number of displaced Palestinians and the poor economic conditions within neighboring states, however, a larger intervention by the international community became essential for addressing the needs of the refugees. In its report to the United Nations General Assembly, for example, the Clapp Economic Survey Mission described “the extreme poverty” of refugee host

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<sup>65</sup> According to Badil, between 35,000 and 45,000 of Palestinians who remained within areas of Palestine that became part of Israel were displaced (Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. n.d., 4).

<sup>66</sup> By 1949, approximately 78% of Palestinian territory was conquered by Jewish forces. The remaining 22% fell under Egyptian and Jordanian rule.

countries whose influx of refugees created “conditions of intense pressure and of hungry populations upon closely limited resources (Barakat 1973, 148).” Given the grim conditions on the ground and the absence of any immediate efforts towards returning the refugees to their homes, plans for temporary resettlement began to take shape. For this effort, the United Nations took a primary role.

Faced with its own responsibility in the creation of the Palestine conflict<sup>67</sup> and the severity of the refugee crisis, the United Nations created several ad hoc agencies designed for both assessing the extent of the humanitarian challenges and providing immediate aid. These agencies included the United Nations Mediator for Palestine, the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (Parvathaneni 2004, 3). Although each agency played a critical role in addressing some of the political, economic, and humanitarian aspects of the crisis, it wasn’t until the creation of UNRWA<sup>68</sup> in 1949 that a more coordinated and systematic response was implemented. Sponsored by the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Turkey, and all of the Arab states (and later Israel), the agency was given two duties: first to carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programs for the Palestine refugees and, second, to consult with interested Middle Eastern governments about measures to

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<sup>67</sup> In 1947, against the wishes and rights of the Palestinian people, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181 recommending the Partition of Palestine into two states: one Jewish, one Arab. According to the resolution, only 43% of Palestine was to be given to the Palestinian Arabs despite the fact that they lived on well over 60% of the land and constituted about 67% of the population. Jews, comprising only 33% of the population, were offered 56% of Palestine.

<sup>68</sup> UNRWA was established in December 8, 1949, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV). The agency began its operations within Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan on May 1, 1950.

be taken by them against the time when international assistance for relief and works projects would no longer be available (Dale 1974, 579-580). Thus designed, the agency was restricted to operations guided by the principles of relief and works. It could not, in other words, engage in any political activities aimed towards the realization of Palestine refugee rights as outlined in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (11). According to the resolution, any “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property, which under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible (Dale 1974, 581).”

One of the principal outcomes of the establishment of UNRWA was to create and operationalize an official definition of a “Palestine refugee.” According to its mandate, UNRWA defined a Palestine refugee as all persons who lived in Palestine for at least two years before the Arab-Israel conflict of 1948, and who as a result of the war lost both their homes and their means of earning a living. This definition was later expanded to include refugees displaced in 1967 and the descendants of both groups of registered Palestine refugees. When the agency began its services in 1950, about 750,000 Palestinians met the agency’s definition and were receiving assistance in one of its official areas of operation including Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and the West Bank. All registered refugees were entitled to four principal forms of assistance: rations, housing, medical care, and education (Dale 1974, 587).

Despite their official status under UNRWA, the definition of a Palestine refugee did not afford Palestinians the legal status or rights defined by the primary international convention for



refugees, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees<sup>69</sup> (1951 Convention).

According to the Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention, a refugee was any person who:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Although Palestinian refugees met the criteria of a refugee outlined above, Article 1D provided the following exception:

This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance.

Receiving services from UNRWA at the time of the passing of the 1951 Convention, Palestinians were thus excluded from its provisions and all subsequent protocols including the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. This had two particularly important consequences for Palestinian refugees living under the auspices of UNRWA. First, while refugees who met the definition articulated in the 1951 Convention were entitled to, *inter alia*, three fundamental rights including voluntary repatriation (return), permanent settlement in country of residence, or resettlement in a third country, Palestinian refugees receiving UNRWA services were entitled to no such guarantees. Second, refugees who met the definition of a refugee described in the 1951 Convention were entitled to the protections offered by the chief international agency for refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Established by the UN General Assembly in 1950, UNHCR was mandated to both

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<sup>69</sup> For an extensive discussion on the status of Palestinian refugees in international law and the 1951 Convention, see Susan Akram 2002.

protect refugees and actively engage in efforts to resolve their social, political, and economic problems.

Based on their exclusion from the 1951 Convention and UNRWA's service-based mandate, Palestinian refugees did not qualify for similar protections. According to its mandate, UNRWA's political activities were restricted to addressing matters of relief and works programs with local governments. Questions of refugee rights or a solution to their displacement was simply beyond the agency's scope and purpose. This left Palestinians within a legal lacuna in which neither their rights nor protections could be ensured by any United Nations agency. While the UNHCR could not extend its protection role to the Palestinians, UNRWA didn't have the mandate to do so. Their exclusion from the 1951 Convention, in other words, confined them to the framework of an international agency lacking the mandate necessary for ensuring and protecting their rights as refugees and solving their predicament as a stateless community.

### **Two Wars, Two Waves: Palestinian Refugees in Jordan:**

The Palestinian presence in Jordan is grounded in two particular events<sup>70</sup>. The first was the catastrophic war of 1948 and subsequent annexation of central Palestine. Of all regional actors, the Hashemite King of Jordan was unique in his approach to the Palestinians. Left with a chunk of central Palestine that included the historic city of Jerusalem, *Khalil* (Hebron), Nablus, Ramallah, and Jenin, King Abdullah I officially annexed the territory making it the West Bank of Jordan and transforming its Palestinian population into citizens of the Jordanian state through an addendum to the 1928 Law of Nationality (Massad 2001a). Cementing the legal and territorial incorporation of central Palestine and the Palestinians into the Hashemite Kingdom, the addendum Law of 1949 was later amended by the Law of Jordanian Nationality in 1954. The

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<sup>70</sup> For the purposes of my discussion, I am restricting my historical background to the two major events that directly impacted my research participants.

legal shift effectively replaced all former laws relating to the question of nationality in order to ensure that Palestinians who entered the Kingdom after 1949 were also offered Jordanian nationality<sup>71</sup>. In demographic terms, the annexation of the West Bank not only meant the addition of native West Bank Palestinians to the Jordanian national body but also required the inclusion of about 500,000 displaced refugees now residing in both the East and West Banks. This brought the Kingdom's population to about one and one-half million, of whom less than half a million were Transjordanians<sup>72</sup> (Salibi 1998a). Thus between 1954 and 1967, West Bank Palestinians and 1948 refugees achieved legal equality through their constitutional status as citizens of the Jordanian state<sup>73</sup>.

The second major event was the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967 between three Arab states including Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, and the state of Israel. Expanding its territory well beyond the de facto borders of 1949, Israel successfully defeated all three armies conquering large swaths of territory in the process. Israel's unexpected victory dealt a heavy blow to the cause of Arab nationalism championed by its primary spokesman, Gamal Abdul Nasser. For years the

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<sup>71</sup> According to Jordanian Law No. 6 of 1954 on Nationality, Article 3 (b), Palestinians living within the annexed territory of Palestine following the 1948 Palestine War became Jordanian nationals (citizens). The Law states that a Jordanian national is "[a]ny person who, not being Jewish, possessed Palestinian nationality before 15 May 1948 and was a regular resident in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan between 20 December 1949 and 16 February 1954."

<sup>72</sup> The term *Transjordanians* refers to the population who, according to the nationality laws of 1928 of the Emirate of Jordan, became citizens of the State of Transjordan and subsequently citizens of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

<sup>73</sup> The geographic and constitutional union of central Palestine (the West Bank) and East Bank of Transjordan did not necessarily translate into formal equality. As Joseph Massad has noted, Palestinians raised several complaints against the Jordanian government for its failure to invest in both banks equally. In 1950, Palestinian merchants, for example, claimed that they were discriminated against in the issuance of import licenses, "a complaint that seems quite reasonable given that two-thirds of the import licenses were given to East Bank residents" (Massad 2001b, 235)."

Egyptian president raised the banner of Arab unity throughout the region. Charismatic and convincing, Nasser gained popular support through his declarations about the inevitable liberation of Palestine and unification of the Arab people while often challenging the legitimacy of the colonial monarchies in Jordan and the Gulf (Kamrava 2005; Dawisha 2005; Gawrych 2000). Suspicious of his Egyptian adversary and doubtful of the feasibility of defeating Israel in another war, the late King Hussein had little incentive to enter the war. But with Arab nationalism at its peak and popular unrest within its borders, Jordan couldn't afford to stay out of the fight. Once Israel launched its first strikes in June, Hussein reluctantly joined the war effort suffering considerable losses as a result. In addition to the conquest and subsequent Israeli occupation of the Jordanian-ruled West Bank including the eastern half of Al-Quds, the Kingdom's East Bank population swelled as approximately 400,000 displaced Palestinians sought safety in the east (Segev 2007; Salibi 1998a; Robins 2004).

For Palestinians, the post war status quo was particularly distressing. Not only were the remaining territories of Mandate Palestine now occupied by Israeli forces but a new wave of displacement and destruction left many Palestinians homeless for the first time. In both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, indigenous Palestinians fled invading Israeli forces seeking shelter primarily in the East Bank of Jordan<sup>74</sup>. These Palestinians joined 1948 refugees in UNRWA refugee camps adding new pressures to the already burdened agency. In addition, the war produced a second group of Palestinian refugees who were originally displaced in 1948<sup>75</sup>.

Primarily from the West Bank, this group of refugees was also forced across the Jordan River

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<sup>74</sup> According to the UNRWA, approximately 240,000 citizens of the West Bank were displaced and categorized as "displaced persons" (the West Bank was administered by Jordan between 1948 and 1967).

<sup>75</sup> UNRWA estimates that 140,000 Palestinians already registered with UNRWA were displaced in 1967.

into the East Bank of the Kingdom. Already dependent upon UNRWA services, many of these Palestinians lost what little they had acquired since their displacement in 1948 and began a new life in Jordan's expanding refugee camps. By the end of the war, the new refugees were relocated to six new emergency camps raising the total number of UNRWA camps to ten.

### **The Camp and Its Meanings:**

In Jordan, Palestinian refugee camps represent a peculiar phenomenon. One of the most striking features of the camps, for example, is their age. Initially created in response to the 1948 displacement of over 100,000 refugees who crossed the Jordan River into the East Bank, the camps fell under the official management of UNRWA in 1950. Only four years earlier, the late King Abdullah I declared the British-controlled territory an independent Hashemite Kingdom. In this sense, the camps are almost as old as the country itself. Second, due to rapid population growth and extensive urbanization, some of the refugee camps have developed into massive urban slums contiguous with other non-camp neighborhoods. In Amman, for example, the Wihdāt and Al-Hussein camps are geographically indistinguishable from the surrounding areas. Established in the wake of the 1948 war, both camps have developed from small encampments into sprawling quarters replete with local shops, schools, and mosques. Third, unlike other refugee camps throughout the world, Palestinian camps in Jordan shelter refugees who are also Jordanian citizens. Despite their official status as refugees and their connection to the international services provided by UNRWA, Palestinians in the camps are legal equals with

Jordanian nationals<sup>76</sup>. Whether in terms of work, education, or healthcare, most Palestinian refugees are thus guaranteed the same rights and privileges of all Jordanian citizens<sup>77</sup>.

Unlike the isolated and controlled environments of many refugee camps throughout the world, Palestinian camps in Jordan are also unique for their political histories as sites of intense national mobilization and resistance. Historically, this was most visible during the rise and culmination of PLO power in Jordan. From the emergence of the PLO in the 1960s until its expulsion in 1970-1971 by the Jordanian military during Black September, Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan achieved an almost unlimited autonomy functioning as a state within a state; they were governed by the PLO and served as the center of gravity for Palestinian political activity in the diaspora. Even after the PLO's demise in Jordan, the camps have maintained a distinct Palestinian character known culturally and politically as symbols of the Palestinian struggle and people. Throughout the Kingdom, the camps have thus come to represent Palestinian national spaces with their own unique communities and histories. Finally, the continuing presence of UNRWA institutions and their exclusive functions for Palestinian refugees has also facilitated their development into distinctly Palestinian locales emplaced within the Jordanian national geography. Located within the territorial borders of the Jordanian state, the camps nevertheless function as transnational spaces constituted by the presence and services of international humanitarian agencies including UNRWA and the symbolic extension of the Palestinian nation in exile.

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<sup>76</sup> All Palestinian refugees in Jordan have citizenship except for approximately 120,000 Gaza refugees.

<sup>77</sup> This is not to deny that discrimination exists between Palestinian citizens of Jordan and Jordanians. As will be discussed later, Palestinians' status as Jordanian citizens does not necessarily mean that they are treated as full citizens. However, Palestinians' citizenship status in Jordan does afford them opportunities and rights that have been denied to other Palestinian refugees throughout the region.

Despite their enduring presence in Jordan and their historical and symbolic significance to the Palestinian national ethos, the camps occupy an ambiguous place in the Palestinian context of Amman today. From the city, they are perceived as marginal spaces characterized by economic and social poverty and the cultural status of what might be described as a Palestinian ghetto. In material terms, for example, Palestinians often explained how the camps were distinguishably poorer than other urban areas of Jordan. The claim was not altogether untrue: Palestinian camps throughout the Kingdom bear the distinct features of an undeveloped urban slum with inadequate infrastructures. For example, most camps have homes with zinc roofs held by heavy stones and debris, extremely narrow passageways, and raw sewage running through the streets. Culturally, the camps were also described places marked by all the signs of “social decay” including unemployment, a burgeoning population of young people, crime, violence, and unrefined manners. Within the camps, however, their meanings were less straightforward. Material conditions notwithstanding, the camps were often described as spaces of strong social cohesion and national belonging. In the following section, I will provide a brief demographic portrait of the camps with specific attention to material conditions of poverty. I will then examine some of the various meanings ascribed to the camps emphasizing how their constructions as places of poverty and social decline enabled particular ideas about the Palestinian community of refugees.

### **Camp Demography:**

Ten official and three unofficial UNRWA refugee camps exist in Jordan. The majority of these camps are located in or around the Jordanian capital, Amman. According to UNRWA, five of the camps were established on the East Bank after the 1948 war for about 100,000 refugees while the remaining eight were built after 1967 to accommodate approximately 140,000

refugees. Within the camps, UNRWA provides basic assistance including primary education and general healthcare. It also organizes community support organizations such as women's program centers and coordinates with governmental and non-governmental organizations on economic development efforts including micro-financing projects. Although UNRWA does play an active role in improving camp conditions, the Jordanian government is primarily responsible for the infrastructure of the camps. Most of its operations in the camps are run through the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA)<sup>78</sup> and the Ministry of Construction and Restoration.

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<sup>78</sup> The DPA is an extension of Jordan's Ministry of Refugees. In 1951, the ministry established the Ministry of Construction and Restoration, which was assigned the responsibility of organizing and supervising the establishment of residential units for the refugees in accordance with a 1951 agreement between UNRWA and the Jordanian government. (See: <http://www.dpa.gov.jo/MenuHistoricalindex.html>)



Camp Name	Year Established	Camp Population	Housing Units	Number of Families	Family Hardship Cases <sup>79</sup>
Wihdāt	1948	51,000	2,130	9,800	2,044
‘Azmi Al-Mufti (Husn)	1968	22,000	2,314	4,505	413
Souf	1967	20,000	1,179	4,029	322
Talbīyeh	1968	7,000	810	1,313	134
Sukhneh	1969	6,000	500	620	95
Jabal Al-Hussein	1952	29,000	2,488	5,811	1,320
Irbid	1951	25,000	1,693	5,142	1,747
Mādaba	1956	5,500	512	813	249
Baqā’a	1968	94,000	7,100	18,129	1,740
Hittīn (Marka)	1968	45,000	2,844	8,700	965
Jarash (Gaza)	1968	24,000	2,130	4,726	538
Prince Al-Hassan	1967	10,000	648	1,190	331
Zarqā’	1949	18,000	1,135	3,862	1,181

**Table Three: Jordan Refugee Camp Profiles<sup>80</sup>**

Although camp conditions can differ according to their establishment<sup>81</sup>, population size and density, and infrastructure, refugee camps are nevertheless distinguishable from urban areas

<sup>79</sup> The special hardship assistance program assists the most disadvantaged and vulnerable refugees including women whose husbands have died or whose husbands have divorced or abandoned them, the elderly, the chronically ill, refugees with disabilities, and the very young. Families that meet UNRWA’s criteria are eligible for food and cash assistance, shelter rehabilitation, are given priority in the programs organized by the social services division, and preference in enrolling at the vocational training centers. (See: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/programmes/rss/specialhardship.html>)

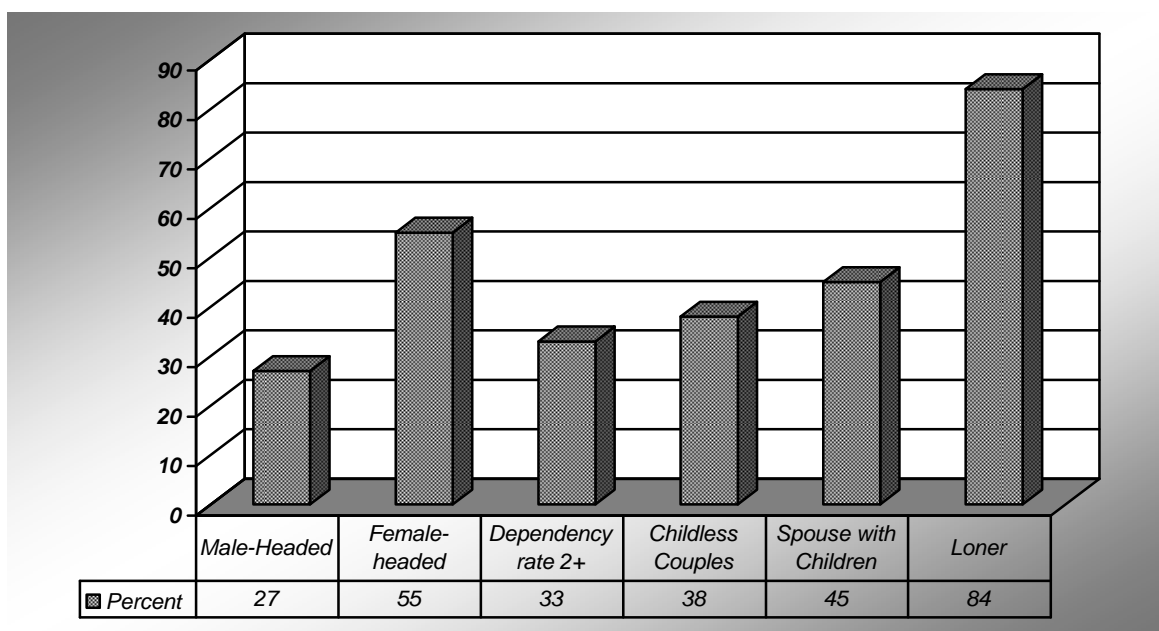
<sup>80</sup> Figures in this table are drawn from UNRWA and the DPA 2008 report “60 Years Serving Refugee Camps.”

<sup>81</sup> According to UNRWA, although refugees live under similar socio-economic conditions, camps established in the wake of the 1948 war are generally better off than those created in 1967. Despite various improvements made within the 1967 camps, they are nevertheless “less developed than those established in the 1950s. Some of them lack basic infrastructure and public services, especially the camps in remote areas.” (See: <http://unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=100>)

in Jordan in several ways. In 2000, for example, a joint study conducted by Fafo<sup>82</sup> noted that fertility rates among Palestinian refugees in the camps were generally higher (4.6 children) than the national average (3 children). With limited economic opportunities, higher fertility rates were linked to increased population density and general overcrowding throughout the camps. The Fafo study also reported that one-third of all refugee camp households had eight or more individuals whereas the Jordanian national average was approximately six individuals per household. Within the home, quarters were particularly crowded as about 45% of all camp households had three or more individuals for every room. Female-headed families were also more widespread in the camps. While women headed about 15% of all camp households, the national figure was only 10% (Khawaja and Tiltne 2002, 25). In the camps, unemployment was also higher than other areas of Jordan with a particular glut among the youth. Unemployment among males between the ages of 15-24, for example, was about 16% and roughly 30% for women of the same ages (Khawaja and Tiltne 2002, 49). According to a 2002 Fafo report, two factors helped explain the high levels of unemployment in the camps. First, camp youth were typically less educated than their non-camp peers due to high drop-out rates. Second, the young were generally less skilled than the older generation and thus had few opportunities for entering the work force (Khawaja and Tiltne 2002, 49).

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<sup>82</sup> According to its website, Fafo is an independent and multidisciplinary research foundation focusing on social welfare and trade policy, labor and living conditions, public health, migration and integration, and transnational security and development issues. (See: <http://www.fafo.no/indexenglish.htm>)



**Table Four: Poverty Levels by Household Composition**<sup>83</sup>

Income and poverty levels also suggest important differences between the camp populations and refugees in the city. In 2000, Fafo reported the national poverty line for a family of six persons at JD 1,250 (roughly U.S. \$1700). The same year, approximately 30% of camp households fell below the national poverty line. Two years later, 22% of camp households were reported to be making less than JD 900 per year compared to the national average of 10% (Khawaja and Tiltne 2002, 56)<sup>84</sup>. Moreover, poverty levels were considerably high among female-headed households. Whereas approximately 27% of male-headed households in the camps were poor, 55% of female-headed households lived below the national poverty line. The differences in income and poverty were particularly striking given that both camp and non-camp refugees have equal legal standing in Jordan. That is, with the exception of about 120,000

<sup>83</sup> Adapted from Khawaja and Tiltne, 2002.

<sup>84</sup> Although camps tend to be generally poorer than non-camp areas, it is important to mention that considerable differences between camps exist. For example, whereas approximately 33% of camps located in northern Jordan meet the definition of poverty, only 27% of Amman camps are poor (Arneberg 1997).

refugees from Gaza, all Palestinian refugees have Jordanian citizenship and are thus guaranteed equal status in terms of education and employment. According to Fafo, several factors accounted for the economic disparities between camp and non-camp residents: business flight due to lack of space (overcrowding), low wages due to competition with foreign labor, locational disadvantages including long distances from work areas, and decreased migration to the Gulf following the 1991 Gulf War (Arneberg 1997).

### **Identifying Refugees: *Refugeeness* for All:**

Throughout my research, the historical episodes of 1948 and 1967 were essential for understanding the formation of the Palestinian refugee diaspora (*Al-Shattāt*) in general and the presence of Palestinians in Jordan in particular. In local terms, however, Palestinians typically referred to *Al-Nakba* and *Al-Naksa*<sup>85</sup> in order to locate particular events or people in time. *Al-Nakba* could thus refer to the displacement of Palestinians and partition of Palestine, the destruction of Palestinian territory through the establishment of Israel, and/or the Arab armies' failure to defeat Zionist forces. It could also mean the culmination of Zionist colonization that began long before the 1948 war. Similarly, *Al-Naksa* signified the defeat of Arab forces in 1967, the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, the fragmentation of Arab territory through Israeli occupation in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, and the specific conquest of Gaza and the West Bank. For some, it also signified the failure of Arab nationalism and the beginning of the Islamic resistance. In addition to particular events, *Al-Nakba* and *Al-Naksa* could refer to an individual's physical origin in Palestine and/or metaphysical location within the history of Palestinian displacement. A Palestinian could thus be of the *jīl Al-Nakba* (the Nakba generation) if he or she was displaced from a village or city in Palestine conquered by Zionist

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<sup>85</sup> Palestinians explained that the word “naksa” expressed the “setback” following the 1967 war and/or the “breaking” up of Palestine and Arab territory.

forces in 1948 or of the *jīl Al-Naksa* (the Naksa generation) if he or she was displaced from a village or city in the Gaza Strip or West Bank in 1967. In the next section, I will discuss how these two historical markers functioned in self-categorizations as “refugees” among camp and city Palestinians.

When I began conducting interviews with Palestinians in the refugee camps, I always started with what may have seemed an odd question: “Are you a refugee?” Initially, I thought the question was a good opening for a series of queries meant to establish a participant’s background. Not long after my first interview, however, I realized that the question was far more significant than I originally thought. The fact that respondents answered in the affirmative, “I am a refugee,” was not the issue. As I mentioned above, I expected that Palestinians in refugee camps would readily identify as refugees. Rather, I was struck by how Palestinians anchored their claims to being a refugee. Contrary to my assumptions about the camp and its residents, neither official UNRWA status nor life in the camp emerged as the basis for identifying oneself as a refugee. Instead, Palestinians’ identification as refugees relied on a concept of displacement understood both as a lived experience and inherited condition. A refugee was thus either a *lāji*’ of the Nakba or *nāzih* of the Naksa regardless of his or her UNRWA status. Moreover, while one’s status as a resident of the camp could be used to emphasize refugeeness, it was ultimately an individual’s ability to establish a link to a particular displacement that authenticated his or her identification as a refugee.

In the following section, I will highlight two key features of how Palestinians identified as refugees in both camps and the city. The first concerns the direct experience of displacement from Palestine. Experientially framed, identifying as a refugee reflected two things: first, the experience of displacement and, second, the persistence of exile in an individual’s life following

his or her removal from Palestine during the Nakba or Naksa. The second feature is what I will call the “inheritance of exile.” In this case, refugee status is inherited by a descendant of a refugee who directly experienced displacement or was himself a descendant of someone displaced. Following the logic of a nationalized patrilineal descent<sup>86</sup>, refugee identification was conceived as a gendered national inheritance primarily based on the origin and displacement of male relatives from Palestine. A Palestinian refugee could claim refugeeness in virtue of an essential Palestinianness established through a link to a Palestinian male’s displacement from the “motherland” in 1947 or after.

### **The Displaced and the Persistence of Exile:**

Refugee camps in Jordan are not a recent phenomenon. Several of the camps were established immediately following the displacement in 1948, only a few years after King Abdullah I declared Jordan’s independence from British colonial rule. Others were created as temporary shelters for Palestinians displaced in 1967. In both cases, what began as small, temporary encampments in 1948 and 1967 have developed into sprawling urban neighborhoods resembling inner-city slums. In the camps established in 1948 such as Al-Wihdāt, the population reflects the long-term presence of the camp. One can thus expect to find refugees displaced in 1948 and 1967 living alongside of their children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren. In the Baqa’a camp, for example, I spent considerable time with a family living in a three story dwelling in which each floor housed members of different generations. In the city, one can find similar living arrangements to the camps: multiple generations inhabit the same apartment buildings (and sometimes apartments) or neighborhoods. Several families I met either purchased

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<sup>86</sup> Patrilineal descent, or agnatic kinship, typically refers to a genealogical system in which an individual primarily belongs to her or his father’s lineage. It can also involve inheritance including familial name and property.

nearby apartments or built upon the existing structures of their homes to accommodate newly-wedded sons, their wives, and their children.

But as the Palestinian refugee crisis<sup>87</sup> continues unresolved, the demographics of the camps and cities are rapidly changing. Most Palestinians from jīl Al-Nakba are now within their 70s or 80s or are now deceased. Finding Palestinians displaced during the Nakba is thus no longer as simple as a selfish researcher would hope. Nonetheless, two years of fieldwork afforded me several opportunities to meet and interview a significant number of Palestinians displaced during the Nakba. These encounters were always animated by the passion and sincerity of the elders. Often dressed in the worn yet colorful *thobe*<sup>88</sup> described as “*malābis Filastīniyya*” (Palestinian dress), these mostly Palestinian women spoke frankly about their lives and their intense longing for a return to the past. In particular, I was struck by their deep connection to the land and life-ways of pre-Partition Palestine. It was primarily a result of their unique expressions that helped me realize that their country, Palestine, and their displacement from it in 1948, were still at work in their lives. Being a refugee was, for them, an identity and experience: it was the ceaseless condition of a life everywhere except in Palestine. This pattern emerged again as I encountered Palestinians displaced in 1967 among the jīl Al-Naksa. They too identified as refugees trapped within an ongoing experience marked by displacement and the

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<sup>87</sup> Authors like Benny Morris have described the displacement of Palestinian refugees as a “problem” (Morris 2004). I prefer to use the term “crisis” to underscore the urgency of the situation for both Palestinians living as refugees and the national contexts in which they are in. In truth, however, it is not the fact of Palestinian refugees that is the problem. Rather, it is the Israeli state’s unwillingness to take responsibility for their displacement by addressing the rights of refugees established in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (11).

<sup>88</sup> Thobes are typically long garments covering both the arms and legs down to the ankles. They are often stitched with differing patterns using red, white, green, and yellow thread.

“foreignness” of their life in Jordan. In the following discussion, I examine how these two generations articulated the meaning and condition of being a refugee<sup>89</sup>.

Um Fādī and I met during my second visit to the Baqa’a. She lived in a small, one-story dwelling within the camp. Originally from Al-Sawāfir in Gaza, she and her husband were displaced in 1967. Most of her relatives, she explained, remained in Gaza. She was 72 years old at the time of our meeting and, like most Palestinians of her age, was comfortable speaking with strangers. When asked if she was a refugee, her response was “*na’m, ana nāzih* (yes, I am a refugee).” I then asked, “Are you registered with UNRWA?” Referring to the UNRWA card used to prove registration with the agency, Um Fādī responded, “I have the card.”

I was introduced to Abu Raid in the Baqa’a camp. Originally from *Dura* in the city of *Khalīl* (Hebron), Abu Raid identified himself as a *nāzih* displaced in 1967. He, his brothers, and one of his sisters all lived in the Baqa’a camp. Abu Raid’s second sister was a refugee living in mukhayyam Gaza in the city of Jarash. Like his brothers and sisters, he said, I am registered with UNRWA as a refugee.

Um Shāhid and I shared a mutual friend in the Wihdāt camp. We met in the central *sūq* (market) at the watch shop owned by my friend. After offering a brief explanation of my research, she led me through the narrow streets of the camp to the homes of friends and family. One of our visits included a home with three elderly Palestinians. Two of the *hajjāt* (elderly women) began describing their rural lifestyle before the Zionist occupation. When asked if they were refugees, they both said “yes, we are *lāji’in* from Palestine.” All three women said they had UNRWA cards.

Abu Asad never lived in a camp. He and his family fled an area near Al-Quds called ‘*ayn Karam* in 1948. They moved to Amman and eventually managed to purchase an apartment in the Hāshmi Shamālī in East Amman. Over time, the Hāshmi became an area heavily populated by Palestinians. Abu Asad never registered with UNRWA nor did he live in a camp. He nevertheless said he was a *lāji’ min Filastīn* (from Palestine).

The four profiles above reflect interviews conducted with the Nakba and Naksa generations of Palestine displaced from Palestine in 1948 or 1967. Representing two refugee camps and an urban area of Amman, their experiences were not untypical. During most of my

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<sup>89</sup> The similarity in claims discussed at this stage in the analysis should not be taken to mean that both generations felt loss the same way. What was lost and how it was expressed were, at times, very different things reflecting broader changes within the Palestinian ethos of which they were raised. This, however, will be discussed at a later point.



interviews with the older generation, the question “are you a refugee” was addressed by identifying oneself as a *lāji*’ or *nāzih*. In this sense, whether or not they identified as refugees did not depend on their UNRWA status. Rather, it was their direct experience of displacement from Palestine that informed their response. Abu Asad, for example, never received the assistance offered by UNRWA. He and his family moved directly into the East Bank in search of work and managed to find a stable source of income. In time, they moved into the eastern area of Amman where homes were cheap and land was plentiful. His children, all born in Amman, were raised in the city far from the camps. Nonetheless, Abu Asad was “a *lāji*’”, displaced from his homeland by the Zionist occupation.”

In Wihdāt, Um ‘Ammār also claimed to be a *lāji*’ a. Unlike Abu Asad, she and her family could not afford to find shelter beyond the camps. She thus registered with UNRWA and, along with her family, moved into the camp receiving the agency’s services. Yet her identification as a refugee was grounded in the existence she lost when forced from her homeland and her exilic condition in Jordan. During our interview, Um ‘Ammār explained: “I live in a country and it’s not my country; I acknowledge that. Here, I am considered a refugee or guest in Jordan. But my *asās* (original) country is Palestine.” For Um ‘Ammār, her identification as a refugee expressed her connection to Palestine and, consequently, her status as a “guest” in Jordan. Not being in Palestine, in other words, established her refugeehood. Responses provided during a survey administered at an UNRWA vocational center reflected similar issues. In one of the responses, the participant described himself in the following way:

I am a *nāzih*. I am registered with UNRWA. I was born in 1964 in ‘*Ayn Al-Baydha*’ in Palestine. Now I live in Amman, Jordan. I am originally from Nablus in Palestine. I do not consider myself a Palestinian refugee because of my [UNRWA] papers. I consider myself a Palestinian refugee because Palestine is my homeland (*wattan*).

In another survey response, the participant provided the following answer to the question of refugee identity:

I am a lāji'. I am registered with UNRWA. I was born in 1962 in Al-Zarqā' in Amman. I now live in Wadī As-Sīr in Amman. I am originally from a village in northern Palestine called Qanīr. I am not a Palestinian refugee because of my documents. My blood was made of Palestinian mud and our religion has taught us to love the land we are from.

Also drawing on the symbol of blood, another respondent provided the following answer:

I am a lāji' and I am registered with UNRWA. I was born in 1988 in Amman, Jordan. I now live in Amman but I am originally from Khalīl in Palestine. I do not consider myself a Palestinian refugee because of my documents. I am a Palestinian refugee because I have the Palestinian blood running through my veins.

The three responses above reveal a common attempt by Palestinians to avoid conflating their official status as registered refugees with their existential status as refugees. In the first excerpt, it was his connection to the Palestinian homeland that grounded his identification as a refugee. Displaced in 1967, he was living beyond the borders of his homeland and, consequently, living as a refugee in Jordan. In the next two excerpts, both UNRWA-registered respondents draw on organic metaphors of the body including blood to describe their identification as a refugee. For the first respondent, the very earth of Palestine is constitutive of his being. The land of Palestine is a part of his very body: he is of Palestine and it of him. But his inability to live in Palestine and experience that connection in a particular place has forced him into a state of displacement and, consequently, refugeeness. Similarly, it is the presence of Palestinian blood that makes the third respondent a refugee. To be anywhere but in Palestine is to render him a refugee living with the blood of his country yet removed from its body.

The claim to refugee identity offered by Palestinians in camps and the city suggested a concept of displacement rooted in time yet ongoing and thus continuous. Being a refugee, in

other words, was an identification grounded *in* and lived *through* a persistent state of separation and distance from the homeland. Moreover, the persistence of displacement wasn't necessarily the experience of living in a camp. Rather, it was the "liminal state of being out of place (outside of Palestine) or in between (connected to Palestine and Palestinians but in the context of Jordan) (Malkki 1995, 6-7)." More specifically, displacement was the persistent state of not being fully *here*, in Jordan, nor *there*, in Palestine. Um 'Arif, for example, identified as a refugee of the Naksa. She and her family were originally from Gaza and her father was active in the Palestinian resistance until the war between the PLO and Jordanian military in 1970. Their displacement began in 1967.

I came to Amman, to a refugee camp. I used to live in a camp called *Schlinner*<sup>90</sup>. As of April 24, I will have been living in Jordan for 38 years. Of course, my father was a *fedā'ī* and, when Israel invaded [Gaza] on the 15th of [June] 1967, my father and all of the *fedā'īyyīn* fled to Egypt. My father left Egypt for Jordan because it was the only place that Palestinians could live in. I came here on April 24, 1967. I was in the third grade and [after the displacement], I studied in a tent. We all lived in a tent. We lived for two years in a tent. A tent! In Gaza, we were living in a house by the sea but we came here and lived in a tent.

In Jordan, she explained, Palestine was perceptibly near yet unreachable. She could see the lights of Jerusalem from Amman and the eastern coast of the Dead Sea but could not cross the border that divided Jordan from Israel. Displacement thus involved both the separation from Palestine and the barriers that kept her from returning.

[Palestine] is my land but I cannot eat from it. Pain, pain! And we hope that the barriers [that divide us from Palestine] are removed (*tūzāl Al-'Awā-iq*). Palestine is only half an hour from here and there are places you can see from here. This is something very painful: you see your country but you can't enter it, you smell its scent but you can't eat from its goodness. It's your land and other people live in it; you can't live on your land!

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<sup>90</sup> Schlinner is a local name used for the Hittīn camp. The word comes from the presence of a local school established by a German man whose surname was Schlinner.

Throughout our interview, Um ‘Arif described the pain of leaving Palestine and the tragic irony of its close albeit inaccessible presence. For Um’Arif, neither her status with UNRWA nor life in the camp established the basis of her self-understanding as a refugee. Indeed, she was one of the few Palestinians able to leave the camp and secure a good-paying job at an UNRWA vocational school. Whether in the camp or in the city, Um ‘Arif explained, she could not be other than a refugee; her broken connection to Palestine and inability to restore that connection through return left her in a persistent state of displacement as a refugee.

Leith, Um ‘Arif’s brother, still lived in the camp and was registered with UNRWA. Unable to find sufficient income to rent or purchase a home outside of the camp, he had lived in the camp since he fled Gaza at eighteen years of age. Like his sister, Leith also claimed to be a refugee displaced from Gaza in 1967 (*nazaht min Gaza fī saba’a wa sittīn*). Leith and I met in his home at the Hittīn camp. Although none of his children were directly displaced from Palestine, he nevertheless explained how displacement scattered his children (*kharajū*) throughout the region into Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Libya. Displacement, for him, was a shared condition that his children now lived. Like his sister, Leith described refugeeeness as a state linked both to the displacement during Al-Naksa and the inability to return to Palestine.

I lost my country (wattanī). Everyone in the world has a country but I don’t have a country. Everyone has a country but I don’t! I am living as a guest in Jordan without a country of my own. Jordan is my second country (wattanī Ath-thānī)! That is, any Arabic country is my second country.

When asked about his relationship to the camps, Leith described it as the consequence of being homeless and nothing more. Whether in a camp in Jordan or another country, he claimed, displacement would persist through an unending feeling of being out of Palestine and a desire to return to it.

Palestinians live in the camps because the Israelis kicked them out of Palestine. If all the Palestinians left the camps, their feelings would still remain. They would feel Palestinian: that he is Palestinian, the right of return is his. I will not forget my feelings even if I lived in China. My feelings are that I want to return to Palestine.

### **The Inheritance of Exile:**

- Michael: Are you a refugee?  
Abu Yāsīn: Refugee? That means that I used to live in Palestine and then was kicked out?  
Michael: ‘*Ala Rahtak* (as you like). I want you to decide.  
Abu Yāsīn: There are certain definitions of a refugee.  
Michael: What would make *you* a refugee?  
Abu Yāsīn: Well, because my father used to work in Palestine and he was kicked out and had to leave.  
Michael: What year was this? What year did he leave?  
Abu Yāsīn: This was in 1948.  
Michael: From where in Palestine, the West Bank, Gaza, or Nakba Palestine?  
Abu Yāsīn: No, we are originally from the West Bank but my father used to work in Haifa, which is in Israel now. We were living in Haifa at the time [of the war] and that’s when we moved back to the West Bank. We were accustomed to living and working in the city, so moving back to the West Bank and living in a village was difficult. We stayed in the West Bank for about nine months and then moved to Amman.

The excerpt above comes from an hour-long interview held at the home of Abu Yāsīn.

An educated and successful businessman, Abu Yāsīn lived in one of the more affluent areas of Amman. He and I met through his son, Yāsīn, who was studying at a local private school where I taught for one year. Yāsīn arranged the interview after expressing his desire to have an anthropologist interested in *Al-Qādhīyya Filastīnīyya* (the Palestinian situation) come to his home and interview his family. Knowing Yāsīn for almost a year before the invitation, I agreed to the meeting. Before visiting his home, Yāsīn assured me that my wife and I would be welcomed with a “traditional” Palestinian meal and an opportunity to view his luxurious entertainment room filled with the latest in visual technology. The night of the interview, all

promises were fulfilled. The meal included an assortment of “Palestinian” dishes including *imsākhen* and *mulukhīya* and the entertainment room was well equipped with an impressive arrangement of sight and sound technology. More importantly, Yāsīn’s father provided an engaging interview that illustrated some important points about the meaning of refugee identity among Palestinians from the city.

Well versed in the history of the Middle East and Palestine in particular, Abu Yāsīn understood that the term “refugee” could mean a variety of things. Despite never living in a refugee camp himself, he was aware that the term “refugee” was often used to designate those Palestinians who lived in camps. This, he later explained, was a meaning linked to the specific institutional setting of UNRWA. He was also aware that refugees were Palestinians who received assistance from UNRWA regardless of where they lived. Palestinians could thus be refugees without living in the camps. But as our exchange above illustrates, the fact that he never lived in a camp nor received assistance from UNRWA did not preclude him from asserting his claim to being a refugee. In his own words, Abu Yāsīn was a refugee because his “father used to work in Palestine and he was kicked out and had to leave.”

Abu Yāsīn’s response highlights two important points about the meaning of refugee identification for many Palestinians I met throughout the course of my research. First, his attention to the existence of “certain definitions” indicated that the refugee category *could* have an institutionalized meaning. According to Abu Yāsīn, Palestinians in the camps and/or dependent upon UNRWA services are refugees; they meet the official definition of a refugee and live that status in an institutional setting. Such an understanding often emerged among other Palestinians living in the city. During numerous conversations concerning refugee identity, for example, Palestinians could not ignore the institutionalized definition of a refugee linked to the

camps and UNRWA. Living in the city, their lives were crafted in spaces external to the camps and thus beyond the particular experience of exile and refugeehood represented by the camps. Although “refugee” could mean many things, what it meant could not exclude the people who lived under that specific status within the unique space of the camps. But while Palestinians in the city couldn’t avoid associating refugeehood with the camps and UNRWA, they also didn’t limit its meaning to an individual’s relationship to either. Thus during my discussion with Ghāzī, who was born in the city to a father displaced in 1967, identifying as a refugee was linked to his shared experience of displacement. Like refugees in the camps, he too grounded his claim to a refugee identity within the historical context of the Naksa and his father’s displacement during that event. In this sense, displacement established a common link between Palestinians in the camps and cities. Put another way, through the common experience of displacement, refugee identity could be claimed and maintained regardless of an individual’s location in the particular space of the camp or city.

This raises the second point about Abu Yāsīn’s response to the question of refugee identity. According to Abu Yāsīn, he was a refugee because his father was from Palestine and “kicked out.” Being a refugee was, in this sense, an inheritance. As previously discussed, Palestinians in both the camps and cities anchored their identification as a refugee in their direct experiences of displacement. Thus whether an individual or family was forced from Palestine into an UNRWA camp or an urban area of Amman, it was the displacement itself that enabled their claim to being a refugee. But not all Palestinians in Jordan were displaced during the Nakba and Naksa. Indeed, the majority of Palestinians in Jordan today were not directly expelled from Palestine. Over 60 years since 1948 and 40 years since 1967, generations of Palestinians have been born and raised in Jordan with little or no contact to what remains of

Palestine. How then can Palestinians claim to be refugees if they were not themselves forced from their lands in 1948 and/or 1967? Abu Yāsīn's response is illustrative in this regard. What made him a refugee was his father's displacement from Palestine. Originally from Palestine, his father used to live and work in Haifa but was expelled in 1948. Abu Yāsīn was therefore a refugee because his father was a refugee. This response was not confined to Abu Yāsīn alone; his son, Yāsīn, also claimed to be a refugee in virtue of his grandfather's displacement. Identifying as a refugee, in this sense, reflected an inherited condition through which Abu Yāsīn and his son could both trace their origins to a specific place in Palestine and in time through the Nakba displacement. Consider the following examples.

Imād and I met at the Wihdāt refugee camp in Amman. He was a Jordanian citizen born in the camp in 1979. Imād described himself as an artist and playwright. Theater was his passion, he said, but working at an Islamic orphanage allowed him to carry out the Islamic principle of caring for the orphans. It also kept him close to the people of the camp. Imād's parents, he informed me, were originally from the city of Jafa in *Filastīn* until their displacement in 1948. Like many Palestinians, Imād had relatives displaced throughout the region including Nablus in the Occupied West Bank, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. Some relatives lived in refugee camps and others didn't, he said. Yet all of his relatives, he explained, were refugees. When I asked Imād, "Are you a refugee," his response was "*ana lāji*." I then asked, "Are you registered with UNRWA?" "*la, ana mish musajjal ma'l UNRWA* (no, I am not registered with UNRWA)."

Asad and I originally met in the Wihdāt camp at the *Markaz Itām*, a religious orphanage for boys. Although intimately connected to the Markaz and the people of the camp, Asad lived in an area several kilometers outside of Wihdāt called the Hāshmi Shamālī (North Hāshmī). Born in Amman, his parents were originally from an area near 21 kilometers west of Al-Quds called 'Ayn Karam. They were displaced in 1948. Neither he nor his siblings ever lived in a camp nor received UNRWA services. When I asked him if he was a refugee, Asad responded, "Yes, I am from the refugees."

Warda lived in a small rural area located on the outskirts of Amman. Her father was a Palestinian physician employed in one of the camps. We met through her father who welcomed me to his home for a Palestinian lunch and a chance to get away from the city. Warda's father and I attended to local masjid for the Friday prayer. Shortly thereafter, we had a gratifying meal replete with fresh meat and



vegetables from their garden. After lunch, we walked in the fields behind Warda's home. During our walk, Warda and her father offered an engaging discussion about their family history and experiences. Warda described herself as a *lāji*'a. She wasn't sure if her family had the UNRWA card. Even if they did, she explained, her family didn't use it for any services. Born in Amman, she said her family was originally from Beersheba in Palestine until their displacement in 1948.

Māzin and Hāfiz were two young men I met at the Wihdāt camp. Both were students at the camp's local UNRWA school. Hāfiz said he was raised in the Jabal Al-Ashrafīyya area of east Amman. Māzin was from the Wihdāt camp. Both teens claimed to be refugees. Hāfiz said he was a *laji*' registered with UNRWA. His parents were from Al-Ramla in Nakba Palestine. Māzin claimed to be a *lāji*' as well. He said his parents were originally from Gaza until their displacement during the Nakba.

All four excerpts above come from fieldnotes taken during formal and informal interviews with Palestinians from the camps and city. In each case, Palestinians born in (and citizens of) Jordan claimed to be refugees. That is, these Palestinians identified as refugees even though they did not themselves experience displacement from Palestinian territory. These brief excerpts thus highlight an element common to my discussions with Palestinians about the meaning of their refugee identification. When not directly displaced, Palestinians anchored their refugee identification in terms of an inheritance extending from their connection to a specifically male relative who was displaced from Palestine and the idea that they too longed for the homeland. For these Palestinians, refugeeeness was an inherited and thus relational category established primarily through their patrilineal connection (a Palestinian) to a place of origin (Palestine) and experience (exile). More specifically, the identification of a male relative as a *displaced* Palestinian allowed Palestinians to assert a commonality that facilitated a claim of membership or togetherness: we are all refugees (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Displacement thus represented an inherited status and shared condition (a commonality) and promoted what

Weber called a sentiment of solidarity (Weber 2009). It served as an affective tie grounded in lineage but expressive of a condition that transcended a mere relationship between kin.

Such articulations are important for understanding the meaning of refugee identifications among Palestinians in two particular ways. First, they show how Palestinians conceptualize the meaning of refugee “identity” and what enables one to claim it. For Palestinians, the claim to being a refugee is located at the intersection of territory and kinship. As much as a Palestinian can identify *as a Palestinian* through his or her connection to a relative from Palestine, a Palestinian in Jordan can also identify as a refugee through the displacement of that relative. In this case, it is not just that a Palestinian is displaced, but that a Palestinian’s displacement is shared through the same bonds that connect him to his kin. Being a refugee, as is being a Palestinian, is an identification grounded in the bonds of blood that tie people together through a common lineage and experience. One inherits her identification as a refugee just as she inherits her identification as a Palestinian and, as such, inherits the presumed ties to Palestine that make possible the claim to being Palestinian.

Warda, for example, knew her origin in Palestine. She knew that her father and his family were from Beersheba in south-central Palestine. But her father’s origin was not the sole basis of her refugee identity. Rather, it was his displacement from Beersheba that constituted her identity as a refugee. This identity, she explained, would be passed on to her children so as long as they could not return to Palestine. Moreover, like Palestinians who were directly displaced from their homeland, Warda also described a sense of refugeeness as an experience of being out of place.

I don’t like to attach myself to a city that is not of my origins. I am originally Palestinian and I used to think about Palestine a lot when I was younger. Jordan is a good country to the Palestinians and it has offered [us] *qaddamāt* (provisions) that no other country has offered the Palestinians. Nevertheless, I feel that I am

Palestinian, not Jordanian because the [most important thing] is my origin. Palestine is my origin and just like someone is comfortable when they are in their own house and are happy there, so too is the same for me and Palestine. I want to return to Palestine.

Warda did not directly experience displacement nor has she lived the exilic condition of the camps or its concomitant dependency on UNRWA services. On the contrary, her father owned a two-story home and sizable garden. He built an economic base through his work in the camps as a physician employed by UNRWA but remained independent of its services. Yet Warda nevertheless claimed to be a refugee like her father. Through her father's displacement and the inherited condition of exile—of not being in Palestine—she too was a refugee.

Like Abu Yāsīn above, Asad identified as a refugee through his father's displacement from Palestine. Following the pattern of patrilineal descent typical among many Palestinians, Asad understood his identity as one tied to his father's origins in Palestine and his displacement from that location in 1948. Similarly, both Māzin and Hāfiz identified themselves as refugees through their parents' displacement from Palestine. Hāfiz did not live in the camp although he received UNRWA services through his official status as a refugee. Māzin was also registered but lived in the camp. Neither Hāfiz nor Māzin, however, suggested that their identification as refugees reflected their connection to UNRWA. Instead, both participants linked themselves to Palestine through their fathers' origins and their self-understanding as refugees through their families' displacement. As Hāfiz explained, “we are refugees because our parents and grand parents are Palestinians [displaced from Palestine] and we inherited that from them.” One's status as a refugee, in other words, was inherited through his or her families' Palestinian origins. Similarly, during an interview with an Imam from the Souf camp, he described himself as a “refugee son, a child of refugees displaced in 1948 (*min Al-Lāji'īn*).” He and his children were all registered with UNRWA and grew up in the camp. Nevertheless, the Imam explained that it

was his father's origin in 'Ayn 'Arīq, a town in the area of Ramallah, and his displacement in 1948 that grounded his identity as a refugee.

The significance of a Palestinian's connection to the homeland via a displaced male relative shows that the claim to a refugee identity is implicated in a much larger project than that of patrilineal kinship ties alone. Transcending the boundaries of agnatic reproduction, refugee identifications also indicate a distinctly ethno-national claim grounded in gendered assumptions about the relationship between people and place. It is a claim functional within a nationalized discourse of commonality constructed according to gendered conceptualizations of "national" identity, "national" reproduction, and the "national" homeland. Claiming refugeeness, in other words, is as much about asserting one's ethno-national identification as a Palestinian and, consequently, one's connections to Palestine, as it is about one's patrilineal connections. The structure of these claims is not, however, a novel production. They reflect a well-established nationalist logic in which gendered assumptions about people and territory enable a particular national imagining.

Looking at one of the key documents of the Palestinian national movement of the PLO, we find the basis of Palestinian national identity reflecting key ideas about the relationship between gender, the nation, and its territory. According to Article 4 of the Palestinian National Charter (1968), Palestinian identity is described as "a genuine, essential, and inherent characteristic; it is transmitted from parents to children." In this case, "national" identity is transmitted through bilateral ties (from *both* parents to children) and therefore defies the consequences of displacement from Palestine. Indeed, the article continues to explain that neither "the Zionist occupation" nor "the dispersal of the Palestinian Arab people do not make them lose their Palestinian identity" or "their membership in the Palestinian community."

Article 5, however, moves beyond the general claim to an inheritable Palestinian identity and specifies the meaning of that identity in two ways. According to the article, “Palestinians are those Arab nationals who, until 1947, normally resided in Palestine regardless of whether they were evicted from it or have stayed there.” This first meaning of Palestinian identity presents an inclusive approach in which both women and men can be Palestinian if they “normally resided in Palestine.” According to this definition, territory functions as the basis of identity: Palestinians are both men and women who “normally” resided in Palestine. It is enough that an individual resided in Palestine that she is identified with and by that territory.

The idea that “national” identity reflects the connection between residence and territory, however, is all but a neutral construction. On the contrary, its inclusiveness of both women and men stems from the reproductive capacity of the territory itself, which is decidedly gendered. In his analysis of Palestinian national discourse, Joseph Massad noted the ways in which gender functioned within a pre- and post-Zionist conception of national reproduction (Massad, 1995). Prior to the partition of Palestine, the land itself provided the basis of identity. According to this logic, the land itself was conceived as the literal *mother*-land and the Palestinians were seen as her/its children. Faced with the wide scale depopulation of the land and Zionist conquest (“rape”) of Palestine, however, a new concept of national reproduction emerged in which the mother-land/Palestine no longer played its fundamental role. This shift was adequately reflected in the second definition of identity expressed in Article 5, which proceeds to define a less inclusive concept of Palestinian identity linked to patrilineal kinship. Thus the article stipulates that “anyone born, after that date, *of a Palestinian father*, whether inside or outside [of Palestine], is also a Palestinian.” According to Massad, the shift from a territorial (female) to a patrilineal (male) basis for “identity” reflects the nationalist concern over the Zionist conquest of

Palestine, which disqualified the mother-land from her historic role in national reproduction. As Massad notes:

It is being born to a Palestinian father that now [post-1947] functions as the prerequisite for Palestinianness, a father, it is important to note, whose very Palestinianness is established through his residence in the motherland before the “rape”...while the land as mother was responsible for the reproduction of Palestinians until 1947, the rape disqualified her from this role. It is now fathers who reproduce the nation. *Territory was replaced by paternity* (Massad 1995, 472).

Massad’s analysis is illuminating for it offers a telling example of the nationalist logic through which Palestinians identify as refugees. For Palestinians in both refugee camps and the city, identifying as a refugee is grounded in the ethno-nationalist logic of reproduction in which residence in Palestine provides the basis of a Palestinian identity that is carried by both women and men but only transmittable through men after the conquest of Palestine and displacement of its people. A Palestinian claims to be a refugee in the same manner as he/she claims to be a Palestinian: through paternity linked to territory. Women who were displaced are, like the mother-land itself, disqualified from reproducing the nation of refugees if they do not produce children with a Palestinian male’s contribution.

Throughout my discussions and interviews with Palestinians in camps and in the city, their identification as refugees reflected a broad conceptualization of refugeehood as an inheritance. They described themselves as refugees through their father’s Palestinian origins and experiences of displacement from the homeland. It also reflected the inherited condition of exile: a sense of being out of place characterized by a longing for return and the restoration of Palestine. Perhaps no other example illustrates this better than my conversations with a Palestinian family living in a middle-class area of Amman. Rather than claiming to be refugees, this family was explicit about the fact that they were not, indeed could not be, refugees. During

their interview, it was the way they disidentified with the refugee category that revealed how displacement, as an experience and an inheritance, constituted conceptualizations of the Palestinian “refugees.”

- Michael: Are you a refugee or displaced person (hal intūm lājia’a aw nāziha)?
- Um Mahdi: I can’t say that I am laji’a and I can’t say that I am nāziha.
- Amina: Because our father lived in Ramallah and most of our family is still living there, we can’t say that we are refugees.
- Abu Bassaam: Let’s say that my mother left Palestine to work in the Gulf. She leaves Palestine and goes to work in Kuwait. She is not a refugee.
- Amina: Lāji’a means one left her country by force and becomes a refugee (lāji’) in another country. This is the meaning of a refugee.
- Um Mahdi: We are not considered lāji’ or nāzih. We left Palestine to work. I left because my husband found work at the time. My husband worked abroad so it’s different for us.
- Michael: So when did you leave?
- Amina: I left twice. The first time I left was in 1952. The second time was in 1954.

The excerpt above comes from an interview conducted at the Mahdi family home in the Khālida neighborhood of Amman. Originally from the West Bank, the Mahdis were descendants of a well known Palestinian patrilineage linked to the great historian and former mayor of Jerusalem. I met Um Mahdi during my tenure as an instructor of English and Islamic History at a private school where I taught both of her sons, Mahdi and Zain. Despite their noble lineage, I would describe the Mahdis as an essentially hard-working, middle-class family living in west Amman through combined parental income. Much of their wealth came from Abu Mahdi’s migration to Kuwait during the oil boom years. Like of thousands of Palestinians, he spent a considerable time in the Gulf sending remittances back to Amman and Palestine until the 1991 Gulf War and expulsion of Palestinians from the Gulf and Kuwait in particular. Since then, the Mahdis have worked in Amman providing their sons with an upper-level education and a comfortable living.

In the selection above, two particular features of the Mahdi's response underscores the significance of displacement for understanding the meaning of refugee identity. First, both Um Mahdi and Amina explain that they could not claim to be refugees because they were not forced to leave Palestine. According to Amina, "Because our father lived in Ramallah and most of our family is still living there, we can't say that we are refugees." In this sense, it is the absence of displacement in the family that prevents them from claiming to be refugees. Second, the Mahdi family could not claim to be refugees because of their ongoing connection to Palestine through both property and relatives. Later in the interview and from numerous conversations I had with Um Mahdi and Zain, in particular, I learned that they regularly visited the West Bank. They would often spend holidays or vacations with their relatives in Ramallah and Nablus. Traveling to and from the West Bank provided them with a practical link to both the people and place of Palestine. For them, refugees could have no such connections.

On the surface, the Mahdi's reluctance to identify as a refugee seems obvious: they were not displaced and therefore cannot claim to be refugees. Moreover, their ability to travel to Palestine and remain connected didn't allow them to speak of loss in the way that other Palestinians could. Put another way, for the Palestinians who did identify as refugees, displacement was inextricably linked to the loss of home and the inability to connect to that which was lost. In this sense, it was the absence of displacement and loss in the Mahdi's lives that precluded their claim to refugeehood typical of other Palestinians in Jordan. While this underscores the idea that, for Palestinians in Amman, identifying as a refugee must be grounded in the direct experience or inherited condition of displacement, it also indicates that the displacement constitutive of refugee identity must be of a particular kind. According to the concept of displacement referenced by Palestinians who did claim to be refugees, economic



migration did not count. This had important consequences for the Mahdi family who, like many other Palestinians, were not directly displaced but nevertheless left their homeland in search of economic opportunities unavailable in the Occupied West Bank. Their movement to Amman was directly connected to the deteriorating circumstances in the West Bank. Furthermore, when Amina left for Kuwait to teach, it was not simply the choice of an economic migrant; the Gulf was a point of migration precisely because the Israeli occupation had successfully strangled the economy in the West Bank. Migration, in this sense, was less the consequence of choice than of necessity.

Despite the hardships created by over 40 years of Israeli military occupation in the West Bank including home demolitions, restricted mobility, imprisonment and torture, colonization, and the implications of these practices for the development of social, political, and economic life in Palestine<sup>91</sup>, the Mahdi family did not consider occupation the cause of displacement. Relying on the Nakba and Naksa as official markers of displacement, they thus did not explain their existence in Jordan or, more specifically, their non-existence in Palestine, as the effect of displacement. They were neither *lāji'īn* nor *nāzihīn*. Yet the realities of the occupation and its relevance for their lives in Amman were an important subtext to their discussions. During my conversations with Zain, for example, he regularly expressed the difficulty of life in Palestine. He explained that Amman offered a safer and more practical place to complete an education. Whenever he visited Nablus, for instance, he was always angered by the routine closures of school and work. Zain also expressed frustration with the daily challenges his relatives faced living under occupation including checkpoints and Israeli home invasions. Um Mahdi also

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<sup>91</sup> According to the World Bank, in 2003, nearly one-half of the entire Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lived below the poverty line. More than half a million Palestinians (16% of the population) could not afford the basic necessities of life (World Bank 2004).

described the violence of the occupation as an obstacle to family life and the establishment of a secure economic base. “In Amman,” she explained, “finding a job and building a home was a much easier project.” Life in Palestine, in other words, was an insecure and untenable experiment with too many risks.

One can easily understand how the violence and general insecurity of life in the West Bank, like in many parts of the world, could compel a family to pack up their bags and leave for a safer place. Indeed, forced displacement need not take place through the barrel of a gun; migrants all over the world have fled their homelands under conditions of duress imposed by internal and external forces (Brettell 2003; Mandel 2008; Hing 2010; Robert Smith 2005; Vertovec and Robin Cohen 1999). Yet by excluding these experiences from the meaning of displacement, the Mahdi family could not establish a claim to refugee identity. No matter how difficult life was in the West Bank, their choice to live in Amman and connection to Palestine made them anything but refugees. They were Palestinians in Jordan who “chose” an alternative existence and maintained a material and symbolic link to Palestine.

### **Al-Mukhayyamāt and The City:**

The preceding section focused on the ways in which Palestinians conceptualized and claimed refugee identity. In the camps, Palestinians understood the meaning of displacement in ways not unlike those of Palestinians in the city. That is, both Palestinians in the camps and city claimed to be refugees if (1) they were directly displaced from Palestine during 1948 and/or 1967 or (2) they were the descendant of a male relative who was directly displaced during 1948 and/or 1967. Understood this way, refugee identity served as an “essential” commonality through which Palestinians could assert a common experience (displacement) and claim (exile) regardless of their official status as refugees defined by UNRWA. Moreover, displacement was

conceived as an ongoing event or process beginning with the removal from Palestine and persisting through time as a condition of being out of place. Return, in this sense, not only represented the physical movement back to Palestine but also the termination of a condition of exile through the restoration of the Palestinian people to their “original” place in Palestine. In the following section, I extend my analysis to consider the relationship between the meaning of refugee “identity” and the space of the refugee camps. Although the shared experiences of displacement and exile established an important link between Palestinians across space and time, I argue that the material and symbolic boundaries between the city and the camps nevertheless had significant consequences for what it meant to *be* a refugee living in both spaces. As I will show below, Palestinian refugees in the city held particular views about the camp and its residents that enabled a moral discourse about the Palestinian people grounded in the experience and meaning of life in the camps.

Palestinians in both the camps and the city claimed to be refugees. In this sense, the common experience *of* and link *to* displacement provided the basis of an important identification across space and time. But the commonality of a displacement and its relation to one’s identification as a refugee did not necessarily mean that all refugees were the same. On the contrary, the link between identity and place played an important role in the construction of distinct ideas about “refugeeness” grounded in the meaning of particular places. Whether one was a refugee of the camps or the city had significant implications for the kind of refugee a Palestinian could be. In the following section, I consider three specific ideas about the relationship between identity and place among city and camp refugees. These ideas, I argue, suggest significant areas of convergence and divergence between Palestinian refugees’ understandings of place and the construction of community.

First, both Palestinians in the camps and city described the camps as “refugee spaces.” Notwithstanding the presence of refugees throughout the city, the camps were thus conceptualized as the authentic “home of the refugees.” That is, although the city was equally comprised of Palestinians who claimed to be refugees, the camps were nevertheless distinguishable as unique sites of refugee life. For Palestinians in the city, the specific character of the camps as refugee spaces also gave them a particular value in the Palestinian struggle: camps were the symbols of displacement and, as such, the basis of an historical injustice and right to return. In the camps, Palestinians gave no similar importance to the meaning of their living space. For them, the Palestinian refugee issue could be disentangled from the camps and understood through displacement itself regardless of its particular consequences. Finally, the material conditions of poverty in the camps emerged as an important marker of difference. Among Palestinians in the city and the camps, poverty played an important role in the construction of “the camps” as distinct social spaces. There was, however, an important difference. In the city, Palestinian refugees understood poverty as much more than material conditions. Rather, they described poverty as a constitutive feature of a particular “refugee subjectivity” distinct from that of the refugees of the city; a subjectivity manifest in the culture and behaviors of the camp refugees. For Palestinians in the camps, on the other hand, poverty represented the material borders of a space, not community. Poverty, in other words, was the challenge of life in the camps but not the productive force behind a social being.

### **“The Home of the Refugees”:**

Over 40 years old, Jordan’s refugee camps are no longer the exclusive abode of refugees. Throughout the last ten years, numerous non-Palestinian non-refugees have taken up residence within the camps. Following the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, for example, an

untold number of displaced Iraqis have begun renting homes in Amman camps. Unable to afford the steep costs of legal residency permits or the increasing prices of rent, these poorer Iraqis have moved into the meager dwellings of the camps rented out by Palestinian refugees trying to enhance their income. In addition, it is not uncommon to find Egyptian laborers living within the camps. Sending remittances back home to their families in Egypt, these workers have moved into the camps because of their low wages and, more importantly, to maximize their savings. In this sense, living patterns within the camps reflect broader trends in the city. Indeed, Iraqis and Egyptians live throughout Amman in both the poorest and wealthiest parts of town. Despite the increasing heterogeneity of the camps and city, Palestinians in both locales described the camps as exclusively Palestinian spaces. Speaking from the context of the Hāshmī Shamālī, for example, Asad described the camps as the “home of the laji’īn and nāzihīn.” “The camps are the homes,” he explained, “of both [the Nakba and Naksa] generations.” In my discussions with Leila, another Palestinian born in an urban area of east Amman, she also described the camps as “the home of the refugees.”

Asad and Leila’s conception of the camps as refugee “homes” were significant for several reasons. First, Asad was born and raised within the Hāshmī, an area widely known for its Palestinian population. Most of these Palestinians were originally refugees and/or their descendants. Indeed, Asad identified himself as a refugee in virtue of his father’s connection to Palestine and displacement from the homeland. Despite this fact, he saw the camps as specifically refugee spaces. Leila also claimed to be a refugee. During our interviews, she introduced me to her mother, who was displaced from Khalīl in 1967. According to her, they were all refugees. Leila also knew of the widespread presence of refugees throughout Amman. Like many Palestinians, she referred to the Kingdom as a country “built by the Palestinian

refugees.” Moreover, as an UNRWA employee, she was well aware of the growing diversity within some of the camps. She knew, for example, that not all Palestinians in the camps were originally camp dwellers. Indeed, Leila understood that the camps provided a safety net for poor Palestinian families who could not survive in the cities. Nonetheless, she too represented the camps as exilic spaces and the exclusive home of the refugees.

Abu ‘Imran, a Palestinian from the Baqa’a camp, also described the camps as the “home of those originally from Palestine.” “They are the ones who live in the camps and the camps are the *‘inwān* (address) of the refugees.” Elaborating on the space of the camps, Abu ‘Imran described them in the following way:

The camp is the *‘inwān* of the refugee. The camp is an address for those who are *tashrīd* (displaced); it is the address of displacement, defeat, and *qahr* (conquest). It is also the address of the oppression that was inflicted upon the Palestinian people. We did not choose to live in the camps; it was forced upon us against our will. The camp is where our circumstances forced us.

In this example, the link between displacement and the camps is clearly drawn. The camp, according to Abu ‘Imran, is the place through which Palestinian displacement is rendered visible. Forced upon the Palestinians, it represents the conquest of Palestine and the oppression of the Palestinians.

The use of the word “home” in the examples above was not without its significance. In Arabic, the words “*bayt*” and “*dār*” can be used to refer to the word “home” implying both its physical and sentimental character. During my conversations with Palestinians, both words were used to refer to the camps. The camps, in this sense, were not merely the residence of the refugees but were more fundamentally their homes; they were the geophysical and emotional space of refugee dwelling constitutive of life displaced. For example, Laith distinguished the camps from the city as the “home for the expelled.” “The camps are the homes of those

Palestinians who were kicked out [of Palestine] by Israel.” Yūsuf echoed his uncle’s sentiments describing the camps as the “place where Palestinians fled.” “They fled Palestine and their homes and now they live in the camps,” he explained. More importantly, many refugees described the camps as spaces of longing and estrangement. Hassan, a Palestinian in Baqa’a, captured this idea best when he referred to “the feeling of the *ghurba* (exile) in the camps.” Although Palestinian refugees lived throughout Amman, Hassan and others felt that the camps were the sites of a particular sense of longing: *ghurba*. The camps were the spaces of estrangement and thus the home of the refugees and experience of exile.

Strangely, the city received no similar descriptions. Even in areas primarily populated by Palestinians displaced during the Nakba and Naksa including the Hāshmī Shamālī, Jabal Ashrafīyyah, Tabarbūr, and Zarqā’, space was less constituted by the exilic condition of its inhabitants. Instead, these areas were known as “ethnic” spaces; they were “Palestinian neighborhoods.” Hāfiz, for example, described his *mintiqa* (area) as primarily Palestinian. “The majority of people living in Ashrafīyyah are Palestinians.” “Our neighbors, for example, are Palestinian. They came [from Palestine] with our family and they stayed in the area ever since.” Similarly, the Hāshmī was widely known as a Palestinian area populated by refugee families in both 1948 and 1967. Nevertheless, Hāshmī residents did not describe their area as a refugee space. Rather, residents conceptualized their neighborhood as ethnic Palestinian. Thus while certain areas could be claimed as Palestinian space, they were not necessarily claimed as refugee space. For this, the camps enjoyed an exclusive privilege.

**“Without the Camps, the Refugee Issue Will Disappear”:**

Whereas Palestinian refugees shared a particular view of the camps as authentic spaces of exile and the “homes” of the refugees, their ideas differed when it came to the significance of

those spaces in the broader national ethos. Although camps symbolized homogenous spaces constituted by an idealized link between identity and place (refugee camps as the “home” of the refugees), their importance for the question of Palestinian displacement was markedly different for city and camp Palestinians. Throughout my discussions in the city, the authenticity of “refugeeness” associated with the camps was also expressed through ideas about the importance of the camps for the Palestinian national struggle and refugee question in particular. While displacement was a widespread experience reflected in the presence of refugees throughout the Kingdom, it was nevertheless the specific space of the camps that served as a symbol of displacement and the need for the right of return. Refugees in the city thus regularly referred to the camps’ unique importance for the Palestinian issue. Speaking from the context of the city, for example, Asad offered the following words on the importance of the camps:

The camps have to be present because they are the essence of the refugee issue and the experience of the “friends of the land” (the true owners of Palestine). The camps remind the people that there is something called “Palestinian laji’īn and nāzihīn” that are present in Jordan. The camps remind people that the refugees must return to their country.

Asad went further to add that the refugee issue was currently under threat due to international efforts to close the camps. “In Amman, they are currently trying to erase the camps.” “They are trying,” he said, “but in a slight and unnoticeable way so that they can get rid of the refugees and the friends of the land.” According to Asad, efforts by international governments to give Palestinians an alternative citizenship were essentially aimed at removing the camps and the refugees not as a solution to displacement (or realization of refugees’ rights), but as the erasure of the Palestinian story. Resettlement was seen as the abolition of Palestinians’ right to return.

Asad’s comments draw an explicit link between the camps and the refugee issue. Without the camps, he feared that the displacement of refugees from Palestine would be



forgotten. Thus someone had to stay in the camps if only to preserve the rights and cause of the refugees, including the return to Palestine. Similarly, Fāris, a Palestinian friend who lived in east Amman, also explained that, without the camps, the refugee issue would be forgotten. Despite his own self-identification as a refugee, he and his family said that the camps were of particular value for the broader Palestinian issue. The disappearance of the camps, for them, was tantamount to the erasure of the Palestinian refugees.

Within the camps, however, the connection between the camps and the refugee issue was of considerably less relevance. Imād, for example, volunteered the following comments regarding the importance of the camps for the Palestinian issue:

There are many refugees living outside of the camps. We, the Palestinians, didn't consider ourselves as "refugees" nor did we classify our situation as that of "refugees" or "internally displaced peoples." Some people have a yellow card, which allows them to visit Palestine. Others have the green card, which means they have Palestinian nationality but are temporary residents in Jordan. And then there are people like me who don't have either card. *The truth is that there is no difference between the refugees in the camps and city because we are all part of an afflicted nation*<sup>92</sup>.

Imād's comments are particularly important. First, he clearly rejects the official designation of a "refugee" as an imposed category. Instead, he prefers a more inclusive sense of the term that includes all displaced Palestinians within its meaning. Palestinian refugees thus live "outside of the camps." This conceptualization of refugee identity was reflected throughout the city as they too claimed to be refugees regardless of their official status vis-à-vis UNRWA. Second, Imād saw the camps as being no more or less important to the refugee issue than the city. For him, it was not that refugees were forced into camps that mattered; rather, it was the overall "affliction" suffered by Palestinians *wherever they are* that sustained the refugee issue. For Imād,

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<sup>92</sup> Emphasis mine.

displacement was the basic element in the claim to refugeeness, not whether an individual lived in a camp as a result of his or her displacement.

Not unlike Imād, Abu ‘Imran gave no particular importance to the connection between the refugees’ plight and the camps. According to Abu ‘Imran, “there is no difference between the refugees living within the camps or within the city, they are all still refugees.” “They remain refugees whether they are inside of the camp or outside.” “Their feelings for Palestine,” he explained, “are similar and their situation is the same.” When asked if the dissolution of the camps would signal the end of the refugee issue, Abu ‘Imran responded:

The refugees will leave the camps. They do leave the camps. But he will nevertheless *yahāfadh* (guard) the meaning of the camp. That is, even if he leaves the camp, *he* will remain the address of the refugee issue and will work so that he can contribute to the *takhfīf* (alleviation) of the suffering of the children of the camp.

In this case, Abu ‘Imran saw the refugee issue as deeply rooted in the being of the refugee: “he will remain the address of the refugee issue.” Thus, while significant for their contribution to Palestinian suffering, the camps are not necessarily linked to the status of refugee rights and return; it is in virtue of displacement and its role in the making of refugees that the refugee issue will remain. Rāshid, another Palestinian from the camp, explained that “even if the people inside of the camps leave, we’d be tied to our issue.” “Through displacement we learned and feel that our land is occupied and imprisoned.” Just as displacement formed the basis of identification for refugees in the city and camps, displacement also provided the foundation of the Palestinian refugee issue. The reality of the camps, according to this view, is circumstantial at best.

### **Poverty and the Camps: Refugees and *Camp* Refugees:**



**Figure Four: Jarash Refugee Camp<sup>93</sup>**

As previously discussed, material conditions in the camp provide a visible marker of difference between the city and the camp. Although certain areas of Amman reflect comparable poverty to that of the camps both in terms of income levels and infrastructure, the overrepresentation of such conditions in the camps establishes a commonality between them unlike that of other areas of Amman. The camps, in other words, are characteristically poor. The fact of material poverty and deprivation within the refugee camps was a subject of considerable importance to Palestinians in the camps and the city. It served as a material boundary between the two and thus facilitated particular ideas about the relationship between identity and place. From the city, poverty provided a link between displacement and refugeeness

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<sup>93</sup> Photo taken by author.

that enabled a symbolic boundary drawn within the community of refugees in Jordan. According to this boundary, to be in the camp was to be *of* the camp; it was to be a particular kind of refugee constituted by the material conditions of that space. Within the camps, however, refugeeeness was understood as a generalized condition accessible to any displaced Palestinian or his descendants, not by camp poverty. For camp refugees, poverty described the conditions under which they lived in the camp. In other words, although poverty presented important challenges to the establishment of a healthier and more comfortable life in the camps, it did not produce any particular forms of social being.



**Figure Five: Jarash Refugee Camp<sup>94</sup>**

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<sup>94</sup> Photo taken by author.

Poverty is a fairly ambiguous term encompassing a wide range of meanings. It can, for example, refer exclusively to the income level of residents within a particular area or, more broadly, to the quality of life experienced by individuals within a particular income group or place. Symbolically, poverty can also be used to suggest particular kinds of people or moral communities as expressed by the terms “working poor.” In the context of my research, the concept of poverty that emerged concerned two conditions: material and social. Regarding the first, poverty was used as an economic boundary linked to specific material conditions that distinguished the camps from other areas of Amman. Thus one of the most common descriptions of the camps was as a physical space of poverty. Camps were homogenous spaces of poverty marked by general “difficulties” including comparatively low incomes, overcrowding, undeveloped infrastructure and inadequate services. For example, in several responses to questions concerning the difference between the city and the camps, Palestinian refugees emphasized material difficulties as a common issue. “In the camps, everything is difficult,” one respondent explained. “In this sense, all of the camps are similar. Life in all of the camps is difficult.” Similarly, another respondent from the camps described camp life as circumscribed by “problems” absent in the city. “The biggest problems in the camps are the poverty and severe overcrowding. All of the camps are poor and crowded.” “There is no money and there is no space to move,” the respondent explained. “This is not like life outside of the camps.” Another respondent described the camps as places with a “similar style.” “They’re all poor and have a similar style; that is, they look poor. They are also very crowded with narrow streets.”



**Figure Six: Baqa'a Refugee Camp<sup>95</sup>**

Having visited camps throughout Jordan, the idea of a camp “style” is not altogether off the mark. Refugee camps such as Al-Hussein and Irbid have a distinctive look given the broader cities in which they are located. In both camps, for example, the streets are extremely narrow, barely able to accommodate a single vehicle. Also, camps dwellings are mostly undivided; that is, housing units are linked into blocks with nothing more than a wall dividing one home from the next. Finally, throughout the camps, it’s not uncommon to find a small drain carved into the streets through which waste water regularly flows. Such features do facilitate the impression of a unique urban architecture that, despite some differences, indicates a common structural setting or, in the words of the respondent above, “style.”

During formal and informal interviews with refugees from the camps and the city, responses were often similar to those above albeit more precise. Laith, for example, described the camps as spaces marked by poverty. “Poverty,” he said, “is the way of the camp.” “We have

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<sup>95</sup> Photo taken by author.

few opportunities and it is difficult to make enough money for your family.” “This,” he explained, “is why we live together crowded in the home.” Yūsuf and Yūnus, also explained how the camps suffered from poverty. “There are no opportunities in the camps,” they explained, “and there are too many people living here.” Speaking about the camps from the context of the city, Asad described the camps this way:

The camps face many problems that we don’t in the city. But the biggest problems are the services. That is, the municipal services are insufficient in the camps. Sanitary services, healthcare services, road services, traffic lights, etc. The camps have a lot of shortcomings. Another problem in the camps is the overcrowding. There is no space between the people and the housing. This is something important because everyone [in the camp] knows something about his neighbor. In the camps, this is a bad thing.

Describing the differences between the camps and the city, Imād offered the following explanation:

There is a definite difference between the camps and city. The first difference is the services. If we [in the camps] face a problem with the sewage, it takes the people in charge a very long time to fix it and, most of the time, the camp people fix it themselves. You do not see that problem in other parts of Amman.

During my discussions with the Imam mentioned above, he offered the following account:

The conditions of the camp are bad because it is crowded. If someone committed a crime outside of the camp and wanted to evade the authorities or get away from his relatives, he can come to the camp and rent a home for 40JD a month. Also, there is the problem of Egyptians and Iraqis who live in the camp and, you know, life for singles is different from the family life. There is also a group of people we call the Nawar or “gypsies.” The men don’t work and stay at home. They also gamble while the women work in the night-clubs or hotels. This group gathers and lives in the camps.

But most of the people live in the camps with poverty and difficult financial situations. Life in the camp is overcrowded and the schools are crowded too. The houses are small and there is insufficient room for the children to play. This is why you see children playing in the streets. The streets are dangerous for children because a car can hit them.

The excerpts above represent the ideas of Palestinian refugees from the city and the camp.

Common to all three accounts is the issue of poverty linked to overcrowding and insufficient services. Asad, for example, highlights the problems of services and space. Although Asad lives in the city, he works in the Wihdāt camp. He thus spends most of his time within the camp with its residents. Speaking from the position of the city, Asad sees the poverty of the camp through the prism of poor infrastructure, inadequate social services including healthcare and education, and congestion. Overcrowding, in his view, restricts the privacy of neighbors and compromises the social lives of camp inhabitants. For Imād, services provide the dividing line between the city and camp. His comments suggest a particular critique of the discriminate practices of the Jordanian government vis-à-vis the camps. In Jordan, the state government is responsible for the infrastructure in the camps. In this sense, the camps should reflect structural equality with other areas of the city. Despite this, Imād states that the camps are neglected spaces receiving inadequate attention when problems emerge.

The Imam echoed Asad and Imād's comments by highlighting economic difficulties and overcrowding. In his view, however, the overcrowding has greater consequences for the camps than social congestion or the lack of privacy. According to the Imam, the density of camp populations provides a context for criminals to "escape" or evade the authorities and their families. Overcrowding in the camp thus facilitates a general anonymity in which unruly elements can situate themselves within the Palestinian context undetected. More importantly, the Imam's comments articulate a moral line between the "inside" and the "outside." In his view, poverty expressed by the low cost of living in the camps has allowed outsiders like "Egyptians" and "Iraqis" to move into the camps and lead a life that contradicts their (Palestinians') moral fabric. As single men, he suggested, they bring habits and desires that run counter to the family-



oriented context of Palestinian social life. In addition, the Imam links the presence of gambling, prostitution, and lazy men to the “Nawār.” During several interviews in the camps, the Nawār were mentioned in relation to the social problems of the camps. Although no individual was ever identified as a member of the Nawār, they were regularly referenced in conversations concerning the crime and vices in the camps. Like other camp Palestinians, the Imam did not deny the existence of particular social problems in the camp linked to material conditions of poverty. He did, however, externalize the causes of these issues by associating them with the presence of “outsiders” on the “inside” whose behaviors were contributing to the social deterioration of the camps.



**Figure Seven: Home in Baqa’a Refugee Camp<sup>96</sup>**

The Imam’s idea that poverty, as a material condition, played a role in the production of poverty, as a social condition, was a source of significant tension between Palestinians in the city

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<sup>96</sup> Photo taken by author.

and the camps. Whereas the Imam saw the poverty of social life within the camps as a manifestation of nefarious external elements, Palestinian refugees in the city represented a radically different picture. For them, the material and social poverty of the camps were inextricably bound; poor material conditions were constitutive of a poor social being visible in behaviors and beliefs absent within the city. Camp refugees were thus socially inferior to those of the city both in terms of their material and social existence. For example, one respondent described the difference between city and camp refugees in the following way: “There is a difference between refugees that live in the camps and those that live outside of the camps: they have different behaviors.” Similarly, another respondent claimed that “The people who live in the camps are the Palestinians who did not keep up with modernization and development.” Both excerpts highlight a common idea of the “camp refugee” as a less industrious and ill-mannered individual recognizable through his or her undeveloped social existence and inferior habits.

Asad, for example, shared the following assessment of the material poverty in the camps and its social implications for their residents:

In the camps, the traditions and bad practices can spread easily among the refugees. Smoking among children is a very big problem. Actually, it is widespread in the camps. It may be difficult to control your children because they walk around the neighborhoods with other people and are influenced [in negative ways]. This causes problems in raising the camp children; it impacts their manners and the future society.

Asad’s comments suggest two important points expressed by Palestinians throughout the city.

First, Asad draws an implicit connection between the overcrowding in the camps and the vulnerabilities of people living within that context. With too many people living in one social space, in other words, “traditions and bad practices can spread easily” including “smoking among children.” Second, Asad is particularly concerned with the “manners” (*akhlāq*) of camp Palestinians and what he calls the “future society.” The material condition of overcrowding and

the vulnerabilities of camp Palestinians to bad practices, in his view, can compromise the moral fabric of the future generations. Camp poverty, in this sense, not only impacts the contemporary lives of refugees but also threatens the character of future generations condemned by the camp to a life of inferior sociality.



**Figure Eight: Men Walking in Wihdāt Refugee Camp<sup>97</sup>**

Asad also believed that the material conditions of the camp constituted a social being marked by limited aspirations. Expanding on the problems of the camps and its residents, Asad explained that:

Also, the camp refugees' aspirations are limited. Perhaps he can become the driver of a *servīs* (fixed-route taxi) or a taxi driver. Outside of the camp, aspirations are bigger than this and maybe the [city] refugee has greater *iltizām* (commitment) to his religion. But the majority of the residents of the camp, a large segment of them anyways, their *takfīrhum* (thoughts and ideas) are always what? Simple.

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<sup>97</sup> Photo taken by author.

In this example, Asad sees material poverty as the productive force behind a refugee existence stricken by limited aspirations and less religious commitment. Conspicuous in this excerpt is how the idea of “limited aspirations” allows him to juxtapose the social life of refugees in the city and the camp. According to Asad, the camp, as a material space, is linked to the production of a social being distinguishable from the city. Refugees in the city are more committed to their religion and have greater ideas about the limits and possibilities of life than camp refugees. In this case, it is not that the economic depravity of the camps *actually* limits the possibilities in the camp and thus its residents’ aspirations; rather, it is that the camp produces a social existence in which its residents don’t envision opportunities that they could otherwise achieve.

The idea that material conditions in the camp produced a refugee with limited economic horizons and unrefined manners was common among Palestinian refugees in the city. Resembling conservative ideas in the U.S. about the “undeserving poor” (Gans 1996) who bear responsibility for their own social and economic circumstances, some refugees saw the camps as spaces of weak, inferior beings unwilling to take control of their lives. Um ‘Arif’s discussion is illustrative in this regard. Once a camp resident herself, she acquired a job through a contact in UNRWA and earned enough money to leave the camp and relocate to the city. Reflecting on the camp during our interview, she described its conditions and people in the following way:

In the camps, there is an unemployed person and the unemployed person, God only knows, may be uneducated or maybe he has lost his mind—he’s mentally ill. So the factors that were in the camp originally—the revolutionary spirit, the intellectualism, the *‘aqā’idīyyeh* (creed)—is now gone because [the revolution] came to an end. And in place of that generation came another generation that is irresponsible and indifferent. It is now on the *inhīrāf* (those on the crooked path)...there are crooked ways made available to them. So [the new refugee] goes on to support himself [through these crooked ways] and he may attack or rob people and even kidnap. And sometimes you’ll see them sniffing glue. This is the crookedness present in the camps.

Like many Palestinians, Um ‘Arif draws a generational line between *jīl Al-Thawra* (Palestinian generation of the revolution) and those of today. Prior to the 1970s and expulsion of the PLO from Jordan, Palestinian camps in Jordan were the nucleus of national activity and mobilization. For example, camps like the now abandoned Karama were legendary and of great symbolic importance to the Palestinian national movement and resistance. In Karama, the PLO was widely believed to have defeated the Israeli military in a cross-border assault despite the invaluable contribution of Jordanian forces. The battle of Karama thus became an essential popular memory building both the morale within the PLO commandos and inspiring countless others to join ranks. Similarly, during my initial visit to the Wihdāt camp, a Palestinian friend described it in terms reflecting its historical importance in the revolutionary period of the 1960s and 1970s. He nostalgically recalled the time when Palestinians controlled entry into the camps and when the PLO governed its affairs. It was the peak of Palestinian power in Jordan and, more importantly, a time when the camps were symbols of rebirth and resistance.

Today, as Um ‘Arif explained, a new generation has emerged lacking both the spirit and ‘aqā’idīyyeh of the revolutionary generation. This generation is recognizable in its “irresponsibility” and “indifference.” Moreover, she believed it is given to criminal ways and helps explain the “crookedness” in the camps. During our interview, for example, Um ‘Arif also believed that life in the camps had a transformative effect for its inhabitants.

Insha’ Allah I will take you to the camp and you can see the way that people are living. There are many differences: socially, materially, intellectually, etc. *The person in the camp is transformed by the conditions*<sup>98</sup> ...and there are differences in the lifestyle too. Everything, everything in the camp is different! The ones in the camp remain in the camp; they remain within the same environment and with the same thoughts and ideas.

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<sup>98</sup> Emphasis mine.

According to Um ‘Arif, the material conditions of the camp transformed the social being of the refugees. As a space, it circumscribed the existence of its inhabitants and was generative of a particular form of social existence. For example, Um ‘Arif explained how the overcrowding within the camps impacted families and reflected the refugees’ unwillingness to “take their situation by the reins.”

The environment is cramped and the population is large. He, the camp dweller, *yattlūq le nafsuh Al-‘Anān akthar* (doesn’t take his situation by the reins). So he is in the house among five others at the minimum but can live with as many as ten or twelve others. Sometimes, it is the grandfather, the uncle, the aunt, all of them in an area of 100 square meters. They live on top of each other! So this is the life of the camp dweller; he doesn’t have anything except for his desire to live. He wants to eat, that’s it! And of course, the house is cramped and they will penalize the girls and the boys. Even if the boy is out late at night, he will be punished. Everyone in the camp is afraid for the boy because of the poor manners [he may acquire]. They are afraid for his security or they are afraid of [the effects of the camp on] his personal characteristics. But here, outside of the camps, no one notices these things. [In the city], everyone is happy with the benefits they have and the way they shape their own lives. Those who get out of the camp, they change. Even their culture, it changes.

In the preceding excerpt, Um ‘Arif described how the population density of the camp was also experienced within the home. Camp homes, she explained, were crowded spaces with people living “on top of each other.” This, she believed, was not because of the lack of economic mobility within the camps. Rather, it was because of the refugees’ unwillingness to take charge of their lives. The material fact of limited economic mobility and space, in other words, confined camp refugees to a living situation within the home that reflected the camp dweller’s failure to “take control over [his] situation.” Furthermore, like other Palestinians I interviewed within the city, Um ‘Arif saw material conditions of poverty like limited living space as productive of a negative social life. For example, too many people in the home brought specific anxieties to its members that were visible within the treatment of boys. Boys, according to her, had limited freedom within the camps. As a space of poor sociality, camp families feared that

their sons would acquire the “bad habits and manners” of the camp population at large. In this sense, Um ‘Arif saw camp families as lacking a certain kind of agency; they were unable to shape their own children’s lives and thus worried about the transformative effects of the camp’s conditions upon them.

Interestingly, the example above suggests an important ambiguity within Um ‘Arif’s account that was also present within representations of the camp by other refugees from the city. At times, it seemed that camp conditions were understood as having a determinate effect upon its inhabitants. In the excerpt above, for example, refugee families feared the impact of a degenerate moral situation within the camp itself. Thus camp families tried to protect their sons from conditions that could transform them into negative social beings. Other times, however, it was the camp dwellers themselves who bore responsibility for the troubles in the camp. If they “took control” over the situation in the camp and their lives, then the conditions of the camp would be different. As Um ‘Arif explained above, once the revolutionary spirit was gone, then the new generation “went crooked.” Marked by indifference and irresponsibility, she suggested that the social condition of the refugee helped explain the conditions within the camp. In this sense, it was the refugee who produced the conditions and not the other way around.

Um ‘Arif’s account above is also important for what it says about the city. Emphasizing the relationship between material and social conditions, she described the camp as an almost imprisoning place. Materially, overcrowding within the camp and home had confined Palestinian refugees to a limited living space and bounded experience of social being. The absence of physical space or “crowding” within the camps constituted the lack of social space necessary for the proper cultivation of the individual, family, and community. In social terms, camp refugees were also limited by their own indifference and unwillingness to change. The

camp refugee was, in this sense, imprisoned by his or her own lethargy or generational weakness, which precluded her from achieving a more productive and dignified social life.

When describing the city, however, it was thus unsurprising to find a sense of freedom associated with conditions defined in opposition to those of the camp. If the camp was a material and social prison, then the city was an “open” place reflecting sufficient physical and social space to cultivate one’s life. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, freedom often implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act (Tuan et al. 2001, 52). Um ‘Arif’s account of the city implied just such an association; she idealized the city as a physical and moral space of liberation. Unlike the imprisoning situation of the camps, it provided refugees with the opportunity to “shape their own lives.” In the city, refugees were thus free to take control of their situations and “change.” Moreover, she believed that the city was productive of a different kind of social existence. She therefore explained how the city afforded refugees a chance to shed both the effects of camp life and ways of the camp refugees by not only changing their circumstances but also their very “culture.”

The examples above illustrate the common idea among city refugees that the camp represented a bounded space marked by unique forms of material and social poverty. Moreover, they understood these conditions as constitutive of a particular kind of being or refugeeness distinguishable from that of refugees in the city. For Palestinians in the camps, however, the implications of material poverty for the constitution of social life and identity were perceived differently. Although they too conceptualized the camps as distinct physical spaces, they did not see its boundaries as a dividing line between two separate groups within the community of refugees. The material difficulties of camp life notwithstanding, Palestinian refugees were all the same. Abu ‘Imran, for example, was clear about the difficulties surrounding Palestinians in



the camps. For him, these challenges distinguished the camps from the city. In terms of education and income, he knew that life in the camps was generally harder for refugees.

Of course there are differences between the Palestinians in the camps and the city. Like any people, we have different segments or layers. There are people whose financial situation is very good and there are people who are poor. There are educated people and there are those who are less educated. Generally, the camps are the areas with the least bit of luck in all aspects of life. That is, their educational situation is difficult, their social situation is difficult, and their material situation is difficult, for all. Definitely, these are the differences.

When asked about the relevance of these differences for the community of refugees in the camps and in the city, however, Abu ‘Imran saw no difference; all were refugees.

But there are no differences between the refugees if they live inside of the camp or outside: he is still a refugee. He remains a refugee whether he is inside or outside. For the refugees on the outside, life is a little better. Their situation is better. In the camp, the living conditions are difficult.

Moreover, as refugees, it was the experience of displacement that made them equals. Material challenges were only specific factors of camp life that could be overcome through faith and will.

Life is difficult in the camps but we have faith and can overcome the difficulty. The human being doesn’t choose his destiny. You did not choose to be Cuban or Algerian, this is your destiny. So we live with destiny and with the hopes that we can overcome it. The camp, its conditions are difficult, but we can overcome it.

Abu ‘Imran was not alone in his assessment; many camp refugees saw their circumstances as merely “challenges” or “difficulties” caused by the displacement from Palestine and the loss of their livelihoods in the homeland. Unlike the perspective of refugees from the city, camp poverty was the material reflection of displacement and constitutive of a life in exile. It did not, in other words, reflect the “character” of camp refugees.

Not all camp refugees saw their situations in negative terms. During my interviews with camp refugees, several Palestinians described the camp as a “normal” place just like any other. Hānī, for example, grew up in the camps and had little to complain about.

Life in the camps is normal; like it is for all people. Some people tell me to leave the camp and to go and live outside [in the city]. I don't approve though. I live in the camp and I know all of the areas in the camp. I know everyone here. At night, there is security.

Hānī's experience was not unusual among the youth. For his generation, the camps were simply their neighborhoods and homes where ordinary social life takes place. Whereas as the older generations lived in the camps through more momentous periods such as the 1970s, Hānī's generation has experienced little in the way of national mobilization. Their experience of camp life thus reflects the more mundane rhythms of life linked to education, economic need, and the other habits of a modern, globalized existence. Moreover, Hānī's comments indicate a common tendency among the camp youth to idealize the refugee camps as spaces of important social value. Aware of the stereotypes of camp refugees, Hānī rejected the claim that the city has something more to offer and instead emphasized the positive aspects of camp life. The facts of limited physical space and overcrowding, for example, were inverted in Hānī's response to suggest an important social value: familiarity. Whereas for city refugees these conditions were understood as imposing features of camp life that constrained social existence, Hānī saw them as enabling a state of familiarity between refugees in which everyone "knows everyone." In addition, the congested space of the camps was used to highlight the familiarization of physical space; in the camps, all places are known. Like other camp refugees, the narrow streets and close proximity of living quarters facilitated a degree of familiarity that, in their view, was unique to the camps.

Like Hānī, Hassan also emphasized the positive features of camp life. Born and raised in the Baqa'a camp, Hassan was in his early 30s and never lived in the city. When asked about the differences between camp and city life, he too described the material disadvantages in the camps. Both in terms of luxuries and services, the camp was distinct from the city.

For sure there is a difference between life in the camps and in the city. There is a social difference...a difference in the, like how you say, in comfort and *rafāhīyah* (luxury) and the *khaddammāt* (services).

Like Hānī, however, he did not associate the camps with a negative social life. On the contrary, he believed that the camps offered a unique social “closeness” superior to the “distance” between people and places in the city.

Socially, however, there is a disconnection in the city. Here, [in the camp], if you ask someone about me at the bus station or ask where Fulan’s<sup>99</sup> house is, the people [in the camp] will guide you to his house. People know one another in the camps. But there, outside of the camps, the people are on their own. It’s not like this here. That is, here the *rawaabitt* (social connections) are stronger. For example, go and ask about someone in the most obscure part of the camp and anyone will know about him and guide you there. They will give you a biography of his life and tell you anything you want to know about him. The people in the camps are familiar with one another.

In both Hānī and Hassan’s accounts, material conditions within the camp enabled positive social forms. They, like many other camp refugees, did not believe that the difficulties of camp life were enough to produce a group of refugees distinguishable from that of the city. Material poverty, in other words, did not necessarily contribute to the formation of social poverty represented by refugees living outside of the camps. More importantly, where camp refugees did perceive a difference, it was represented through positive ideas about camp society. Hānī and Hassan thus converted the negative features of physical overcrowding into a beneficial condition of familiarity and closeness, if only as a counter-discourse. According to this idea, the difference between the camps and the city was evident in the perceived relationship between physical space and social being: intimacy vs. distance.

The discussion above reflects numerous interviews with Palestinian refugees throughout the camps and the city. Interviews, however, were not the only opportunities to access the

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<sup>99</sup> The name “Fulan” is used by Arabic speakers to refer to any “random” person. It is the English equivalent of “Joe” in the U.S. context.

complex construction of identity and place between refugees. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to an ethnographic example that underscores the relationship between camp and city refugees in a unique setting: marriage. Observed during the initial weeks of my fieldwork, it was a case I repeatedly considered in light of subsequent experiences and discussions with Palestinians in both contexts. In some sense, it became a framing event whose implications became clearer only after meeting and interviewing Palestinian refugees about the meanings of camps and the city in the formation of the community of refugees.

### **Marrying the Camp, Divorcing the Camp:**

The significance of the refugee camps for the Palestinian community in Amman became apparent early on in my research. Only days after settling into our apartment on the eastern side of the city, my wife and I were invited by our close friend Fāris to join in his wedding celebration with a local Palestinian woman from the Hussein camp<sup>100</sup>. Introduced through a mutual friend in 2005, Fāris was my first contact in Jordan. He initially helped me in my search for an apartment during my Arabic studies at the University of Jordan. Ultimately, however, he invited me to stay with him and his family for the full length of my program. During this period, he and I developed a close friendship spending countless hours in his small shop on the central strip in the HāshmīShamālī. When I returned to Jordan in 2006, Fāris offered his support a second time helping me find a spacious apartment just two blocks from his own home. At the time, I was delighted to live close to my friend and thrilled by the opportunity to celebrate his marriage. Having arrived in Jordan just a few days earlier, the wedding seemed like a good chance to loosen up and, more importantly, integrate into our new community in the Hāshmī. As I later discovered, the wedding was all but a simple affair; the union ultimately failed for various

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<sup>100</sup> I have changed the names of the people and camp to protect the identity of each participant.

reasons that were explained in terms of the differences between Palestinians of the city and the camps.

The following narrative is a composite of ethnographic fieldnotes reflecting key events in the period preceding and following the wedding experience<sup>101</sup>. As intimate friends of Fāris and his family, I was able to participate in and observe important aspects of the marriage that revealed common themes that were used by city refugees to distinguish themselves from refugees from the camp. I will then proceed to offer a critical analysis of the events highlighting their significance for the cultural construction of the place and identity.

I was excited by the news: Fāris was getting married. Just a few months ago, he was an eligible bachelor seeking a suitable partner. Today, he's engaged to be married. Her name is Hoda. She's a Palestinian from Al-Hussein, an official refugee camp located in east Amman. According to Faaris, they met in the local internet café in the Hāshmī. As a camp refugee, Fāris told us, Hoda made him feel more Palestinian. She was "closer" to the issue, he said, and her family was full of stories from the homeland. This excited Faaris who felt their marriage would benefit his own sentiments as a Palestinian.

Things were moving fast and Fāris wanted us to meet Hoda as soon as possible. He asked us to join him for a visit to the camp. Her brother, Hātim, was also getting married and invited Fāris and his family to join them for the wedding celebration. Fatima (my wife) and I were delighted by the opportunity to visit the camp and meet Fāris's prospective spouse. We agreed to join them for the party.

The weather couldn't have been worse; Amman's streets were flooded as the rain poured down relentlessly. Fāris, accompanied by two of his brothers, his mom, Fatima and I, all packed into a rental car and headed down the circuitous streets of east Amman into the Hussein camp. The area was conspicuously different from the Hāshmī. The houses were visibly poor; zinc roofs held by stones and debris were common. The streets were narrow and the UN flag decorated several buildings. Given the rain, the streets were empty. When we finally arrived, Fāris, his brothers, and I were escorted into a large tent covering dozens of empty chairs and two large speakers blasting Arabic music. Like the streets, the tent was also

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<sup>101</sup> I have adapted these excerpts to fit the style and purpose of this section. Stylistically, I aim to provide a more readable representation of my notes that avoids the ruptured structure of thoughts and ideas written down in the field. In terms of my purpose, the adaptation aims to provide an introduction and chronological order of the wedding events that offer a partial yet "thick" description of what took place.

empty. Set up to seat at least 50 men, just a few close friends showed up for Hātim's wedding. Fatima and Fāris's mom were taken to Hoda's home. There, the women celebrated with music and henna.

After an hour of introductions and casual conversation in the tent, Hātim invited us to join him at his home. Like the camp exterior, his home bore signs of poverty. The rooms were small and tightly packed into a tiny apartment. It was cold in the dwelling, which was heated by a small gas heater. The bathroom was separated from the kitchen by a long burgundy curtain. Hātim was friendly and his family was very courteous. They cooked a "Palestinian" mensef<sup>102</sup> for the guests. We sat for hours chatting about the U.S., Islam, and other worldly topics. Hātim was fluent in English—more so than Fāris—and was quick to ask for assistance getting a job in the U.S. He hoped I could help.

Today Fāris invited us for another pre-wedding social event. This time, however, things were going to be a bit more intimate. He planned to travel south to the port city of 'Aqaba on the Red Sea with Hoda, her parents, and her sister. The trip was meant to provide the couple with another opportunity to get to know each other better within a more personal setting. Fatima and I agreed to join them; 'Aqaba was too attractive a destination to turn down. We met early in the morning in the 'Abdalī station. Hoda was traveling with her sister, mother, and father. Fāris traveled with us; none of his family joined him for the excursion. Māher, Fāris's friend and mediator between the two families, was supposed to meet us once we arrived in 'Aqaba.

The trip was plagued by complexities. The first problem was financial. Fāris worked long hours to earn a modest income. He couldn't afford the costs of a hotel and thus rented tents along the shoreline of the Red Sea. It might have been a romantic setting if the winds weren't blowing so harshly. It was also cold and cloudy; unusual for the hot, humid, and sunny weather in 'Aqaba. There were other issues. Fāris was troubled by several things concerning Hoda and her family. He seemed to hold reservations about her father's alleged mental illness. No one, he told us, has been forthcoming about the fact that her father suffers from something psychological.

Things started to fall apart after we returned to the Hāshmī. A controversy emerged that forced a temporary but dramatic split between Fāris and his family. Rumors were circulating that Hoda was too close to her brother-in-law. There were questions about infidelity. Fāris initially defended his fiancé and left his home when his mother and brothers suggested that Hoda was guilty of improper behavior with her sister's husband. We joined him in his shop the night he left home. There was a dust storm that evening and the streets were empty and eerie; blowing under the orange glow of the street lights, the dust appeared to have a life

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<sup>102</sup> Mensef is a typical dish in Jordan prepared with rice, large chunks of lamb or chicken, and a delicious yoghurt sauce.

of its own blanketing the cars, streets, and buildings. We stayed with Fāris all night until the *fajr* prayer at sunrise. He was torn by the division between Hoda and his family. He said he had never disagreed with his mother before nor had he received such little support from his brothers. They warned him of Hoda's behavior and wanted to call the whole thing off.

Fāris finally returned home today. Fatima and I were not surprised by his decision but we didn't expect what followed. Siding with his family, Fāris called the wedding off. In the evening, he invited us over to join him, his family, and Māher for a discussion. We agreed and met them shortly after the *'isha* prayer. Fāris terminated the marriage. Originally torn between his family's claims about his fiancés' transgressions and Hoda's denials, things were apparently resolved. The previous night, he told us, he had a dream. In the dream, a serpent slid up his leg and bit him. According to Fāris, the serpent symbolized Hoda and the bite represented her betrayal. "She can't be trusted," he said. For Fāris, the dream was more than a dream; it was a vision. It revealed the truth of the situation. We were stunned by the dream and its timing. I thought it was slightly disingenuous but also felt that I was underestimating the power of dreams to explain and/or guide an individual's experiences. Fāris was an honest guy known for his integrity and sincerity. Nonetheless, the wedding was off and Fāris was back with his family. He was sorry for abandoning them and admitted being wrong. Māher tried to work things out with Fāris. Without discounting the significance of the dream, he attempted to find an amicable solution to the problem that avoided a breakup. I could only imagine what this would mean for Hoda's reputation. The story was bound to be retold and I expect that many will see the break-up as her fault; her social capital as a future spouse would surely diminish.

Tonight, as most nights, we spent hours drinking tea, playing chess, and conversing with Fāris and his family. The subject of conversation, however, was the break-up. In a remarkable shift of perspective, Fāris now blamed Hoda's behavior on her camp background. Whereas being a camp refugee was once a good thing (good for his identity and connection to Palestine), Hoda's camp upbringing was now the root of her problems. Fāris's mother, for example, recalled how Hoda's mother wore bathroom slippers around the house<sup>103</sup>. This, she explained, revealed that they were a filthy family with poor hygiene. "Hoda is a camp girl," she said to Fāris. "Do you remember her brother's wedding," she added. "Hoda's mother was loud and brutish." To Fāris's mother, this behavior was unbecoming of a woman and indicative of her camp origins. They are less educated and poorly mannered. "The camp is a rowdy environment in which to develop one's manners," she said. Fāris also described her as a *bint min-al-mukhayyam* (camp girl). Like his mother, he said that her dirty home in the camp was a sign of their unrefined habits. She and her family's behaviors, he

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<sup>103</sup> In Jordan, many homes set aside a specific set of slippers for the bathroom. These are not used in the house except for the bathroom, which is usually what Americans refer to as a "squat and plop."

explained, were not like those of the refugees in the city. Whether he was being sincere or not, I couldn't help but notice that her camp background was being used to explain everything. Tonight, it seemed, all things were clear. "Of course the marriage didn't work, she's from the camp." "Of course her habits are bad, she's from the camp." "And of course you can't trust her word, she's from the camp." A sad ending indeed.

The wedding process was a short but intimate experience packed with romance, controversy, and disappointment. Dissolved shortly after it began, it was a sincere attempt to bring two individuals and their families together despite several cultural obstacles. In the excerpts above, I have tried to render some of these cultural complications visible. Although reflecting a limited composite of my fieldnotes and perhaps an even more limited account of all that occurred, two particular aspects of the experience narrated above stand out for their relevance to the question of the city and the camp. The first outstanding point concerns Fāris's original feelings about Hoda's camp status. When Fāris told me that Hoda was from the camp, he described it as a positive feature, at least insofar as it would enhance his own sense of being Palestinian. Of course, having lived with Fāris and his family for several months, I was aware that he had some negative opinions about Palestinians from the camp. On several occasions, for example, Fāris and his family cautioned me about visiting the camps and engaging its residents. During discussions about my research agenda, they warned me: "*Dīr balak fīl mukhayyamāt Michael*" (Be careful in the camps Michael). According to them, the camps were shady places in which criminals and violent youth lived. They spoke of the camp shabāb as unruly elements. "They carry knives and will kill if they have to."

Notwithstanding his stereotypical views of the camp and its people, when Fāris declared his interest in Hoda and mentioned her status as a *bint min Al-Mukhayyam* (camp girl), there was a clear sense of sincere appreciation. Throughout the summer of 2005, Fāris and I spent countless nights playing chess and video games, drinking tea, and watching scenes from Palestine



on Al-Jazīra while discussing the fate of the Palestinians. Proud of his Palestinian roots and people, his attention to Palestine was described as a “national duty;” their situation was his situation and he owed it to them to remember their struggle. Moreover, Fāris was particularly fond of Hamas and its “martyred” leadership. He often mentioned the day he met Hamas’ spiritual leader, Sheikh Amhed Yāsīn, in Amman. Yāsīn was in the city for medical treatment at the Islamic hospital run by the *Ikhwān Al-Muslimīn* (Muslim Brethren or Brotherhood). Through his ties to local Palestinian Muslims in the Hāshmī, Fāris traveled to the hospital to meet and offer his respect to the popular leader. This was an important moment for Fāris who deeply admired Yāsīn’s religiosity and Hamas’ willingness to resist Israeli occupation and die for the liberation of Palestine. It was an important connection.

The chance to marry Hoda, Fāris believed, provided him with a way to establish a clearer link to the Palestinian issue and experience since her origins in the camp spoke more forcefully to the reality of Palestinian displacement in Jordan. Like other Palestinians, Fāris saw the camps as the homes of the refugees and thus the “authentic spaces of exile.” Although critical of the camps’ people, Fāris also shared the romantic idea that the refugee camps held a special place in the Palestinian ethos. In symbolic terms, the camps were fragments of a Palestine lost and a people waiting to return to their proper place. He believed that the disappearance of the camps could only occur with the simultaneous reappearance of Palestine as it was in 1948. Marrying Hoda, Fāris explained, offered him and his future children a more intimate connection to the homeland. In his view, Hoda’s camp life constituted her existence as a unique being whose knowledge and experience were more profoundly Palestinian than his. Despite the fact that both Fāris and Hoda’s parents were born and, until their displacement, raised in Palestine, Fāris believed that Hoda and her family could share an authenticity unavailable in the city. Living in a

“refugee space,” in other words, Fāris believed that Hoda was shaped by displacement in ways that he wasn’t. Like Hoda, he was a refugee, but unlike Hoda, he didn’t live the displacement in the space of exile: the camp.

The second aspect of the wedding narrated above concerns the shift in Fāris’s feelings about his fiancé’s background. Given the dual nature of the camps for city refugees like Fāris, although marrying Hoda could be a source of great cultural pride, it was not without its dangers. That is, despite Fāris’s initial excitement over his fiancé’s camp status, he could not avoid the fact that the camps were dangerous spaces productive of “ill-mannered” and “unruly people.” The force of this duality became clear during Fāris’s brief but significant quarrel with his family over Hoda’s reputation. When rumors first emerged about Hoda’s relationship with her brother-in-law, Fāris defended his fiancé. Although troubled by the claims, he nevertheless stood up to his own family in support of his and her honor believing that he selected a woman worthy of trust and that her word was as trustworthy as his. Yet Fāris eventually broke down. Shortly after the rumors began, he could no longer sustain his defense and Hoda’s camp status provided a “reasonable” explanation for why. Returning to his family and asserting the validity of their claims against Hoda, Fāris argued that a “camp girl” could not be trusted.

Coming to terms with the inescapable fact of “the camp” in his choice of a partner, he believed Hoda was capable of improper relations and, more importantly, that she would lie to cover it up. As he explained to his family, Māher, and I, his dream clarified the matter. Coming between him and his family, Hoda was a serpent and her words were her venom. Only through her poison could he turn against his family and only from the camp could this serpent emerge. The dream, as it was told, revealed the truth about Hoda and the deceit of her ways. Reflecting on the wedding experience in a new narrative form, Fāris and his family claimed that “the

campness” was always there. It was visible in the filth of her home and her mother’s manners. She was loud and uncalm, which were perceived as “typical” habits of camp dwellers. Later, the camp emerged in the vague condition and speculations surrounding her father’s mental state. He was ill, they believed, but hiding it; they were all hiding it. Finally, Hoda’s “campness” explained the potential of her improper conduct and untrustworthy words. Without the same manners of refugees in the city, Hoda certainly *could* have behaved inappropriately with her brother-in-law and was certainly *capable* of lying about it. Faced with such possibilities, Fāris knew the marriage could not go on and that he had stepped beyond the security of the city.

Thus from the start, the marriage carried the seeds of a shaky cultural ambivalence. On one hand, Hoda’s camp status was a source of authenticity and pride. Born and raised in the camp, she represented the pure and authentic product of displacement and offered a city-born refugee such as Fāris the opportunity to partake in that important cultural status. On the other hand, Hoda’s camp status was also a source of danger and impurity (Malkki 1995). As became evident in the final days of Fāris and Hoda’s potential union, her camp origins represented a dangerous and threatening quality capable of contaminating the relationship.

### **Conclusion:**

This chapter has focused on the local context of Amman emphasizing intra-Palestinian identifications in the refugee camps and the city. Critically examining the meaning of Palestinian identifications as “refugees,” I showed how the meaning of displacement and exile constituted a fundamental commonality through which Palestinians could assert an identity as “refugees.” The identification “refugee” was thus made by Palestinians in both the camps and the urban areas of the city (non-camp neighborhoods). But the fact that Palestinians identified as refugees was not as important as *how* they did it. To some extent, the term “refugee” reflected a

well-established external identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15) crafted by UNRWA for the purpose of addressing Palestinian displacement. As a formalized and institutionalized category of practice used to facilitate the identification of Palestinians as refugees and administration of services, Palestinians' identification as "refugees" merely suggested the significance of this category in their lived experience. Identifying as a refugee, in other words, was a consequence of living that ascribed status within the institutional context of UNRWA refugee camps and services.

But the use of this category among non-camp Palestinians and its meaning for those who claimed it in both camp and city settings also showed that identifying as a refugee was about much more than the external identification created by UNRWA. Rather, from the analysis above we see how Palestinians put this category to use in ways that not only defied its institutionalized settings—by claiming it beyond the institutional context of UNRWA—but also enabled a particular stance as Palestinians. By identifying as refugees, Palestinians were sustaining a critical sense of commonality that, on one hand, located all Palestinians within a common narrative of displacement that tied them to Palestine and, on the other hand, created a key sense of "difference" through which Palestinians could disidentify as "Jordanian." In this sense, Palestinians' self-categorization as "refugees" in Jordan functioned within a larger claim to a distinct Palestinian ethno-national status. As Brubaker et al. noted in their work on ethnicity in Transylvania, ethnic categories are not always unambiguous: they can work through language, race, and a multitude of other presumed attributes or experiences (Brubaker et al. 2008, 231). Grounded in the "shared" experience of displacement and "being out of place," refugeehood can thus be seen as one category operative within a broader constellation of categories that together formed the meaning of "Palestinian" ethno-national identity in Jordan.

Yet the commonality claimed by Palestinians as “refugees” was complicated by the cultural meanings assigned to that category in particular places. Although Palestinians identified as refugees in both the city and camps, Palestinians in the city nevertheless enacted a discourse of difference in which one’s location within the camp marked her as a unique social person. According to city refugees, camp refugees were a different category of people constituted within the poor social and economic conditions of camp life. From the camps, however, Palestinian refugees spoke in unsimilar terms. For them, camp conditions did not draw the same moral line between “Palestinians;” all were thus equally refugees suffering from the general conditions of displacement. Despite the camps’ poor conditions, in other words, refugees were all the same.

The disjuncture in the meaning of “refugee” (as a refugee from the camp vs. as a refugee from the city) highlights the instability of group categories and how seemingly common identifications do not necessarily result in “identities.” On the surface, the common identification among Palestinians as refugees suggested a strong sense of “groupness” grounded in some shared experience of displacement and its social consequences. But within the context of the city and the camp, that identification had distinct meanings. The idea that Palestinians were a “group” formed through their common refugee “identity,” in other words, became highly problematic when seen from the perspective of those who claimed it in particular places. In this case, social and economic mobility played an important role in establishing boundaries between Palestinians that made the very claim to a common identity difficult.

In the following chapters of this dissertation, I will expand my analysis to consider two areas of Palestinian identification. The next two chapters will examine the meaning of Palestinian identification within the national context of Jordan. Focusing on the role of Transjordanian nationalist discourse and state policies in the production of a political field, I will

show how Palestinian refugees articulated their ethno-national identifications in ways that reflect two statuses: their status as refugee-citizens of Jordan and their status as members of the putative Palestinian nation in exile. In the following two chapters, I will look at Palestinian ethno-national identifications vis-à-vis homeland representations. Located at the nexus of the local Jordanian national context and the homeland politics of the Palestinian territories, I argue that the meaning of Palestine as an “Islamic” space reveals two particular issues. First, the meaning of the homeland shows how Palestinians engage with the homeland politics of Hamas, in particular, and articulate claims of belonging and rights via religious national discourse. Second, I show how symbolic representations of the homeland are “nationalizing” practices sensitive to and constituted within the local national context of Jordan. Through the homeland, Palestinians can be national in everyday life without being nationalist.

## **Chapter Four:** **Nationalizing States: Transjordanians, the State, and the Palestinians**

*What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group.*

Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*

This dissertation focuses on the ways in which Palestinian refugees articulate ethnic, religious, and national identifications within the context of everyday life in Jordan. Central for understanding what constitutes the “everyday” is the local social-political context of Jordan; that is, Palestinian identifications of themselves and “Others” reflect key aspects of their location, or subject position, within the field of Jordanian nationalism and state practice. In the next two chapters, I focus on the ways in which Palestinian identifications as refugee-citizens underscore their engagement within a field constituted by Transjordanian nationalism and the discriminatory practices of the Hashemite-Jordanian state. This chapter outlines the history and key claims of Transjordanian nationalists regarding Palestinian refugee-citizens. In addition, I also show how particular forms of discrimination by the state have facilitated a process of “de-Palestinianization.” For Palestinians, the exclusionary discourse of Transjordanian nationalists, who believe Palestinians do not “belong” to Jordan as “nationals,” and the social and political barriers erected by the Hashemite state, which reflect a “Jordan first” policy grounded in the 1970 Civil War, have reinforced the idea that one cannot be both “Jordanian” and “Palestinian;” the two categories function as mutually exclusive “identities” of two distinct ethno-national groups. This division permeates Palestinian identifications, which both legitimize and resist the binary through assertions of ethnic commonality and national difference.

### **Introduction:**

During fieldwork, what might otherwise be a mundane or routine experience can often offer critical insights into important issues long before the ethnographer is aware of them. In my case, living in Jordan for two years afforded me numerous opportunities to see (and probably miss) the significance of the ordinary. Through “informal” research experiences including daily interaction with Palestinian refugees and Jordanians on the streets, in coffee shops and restaurants, and in professional settings, I gained a profound appreciation for the importance of the unexpected. Indeed, my experiences in Jordan taught me early on that what counts for the ethnographic is often what happens long before the pen hits the page or the tape recorder begins recording. For my purposes in this chapter, consider the following ethnographic example.

It was a warm summer day and my wife and I were scheduled for an introductory meeting at one of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency’s (UNRWA) vocational schools located in North West Amman. The meeting was arranged by Rānīā, a Palestinian administrator at the institute and friend who wanted to facilitate my research contacts. Intrigued by my research project, she believed the vocational center offered an important opportunity to meet with young Palestinians who were preparing for the workforce. With its mostly Palestinian staff, she also believed the center provided a chance to meet with some of the older, more educated Palestinians working for UNRWA. When we arrived, the gate immediately opened and a staff member escorted us directly to the chief administrator’s office. Unsurprisingly, the center was not unlike other UNRWA facilities: a walled-in compound consisting of a series of short concrete buildings painted white and blue. At the compound’s center, however, was something unique: a large courtyard surrounded by several trees half-dressed in white paint. Offering shade and the aesthetics of a small garden, the courtyard provided students with a cool and relaxing place to congregate.



After a brief wait in the lobby, the director welcomed us into his office. Introducing himself as “Dr. Ahmed,” he offered us a customary cup of coffee and asked us to take a seat. For the next few minutes, we ran through formal introductions. It was clear that Dr. Ahmed was an educated man. Like most UNRWA administrators, he spoke fluent English and told us that he completed his university education in the United States. Speaking carefully but confidently, Dr. Ahmed then told us that he too was a Palestinian refugee and thus felt a personal interest in my research. I then handed him a list of sample questions from my research questionnaire. Glancing over the questions, he assured me that I was welcome at the center and that he would do all he could to facilitate my research. At that point, Rānīā began to summarize my research goals in her own words. She explained to Dr. Ahmed that I wanted to meet as many refugees as possible and that I was interested in the question of Palestinian identity in Jordan. Then, Dr. Ahmed looked up with a curious smile. “Of course,” he said. “This is an important issue for us in Jordan. But we must remember, Jordan First (*Al-Urdun Awalan*).” Grinning, Dr. Ahmed repeated himself, “Jordan First,” while Rānīā chuckled.



Figure Nine: “Jordan First” Ad<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> From [www.mahjoob.com](http://www.mahjoob.com)

Initially, the comment seemed like an innocuous joke. I knew, for example, that “Jordan First” was the official slogan for a national campaign launched by King ‘Abdullah II in 2002<sup>105</sup>. I also knew that, although the campaign’s primary purpose was to promote economic liberalization and democratization, it also set out to redefine the Kingdom’s regional role by establishing an agenda that placed national needs above regional and international interests (Ryan 2004). But even if I wasn’t familiar with the campaign’s policies, I would have at least known that Jordan First was a popular national slogan. Throughout the city, there was no shortage of Jordan First’s conspicuous artifacts: campaign posters decorated street signs, lamp posts, billboards, and even taxi cabs. Indeed, by the time I arrived in Jordan in 2006, the Jordan First campaign had achieved a physical presence in Amman second only to the King’s ubiquitous portraits. It had become an inescapable idea whose symbolic representations were effectively imposed upon the Jordanian urban landscape. After hearing the joke, I therefore concluded that Dr. Ahmed’s reference must have been nothing more than a local commentary on the ubiquity of the Jordan First campaign.

It wasn’t until months later that I realized the significance of Dr. Ahmed’s comment. Innumerable encounters with Palestinians in a variety of formal and informal settings taught me that Dr. Ahmed’s joke wasn’t unique. On the contrary, I learned that Palestinians referred to the Jordan First campaign quite often, and not just when answering my research questions. I should say that my realization did not mean that Dr. Ahmed’s reference gained any new particular meaning. My initial interpretation was correct: Dr. Ahmed *was* merely joking about the national slogan. Jordan First was everywhere and thus easy to joke about. But his comment did show me

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<sup>105</sup> For a discussion of the Jordan First campaign see *Jordan First? Internal Politics and the Approaching Iraq War* by Rami G. Khoury (<http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/events/khoury.pdf>) and “*Jordan First*”: *Jordan’s Inter-Arab Relations and Foreign Policy Under King Abdullah II* by Curtis Ryan (2004).

that the campaign achieved much more than its successful integration into the physical landscape; it had become part of the social landscape as well. Jordan First was too conspicuous to ignore and, for Palestinians in particular, joking about it was a meaningful way of expressing a very political idea in daily social discourse. According to Dr. Ahmed and other Palestinians, Jordan First meant that Palestine and the Palestinians were second. It was understood as a national slogan that underscored their subordinate status vis-à-vis “Jordanians.” Moreover, Jordan First confirmed that the Jordanian state did not have “Palestinian” interests at the forefront of its policies. The campaign, in other words, meant that the state was firmly behind the “national” interest. And, in the eyes of many Palestinians, the “national” interest did not include “Palestinian” interests.

The anecdote discussed above provides a simple but appropriate introduction to this chapter. First of all, it presents compelling evidence for the significance of the mundane. As Dr. Ahmed’s comment illustrated above, the most common features of daily life can often provide clues about much larger ethnographic issues. When considering the role of the ethnographer (or at least *this* ethnographer), the example above demonstrates how and why details matter. Second and relatedly, the specific instance of Dr. Ahmed’s passing reference to Jordan First showed how national and state projects can be interpreted by ordinary people in ways that defy (or prove) their original intents. To date, the Jordan First campaign includes too many projects to suggest a cohesive policy. Human rights initiatives, legal workshops, and economic liberalization have all counted as part of the Jordan First campaign. With such a diverse set of efforts, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what initiatives reflect the campaign’s core principles. Moreover, the fact that economic policies under Jordan First seem to reflect international interests as much as Jordanian ones (Knowles 2005; Piro 1998) makes it difficult to say that the campaign is living up to its

“national” promise. But regardless what the purpose of Jordan First *actually* is, what matters is that ordinary people including Palestinian refugees interpreted it in ways that suggested that they knew what its purpose *might* be. Palestinians, as I discovered, understood Jordan First as a campaign designed exclusively for Transjordanians. They thus joked about it, talked about it, or simply expressed the words: “Jordan First.” The slogan itself clarified their exclusion (perceived and real) and, as a result, membership in a particular group. Put another way, the exclusionary interpretation of Jordan First meant that there *are* Palestinians who are distinguishable from Jordanians in very practical ways. Furthermore, the jokes showed that Palestinians were engaged with the campaign in ways that said as much about their perceptions of the state as it did about themselves. The subtle importance of Jordan First was that it revealed a way that Palestinians could comment both on the practices of the state and their predicament in Jordan as non-Jordanians.

Jordan First is not the only thing about the state or Transjordanian nationalism that Palestinians comment on. From the annexation of Palestine under former King ‘Abdullah I to the politics of the current King and his Palestinian wife, Queen Rānīā, Palestinians offer an assortment of ideas and perceptions about their position in Jordan. The importance of the anecdote above thus doesn’t necessarily depend on the specifics of the campaign. Rather, it highlights the point that Palestinian social discourse is, among other things, engaged with Jordanian politics. Dr. Ahmed’s comment provides an illuminating and useful opening for the much larger issues that constitute the basis of this chapter and contribute, more generally, to the argument of this dissertation.

In the next two chapters, I examine how Palestinians articulate their position in Jordan in light of the exclusionary discourse and practice of Transjordanian nationalists and the Hashemite

state. My aims in this chapter are twofold. First, this chapter seeks to provide a background on two elements constitutive of the political field in which Palestinian nationhood takes place in Jordan<sup>106</sup>. The first element concerns the nationalist stance taken by Transjordanian nationalists. Examining its historical background and contemporary expressions, I show how these stances reflect an important contribution to the debate over nationality in Jordan that centers, primarily, on the question of the nation and the state. Regarding the latter, Transjordanians promote a nationalizing discourse in which the state is claimed as exclusively theirs. As the “true” nation of Jordan, in other words, Transjordanians claim that the state belongs exclusively to them. Regarding the question of the nation, Transjordanians claim to be the “real” Jordanians. They thus represent Palestinians as a foreign presence on Jordanian soil. Transjordanians, however, address the Palestinian question in Jordan in two ways: limited inclusion and complete exclusion. In the first instance, Transjordanians say that Palestinian refugees from 1948 can remain in Jordan as citizens but cannot participate in the state. That right is the exclusive reserve of the Transjordanians. The more exclusionary approach says that Palestinians can remain in Jordan as foreigners until they return to Palestine. According to this logic, Palestinians should be stripped of their citizenship and treated as any other foreigners since Jordan is for the Transjordanians and Palestinians belong in Palestine.

The second element I discuss concerns Jordanian state policies towards Palestinian citizen-refugees and its importance for the meaning of Palestinian identity. According to Anthony Marx, citizenship is a key institutional mechanism for establishing boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in the nation-state (Marx 1998, 5). Through citizenship, Marx argues,

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<sup>106</sup> As noted by Brubaker, “nationalism is not engendered by nations. It is produced—or better, it is induced—by *political fields* of particular kinds. Its dynamics are governed by the properties of political fields, not by the properties of collectivities (Brubaker 1996, 17).”

states can construct preferential policies or allocate resources in ways that not only reinforce a sense of commonality and loyalty between those preferred but also strengthens identification among those excluded. Similarly, Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1993) have moved beyond definitions of ethnicity that rely on positive identifications such as language, religion, and culture to include shared conditions of existence under the state. Ethnicity, according to them, involves partaking of the social conditions of a group, which is positioned in a particular way in terms of the social allocation of resources, within a context of difference to other groups, as well as commonalities and differences within (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, 9). In the Jordanian context, discriminatory treatment of Palestinian citizens of Jordan has not only reinforced the idea that Palestinians and Jordanians represent distinct ethno-national communities but has also given practical meaning to such distinctions in terms of access to political and economic resources. The state has thus played a critical role in the establishment of ethno-national boundaries that underscores Palestinians' unequal status as citizens and reinforces an important aspect of their shared condition as a group.

In this section, I therefore consider the function of the state in the production of what Abu-Odeh has called the de-Palestinianization of Jordan (Abu-Odeh 1999a). Since the 1967 War and, in particular, following the 1970 Civil War, or Black September, Palestinians have been systematically excluded from key areas of the public sphere through a variety of state practices. Although these exclusions have not always reflected the convergence of Transjordanian and Hashemite interests, their effects have nevertheless produced the impression that the state does not see or treat Palestinians as equal citizens. Indeed, whether on behalf of Transjordanian nationalists or not, the state has engaged in systematic forms of discrimination and thereby given material meaning to the binary of Palestinian/Jordanian. This section attempts

to show certain areas of discrimination that underscores the process of de-Palestinianization and its implications for the meaning of “Palestinian” identity in Jordan.

In the next chapter, I focus on the impact of the Transjordanian political field upon the meaning of Palestinian identity among refugees in Amman as expressed through ideas about nationality and citizenship. Faced with the exclusionary politics of Transjordanian nationalists and the discriminatory practices of the state, Palestinians engage in a tenuous form of ethno-national discourse. As citizen-refugees of Jordan confronting prolonged displacement and the unlikelihood of any immediate return, Palestinians assert a universalist form of discourse that seeks to normalize their presence in Jordan as Arabs and Muslims and challenge the exclusivist claims of their Transjordanian peers. Through pan-Arab<sup>107</sup> and religious discourse, Palestinians thus identify with Transjordanians and claim a legitimate right to belong in Jordan as Arabs and Muslims. But Palestinians also promote a particularist claim to Palestine and Palestinian nationhood. They thus assert a unique ethno-national identity as Palestinians that allows them to disidentify with Jordan and claim a stronger sense of belonging to Palestine and the idea of a Palestinian nation.

These two positions form an important part of the meaning of Palestinian nationhood in Jordan. Together, they underscore the interactive stances Palestinians take within Jordan vis-à-vis the state and Transjordanian nationalists. More importantly, they suggest the basic idea that forms the central claim of this dissertation, namely that Palestinian nationhood in Jordan should be understood not as something that is produced but rather induced by interacting factors in a broader political field.

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<sup>107</sup> According to Rashid Khalidi, Arab nationalism is the idea that Arabs are a people linked by special bonds of language and history (and many would add religion), and that their political organization should in some way reflect this reality.

### **Transjordanians Then:**

When the first Transjordanian opposition movement emerged in the 1920s, it had as its primary concern the question of the state<sup>108</sup>. At the time, British colonial authorities and the Hashemite King, ‘Abdullah bin Hussein<sup>109</sup>, were busy with efforts to create a state structure that could integrate regions within the emergent Transjordanian entity. Unlike most other “nationalized states” (Brubaker 1996) whose formation was preceded by a nationalist movement or a sense of national identity, plans for the state of Transjordan worked in the reverse: the production of the state was essential for the creation of a “nation” (Massad 2001b, 27). Much to the dismay of Transjordanian locals, these early efforts at state-building reflected a pattern of exclusion in which non-Transjordanians were quickly filling the state apparatus. When King ‘Abdullah formed the cabinet of his first government in 1921, for example, he filled the posts with individuals from areas outside of Transjordan including Syria, Palestine, and the Hijaz (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 42). Reflecting a broader trend<sup>110</sup> of assigning government and bureaucratic posts to non-Transjordanians, only one Transjordanian, ‘Ali Khulq al-Sharayri, was assigned a position within the new government. To be sure, between 1921 and 1923, the majority of posts within the emergent Transjordanian government were filled by Syrian, Iraqi, Palestinian, and Hijazi immigrants (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 23).

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<sup>108</sup> For a historical examination of the Jordanian National Movement, see *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* by Betty S. Anderson (2005).

<sup>109</sup> Originally offered a temporary position in Transjordan, the British made King ‘Abdullah the permanent ruler of the State of Transjordan in 1923 (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 40).

<sup>110</sup> As Kamal Salibi has noted, the King’s decision to include non-Transjordanians in the new government reflected his broader aim to establish a Hashemite Kingdom in an area much larger than the British had assigned him. According to Salibi, what ‘Abdullah had in mind at the time was not a Transjordanian administration, but a nuclear pan-Arab government for the whole of Syria based in the available territory of Transjordan, with elements representing the central Arab government of King Hussein in the Hijaz (Salibi 1998a, 94).



The exclusionary nature of Transjordanian state-building drew the ire of many Transjordanian locals. Supportive of the idea of a Transjordanian state, they were frustrated by the few benefits available from a state ostensibly created in their name (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 42). It thus wasn't long before key figures within the Transjordanian scene formed an organized opposition movement with the King and his British supporters as its target. With "Transjordan for the Transjordanians" as their rallying cry, regional leaders used a variety of tactics to try to shift state-building practices in their favor. In May 1921, for example, the people of al-Kura, an area within the district of 'Ajlūn, refused to pay their taxes and revolted against the government (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 44). Violently suppressed by the British Royal Air Force, the rebellion nevertheless succeeded in setting off a series of small resistance campaigns throughout Transjordan led by local tribes. In addition, the militant stance taken by Transjordanian tribes paved the way for a broader-based opposition force to emerge from the urban and merchant class against the Anglo-Hashemite regime (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 45).



**Figure Ten: Map of Transjordan in 1922<sup>111</sup>**

Using their skills as writers and poets, the new face of the opposition voiced their concerns to the public through speeches and the press denouncing the British as imperialists and the King as a traitor. Stirring patriotic passions characteristic of nationalist claims, figures such as Mustafā Wahbah al-Tall championed the rights and entitlements of the “Transjordanian people” and decried the theft of his country. According to Joseph Massad, it was al-Tall who originally coined the slogan “*Al-Urdun Lil Urdunīyyīn*,” or “Jordan for the Jordanians,” as an

<sup>111</sup> From <http://www.bicom.org.uk/context/maps/pre-state-maps/1922--separation-of-transjordan>

assertion of nativist rights against their usurpation by outsiders (Massad 2001b, 28). Moreover, the exigencies of mounting an immediate response to the expanding Anglo-Hashemite state compelled some Transjordanians to engage the political sphere. Calling for a constitutional monarchy and an end to the British Mandate, groups like *Hizb al-Sha'b* (the People's Party) formed political opposition blocs meant to represent the Transjordanian people against foreign control of their state. The *Mu'tamar Watani 'Am* (General National Congress) went so far as to issue its own Jordanian National Charter ( *Al-Mithaq Al-Watanī Al-Urdunī*) in which Transjordan was claimed as “an independent sovereign Arab country” and forwarded their demands to the League of Nations (Massad 2001b, 31).

Ultimately, the early Transjordanian movement failed to achieve its goals. Despite the valiance of their struggle, the tribe-led resistance was no match for the strength and brutality of the British Royal Air Force and an ambitious King. Commenting on the 'Adwan revolt against the British, Andrew Shryock described the collapse of tribal resistance this way:

The state of Transjordan was a political configuration quite unlike anything the Balga tribes had seen before. It combined the moral authority of the Hashemites [sic] –proponents of Arab nationalism and descendants of the Prophet – with the military brawn of Christian Europe. The Balga tribes were unable, and many of them were unwilling, to resist this new ideological and coercive partnership (Shryock 1997, 88).

In addition, the popular appeal of Transjordanian politics was insufficient for challenging the expanding power and influence of the Anglo-Hashemite state. Enacted in 1927, for example, the Crime Prevention Law functioned to set new legal limits upon the political activities of local opposition groups. The new law allowed the government to arrest anyone whom it considered a security threat and was complemented by the Law of Collective Punishment and the Exile and Deportation Law, which were systematically used to harass and repress national opposition (Massad 2001b, 31). Furthermore, on February 20, 1928, despite considerable efforts by

Transjordanian groups to abolish the British Mandate and establish a constitutional monarchy within the state, a formal agreement between Britain and King ‘Abdullah recognized the ultimate authority of His Britannic Majesty in Jordan and asserted the King’s legitimate rule over any government (Robins 2004, 37). The agreement was followed by the creation of a constitution, or Organic Law, which, *inter alia*, cemented a governmental structure (a 21-member Legislative Council) that was subordinate to executive control<sup>112</sup>.

Notwithstanding the demise of the Transjordanian movement discussed above, its stance vis-à-vis the Anglo-Hashemite state during the 1920s is important for understanding contemporary nationalist politics. Indeed, some of its core concerns articulated almost a century ago reflect key issues that persist today within the more recent brand of Transjordanian nationalism. Of particular importance is the question of the state. The early Transjordanian movement believed that the emergent state “belonged” to the Transjordanians. Populating government posts with non-Transjordanians thus represented a basic violation of the logic behind the creation of the state. As the nationalists saw it, what legitimacy could a Transjordanian state have if not representative of the very Transjordanian people for whom it was built? The second issue for the Transjordanians was inextricably linked to the first, namely who was a “Transjordanian.” By questioning the validity of non-Transjordanian dominance in the state, nationalists were fundamentally articulating a concept of who was (and who wasn’t) a Transjordanian. In his poetry, for example, al-Tall conceptualized the meaning of “Transjordanian” in localized terms relying on the “distinctive characteristics” of both the people and their environment (Betty S. Anderson 2005, 47). His vision of a Transjordanian “identity”

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<sup>112</sup> The new Council, for example, could be dissolved or prorogued on the whim of the Emir and only the new Chief Minister had the power to introduce bills for consideration (Robins 2004, 37-38).

thus encompassed local ideas about the Transjordanian “tribe” and its relationship to the land<sup>113</sup>.

It did not, consequently, include those identified as “outsiders” including Syrians and Palestinians brought into the state apparatus by the British and ‘Abdullah.

Although genealogically distinct, the Transjordanian movement of the 1920s and Transjordanian nationalists today share a fundamental preoccupation with the relationship between the Transjordanian “people” and the state. In the following section, I will briefly outline the nationalist stance of the contemporary Transjordanian movement<sup>114</sup>. Of particular importance will be its position vis-à-vis the contemporary “Other” in Jordan: the Palestinians. Today, the Transjordanian stance that “Jordan is for (Trans) Jordanians” and not, consequently, for Palestinians, represents the persistence of what Rogers Brubaker has called “nationalizing nationalism” in Jordan. According to Brubaker, nationalizing nationalisms involve claims made in the name of a “core nation” or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole<sup>115</sup> (Brubaker 1996, 5). One of the central claims

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<sup>113</sup> For discussions of tribal identity and national identity in Jordan, see *Home and Homeland: The Dialogics of Tribal and National Identities in Jordan* by Linda L. Layne (1994) and *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* by Andrew Shryock (1997).

<sup>114</sup> As my research is primarily concerned with nationalizing discourse among Palestinian refugees, my historical sketch of the Transjordanian movement will be just that: a sketch. For an in-depth account of the Transjordanian national movement in the post-1970s context, see *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* by Joseph Massad (2001), Chapter 5, *Jordanians, Palestinians, and The Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process* by Adnan Abu-Odeh (1999), *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* by Marc Lynch (1999), and *Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity* by Laurie Brand (1995).

<sup>115</sup> For Brubaker, nationalizing nationalisms are executed by new or newly independent states. Thus it is the state that is “nationalizing” the public in terms of the idea of a homogenous core nation. In Jordan, however, the presence of a Transjordanian majority within the government is insufficient for identifying the state as “Transjordanian.” With the Hashemite monarchy at its head, the state represents a dual institution in which “Transjordanian” and “Hashemite” do not

espoused by such nationalisms is that the core nation is the legitimate owner of the state. Thus conceived, the state is understood as an institution exclusively *of* and *for* the core nation (Brubaker 1996, 5). As will become clear below, Transjordanian nationalists articulate a stance that identifies a Transjordanian core nation. They thus not only argue for the illegitimacy of Palestinians as Jordanian nationals but also advocate state policies that seek to reinforce Transjordanian dominance of the state and further marginalize Palestinians.

### **Transjordanians Now:**

Writing for the July 2010 edition of *The Independent*, Robert Fisk offered an interesting expose of what some Jordanians are calling the “New Jordanian National Movement.” According to Fisk, the new national front represents a stiff brand of Transjordanianism that sees Jordan as “occupied territory.” In a recent open letter addressed to the current Hashemite King, ‘Abdullah bin Hussein, an elite group of Transjordanians including Former General Ali Habashneh, Colonel Beni Sahar, and Major General Mohamed Jamal Majali expressed their growing dismay with the government’s weakness vis-à-vis Israel and the United States (Fisk 2010). They believe that the King’s failure to assert Jordanian national interests above external interests has placed the entire country at risk. More importantly, the letter conveys the more general fear among Transjordanian elites that Palestinians are slowly taking over the country. According to one of Fisk’s interlocutors, the fact that the head of the senate is Palestinian, the head of the judicial system is Palestinian, and that the head of the ‘Aqaba special economic zone is Palestinian shows that the Jordanian state is quickly becoming non-Jordanian.

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necessarily overlap. Much like the past, Transjordanian nationalists today thus espouse a nationalizing nationalism that is meant to claim the state as its own and identify the Hashemite King as the paternal leader representing Transjordanian interests. I thus use the terms “nationalizing nationalism” to refer to the stance of Transjordanian nationalists that, although often reflects state discourse, is not necessarily expressive of the state.

Although written in 2010, Fisk's coverage of the New Jordanian National Movement does not necessarily represent the emergence of anything new. On the contrary, since the 1970 Civil War in Jordan, Transjordanian nationalists have established a viable nationalist discourse concerned with two key issues: the ongoing anxiety among Transjordanians over the national identity of the state and the persistence of the "Palestinian question" in Jordan. In this sense, the New Jordanian National Movement isn't new at all; it represents yet another manifestation of a national discourse and movement concerned with the relationship between the Transjordanian nation and the state. More precisely, the new movement underscores the unresolved status of Palestinians within a state conceived in exclusively Transjordanian national terms. In the remainder of this section, I will present two key positions among Transjordanian nationalists. Although not exhaustive of the ideas of Transjordanian nationalists, these two positions nevertheless provide a general framework for understanding how the question of the state and the Palestinians in Jordan is asked and answered. Furthermore, an exploration of these two positions is essential for understanding my broader aim within this chapter, namely to identify an important part of the political field in which Palestinian nationalizing discourse among refugees has taken place.

Writing about the post-1970 resurgence of Transjordanian nationalism, 'Adnan Abu-Odeh identified two particular groups of nationalists in Jordan<sup>116</sup>. The first group consists of former senior government officials and retired army officers and is primarily of middle to upper class background. Having developed within the boundaries of the Transjordanian state, they draw much of their support from the Transjordanian ruling elite and prominent businesspeople

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<sup>116</sup> Abu-Odeh actually identifies three groups of Transjordanian nationalism. For my purposes here, however, I will confine my discussion to only two groups since they have achieved greater public exposure and represent a more influential brand of nationalism within the state.

(Abu-Odeh 1999b, 241). One of the key features of this group concerns its approach to the status of East Bank Palestinian refugees. Both before and after the legal and administrative separation of the West and East Banks, Transjordanians of this brand of nationalism have expressed their willingness to accept 1948 Palestinian refugees as Jordanian citizens<sup>117</sup>. The unlikelihood of their return to Palestine, they argue, has established a basis for their continued existence in Jordan. During a lecture concerning the future of Palestinian-Jordanian relations, one of the chief proponents of this position, ‘Abdl-Hādi Al-Majāli, a former minister, chief of staff to the military, ambassador, director general of public security, member of parliament, and head of the *Ahad* party, articulated the issue this way:

[Our] party believes that our people [Transjordanians] should accept those 1948 refugees as full Jordanian citizens, because of the difficulty of having them return to Israel...As for the West Bankers, wherever they are in the diaspora, they should practice their political rights on Palestinian territory...He who chooses to remain Jordanian, though it is preferable that he practices his political rights in his country, Palestine, we shall find a solution for his case. He has to apply to become Jordanian. In this way, the [Jordanian] identity and loyalty will be reaffirmed [cited in (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 242)].

According to this formulation, Transjordanians like Al-Majāli are prepared to accept 1948 refugees on the East Bank as “full” Jordanian citizens. They can remain in Jordan within the framework of citizenship which, according to Al-Majāli’s calculations, will reaffirm their “identity” and “loyalty” to the state. Citizenship, in this case, is seen as a status expressive of loyalty to the Jordanian state. It is not, however, productive of a “national” status capable of providing Palestinians with equal access *to* the state. Indeed, one of the defining features of the nationalist approach of Transjordanians including Al-Majāli is that the extension of citizenship to

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<sup>117</sup> This does not include 1967 refugees who, according to this group, are expected to return to the Gaza Strip or West Bank upon the establishment of a Palestinian state.



Palestinian refugees does not entitle them to a position within the state (Brand 1995, 56). Thus in the Jordanian Arabic daily, *Al-Dustūr*, Al-Majāli argued that:

We seek to distinguish between our Jordanian brothers of Palestinian origin who belong to our joint political identity in the framework of the constitution and who worked to establish and crystallize it in the framework of national unity...and between those who are demanding a separate identity and a separate state...What is between us is not defined by national (*watani*) unity, but by relations in a pan-Arab (*qawmi*) framework...*The Palestinian who lives among us and wishes to maintain...his Palestinian political identity, has the right to live without discrimination...he does not have the right to work in Jordan[ian] political institution[s]* [cited in (Brand 1995, 56)]<sup>118</sup>.

Critical for understanding the nationalist platform espoused by Transjordanians such as Al-Majāli is the distinction between citizenship and nation. According to al-Majāli, citizenship is conceived in two ways: there is the citizenship of the national (Transjordanian) to whom the state “belongs” and the citizenship of the “alien” (Palestinians) to whom it doesn’t. For Transjordanian nationalists like Al-Majāli, the citizenship of a national is understood as a bounded membership that is exclusive and unavailable to national outsiders (Bosniak 1998, 32). For Palestinians, citizenship is limited by their “alien” status as non-Transjordanians. They have “limited” rights that reflect their membership in an “Other” nation. Palestinians can thus live within Jordan as citizens “without discrimination.” They are free, in other words, to exercise certain rights while preserving their “political identity” as Palestinians. Palestinians cannot, however, work within Jordanian political institutions. That right is the exclusive privilege of the “core nation”: Transjordanians. As Al-Majāli explained during an interview with Abu-Odeh: “We reject the premise that a Palestinian-Jordanian is Jordanian. We come from the premise that a Palestinian-Jordanian is a Palestinian” (Abu-Odeh 1999b, 242).

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<sup>118</sup> Emphasis is mine.

The second group of Transjordanian nationalists developed within the tribal system and military<sup>119</sup>. Although no specific political party represents this school, there are active individuals who articulate its attitudes in the local press and others who are members of certain political parties (Abu-Odeh 1999b, 243). One of the more vocal proponents of what Abu-Odeh has called a “tribe-embedded version of Transjordanian nationalism” is Dr. ‘Abdullah Al-‘Uwaydi Al-‘Abbadi, a tribal historian, former police officer, and member of parliament. In an engaging in-depth discussion with Al-‘Abbadi, anthropologist Andrew Shryock elucidated several principles underlying what Al-‘Abaddi has called “the new Jordanian national identity.” The first and most divisive principle is the severance of all links to Palestine. According to Shryock, Al-‘Abbadi understands Jordanian identity as distinct from Palestinians in virtue of two factors that relate directly to their origins in Palestine: their status as peasants and impure blood (lineage). These two conditions provide Al-‘Abaddi with sufficient cause to exclude Palestinians from any considerations of membership within “Jordanian identity.” As Al-‘Abbadi explained: “As for origins and descent...I do not concern myself with the mention of origins if they are [traced to] any area that is not inside Jordan, since we are, in the end, Jordanians: one family and one substance” [Al-‘Abbadi 1986, 17 cited in (Shryock 1997, 272)]. A second principle Shryock identifies is that Jordan is an essentially tribal nation and that the tribe is essentially Jordanian. The most authentically Jordanian citizens, according to Al-‘Abaddi, are thus those who can plunge their roots deepest into Jordanian soil (Shryock 1997, 274). Palestinians, as immigrants and refugees, do not (indeed cannot) have the genealogical continuity of the Jordanian tribes and are thus beyond the parameters of the “new Jordanian national identity.”

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<sup>119</sup> For a discussion of the role of the military in the production of national identity among Jordanian tribes, see Massad (2001), chapter 4 and 5.

The principles articulated above are not confined to the realm of “identity” alone. To be sure, al-‘Abaddi has taken various positions regarding the status of Palestinians in Jordan that have earned him significant attention and criticism. For example, Al-‘Abaddi protested the government’s decision to issue five-year passports to Palestinian-Jordanians (whom Al-‘Abaddi terms “Palestinians”) like those issued to Transjordanians (whom he calls “Jordanians”) (Abu-Odeh 1999b, 244). In addition, Al-‘Abaddi has publicly decried the extension of benefits including land, security, and identification cards to Palestinians who, he believes, have given Jordan nothing in return. Promoting a “Transjordanian first” approach to the state and Palestinians, Al-‘Abaddi has argued that:

“[G]overnment jobs should be confined to Jordanians and the priority in everything should be given to them, such as a director, a minister, a scholarship, etc. The crumbs should be given to the Palestinians. Besides, Jordanians are entitled to a share of the Palestinian wealth, which they couldn’t have gained without the Jordanian passport. This share should amount to 51 percent. Palestinians should not have any political rights whether in the executive or legislative branch...[I] believe in withdrawing Jordanian passports from the Palestinians and giving them instead travel documents” [cited in (Abu-Odeh 1999b, 245)].

A similar view has been expressed by Nahid Hattar, a Transjordanian Christian businessman and writer. According to Hattar, the meaning of “Jordanian” includes anyone living within the former Ottoman protectorates that became Transjordan and was “Jordanized in a natural manner and thus dissolved into [the] country’s flesh and greatness (Massad 2001b, 265).” Although Hattar’s conception of “Jordanian identity” doesn’t necessarily rely on the tribal conception of purity espoused by Al-‘Abaddi, he nevertheless advocates a similar stance regarding the post-1948 Palestinian population of Jordan. For Hattar, Palestinians who came to Jordan after 1948 are much like the Zionists were in Palestine: colonizers. On this basis, Hattar has argued for the establishment of a Palestinian state and right of return of all Palestinian

refugees and immigrants; return for Hattar means an end to the colonization of Jordan. This call for the expulsion of post-1948 Palestinian Jordanians, Massad argues, is the core of Hattar's ideology of returning Jordan to a pre-Palestinian past and as a way of asserting the Jordanians' "full and non-lacking sovereignty over their land (Massad 2001b, 265)." It also underscores the fundamental claim that Palestinians are not and cannot be Jordanians. Indeed, like Al-'Abaddi, Hattar argues that the Jordanian, precisely, specifically, and exclusively, is the non-Palestinian (Massad 2001b, 265).

The two groups of Transjordanian nationalists presented above do not necessarily represent the only approaches to the Palestinian question in Jordan. Within Jordan, there are other ways of articulating and addressing the question of Jordanian nationalism and the Palestinians location within the country and state. For example, Pan-Arabist Jordanians see the entire debate as meaningless. Rejecting the establishment of colonial borders between what they see as a united Arab territory, they look at the division between Palestine and Jordan and, consequently, Palestinians and Jordanians, as an artificial boundary best addressed through an Arab nationalist framework. In their view, all Arab people constitute one Arab nation and should belong to one Arab country with one Arab government (Nanes 2008a, 95). The question of Palestinians in an Arab state such as Jordan is thus, in their perspective, moot. Tackling the question of nationality from a civic perspective, Jordanian pluralists see a solution to the Jordanian/Palestinian divide within the concept of citizenship. According to the pluralists, citizenship and national identity need not be united in Jordan. 'Oreib Rentawi, a prominent journalist for the Arabic daily, Al-Dustūr, for example, has argued that what unifies Jordanians (meaning both Palestinians and Transjordanians) is not a single national identity but their legal status as Jordanian citizens (Nanes 2008a, 103). Thus the choice about the true Jordanian nation

need not entail a resolution of the Palestinian question; Palestinians can be both Palestinian and Jordanian because their connection to Palestine does not necessarily undermine their loyalty to Jordan.

Notwithstanding the variety of approaches to the Palestinian question in Jordan, the Transjordanian nationalist perspectives shown above have been a major contributor to the debate<sup>120</sup>. They have not only shaped the way many of their fellow Transjordanians think about Palestinians' position in Jordan, but they have also influenced critical state policies that have marginalized Palestinians and given practical meaning to the idea that the state "belongs" to Transjordanians. In turn, the persistence of Transjordanian national discourse and discriminatory state practices has also affected the way Palestinians have understood their own location within the Kingdom. In particular, the Transjordanian position has kept alive the idea among many Palestinians that they represent a foreign nation within Jordan and that their future is clear: Palestine is for the Palestinians and Jordan is for the Transjordanians. In the following section, I will move on to discuss the role of the state<sup>121</sup> in the material production of the idea that Transjordan is for Transjordanians. Addressing key state policies aimed at the promotion of Transjordanian control within the state, this section will examine what has been called the "de-Palestinianization" of Jordan (Abu-Odeh 1999b). As will become clear in the next chapter, understanding discriminatory practices by the Jordanian state against Palestinians is important for its impact upon the meaning of Palestinianness in Jordan. To be sure, it reveals an

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<sup>120</sup> For a discussion of the impact of Transjordanian nationalists upon state policy, see Lynch 1999.

<sup>121</sup> Anthony Marx has described the state as a compulsory and continuous association claiming control of society within a territory. Although states may differ over time and place in their capacity to rule, all states seek to contain challenges or instability threatening order and growth (Marx 1998, 5).

institutional basis for the idea that Palestinians do not belong in Jordan and, despite their citizenship, are not true Jordanians.

Before proceeding to the next section, however, a few comments concerning the distinction between Transjordanian nationalists and the Jordanian state are in order. One of the key characteristics of nationalizing nationalisms such as that of the Transjordanians is the idea that the core nation is in a weak position either culturally, economically, or demographically within its territory<sup>122</sup>. This weak position is held to justify the “remedial” or “compensatory” project of using state power to promote the specific (and previously inadequately served) interests of the core nation (Brubaker 1996, 5). Of course, the core nation’s “weak position” within the country need not be a fact “in reality;” it is sufficient that nationalists perceive their position as weak for them to engage in a politics of compensation whereby the state is called upon to address that weakness. In Jordan, where the state is government by a Transjordanian majority that is nevertheless subordinate to the Hashemite King, state policy is not always representative of Transjordanian nationalist interests. To be sure, throughout the Kingdom’s history, Transjordanian nationalist and Hashemite interests have often clashed (Lynch 1999; Robins 2004; Nevo and Pappé 1994b; Abu-Odeh 1999b; Betty S. Anderson 2005; Alon 2009).

The Jordanian state can thus be seen as vulnerable *to* but not necessarily an extension *of* the Transjordanian nationalists who claim it<sup>123</sup>. Indeed, as evidenced by the New Jordanian

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<sup>122</sup> It may be that the nationalizing nationalist movement sees itself as occupying a weak position in all three respects or any combination thereof.

<sup>123</sup> This idea is adequately captured by Brubaker in his discussion of the nationalizing state. According to him, we can think of the nationalizing state not in terms of a fixed policy orientation or univocal set of policies or practices but rather in terms of a dynamically changing field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual figures within and around the state, competing to inflect state

National Movement and its predecessors, at the heart of the Transjordanian nationalists' stance is the idea that their position within the state has been weakened by internal (Palestinian) and external (Israel and the U.S.) factors. They are thus arguing that the state must be "re-claimed" by a nation-first approach that will "cleanse" the state of its toxic influences and, ultimately, save the country from ruin. The Jordanian state must, in other words, be nationalized in terms of an exclusively Transjordanian presence governing according to exclusively Transjordanian interests: a "real" nation-state. The policies described below must therefore be seen in terms of the dynamic interrelationship between the Hashemite King and Transjordanians. What matters for my analysis, however, is not whether discriminatory practices towards Palestinians *actually* reflect Transjordanian interests; rather, what matters is the fact that concrete practices of discrimination exist and that Palestinians *perceive* those practices as expressions of Transjordanian dominance within the state.

### **Unequal Partners: The De-Palestinianization of Jordan:**

Writing about South Africa, the United States, and Brazil, Anthony Marx has examined the role of the state in the formation of national identity. Moving his focus beyond the more spontaneous forms of nationhood produced through processes of mass literacy and education, Marx is interested in how state sanctioned forms of inclusion and exclusion facilitate ideas about who is and who isn't part of the nation. In situations such as the U.S. and South Africa, for example, where the state formed before national forms of consciousness emerged, Marx argues that the explicit efforts of the state to limit and encourage selective nationalism have been particularly evident (Marx 1998, 5). According to Marx, preferential practices by the state towards particular subjects within its territory can erect boundaries of inclusion and group

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policy in a particular direction, and seeking, in various and often mutually antagonistic ways, to make the state a "real" nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation (Brubaker 1996, 66).

formation that solidify loyalty among those officially included. In this sense, the state can be seen as actively promoting specific forms of nationhood through the creation of formal boundaries. One of the most conspicuous means for establishing these kinds of boundaries is citizenship. As Marx notes:

Citizenship is a key institutional mechanism for establishing boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in the nation-state. It selectively allocates distinct civil, political, and economic rights, reinforcing a sense of commonality and loyalty among those included. But by specifying to whom citizenship applies, states also define those outside the community of citizens, who then live within the state as objects of domination (Marx 1998, 5).

Marx's discussion of the inclusionary and exclusionary function of citizenship is significant for its attention to the state's capacity to promote particular forms of group identification through preferential policies. But whereas the extension of citizenship to select members of the state population and denial to others provides an obvious form of boundary-making, the effective status of citizenship experienced by subjects of the state can also reveal important forms of identifications and inequalities. In Jordan, for example, where the majority of Palestinian refugees and their descendants are citizens, one can extend Marx's analysis to consider how state policies toward specific segments of the population can facilitate group identifications through the formation of two classes of citizenship: Jordanian citizenship and Palestinian citizenship. As will become clear below, although Palestinians have long held Jordanian citizenship and thus lived as ostensible equals among Transjordanians, the state's discriminatory practices toward Palestinians has compromised the idea of formal equality through citizenship. Through its preferential treatment of Transjordanians, the state has given practical meaning to the idea that Jordan belongs to Jordanians and has thereby created a dual status of citizenship in which Palestinians have been effectively rendered second-class citizens.



Moreover, these official forms of discrimination have been complemented by social forms of discrimination that have reinforced the distinction between Palestinians and Jordanians.

Discriminatory practices against Palestinians by the Jordanian state has a long and discernible history (Mishal 1978b; Massad 2001b; Abu-Odeh 1999b; Salibi 1998a; Alon 2009). As early as the annexation of central Palestine (West Bank) by King ‘Abdullah I in 1950, a visible state of inequality has existed between Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Transjordanians<sup>124</sup>. Following the unification of the West and East Banks, for example, Palestinian merchants claimed that they were discriminated against in the issuance of import licenses, “a complaint that seems quite reasonable given that two-thirds of the import licenses were given to East Bank residents (Massad 2001b, 235).” In addition, government-imposed restrictions on freedom of expression in the West Bank resulted in the closing of several newspapers and the arrest of numerous journalists (Mishal 1978b, 38). The Palestinian newspaper *Filasteen*, for instance, was temporarily shut down following the publication of an article explicitly criticizing members of the House of Representatives. Moreover, before his assassination by a Palestinian in Jerusalem, ‘Abdullah instituted several policies designed to suppress any representations of Palestine as a distinct entity including its stamp and, more significantly, to disrupt political organizing and the formation of opposition groups. Finally, economic disparities emerged as a direct result of government policy aimed not only at privileging development in the East Bank but also stifling it in the West Bank. As Jamīl Hilāl noted:

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<sup>124</sup> Although discriminatory treatment of Palestinians is a relatively constant feature of the state’s legacy, it is not necessarily indicative of a single policy within the Hashemite-led government. On the contrary, the unique political circumstances facing each king have produced an assortment of state practices with differing aims. Nonetheless, within the reign of each Hashemite ruler, there are clear sets of policies that have produced and sustained an unequal status among Palestinians and Transjordanians in key areas.

[T]he Jordanian government followed a specific economic policy based on encouraging investment and the development of some industries only in the East Bank, hoping in the meantime to weaken the productive base of the West Bank... This regionalist/chauvanist (iqlimīyyah) policy manifested itself toward the West Bank through specific practical procedures, the most important of which was the concentration of large industrial projects in the East Bank of Jordan and the placement of obstacles and difficulties in the way of the employment of Palestinian capital in productive projects in the West Bank (Massad 2008, 235-236).

Following the short-lived rule of King Talal bin ‘Abdullah<sup>125</sup>, King Hussein bin Talal inherited a situation in which the exigencies of integration between the West and East Banks and the transformation of Palestinians into Jordanians tempered the discriminatory policies of his grandfather<sup>126</sup>. The institutionalization of a Jordanian/Palestinian binary and its concomitant process of state-sanctioned discrimination, however, reemerged following the Six Day War in 1967 and became particularly robust in the wake of the 1970 Civil War (Sirriyeh 2000)<sup>127</sup>. Prior to 1967, tensions between the Hashemite government and its Palestinian subjects primarily concerned the question of representation. In particular, the rise of Arab nationalism espoused by Gamal Abdel Nasser and the emergence of a Palestinian national movement presented Hussein with a new set of challenges both internally and externally<sup>128</sup>. According to the King,

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<sup>125</sup> According to Abu Odeh, Talal was well known for his sympathy with the Palestinians. Thus his accession ushered in a new, albeit brief, chapter in the Palestinians’ attitude toward the state—certainly a favorable one (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 61).

<sup>126</sup> For a discussion of the pre-1970 rule of King Hussein and the process of integration, see *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* by Avi Shlaim (2009), *King Hussein of Jordan: A Political Life* by Nigel Ashton (2010), and *From Abdullah to Hussein: Jordan in Transition* by Robert Satloff (1994).

<sup>127</sup> To date, no single treatment of the 1970 Civil War exists in the English language. However, numerous texts have discussed the topic as an event within the history of Jordan and Palestine. For an in-depth account of the Palestinian guerrilla’s role in the battle, see *Armed Struggle and The Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* by Yazid Sayigh (2000).

<sup>128</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the challenges presented by the PLO and Nasser, see *King Hussein of Jordan: A Political Life* by Nigel Ashton (2008), chapters 4-6, and *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan’s Identity* by Marc Lynch (1999).

Palestinian citizens of Jordan owed their loyalty to the Jordanian state. Having “saved” the West Bank and, more importantly, East Jerusalem, from Zionist conquest during the 1948 War, Hussein believed the Jordanian government had a special claim to rule and represent Palestinians within the Kingdom’s borders. More significantly, the fact that Jordan was the only Arab state to extend its citizenship to the Palestinians was used to underscore the special relationship between Jordan and the Palestinians and their debt to the crown<sup>129</sup>. In the King’s view, Palestinians were Jordanians too.

Both prior to and immediately after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, Palestinians began to see themselves and the West Bank in new terms. The growing popularity of Nasser as the champion of Arab nationalism and the emergence of the PLO in 1964 led many Palestinian on both sides of the Jordan River to offer their support and loyalty to the movements (Cobban 1985). Their status as Jordanian citizens notwithstanding, Palestinians thus began to see the autonomy of the West Bank as essential for the liberation of their homeland and establishment of a future state. Furthermore, Palestinian identification with the nationalist rhetoric of the PLO facilitated new cleavages between the Jordanian monarch and his Palestinian subjects. These tensions only worsened after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967. As Marc Lynch has noted, when Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem to Israel in 1967, it found itself locked in a bitter struggle with the PLO over the right to sovereignty in those lands—a struggle which culminated in the bloody and unforgettable “Black September” war of 1970 (Lynch 2004).

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<sup>129</sup> It is widely recognized among scholars that King ‘Abdullah’s annexation of Central Palestine and the nationalization of Palestinians reflected his goals of establishing a Hashemite Kingdom beyond the Mandate borders and not a humanitarian gesture (Satloff 1994; Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2009; Massad 2001c).

Fought largely between Palestinian guerrillas and the Jordanian military, the war gave the question of Palestine and the Palestinians particular salience<sup>130</sup>. Transjordanian nationalists saw the war as evidence that the Palestinian population and Jordanian control over the West Bank were a strategic liability. It also gave new meaning to the Transjordanian claim that Palestinians could not be trusted as loyal Jordanians, an idea that extended beyond the West Bank to include Palestinians on the East Bank as well. For many Palestinians, the war revealed the brutality of the Jordanian regime and its willingness to suppress all forms of Palestinian national claims. It underscored the idea that the Jordanian government had no intentions of relinquishing its control over the West Bank or of supporting Palestinian independence<sup>131</sup>.

Following the eradication of the PLO in Jordan, the King pursued a variety of policies designed to prevent any future conflicts and cement the Jordanian status of the West Bank and the Palestinians. Such efforts ushered in a new period of discriminatory policies aimed at establishing Transjordanian dominance within key state institutions including the military, the internal security apparatus, and the political structure and remain visible until today. For some, the discriminatory policies of the Jordanian state were not necessarily reflective of a single policy aimed at excluding the Palestinians. According to Kamal Salibi, for example, discriminatory practices towards the Palestinians following the war were less an indication of Transjordanian chauvinism than they were a reflection of Jordanian society.

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<sup>130</sup> It should be noted that many Transjordanians joined Palestinian forces during the clashes and, similarly, there were numerous Palestinians who offered their support to Jordanian forces. Furthermore, although Palestinian guerrillas managed to gain widespread support among refugees, in particular, many Palestinians did not support the war and refrained from taking either side (Massad 2001b; Abu-Odeh 1999b).

<sup>131</sup> The Jordanian claim over the West Bank and the Palestinians was made abundantly clear following the war when, in 1972, Hussein launched a new political offensive against the PLO announcing a plan for the creation of a 'United Arab Kingdom' linking the East and West Banks under his crown (Cobban 1985, 52).

The fact that such discrimination did exist derived from the peculiar structure of Jordanian society rather than from state policy. As far as the Hashemite monarchy was concerned, all Jordanians were equal, regardless of origin. To most Transjordanians, however, as to most Palestinians, the question of origin remained politically important. *With the Transjordanian dominating the army and holding the key posts in the administration*, the status of the Palestinians as Jordanian citizens of full rank and standing was compromised in various ways, especially in cases where their political loyalty was suspect (Salibi 1998b, 247)<sup>132</sup>.

Other scholars, however, have taken the position that discrimination in the Kingdom then and now reflects a concerted effort to purge the state of its Palestinian elements. ‘Adnan Abu-Odeh, for example, has identified two flaws in Salibi’s position and has argued that discrimination is an expression of state policy, not social structure. First, Abu-Odeh claims that Salibi failed to recognize that Transjordanian dominance of the military *was* a policy (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 196). Before the Civil War, for example, the Jordanian Arab Army was exclusively populated by Transjordanians (Massad 2001c, 206). Moreover, when Palestinians did join the military, their ranks remained low within the hierarchy. After the war, the government launched a major campaign of recruitment that targeted Transjordanians and excluded Palestinian-Jordanians; this included all branches of the military (Massad 2001c, 213). Second, Abu-Odeh argues that the “key posts” Salibi mentions were, until 1971, occupied by Transjordanians and Palestinians. According to Abu-Odeh, the status of Palestinians in the Kingdom today thus represents a long process of de-Palestinianization within the public sector beginning more or less with the Hashemite/PLO showdown in 1970-1971 but sustained by a consistent state policy (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 196).

Two notable examples of de-Palestinianization came shortly after the civil war in 1970. In 1976, the proportion of Palestinians in the cabinet dropped from one half to one quarter, with

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<sup>132</sup> Emphasis is mine.

many Palestinian government personnel dismissed and replaced by Transjordanians (Massad 2001c, 258). Around the same time, Massad notes, Jordanian universities began an unofficial quota system for employing Transjordanian professors that drastically transformed educational demographics until today. This situation, which proceeded more belligerently after 1989 and to the present, has resulted in emptying Jordan's state universities of Palestinian faculty, as few if any new positions go to Palestinian Jordanians (Massad 2001c, 258).

Another key area of discrimination has occurred within the state security apparatus. Since 1970, the internal Jordanian security forces including the police and the General Intelligence Department or, as it's locally called, *Al-Mukhābarāt*, have been dominated by a Transjordanian majority. According to Abu-Odeh, the Transjordanian nature of the state security apparatus has had profound consequences for Palestinians that reaches beyond the mere question of representation. When the security apparatus is controlled by one group in a society where tribal kinship supersedes the rule of law, then the neutrality of repression, an essential factor for intercommunal harmony, disappears (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 197). In this situation, the exclusion of particular segments of the population from institutional power can facilitate a sense of groupness (Brubaker 2002) grounded in their shared experience as victims of discrimination. Moreover, the dominance of one particular group within the security apparatus can lead to the perception that those excluded constitute an untrustworthy population. Put another way, if the security apparatus is staffed almost exclusively by one group as it is in Jordan, then the message is obvious: this group is loyal and the other isn't (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 198). In Abu-Odeh's estimation, the de-Palestinianization of the Jordanian security forces has produced a self-

perpetuating divisiveness in which Transjordanians look on Palestinians as disloyal or, perhaps, as permanent suspects and thus see no reason why they should be part of the state<sup>133</sup>.

	<b>Transjordanians</b>	<b>Palestinians</b>	<b>% of Palestinians</b>
<b>Cabinet Ministers</b>	18	6	25
<b>Ambassadors</b>	39	6	13.3
<b>Key and senior posts</b>	80	20	20
<b>Members of Parliament</b>			
<b>(a) Lower House (elected)</b>	67	13	16.25
<b>(b) Upper House (appointed)</b>	33	7	17.5

**Table Five: Palestinian/Jordanian Representation within Political Structure**<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the security forces, the process of de-Palestinianization has also manifested itself within the political structure, especially following the disengagement from the West Bank in 1988. As early as the 1974 Arab League Resolution (the Rabat Resolution) recognizing the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” King Hussein and his Transjordanian supporters created new political structures designed for the reduction of Palestinian influence within the government. In the Upper House of Parliament, for example, the fact that members of the chamber are appointed, and not elected, has led to gross imbalances between Palestinians and Transjordanians. According to Abu-Odeh, although Palestinians

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<sup>133</sup> Abu-Odeh’s concerns are not without empirical merit. Throughout my two-year residence in Jordan, Palestinians routinely expressed their fear of the Jordanian mukhābarāt. They typically described the institution as one set up against the Palestinians designed for the purpose of controlling their activities and lives. On several occasions, Palestinians declined to speak on certain topics for fear that the mukhābarāt would learn of their words and detain or arrest them.

<sup>134</sup> Adapted from Abu-Odeh, 231.

constitute at least 50 percent of the population, they have accounted for only seven members out of a total of 40 (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 231). In addition, following the disengagement in 1988 and evident as late as 1997, Palestinian representation within various sectors of the political structure was found to be strikingly low given their demographic presence within the country. The following table provides an illuminating depiction of the differences in Palestinian-Jordanian representation within the government:

This pattern of systematic political marginalization by the state against Palestinians continues until today. According to recent data compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Palestinians remain underrepresented within various political institutions despite their citizenship status. As recent as 2008, the UNHCR found that:

Although Palestinians constitute around half of the population, they remain vastly under-represented in Jordanian government. Nine of the 55 Senators appointed by the King are Palestinian, and in the 110-seat Chamber of Deputies, Palestinians have only 18 seats. Of Jordan's 12 governates, none are led by Palestinians<sup>135</sup>.

Identifying discriminatory practices against Palestinians within the employment and education sector and, more concerning, within the enforcement of counter-terrorism measures, the report adds:

Discrimination against Palestinians in private and state-sector employment remains common and a quota system limits the number of university admissions for Palestinian youth. Government security operations disproportionately target Palestinians, especially operations conducted in the name of fighting terror. Amnesty International reported in July 2006 that Jordanian security services were more likely to torture detainees if they were Palestinian.

While the exclusion of Palestinians from key areas of government and security has played an important role in the de-Palestinianization of the state and the enforcement of official

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<sup>135</sup> Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Jordan: Palestinians*, 2008, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49749cfcc.html> [accessed 5 August 2010].



boundaries between Palestinian and Jordanian citizens, unofficial forms of discrimination have also contributed to the hardening of social boundaries between the two categorical groups. In the remaining section of this chapter, I will turn to some of the less visible forms of discrimination and distinction within Jordanian society that have impacted the lives of Palestinians. My data in this section is primarily ethnographic as it reflects my observations of interactions between Palestinians and Jordanians in daily life and interviews with Palestinians concerning their experiences with Jordanians. The encounters discussed below offer an important insight into the meanings of difference (Caroline Nagel 2002) that sustain the idea of Palestinians and Jordanians as two distinct communities. They not only reveal some of the cultural mechanisms for distinguishing between Palestinians and Jordanians but also show how, for many Palestinians, these discriminations suggest a larger effort by Jordanians to exclude, marginalize, and suppress their community.

### **Discrimination and Difference:**

One of my first encounters with the social tension between “Jordanian” and “Palestinian” identities occurred serendipitously during a weekend trip to Petra. I had only been in the country for a few weeks and decided to satisfy some of my touristic curiosities before engaging in fieldwork. While riding camels at the ancient Nabataean site, I jokingly (and provocatively) asked our guide about the origins of his long-necked animals. “Are these camels from Palestine or Jordan,” I asked. His response was as dry as it was definitive. Pointing to my camel, he said: “This camel is *Baljiki* (Belgian).” Puzzled by his response, I probed further to determine what he meant. “The Belgians were the worst colonizers in Africa,” he explained. “Just like the Belgians were in Africa, the Palestinians are in Jordan. They are colonizers and that camel is Palestinian.”

This brief but compelling exchange with my Jordanian guide wasn't the only time I heard Jordanians describe Palestinians as Belgians. On several occasions after my trip to Petra, I heard Jordanian taxi drivers, shop owners, and even friends refer to Palestinians as Belgians in the same way as my Bedouin guide. For these self-described Jordanians, Palestinians were colonizers responsible for the hardships and sufferings of the Jordanian people. It was the Palestinians who brought Jordan to war with Israel. It was the Palestinians who tried to steal their country during Black September. And it was the Palestinians who have stolen their resources, jobs, and opportunities<sup>136</sup>.

There was, however, a different expression of the Belgian epithet. While working at a local school in Amman, I would often hear Jordanian and Palestinian students argue over national and regional politics. Although the usual topics included the U.S. war in Iraq and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the discussions would sometimes slide into national debates over the Palestinian presence in Jordan. During several of these disputes, I heard Jordanian students use the Belgian epithet to insult Palestinian students; this usually occurred when a Jordanian wanted to convey the idea that Palestinians were foreigners in Jordan and thus unwanted. In more dramatic instances, these exchanges resulted in heated debates that could easily slip into physical altercations. On one occasion, for example, a Palestinian student struck a Jordanian student after being told to take his *mulukhīyya*<sup>137</sup> back across the (Jordan) river along with his Belgian boots.

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<sup>136</sup> More recently, however, the influx of Iraqi refugees has created a new source of resentment. In this case, it seems that both Palestinians and Jordanians are participating in a newfound solidarity in which Iraqi refugees are identified as the cause of myriad problems within the Kingdom.

<sup>137</sup> *Mulukhīyya* is a dish typically described as "Palestinian." In Jordan, the subject of food is often ethnicized in ways that link putative groups with particular foods. While *mansaf*, for example, is often described as the national dish of Jordan and thus "Jordanian," some

The two students were not known enemies and, not long after the fight, returned to being friends. This incident, however, did illustrate the extremes to which the idea of difference could result in serious conflicts.

Most of the time, however, these verbal affronts were nothing more than routine and seemingly harmless teenage exchanges among close friends. Marwān and Qais, for example, were both students of mine and also long-time friends. They knew each other since childhood and both of them came from elite families. Throughout my time at the school, I would hear these two students engage in passionate yet friendly debates over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its impact on Jordan. During some of their more heated exchanges, Marwān, the Jordanian, would call his Palestinian friend a Belgian, a terrorist, or a beggar, depending on the debate. Qais would usually respond in kind by calling his best friend a backward Bedouin from the desert or offer a list of all the cultural items Jordanians stole from the Palestinians including music, food, and dance<sup>138</sup>. Heated or not, what was striking about these verbal duels was that both Marwān and Qais had a cultural reservoir readily available for the fight. They knew what to say about the “Other.” Marwān *knew* that Palestinians were the Belgians of Jordan; Qais *knew* that Jordanians were backward Bedouin.

Intrigued by Marwān’s reference to Palestinians as Belgians, I decided to ask them about the origin and meaning of this association. Marwān explained to me that the idea referred to the events of Black September, during which Palestinian guerrillas fought against the Jordanian

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Palestinians claim it as their own stating that they introduced it to Jordanians who used to eat it with wheat, not rice.

<sup>138</sup> Qais was not unique in his ideas about Jordanian Bedouin and their backwardness. I heard several Palestinians refer to Jordanians as Bedouins in order to assert their inferiority as desert people. This idea usually came along with a statement about how Palestinians are an urban people and thus worldly, cultured, and superior to their Jordanian counterparts. Such attitudes were also observed by Andrew Shryock in his study of Jordanian national identity. For Shryock’s discussion of these ideas, see Shryock (1997) pgs. 71-72.

military under the late King Hussein<sup>139</sup>. “During the fight,” the young man explained, “the Palestinians wore military clothing made by the Belgians and carried Belgian weapons. Jordanians, on the other hand, wore military clothing provided by the Americans and carried American arms. Because of this, Palestinians are known as Belgians.”

Whatever the meaning behind the idea that Palestinians were Belgians in Jordan<sup>140</sup>, one thing was clear: it was not a welcoming statement. In every instance in which it emerged, labeling Palestinians as such functioned as an effective form of “difference” that defined the Palestinians as external to the Jordanian nation and territory. As colonizers, for example, Palestinians represented a foreign and imposing presence upon the Jordanian people and soil. Like the “worst colonizers of Africa,” the Palestinians were said to have used Jordan’s land and resources for their own aims and to the exclusion of Jordanian interests. The fact that they came as refugees and that Jordan annexed a large chunk of Palestinian soil against the wishes of many Palestinians seemed irrelevant to the matter; as in most cases, history could be ignored. Similarly, the idea that Palestinians fought during the 1970 War wearing Belgian fatigues also underscored their foreignness in Jordan. Dressed in Belgian military attire, the PLO represented an external force seeking its own goals. Again, the fact that many Jordanians fought alongside of their PLO comrades and that many Palestinians fought on behalf of the Jordanian military during Black September also mattered little to either side. What did matter was the basic point that

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<sup>139</sup> Few sources have offered a comprehensive account of the events of Black September. The one exception is Yazid Sayigh’s excellent book *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*. (Yezid Sayigh 2000)

<sup>140</sup> According to Joseph Massad, the most credible source for the epithet comes from the 1970 War described by the students above. Another version, however, includes the idea that, during the war, Jordanians planned to expel the Palestinians to Belgium (a far-away country) (Massad 2001b, 253).

Palestinians and Jordanians could be distinguished as such according to particular markers including a Belgian identity.

The fact that Marwān and Qais's interactions took place in school was not of minor significance. From my experiences as an instructor and from my frequent visits to the refugee camps, I realized that an important feature of public and private schools and colleges and universities was that they often provided one of the few contexts in which Palestinian camp refugees and Jordanians could interact directly for prolonged periods of time. This is not to say that Palestinians and Jordanians did not interact outside of schools. On the contrary, contact between both communities could occur at work or in other social contexts including festivals and other public events. But Amman is not a melting pot; its neighborhoods are ethnicized to the extent that one can reasonably identify areas that are "Palestinian" and "Jordanian." The refugee camps, for example, are almost exclusively populated by Palestinian refugees and are identifiable by key markers of difference including the institutional presence of UNRWA. As an institution whose function is to serve only Palestinian refugees, UNRWA has become a clear symbol of difference that sustains the distinction between Palestinians and Jordanians and marks the camps as Palestinian ethnic spaces. Jordanians, as such, cannot attend UNRWA schools or receive medical attention at the clinics in the camps. These services are for Palestinians alone. In addition, in certain areas of East Amman including the Hāshmī Shamālī, Hāshmī Junūbī, Jabal Ashrafīyya, and Tabarbūr, Palestinian refugees and their descendants constitute a sizable demographic majority. Within these neighborhoods, the high concentration of Palestinians has ensured that interactions occur primarily between Palestinians and that few opportunities or reasons exist for engaging with Jordanians directly.

The significance of educational settings as contexts for Palestinian encounters with Jordanians and questions of ethno-national identification was not only demonstrated during my time at the school. During several interviews with Palestinian refugees from different camps, those who were able to attend Jordanian public schools and/or private and state colleges and universities suggested that their encounters with Jordanians in these institutions reinforced the idea that Palestinians were discriminated against and strengthened their identification as Palestinians. Yūnus, for example, was a Palestinian refugee from the Hittīn camp in East Amman. Born and raised within Hittīn, Yūnus said he developed his self-understanding as a Palestinian within the specific cultural milieu of the refugee camps. During our discussions, he often emphasized features of camp life that shaped his understanding of what it meant to be a Palestinian and that, he believed, distinguished him from Jordanians. In the camps, for example, Yūnus explained that everyone was a refugee. His parents, his friends, his teachers, and even the local Imams were all refugees. Nobody in the camps, he said, was “truly” from Jordan. The commonality of displacement among camp inhabitants thus functioned as an important point of identification for Yūnus that made a particular sense of Palestinianness possible. Consequently, it also provided a key site of difference that served to distinguish himself from Jordanians who were not refugees. In other words, because displacement was such a common and important aspect of Palestinian identification, it created a sharp line of demarcation between Palestinians and Jordanians who, unlike Palestinians, were not refugees.

Prior to attending the university, Yūnus explained, his contact with Jordanians was fairly limited. His friends, for example, were primarily Palestinian refugees from the camp or neighboring areas that attended the UNRWA school. After completing his secondary education in the camp, however, Yūnus was able to engage with Jordanians more directly. Hoping to assist

his education, his family managed to save enough money to send him to one of the less expensive local universities. According to Yūnus, it was during his time at the university that he learned first-hand the difference between Palestinians and Jordanians. According to him, his encounters with Jordanian students at the university showed him how Jordanians felt about Palestinians and reinforced his own feelings that he, as a Palestinian, didn't belong in Jordan.

The feelings I have inside of me are that *khalās* (that's it), Palestine *watanī* (is my country) and my land. Jordan is not my country. In Jordan, I don't feel that I'm inside of my country or with my people. At the university, for example, I feel the difference between the Palestinians and the Jordanians. You can feel that there is a difference because you are a Palestinian. You feel the difference even though you have become used to [the idea that you're different]; you feel it inside.

According to Yūnus, he did not develop his identification as a Palestinian from his experiences at the university. On the contrary, he told me that he felt a strong sense of identification as a Palestinian in the camps long before he enrolled in higher education. Instead, his experiences at the university only "confirmed" two aspects of what he already knew. First, his interactions with Jordanian students confirmed that he was a Palestinian and that this was distinct from being a Jordanian. Yūnus, in this sense, came to the university with a conception of difference formed primarily by his experiences in the camp among other Palestinian refugees. His self-understanding was thus framed according to particular identifications that functioned as markers of difference and that were only reinforced by his contact with Jordanian students. Without offering details of his encounters, Yūnus nevertheless suggested that these experiences reminded him of his homeland and only strengthened his identification with Palestinians. Second, his encounters with Jordanians underscored the idea that Jordanians *make* Palestinians feel like they don't belong in Jordan. At the university, where Palestinians like Yūnus and Jordanians could interact more directly, Yūnus "felt" the difference between both "groups." "You can feel that there is a difference," he explained, "*because* you are Palestinian." For Yūnus, the differences he

felt between Palestinians and Jordanians were thus not only the result of his personal or internal identification as a Palestinian but also the effect of an external identification or labeling by Jordanians. In a sense, the very recognition of his status as a Palestinian by Jordanians reinforced his feelings of belonging with Palestine and Palestinians and distance from Jordan and Jordanians. As Yūnus concluded:

I don't feel that Jordan is my country because there are differences. In terms of employment and the economy, in terms of our position in the country, we are not respected as citizens. We are not respected in this country. People say "you are not from this country." "Why are you here?" No one in Palestine will ask us this question.

The importance of educational settings for the production of difference between Palestinians and Jordanians was also captured by my interviews with Warda. The eldest daughter of Palestinian refugees displaced from *Bir As-Saba'*, Warda attended both UNRWA schools in the camp and private schools in Amman. Her father was a physician for UNRWA and thus managed to gain enough income to send his children to local private schools in the city. Initially, Warda explained, her father enrolled her in a more diverse school in which students from a variety of backgrounds enrolled.

First, my father enrolled me in a private school in Jabal Amman. When I went to school there, I never felt a difference between Jordanians and Palestinians. There were Jordanian students, Palestinian students, Pakistanis, Indians, Americans, Turks, etc. There was a huge mix of students from different national backgrounds. In this school, I did not feel oppressed as a Palestinian.

Later, however, Warda's father enrolled her in a new school in which nationalist lines were more acutely drawn.

But then I changed schools. At the new school, there was a principal who was Jordanian. She was Jordanian in a way that was very patriotic and nationalist. She forced Jordanian nationalism on us; she wanted us to love Jordan and feel membership against our will. In this school, sometimes, I wanted to cry. "The King, God keep the King!" This is what she made us say. I felt that I was obligated to love the King. When one obligates you to love someone, you will



feel the opposite way. You will hate him. You will not love a country against your will.

According to Warda, the problem wasn't just that her nationalist principal forced her to identify with Jordan and the King. It was also that doing so entailed a suppression of her identification with Palestine and the Palestinians.

I felt like it was forbidden for me to connect to Palestine. It was forbidden to talk about Palestine or any subject related to Palestine. On Mother's Day, for example, it was forbidden to talk about the mothers of the martyrs unless they were Jordanian. Even though it is common knowledge that many Jordanian mothers sent their children to die for Palestine, we couldn't talk about Palestine's martyrs. The principal would say that the tribes were the pure and generous ones and that the Palestinians came and "dirtied" the country. Even though Palestinians are doctors and teachers, she would say this.

For Warda, her experiences at school were critical for her understanding of difference and, consequently, what she understood as discrimination. Like Yūnus, Warda was raised within a refugee camp and attended UNRWA schools. Her family and friends were primarily Palestinian refugees who shared, at the very least, the experiences of camp life defined by their status as refugees. Warda thus knew that UNRWA schools and clinics were for Palestinians. She also knew that her teachers, the administrators, and the students were all Palestinian refugees like her. When she transferred to a private school, her identification as a Palestinian was left unchallenged as most of the students came from different backgrounds. In this setting, she explained, identifying as a Palestinian was no more or no less interesting than the fact that another student identified as Pakistani or Turkish. It was only when she transferred to a "Jordanian" school that her self-understanding as a Palestinian took on a particular meaning of difference linked to discrimination.

First, Warda encountered as a Palestinian what for Jordanian students would be the normal business of nationalization. Prior to her enrollment in the Jordanian private school,

Warda never had to participate in the nationalizing practices of the Jordanian educational system. While in the camps, for example, Warda said she was never obligated to declare her allegiance to the King. Her administrators and instructors were Palestinian and they spoke about Palestine, not the King. Thus her principal's insistence upon her participation in practices designed for the nationalization of Jordanian students represented an imposed identification and facilitated a particular meaning of difference. Never having to declare her allegiance to the King in the camps, Warda came to see such acts as important markers of distinction between Palestinians and Jordanians. Pledging allegiance to the King, in her view, was what Jordanians did, not Palestinians. Why else were such practices absent from the camps? Moreover, Warda learned that identifying with Jordan required engaging in practices that not only reflected difference but were constitutive of it. Forced to participate in practices designed for the nationalization of students as "Jordanians," Warda understood these enactments as "unnatural" ritual obligations; that is, her unfamiliarity with such practices and the discomfort resulting from her forced participation in them only confirmed that they really weren't for Palestinians.

Second, the active suppression of anything Palestinian showed Warda that identification with Jordan could only occur through the negation of her identification with Palestine. By forbidding Warda from recognizing the mothers of the martyrs of Palestine, for example, the principal was also reinforcing the exclusive nature of Jordanian nationalism. As Warda explained, the fact that Jordanian mothers also "sent their children [off] to die for Palestine" could not be mentioned because, by doing so, one was still mentioning Palestine. Assertions of Jordanian nationalism thus reflected a basic distinction that not only necessitated the exclusion of Palestine but also precluded potentially productive sites of mutual identification. Indeed, the principal's rejection of the shared participation of Jordanian and Palestinian mothers in the war

for Palestine also rejected a key point of “shared” history in which Palestinians and Jordanians struggled and suffered together. More importantly, the principal’s overt attacks on Palestinians and, more specifically, their presence in Jordan served to strengthen Warda’s identification with Palestine. Drawing on the more exclusive forms of nationalist discourse described above, for example, the principal emphasized the urban/tribal dichotomy used by some Jordanians to distinguish themselves from Palestinians. According to this idea, whereas Jordanians’ tribal structure preserved their pure lineage, Palestinians’ urban and settled ways of life tainted theirs. Such an idea was particularly offensive for Warda since, prior to their displacement, her family claimed to live as rural tribal Bedouins from the southern deserts of Palestine. It was their transformation into refugees, she said, that brought them into a sedentary and urban existence. In addition, Warda felt (as many Palestinians do) that the Palestinians were an asset to Jordan, not a burden. Like her father, she explained, many Palestinians were doctors or successful entrepreneurs that helped turn Jordan into a “modern” country. Their urbanness, according to Warda, did not weaken Jordan; rather, it played an essential role in the creation of modern Jordan.

After describing her experiences at the school, Warda concluded by reaffirming her identification with Palestine. In her view, being Palestinian in Jordan was a perpetual source of tension that could only be resolved by a return to Palestine. As a Palestinian, she explained, she naturally belonged among Palestinians in their homeland. A Palestinian, in other words, could not be such in Jordan.

So all of these things around you, things that force you (against your will!) to love Jordan, makes you want to return to your country. Because in Palestine, nobody will ask you “why are you here?” “Why did you come here?” The Palestinian will not ask the Palestinian why he came to Palestine.

## **Conclusion:**

In this chapter, I have highlighted two key dimensions of a broader political field in which Palestinian ethno-national identifications are shaped and claimed. The first dimension concerns what Brubaker has called the nationalizing discourse of Transjordanian nationalists (Brubaker 1996). According to Brubaker, nationalizing discourses represent “nationalizing” efforts by elites who promote a particular conception of “the core nation” that is understood as the legitimate owner of the state. Defined in ethno-national terms, these discourses seek to draw key distinctions between the citizenry in ways that promote the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation (Brubaker 1996, 57). In Jordan, Transjordanian nationalists claim a distinct ethno-national status that, they believe, underscores their legitimate rights to the state. Within this discourse, Palestinians represent a foreign ethno-national community whose presence in the Kingdom constitutes a significant threat to the homogeneity of the Transjordanian nation and the “Jordanianness” of the state. In order to address this problem, Transjordanians advocate the exclusion of Palestinians from the state and, in some cases, from the citizenry. Their status as Palestinians, nationalists argue, should preclude them from the legitimate right to citizenship and participation in the state, which belongs to the core Transjordanian nation.

The second dimension concerns the nationalizing practices of the Jordanian state and their role in the institutionalization of difference and discrimination. As Anthony Marx has noted, the state’s ability to allocate civil, political, and economic rights among particular segments of the citizenry represents a key strategy in the process of nationalization. Specified policies of inclusion, Marx claims, provide a crucial referent for demarcating those included (and those excluded) within the nation. In such instances, group formation, identities, ideas, and

social categories are shaped, manifested, and entrenched through the state in ways that promote both national identification and loyalty (Marx 1998, 5). Preferential state policies, however, can also serve to reinforce solidarities among excluded groups whose formal discrimination provides an important point of commonality and identification. Subordinate to the Hashemite crown, Jordanian state policies have played a critical role in the institutionalization of difference between Jordanians and Palestinians through what has been called the de-Palestinianization of Jordan (Abu-Odeh 1999a). As I have shown, since the 1970 Civil War between PLO guerillas and the Jordanian military, the Hashemite state has engaged in a variety of selective and often discriminatory practices designed to appease Transjordanian nationalists and promote the supremacy of Transjordanians in particular state institutions including the military and security services. In addition, state policies have also facilitated the political marginalization of Palestinians within key areas of government through exclusionary rules of representation. As a result, Transjordanians have come to represent a demographic majority both within particular state institutions and governmental power. More importantly, however, the selective nature of the state's "nationalizing" practices has also reinforced the idea among Palestinian refugees that Jordan is not their country. Their experiences with formal and informal discrimination by the state and Jordanian population has strengthened their identification as Palestinians and the idea that their rights and equality can only be realized in a state of their own, that is, in Palestine.

In the next chapter, I shift the focus to examine how Palestinians position themselves vis-à-vis Transjordanian nationalism and the discriminatory practices of the state. Critical to my analysis are the discursive strategies Palestinians employ to negotiate the demands of what I see as two basic needs. First, as Jordanian citizens, Palestinian refugees seek to normalize their existence in Jordan in ways that resists their marginalization and sustains their legal status as

Jordanian citizens. To address this need, Palestinians stress their connection to Jordan and Jordanians as Arabs and Muslims. Using pan-Arab and religious discourse, Palestinians challenge the exclusionary discourse of Transjordanian nationalists and claim a legitimate right to citizenship and equality. Second, Palestinians strive to maintain their claim to membership in a distinct ethno-national community and connection to a distant homeland. In this effort, Palestinians accept the nationalist logic of Transjordanian nationalists: Palestinians are not Jordanians. They thus assert a particular claim to belong to a Palestinian nation and a Palestinian homeland. In so doing, however, Palestinians disidentify with Jordan as an alternative homeland and nation and, consequently, reinforce the Transjordanian position that Jordan is for the Jordanians.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a field, Brubaker has argued that nationalism or, more particularly, nationhood, should be understood not as something that *develops* but as an "event" that *happens* within a broader relational setting. Understanding nationhood in this way means thinking of the nation as a contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action (Brubaker 1996, 19). It suggests the deeply contextual occurrence of "the nation" not as a bounded group but as a categorical event; as a way of seeing the world and a frame of reference for acting in it. Together, chapters four and five reveal an essential feature of the political field in which Palestinian nationhood "happened" during my fieldwork in 2006-2007. They constitute an important part of my overall argument concerning the meaning of Palestinian identity among refugees in Jordan, namely that the absence of a coherent nationalist movement in Palestine and the conditions of prolonged displacement as refugees within host states has facilitated unique forms of nationhood among Palestinians reflecting the intersections of local and trans-state factors. Rather than seeing

Palestinian identity as a stable, shared feature of a putative group, I highlight in these chapters and the ones that follow the constraints and possibilities (the field) of Palestinian identifications.

## **Chapter Five:** **Citizenship Without Nationality: The “*Ins*” and “*Outs*” of Palestinian Jordanians**

### **Introduction:**

For Palestinian refugees, articulating their relationship to Jordan must address two important and often tenuous commitments. As Jordanian citizens, Palestinians must first find a way to identify with Jordanians in a way that sustains their rights as citizens within the country. As previously discussed, the status of Palestinians as Jordanian citizens has been a contentious point in Jordanian national debates<sup>141</sup>. Many Transjordanian nationalists believe Palestinians are not true members of the Jordanian nation and thus do not deserve the right of citizenship. That privilege, they believe, is exclusively for Transjordanians. The “national order of things (Malkki 1992),” in this case, is used to justify Palestinian denationalization<sup>142</sup>. If Palestinians distance themselves too much from the Jordanian people, they run the risk of supporting the Transjordanian nationalist argument that Palestinians are foreigners and should be stripped of their citizenship. Consequently, Palestinians have to employ a variety of identifications that seek to legitimize their position in Jordan as that of equals to their Jordanian co-nationals. This, however, has to be carefully balanced with a second commitment: identifying Palestinian. In this case, Palestinians must also disidentify with Jordan to the extent that their claim to Palestinianness and connection to Palestine can be maintained. Palestinians must, in other words, avoid becoming “Jordanians” as it threatens their claim to membership within the Palestinian “nation” and, more importantly, the claim to their right to return to the Palestinian homeland.

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<sup>141</sup> For discussions on Jordanian national debates and the Palestinians see Lynch, 1999; Anderson, 2005; Massad, 2001; and Nanes, 2008.

<sup>142</sup> Indeed, since 1967, the Jordanian government has denied refugees from Gaza access to citizenship leaving approximately 120,000 Palestinians stateless.



In the following section, I will demonstrate how Palestinians negotiate their need to remain citizens in Jordan with their desire to maintain a distinct ethno-national identity as Palestinians. Drawing on a variety of sources including oral histories, formal interviews, and the ethnographic encounters of daily life in Amman, I present some of the “salient features” (Handler, 1988) of Palestinian discourse vis-à-vis the Jordanian people and state. My analysis is therefore confined to particular areas of thematic convergence within the data that provide a conditional albeit critical account of ethno-national thought among Palestinians. As noted by Richard Handler, speaking of salience, as opposed to fundamentals, suggests that features selected for analysis are pragmatically forceful and persuasive, and that they engage active interpreters (Handler 1988, 31). As will become clear, one of the key ways in which Palestinians represent their position in Jordan and relationship to Jordanians is through pan-Arab and religious discourse. According to these universalist discourses, Palestinians “belong” to Jordan as Arabs and Muslims; their status as such affords them a legitimate right to live in Jordan as citizens among their fellow Arabs and Muslims. But Palestinians are also *not* Jordanians. According to the logic of ethno-nationalism, Palestinians also assert a particularistic claim to Palestinian nationhood and belonging to their “natural” home in Palestine. Despite their identification with Jordanians as Arabs and Muslims, Palestinians nevertheless claim a distinct ethno-national identity<sup>143</sup> that not only distinguishes them from Jordanians but also locates them within the broader idea of Palestinian nationhood.

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<sup>143</sup> I am drawing on Roger Brubaker’s approach to “ethnic” and “national” resources as “terms of practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events (Brubaker 2002, 167).” According to Brubaker, thinking about ethnicity and national identity means thinking in terms of *ethnicization* and *nationalization*.

### **Debating “Palestinians” in Jordan: Exclusivism and Pluralism:**

The debate in Jordan over the “Palestinian question” is not unique. In many ways, it reflects a global problem concerning the relationship between nationhood, citizenship and the state (Butenschn, Uri Davis, and Hassassian 2000; Shafir 1998; Ong 1999; Benhabib 2004; Balibar 2003; Resnik 2009). At the heart of this problem is the question of citizenship and the “Other.” In a world of territorially bounded states where citizenship has been understood in national terms, that is, as a “nationally bounded” membership that is exclusive and unavailable to those outside of the nation, the location of non-national citizens, or “citizen aliens,” within the state raises an important question (Bosniak 1998, 32). If citizenship reflects the existence of a political community defined nationally (i.e. as “the nation”), then exactly how might the rights of non-national citizens be protected<sup>144</sup>? Moreover, according to what principle can a non-national citizen claim access to a state defined as the exclusive privilege of the nation? Many immigrants and refugees today, for example, are permanently located within secondary countries and often carry the citizenship of states in which they do not identify (or are not identified) as members of the “nation.” Their status as non-national citizens has thus led to a variety of exclusions from the state and society that has produced their effective status as second-class citizens.

The Palestinians, in this regard, are no exception. Although legally branded as Jordanian citizens in 1950, their contentious status as refugees and national “Others” (Nasser 2004) has nevertheless facilitated an ongoing debate over the meaning of their citizenship and relationship to the state. Recently, public discourse concerning the status of Palestinians in Jordan has involved two particular approaches to the meaning of national citizenship: cultural and contractual (Nanes, 2008). According to the cultural view, citizenship is the exclusive privilege

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<sup>144</sup> For a thorough discussion of this question, see *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* by Seyla Benhabib (2004).

of the “core nation” understood as an “organic” or “natural” collective. Membership is thus beyond rational choice and the individual member cannot live beyond the grip of its solidarity (Nanes 2008b, 96). Transjordanian nationalists espouse this idea of the nation and argue that Palestinian refugees who came to Jordan in 1948 and 1967 are not “natural” members of the Jordanian nation<sup>145</sup>. Moreover, because these Palestinians came to Jordan involuntarily, Transjordanians claim that their loyalty to the Jordanian state and people is always in question (Nanes 2008b, 96).

The contractual approach to national citizenship, on the other hand, conceptualizes the nation in terms of a choice, not nature. According to this view, it is the individual wills of members that creates the nation and thus anyone who wishes to join the nation may do so if they agree to submit to the laws agreed upon in the original compact (Nanes 2008b, 96). In the Jordanian context, this is the position articulated by pluralists who argue that Palestinians can be both loyal to Jordan as citizens and remain Palestinian<sup>146</sup>. Advocating a “hybrid” conception of identity, they claim a bi-national status within Jordan: Palestinian in virtue of their origins and Jordanian in virtue of their choice to be citizens<sup>147</sup>. Pluralists also believe that national-citizenship is a question of rights and obligations. By choosing to be national-citizens in Jordan,

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<sup>145</sup> As Nanes (2008) and Abu-Odeh (1999) have pointed out, the Transjordanian position maintains an irresolvable contradiction. On one hand, they demand that Palestinians abandon all claims and attachments to Palestine in order to assimilate in Jordan and become Jordanian. On the other hand, they also claim that it is impossible for Palestinians to assimilate because they are not natural members of the nation.

<sup>146</sup> Prominent pluralists today include ‘Oreib Rentawi, journalist for *al-Dustūr* and head of Al-Quds Center for Political Studies, and Rami Khouri, previously a journalist for the *Jordan Times*, who now writes for the *Daily Star* from Beirut. Outside of newspapers, pluralist ranks include Mustafā Hamarneh, head of the Center for Strategic Studies, a prominent research center affiliated with the University of Jordan and Adnan Abu-Odeh, longtime public servant in the Jordanian government, most recently as advisor to King Abdullah (Nanes 2008b, 103).

<sup>147</sup> Although many pluralists support the creation of a Palestinian state and the right of return for refugees, they nevertheless see their position in Jordan as primary.

pluralists argue that Palestinians can be Jordanian. Moreover, insofar as Palestinians comply with the obligations of citizenship within the Jordanian state, they believe that the state must ensure their equal status as Jordanian citizens within the Kingdom.

For Palestinian refugees, the pluralists have played an important role in defending their legitimate rights as citizens against the exclusivism of Transjordanian discourse and the discriminatory practices of the state. Indeed, their voice in the public sphere has presented an articulate and compelling stance on the Palestinian question in Jordan. They have, for example, publicly questioned the legality of King Hussein's decision to denationalize Jordanian citizens from the West Bank following the administrative separation between the East and West Banks in 1988. In addition, they continue to insist upon the importance of the law for defining nationality in Jordan. This has presented an important challenge to Transjordanian nationalists whose support for Palestinian denationalization contradicts Jordanian nationality laws. Finally, the elite position of many pluralists has allowed them to influence key institutions and constituencies within the Jordanian government. For example, prior to his forced resignation from public service, Adnan Abu-Odeh, a Palestinian pluralist from Nablus, served as a key advisor to both King Hussein and King Abdullah II<sup>148</sup>. Throughout his tenure, he often clashed with nationalists within the regime and promoted the idea that Palestinians and Transjordanians could live together as equals. In addition, several key Palestinian officials I spoke with, including a former minister and senator, confirmed their efforts to protect the rights and interests of Palestinians within the Kingdom. As government officials, they claimed to have used the power of their posts to promote the pluralist agenda and challenge Transjordanian elements within the state.

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<sup>148</sup> See Nanes, 2008.

Despite the political import of the pluralist position in Jordan, it is nevertheless an elite discourse. It represents the voices of journalists, politicians, and mostly affluent Palestinians with established social, economic, and political ties in the Kingdom. Their economic and political position in Jordan has also afforded them a particular investment in the debate. To be sure, if the Transjordanian nationalists have their way, it is these Palestinians that stand to lose the most. In addition, their relatively successful integration into Jordanian society has placed them beyond the socio-economic experience of many Palestinians living in Jordan under radically different circumstances. Most Palestinian pluralists, for example, do not live in the refugee camps nor do they depend on the services of UNRWA. Although they may readily claim to be refugees (and very well may have been displaced), their status as such is not experienced within the institutional settings that govern Palestinian refugee life within the camps. For the approximately 400,000 Palestinians living in camps and the untold number living outside of the camps but still dependent on UNRWA services, integration seems an unlikely solution to their circumstances. Economically, politically, and socially marginalized, citizenship in Jordan has offered these refugees fewer opportunities than hoped and the idea of an eventual return to Palestine thus provides a promising alternative. Moreover, many Palestinians living within the poorer areas of Amman also feel a strong affinity to Palestine and claim that they do not necessarily want to be Jordanian. For these Palestinians, their citizenship status is important only insofar as it provides certain benefits including easier travel and employment opportunities.

In the remaining section of this chapter, I will examine how Palestinian refugees articulate their relationship to Jordan as Palestinians. My own research in the camps suggests that Palestinian refugees do not employ a pluralist framework when representing their position as Jordanian citizens or aspirations as Palestinians. On the contrary, my findings indicate that

Palestinian camp refugees view their status in Jordan in terms that places greater emphasis on their connection to Palestine and self-understanding<sup>149</sup> as an ethno-national community (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 17) . In this sense, many Palestinian refugees I met agreed with Transjordanian nationalists: Palestinians belonged to Palestine, not Jordan. According to them, Jordan was described as their temporary host to which they belonged as Arabs and Muslims, but not Palestinians. Palestinians were “guests” in Jordan among their Jordanian “hosts.” But as refugees living in camps, they strongly believed in their right of return and claimed an allegiance to the Palestinian “nation.” Thus in contrast to the pluralist position that claims a “hybrid” Palestinian-Jordanian identity, Palestinian refugees claimed an essentialized identity that underscored their ethno-national differences and connection to Palestine.

#### **Jordan is an Arab and Muslim Country:**

One of the key claims among pluralists is that Palestinians can also be Jordanians. According to this view, an individual’s status as a Palestinian is primarily defined in terms of his or her ethnic origins (Anthony D. Smith 1991). That is, being Palestinian is grounded in an individual’s identification with his or her genealogical connections to Palestine. Identification as a Jordanian, on the other hand, reflects an individual’s legal status as a citizen of Jordan. The fact that Palestinians were made Jordanian citizens in 1950 allows them to legitimately claim membership in the Jordanian national body.

Among Palestinian refugees in the camps, the question of Palestinians’ status in Jordan was understood in slightly different terms. It was enough that Jordan is an Arab and Muslim country for them to claim a legitimate place within the Kingdom. In this sense, Palestinians

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<sup>149</sup> Here I am drawing on Brubaker and Cooper’s idea of self-understanding as “a dispositional term that designates what might be called “situated subjectivity”: one’s sense of who one is, of one’s social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act.”

could avoid identifying as Jordanian and instead maintain their primary identification as Palestinians while emphasizing the significance of their secondary identifications as Arabs and Muslims. During an interview with Līna, for example, the question of her relationship to Jordan did not concern her legal status as a citizen. The fact that she was a Jordanian citizen did not necessitate the claim to being Jordanian. Instead, she maintained a primary identification as a Palestinian. “I am Palestinian first,” she said. “That is, my nationality is Palestinian. Then, I am an Arab and Muslim.” Regarding her status in Jordan, Līna claimed that she had as much right to be in Jordan as any other Arab country. “Any of the Arab countries is a home for the Palestinian. We are all Arabs and Muslims and we are therefore among our brothers in their countries.” Similarly, during my conversations with Rāshid, another Palestinian refugee from the camps, he expressed the position of Palestinians in Jordan in the following way:

Of course, Palestine is part of the Arabic and Islamic world. Our issue, thank God, is tied to the Arabic and Islamic world. But remember, the occupation and colonialism are what divided the Arabic and Islamic nations into Jordan, Syria, Iraq, etc. These were all one country before and even in the days of the Ottomans, it was one country called *bilād ash-shām* (the Levant). So we belong in Jordan as Arabs and Muslims, we are among our brothers. Praise God, *tajma’nā* (what brings us together) is the ‘*urūb* (Arabness) and Islam as an Arab Islamic country.

Like Līna, Rāshid also identified with Jordan and Jordanians as Arabs and Muslims. For him, these two identifications underscored an important commonality with Jordanians and, more importantly, sustained the idea that Palestinians “belonged” in Jordan.

Līna and Rāshid’s reliance on pan-Arab ideology allowed them to make two critical assertions common among Palestinians in the camps. First, their ability to identify as Arabs facilitated their claim against the Transjordanian argument that Palestinians do not belong in Jordan. Whereas the pluralists claim it is their ability to be *both* Palestinian and Jordanian that legitimizes their location in Jordan, Palestinians like Līna and Rāshid argue it is in virtue of their

ethnic commonality as Arabs that they belong in Jordan. According to this view, Palestinians' identification as Arabs is sufficient for establishing a connection to Jordan and Jordanians. Indeed, the idea of pan-Arab unity espoused by most Palestinian refugees affords them the ability to identify with Jordan as Arab Palestinians. This approach effectively shifts the burden onto Jordanians to deny the significance of Palestinians' identification as Arabs in favor of a more exclusionary form of local Arab nationalism. Second, the idea that Jordanians and Palestinians were united by their common 'urūb (Arabness) allowed Palestinian refugees like Līna to maintain their primary identification as Palestinian. In this case, Palestinians accepted the Transjordanian claim that their genealogical origins in Palestine distinguished them from Jordanians and precluded their ability to be truly Jordanian. The Palestinian refugees I met didn't want to be Jordanian. Instead, they wanted a legitimate place within Jordan until their predicament as refugees was resolved through a return to Palestine.

But Palestinians like Līna and Rāshid did not exclusively rely on the idea of ethnic commonality as Arabs; they also asserted a religious solidarity that underscored a fundamental bond between Palestinians and Jordanians and, more importantly, legitimized their presence in Jordan in religious terms. Like Līna and Rāshid, for example, Asad also believed that religion established an important bond between Arabs. For him, like many Palestinian refugees, the fact that many Arabs are also Muslims underscored their commonality and served to normalize the Palestinian presence in Jordan.

We Palestinians and Jordanians are all Arabs and let us say that a large portion of Arabs are, of course, Muslim. In '97, there were findings, the results of a study, and this is something that I am sure of; 97% of [all] Arabs were Muslims. What unites us as [Arabs] is therefore our religion and language. We all speak the Arabic language. In addition, our customs and our traditions are basically the same. [Our] history as well, all of it is one united through the history [of] colonialism and then independence. All of these things unite us.



According to Asad, religious commonality constituted an important element of Arab solidarity. Islam functioned as a categorical mode of identification through which Palestinians could identify with Jordanians. In addition to history, language, and customs, the majority of Arabs also shared a common religion: Islam. As Muslims, Palestinians and Jordanians thus possessed an important point of identification and essential bond. During a discussion with Abu ‘Imrān, another Palestinian refugee from the camps, the idea that religion provided the basis of an important bond of solidarity between Palestinians and Jordanians was expressed in the following way:

We are proud of Jordan as an Arabic and Islamic country. We are proud of Syria and Iraq in the same way. We are proud when we are in the shade of our Arabic and Islamic nations. I consider myself part of the Arabic and Islamic world. I am a Muslim, an Arab, and a Palestinian. There is no contradiction between the three.

For Abu ‘Imrān, Islam represented one of three points of identification in Jordan: Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian. Each functioned to establish general and particular bonds within Jordan. As a Muslim and Arab, he could identify with Jordanians as members of the “Arabic and Islamic nations.” But as a Palestinian, he could also identify with his specific ethno-national community. Being a Muslim did not negate the significance of his identification as a Palestinian in Jordan. It was only one layer of three seemingly non-contradictory affiliations. Islam, in this sense, allowed him to cut across national distinctions and assert a basic commonality with Jordanians while simultaneously allowing him to maintain the importance of those distinctions in order to remain Palestinian.

The idea that Islam established a bond between Palestinians and Jordanians was a common sentiment in the camps that also served to externalize conflicts and temper any tensions between the two putative groups. As Muslims, Palestinians claimed to share an essential bond

with Jordanians that dispelled the idea that there was any conflict between them. Amīn, for instance, offered the following comments regarding the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship: “*mā fī mushkila* (there is no problem) in Jordan between Palestinians and Jordanians and *mā fī farq* (there is no difference) between the Jordanian and the Palestinian. The Islamic identity is *Al-Asās* (the foundation) [of both].” For Amīn, Islam provided a foundational identification for both Palestinians and Jordanians. They were different communities united by a common faith and ethnicity as Arabs. If there was any problem between Palestinians and Jordanians, he added, it was one resulting from the foreign influence of colonialism. As Amīn explained, “The problems between a Jordanian and a Palestinian or an Iraqi and a Syrian are a result of colonialism.”

Here Amīn’s comments captured two important ideas expressed by many Palestinians when describing the “problems” with Jordanians. First, Palestinians regularly used Islam to convey the idea that religion precluded conflict. Indeed, Palestinians often claimed that their status as Muslims compelled them not only to avoid conflict with Jordanians but also to defend Jordan in the face of any foreign adversary. In this sense, Palestinians could claim to be loyal to Jordan as Muslims committed to its preservation and defense according to the dictates of Islam, not nationalism. Islam thus served as an important source of loyalty that superseded the idea of secular loyalty to the nation-state. Second, Palestinians described the source of any divisions or problems with Jordanians not as a result of conflicting nationalisms but as an extension of colonial influences and the partition of a once integrated Arab homeland: *bilād ash-shām*. Consider, for example, the following three examples. During a discussion with Rāmī concerning the relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians, he provided the following account:

The problems between Jordanians, Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians, for example, are all from colonialism. Our identities are rooted in religion because religion

encompasses everything. Under all of these identities is our religion. If something happened to Jordan, God forbid, I would defend it. Let's say that the Jews invaded Jordan or some other people attacked Jordan, then I would defend it. I am obliged to defend it. I must care for Jordan because it is an Arabic and Muslim country. I love all the Arabic countries and all of the Arabs. I love Iraqis, for example. This is in my veins because of Islam. Islam teaches me that his well being is important to me.

For Rāmī, national distinctions represented a colonial geography and external source of conflict.

Islam, on the other hand, was the foundation of solidarity. It underscored an important commonality and set forth religious obligations to defend any Arab territory from foreign threats.

Loyalty, according to Rāmī, was decidedly religious. Similarly, Laith offered the following ideas about the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship and the colonial roots of conflict:

Jordan is an Arab country and it was divided by colonialism. That is not our idea. There was nothing called "Jordan" in the past; it was all one country: *bilād ash-shām*. We are in Jordan among our brothers as Muslims and Arabs.

In another discussion within the camps, Warda described her relationship with Jordan and Jordanians in the following way:

Jordan and Palestine are one; that is, they were originally one country. Regardless of the divisions imposed by colonialism, they were one. I am living in Jordan and I am living in Palestine. I have to protect the people. This is what our religion teaches us. Originally, the two banks were united so I don't see a difference between Jordanians and Palestinians. So I am attached to Jordan as an Arab and Muslim.

The excerpts above all suggest the significance of religion for Palestinian articulations of commonality and identification with Jordanians. As Muslims, Palestinians could claim an essential "sameness" with Jordanians that tempered the importance of national distinctions by promoting a religious conception of loyalty. Loyalty to the Jordanian people and state thus reflected the bonds of a religious relationship. It was not through a shared nationality that Palestinians could maintain a legitimate place in and connection to Jordan; rather, it was through their common ethno-religious identification as Arabs and Muslims. Citizenship, in this sense,

could be disconnected from nationality and reconfigured as a religious obligation that assured Palestinians' commitment to Jordan as non-Jordanians. In addition, pan-Arab and religious identifications were used to externalize the source of internal conflicts between Palestinians and Jordanians. Echoing modern Muslim intellectuals including Sayyid Qutb<sup>150</sup> and the discourse of organizations including the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas<sup>151</sup>, Palestinians located the conflict between Arabs and Muslims within the history of colonial partition. According to this logic, solidarity between Arabs existed throughout the region in an (imagined) united Arab homeland, bilād ash-shām, until colonial authorities established the borders of the modern Middle East<sup>152</sup>. Palestinian and Jordanian conflicts, in this sense, were born not of local Arab struggles over nationalist claims and the commitment to distinct Arab states but of the disintegration of Arab and Muslim unity at the hands of the colonial powers.

On the surface, pan-Arab and religious discourse thus provided Palestinians with powerful claims against the exclusivism of Transjordanian nationalists. It did this in two ways. First, it challenged the link between nationality and citizenship by defining the relationship between Palestinians and the state in terms of pan-Arab unity and according to the religious principle of unity in faith. Palestinians could thus claim a legitimate place within Jordan as Arab and Muslim citizens while maintaining an ethno-national attachment to Palestine as Palestinians. Second, pan-Arab and religious discourse suggested that any conflict between Jordanians and

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<sup>150</sup> See *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* by Sylvia Kedourie and Sylvia Haim (1974).

<sup>151</sup> See *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* by Khaled Hroub (2000) and *The Society of Muslim Brothers* by Richard Mitchell (1993).

<sup>152</sup> As Rashid Khalidi has noted, the basic premise of pan-Arabism is that the Arabs were a single people with a single language, history, and culture, divided not by centuries of separate development of widely separated countries, but by the recent machinations of imperialism (Khalidi 1998, 181).

Palestinians—indeed, between all Arabs—was a consequence of colonial partition. Because the boundaries between Arabs reflect the external imposition of a colonial architecture, any internal conflicts could be explained away, or at least tempered. Such arguments placed Transjordanians within the awkward position of claiming Jordanian nationalism at the expense of Arab unity.

### **Guests and Hosts:**

The idea that Palestinians are “guests” in Jordan and that the Jordanian government and people are their “hosts” has a discernible history grounded in events beginning in 1974. At the Rabat Summit of 1974, the Arab League passed a historic resolution recognizing the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” Much to the dismay of King Hussein, the resolution signaled a critical shift in Palestinian national politics and had important implications for his legitimacy as a representative of Palestinians in Jordan. Prior to the resolution, the King argued that Palestinians in Jordan were fully integrated into the state (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 209). He therefore believed that any attempts to recognize the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” would compromise his own legitimate position as a representative of Palestinian citizens within his Kingdom. Despite his protests, however, the resolution passed and the PLO became the “sole” representative of the Palestinian people.

Upon returning from the Summit, the repercussions of the resolution were already visible on the ground. For Transjordanian nationalists, the PLO’s new status was a major victory. In their view, the resolution effectively resolved the question of representation by identifying Palestinians in Jordan with the PLO, not the Jordanian state. Palestinians were thus non-Jordanians and could no longer legitimately claim the right to participate in the Jordanian state as nationals. Moreover, Transjordanians argued that the legitimization of the PLO also underscored

the basic division between the East and West Banks. According to the resolution, the Palestinians were afforded the right to establish an “independent national authority under the command of the PLO...in any Palestinian territory that is liberated.” Consequently, the Resolution effectively made the PLO, rather than Jordan, responsible for recovering the West Bank from Israel (Salibi 1998b, 256). Given that the West Bank represented what was formerly an area of central Palestine populated by Palestinians and, more importantly, was territory identified as essential for the liberation of the Palestinian homeland, Transjordanians believed that it was necessarily not Jordanian. For the Transjordanians, the King thus had no claim to the West Bank or its population; the territory belonged to the Palestinians.

Transjordanians weren't the only ones to receive the resolution positively. In Jordan, many Palestinians celebrated the PLO's new status by distributing candies on the street (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 212). For Palestinian refugees, in particular, the resolution symbolized an important shift in the national struggle. Having been expelled from Jordan following the 1970 War, many Palestinians lost hope in the PLO's ability to liberate their homeland and, more importantly, secure their return. Following the resolution, however, Palestinian morale and confidence in the PLO received a serious jolt. In addition to the 1974 resolution, PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, was invited to address the United Nations General Assembly where he delivered his historic speech on behalf of the Palestinian struggle. The General Assembly adopted the Rabat Resolution and the PLO was subsequently given observer status at the United Nations. All these developments gave hope to the Palestinians that the establishment of a Palestinian State was not only possible, but imminent (Abu-Odeh 1999b, 212).

The Transjordanian and Palestinian response to the resolution was less than hopeful for King Hussein. Indeed, their response revealed the King's failure to soften the resolution's

impact in his own country and avoid future conflicts. Following the Summit in 1974, for example, King Hussein addressed the Jordanian public reassuring Palestinians that Jordan was their home if they wanted it. “Jordan,” he explained, “will not cease to be the homeland of every Arab Palestinian who chooses to be one of its citizens, with all the rights and obligations of citizenship without prejudicing his or her natural rights in Palestine (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 299).” Appealing to Arab nationalist ideology, the speech underscored the idea that Jordan was an essentially Arab territory. Palestinians thus had a legitimate place within the country and their rights were secured through citizenship despite their “natural rights” in Palestine. During the speech, the King also invoked religion to soothe any potential tensions. Drawing on terms derived from the historical *hijra* (migration) of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E., Hussein addressed the Palestinians as *muhājirīn* (emigrants/migrants) and the Transjordanians as *ansār* (supporters). By casting the relationship between the two in terms reflective of the early Muslim community, the King aimed to promote a peaceful and supportive environment grounded in an idea of religious kinship. Any attempts to divide the two would thus represent a gross violation of the sacred past marked by tolerance and brotherhood and represent an affront to Islam.

Despite the King’s efforts, neither Arab nationalism nor Muslim history was sufficient for avoiding Jordanian/Palestinian polarization. On the contrary, despite his calls for unity, the very terms of his speech were interpreted in ways that exacerbated pre-existing tensions and supported the idea that Palestinians were “guests” in Jordan and that the Jordanians were their “hosts.” According to Abu-Odeh, for example, the King’s speech included three themes that inadvertently nurtured the divisiveness he hoped to avoid (Abu-Odeh 1999a, 212). First the speech reinforced the idea that Palestinians and Transjordanians were two distinct peoples. Thus

despite the fact that many Palestinian elites did not embrace the PLO's new status and were loyal to the King and Jordanian state, the speech nevertheless suppressed points of similarity and validated a critical idea of difference within the Palestinian/Transjordanian debate over identity and loyalty. Coming from the King, it gave official meaning to the claim that Palestinians were not Jordanians and that Jordan was not their home. Furthermore, the distinction legitimized Transjordanian efforts to purge the state of its Palestinian presence since it did not rightfully belong to them. The second effect of the speech was to emphasize the temporary nature of the Palestinian presence in Jordan. Just as the muhājirīn "returned" to Mecca during the time of the Prophet, so too would the Palestinians "return" to their home in Palestine. Finally, the idea that Palestinians were guests in Jordan implied that the Jordanian State and people were doing Palestinians a favor. All that Jordan had provided the Palestinians was thus seen as a display of hospitality towards an essentially foreign visitor.

Today, over three decades after the passing of the Rabat Resolution, the terms "guest" and "host" continue to resonate among Palestinians and Jordanians. Among refugees, these terms and the discourses they rely on offer Palestinians a way of expressing their transient presence in the Kingdom. Invoking the late King Hussein's pan-Arab and Islamic discourse, Palestinians use these terms in ways that reflect their efforts to assert both a universalist and particularist claim to belong both in Jordan and Palestine. By identifying as guests, or muhājirīn, Palestinians are effectively claiming a legitimate place within Jordan as a religious community of migrants. Muhājirīn, in this sense, functions as a religious category of identification that links them to Jordan as a special community of believers deserving of a special reception by their fellow Muslims. At the same time, however, the category functions to underscore Palestinians'



essential belonging to Palestine and the necessity of return. Consider, for example, the following response by Abu ‘Imrān:

Look, the Arabic and Islamic brotherhood lightens our burden. But whatever happens, whatever happens to us, it is like our Prophet, peace be upon him, when he left Mecca and fled to Medina. He used to remember Mecca and he used to miss Mecca. He was the muhājir and they [the people of Medina] were the ansār. So we are the same, we [the Palestinians] are now the muhājirīn and they [the Jordanians] are the ansār until we return to our country.

This idea was common among Palestinian refugees who believed that Jordan and its people were fulfilling a religious duty by supporting them. As a displaced Muslim community comparable to the original migrants of early Muslim history, the Meccans, Palestinians suggested that Jordan owed them a particular kind of reception. Moreover, insofar as Jordan treated the Palestinians as guests, that is, offered them the same treatment given to the Meccans by the people of Medina, it was also meeting an important standard of religious conduct. Thus many Palestinians indicated that their status as citizens of Jordan was less an act of generosity than a fulfillment of what religion would require of any group that bears the status of ansār. It represented an extension of the bonds shared between Palestinians and Jordanians as Muslims living out the significant status of muhājirīn and ansār.

But Palestinians were also careful to stress the point that the Meccans returned to Mecca. It was, in other words, necessary that Palestinians, like their Meccan predecessors, return to their original homes in Palestine. As Warda explained:

I don’t attach myself to a city that is not of my origins. I am originally Palestinian. Jordan has been a good host to the Palestinians: it has provided us with things that no other country has offered us (*qaddamāt*). Nevertheless, I feel that I am Palestinian and not Jordanian because the most important thing is our origins. In Palestine, everyone will welcome me. No one will ask me “why are you here,” because I will no longer be a guest. For example, like the muhājirīn, when we arrived here, the people asked us “why are you here?” But in Palestine, no one can ask us this question or tell us to get out. We will be at home, no longer guests.

For Warda, the only way to end their status as muhājirīn required a termination of their stay in Jordan. Like the Meccans, she believed, Palestinians must also return home to their origins. In this way, the use of the term “muhājirīn” allowed Palestinians to disidentify with Jordan as their home and, instead, assert a particular link to Palestine as their home. If in Jordan Palestinians were among their brothers and sisters in faith, in Palestine Palestinians would be among their brothers and sisters of origin.

The idea that Palestinians were “guests” in Jordan also functioned in a less sacred sense. Many Palestinians, for example, represented their relationship to Jordanians in terms of a cultural frame invoking the significance of the Arab principle of *karam*<sup>153</sup> (hospitality) to sustain their legitimacy in Jordan. As Haifa, a Palestinian refugee raised in Al-Wihdāt camp explained, “it is customary for Arabs to treat their guests with honor. Jordan has been our host since the occupation. For this we are grateful, as it is an Arab custom to treat one’s guest with honor.” This, Haifa said, is not just an act of generosity; it is the duty of the Arabs especially towards other Arabs.

It’s like if I go to my sister’s house, I am comfortable there but it’s still not my house. And I must say that I love to stay in her house because I love my sister very much, to a degree that is indescribable. But I love my house more. I am comfortable within my house. I have all of my rights within my house and all of the things that are pleasant. I can relax more at home than at my sister’s house where I am a guest. You see, everyone is more comfortable in their own home. Why? Because they are in their own home and can be a host, not a guest.

The above excerpt highlights an important cultural dimension of the principle of hospitality invoked by Palestinians when describing their status as “guests” in Jordan. Writing about hospitality among the Jordanian Bedouin of Balga, Andrew Shryock identified the potential hazards inherent within the experience of playing host and guests. According to Shryock, hosts

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<sup>153</sup> *Karam* may also mean kindness, generosity, and noble.

must “fear” their guests because hospitality creates a momentary overlap of the inner and outer dimensions of a “house” (a *bayt* or *dār*) (Shryock 2004, 36). Brought into the interior space of the home, guests become intimate members of the house albeit provisionally. They are, as Shryock describes, carefully invited into an ambivalent space defined by “privileged inclusion” and “precise containment.”

Among Balgawis, guests are called "prisoners of the host" (*usira al-mu'azzib*). They are boxed in by the etiquette of the visit. They are seated in special areas of the house—on mattresses or overstuffed couches reserved for guests—and things are brought to them. Guests do not move around the house, nor are they expected to serve themselves. They are a privileged audience (Shryock 2004, 37).

In the excerpt above, Haifa translates the guest/host relationship experienced at the micro level of the home to the macro level of the country. According to this logic, Palestinians are living out the status of guests received by their hosts, the Jordanians, in their home, Jordan. As a guest, she and the Palestinians are brought into the “interior” space of the home and are, in this sense, “included” as members within Jordan. Haifa is careful to note, however, the “imprisonment” described by Shryock above; she understands that her stay is provisional and that limits to her “membership” are firmly in place. She is not equal in her status to her hosts—Jordanians—and as such identifies Palestine as her home where “all of her rights” can be realized and where she can “relax.” Comfort, in this regard, functions to illustrate the limitations placed upon the Palestinians while in Jordan. But as Shryock notes, guests pose another potential threat to their hosts: shame. Guests can tarnish the names of hosts who offend them (Shryock 2004, 36). In her representation of the guest/host relationship, Haifa and the Palestinians can thus “damage” their hosts by criticizing the quality of their hospitality. Instead, however, Haifa honors the Jordanians describing them in terms of family (“my sister’s house”) and by recognizing their generosity towards the Palestinians (“I am comfortable there”) while living among them.

Many Palestinians offered a similar stance vis-à-vis their hosts. Recognizing the conditions of Palestinian refugees in countries like Lebanon and Syria, where Palestinians are denied citizenship, they often expressed a degree of gratitude towards the Jordanian government even if they faced practical limits to the realization of full equality with Jordanians. To some extent, however, it should be noted that a particular irony exists within the use of the guest/host relationship to represent the Palestinian position in Jordan. If Palestinians are guests, as they often claimed, then very little can be said to assert a right to full equality with Jordanians while in Jordan. Guests, according to the cultural logic of hospitality, are precluded from full integration into the host's home. Thus although claiming "guesthood" in Jordan allows Palestinians to maintain a transitory status that privileges their "origin" in Palestine (home), it also suggests that Palestinians cannot really complain about inequalities enforced by nationalists. As guests, Palestinians *must* be contained as they are not truly members of the household.

Either as the Muslim muhājirīn or as Arab guests among their family, Palestinians' reliance on the guest/host relationship reflected the unresolved question of the Palestinian presence in Jordan. It suggested that Palestinian refugees have yet to reconcile their prolonged displacement as Palestinians with their extended residence in Jordan as Jordanian citizens. On one hand, claiming "guesthood" served to further their own sense of displacement as it privileged their "connection" to Palestine and reinforced the idea that they did not belong in Jordan. Moreover, claiming guesthood precluded Palestinians' status as "Jordanians" and reinscribed the assumed dichotomy between both "groups." Palestinian guests, in other words, couldn't be Jordanian among Jordanian hosts. The two identifications thus functioned as mutually exclusive categories whereby claiming one negated the other. For how long can Palestinians be "guests" within the only country many refugees really know? To some extent,

this question cannot be fully answered until the Transjordanians reconcile their own desire for an exclusively “Jordanian” nation-state with the fact that half (if not more) of their population does not necessarily identify as such. Their own insistence on the idea of “Jordan for the Jordanians” has only facilitated particular forms of difference whereby Palestinians cannot embrace their Jordanian status nor see themselves as being “at home” in Jordan. In the next section, I plunge deeper into the dichotomous relationship between Jordanian and Palestinian categories within the context of citizenship among Palestinians. For reasons that will soon become clear, the meaning of “Jordanian” and “Palestinian” for refugees prohibits the link between citizenship and ethno-national identification. Thus for Palestinian refugees, Jordanian citizenship did not transform them into Jordanians.

### **Citizenship without Nationality:**

Writing about nationalism and ethnicity among Hungarians in Transylvania, Brubaker et al. discussed the distinct ways in which the terms “Hungarian” and “Romanian” function as markers of ethno-national identification<sup>154</sup>. In Transylvania, to identify oneself as a Hungarian is to identify oneself in terms of ethnocultural nationality and, in implicitly comparative terms, as Hungarian-and-not-Romanian (Brubaker et al. 2008, 213). In contrast, when an individual identifies as a Romanian, she is identifying herself in terms of some mixture of ethnocultural nationality, citizenship, and, in some cases, territory. The use of the term “Romanian” can thus mean “Romanian citizen” or “ethnic Romanian,” depending on the context in which the term is used. “Hungarian,” on the other hand, primarily functions as a marker of difference through

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<sup>154</sup> Brubaker et al. is careful to note that by using the descriptive categories “Hungarian” and “Romanian,” they are not suggesting the existence of two distinct groups. Rather, they are only using the terms as categorical indications of how, given a particular context, an individual would identify themselves by ethnic nationality. For a complete discussion of the use of categories in everyday ethnicity, see *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (2006), especially chapter 7.

which one distinguishes oneself from the taken-for-granted category “Romanian.” According to Brubaker, the reason for the difference is that, in Transylvania, the category “Hungarian” functions as a marked term while the category “Romanian” operates as an unmarked term.

Unmarked categories are the normal, default, taken-for-granted categories, while marked categories are special, different, and “other.” Thus theorists of gender, race, and sexuality have observed that “woman” is a marked category, “man” unmarked; that “black” and to a lesser extent other nonwhite racial categories are marked in America, while “white” is unmarked, and that “homosexual” is marked, “heterosexual” unmarked (Brubaker et al. 2008, 212).

Although Palestinians are believed to constitute at least half of the population of Jordan, and are therefore in a numerically “better” position vis-à-vis the position of Hungarians in Romania described above, one can nevertheless see a similarity between the Jordanian and Transylvanian contexts. In Jordan, the term “Jordanian” can designate a range of identifications including an individual’s status as a Jordanian citizen (a person with Jordanian citizenship), an individual’s ethno-national identification (an ethnic Jordanian), or an individual’s identification with the country of Jordan as a fact of birth (a person born and raised in Jordan regardless of their citizenship status). Thus much like “Romanian” in Romania, “Jordanian” in Jordan is the unmarked term. “Palestinian,” however, often functions as the marked term. That is, identifying oneself as a “Palestinian” tends to signify a specifically ethno-national category that distinguishes oneself from “Jordanian” or, at the very least, qualifies it. To illustrate how these terms function within public life in Amman, consider the routine events of riding a cab or bus. Although an otherwise mundane encounter between a chauffeur and passenger in a cab or two passengers on a long bus ride, the often ritualized discussions that take place provide an interesting opportunity for observing the function of ethno-national identification.

Before purchasing a vehicle, I spent the first nine months of my fieldwork riding in cabs and buses. More often than not, cab drivers or inquisitive bus passengers would start a

discussion with a very typical question about my “origins.” “*Min wain inta* (Where are you from),” they’d ask. By this they were effectively asking two questions: first, they were asking about my country of residence and, second, they were interested in my ethno-national origins. If I had enough energy to carry on the conversation, I’d usually answer the question (and any that immediately followed) and then present my interlocutor with the same question, “*min wain inta*.” If the individual responded with the category “*Urdunī*” (Jordanian), several possibilities for the meaning of that term existed. By *Urdunī*, the individual could mean that he<sup>155</sup> was simply born in Jordan. In this sense, the identification was primarily territorial and signified his location of birth regardless of his ethno-national identification. This could, for example, refer to an individual who, in some other context, might also identify with his Circassian “roots” and thus say “*Urdunī wa Sharkasī*” (Jordanian and Circassian). Another possibility was that *Urdunī* referred to an individual’s citizenship status. In this case, the category “Jordanian” didn’t necessarily preclude the possibility that an individual might also identify as a “Palestinian” in ethno-national terms. It only meant that his *jinsīyya* (citizenship) was Jordanian. A third possibility was that the individual was identifying as a Jordanian in specifically ethno-national terms. This usually meant that an individual was born in Jordan, was a citizen of Jordan, and identified both ethnically and nationally as a Jordanian (Transjordanian). It also meant that the individual was distinguishing himself as a non-Palestinian. The variety of responses notwithstanding, one could safely assume that the use of the category “Jordanian” did not always mean that an individual was not “Palestinian.” Even in the latter case, in which an individual’s response meant that he was actually identifying as Jordanian-not-Palestinian, there was an

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<sup>155</sup> Throughout my two years of fieldwork in Jordan, I never saw a single female cab driver.

additional effort needed by the respondent to make this distinction clear. Usually, this entailed a doubling of the response: Urdunī Urdunī.

The function of “Jordanian” as an unmarked term encompassing such a broad range of identifications meant that to identify oneself as a Palestinian offered much fewer possibilities. For starters, the absence of a Palestinian state made any attempt to refer to Palestinian citizenship futile; without a state a Palestinian could not be a Palestinian citizen. Thus one could not use the category “Palestinian” to refer to *jinsīyya* or citizenship status. In addition, the fact that most people who identified as Palestinians were born in Jordan also precluded the possibility that the category “Palestinian” could refer to their birthplace. Consequently, the use of the category “Palestinian” by refugees in Jordan typically referred to an individual’s ethno-national identification. By using the category “Palestinian,” in other words, an individual was offering an ethno-national identification that was distinct from the category “Jordanian.” But the limited meaning of the category “Palestinian” also meant that, for Palestinian refugees, the term “Jordanian” was also limited. That is, by identifying oneself as a Palestinian, one was simultaneously limiting the meaning of the term “Jordanian.” For many Palestinian refugees, then, the category “Jordanian” could only mean one of two things. First, “Jordanian” could mean an individual’s status as a Jordanian citizen: his or her *jinsīyya*. In this case, a Palestinian could identify as a “Jordanian” in virtue of his or her legal status as a Jordanian citizen. Second, the category “Jordanian” could mean an ethno-national identification. For most Palestinians, this category was off limits insofar as the categories “Palestinian” and “Jordanian” were mutually exclusive. An individual was either Palestinian or Jordanian, but not both. The basic idea here was that, although Palestinians could belong *to* Jordan as citizens, they did not believe that this was enough to make them *into* Jordanians. To illustrate, consider the following three examples



taken from discussions with Palestinians regarding their status as Jordanian citizens and ethno-national identifications.

Asad: I am a citizen of Jordan but I feel for Palestine like any other Palestinian. Palestine is inside of me and there is no difference between me and any other Palestinian. On the contrary, the difference is that, as a Jordanian citizen, I might excel [other Palestinians] because my movement is easier. For example, it is easier for me to travel to Mecca for hajj. I also might be better off financially than the Palestinians on the inside. But I will use my benefits to help them financially and with my prayers.

Faisal: Officially and formally, my citizenship makes me a Jordanian. I am considered a Jordanian because of it. But deep down inside of my heart, I feel that I am Palestinian and I will never forget that. If I have a chance to return, I will leave it all behind in Jordan and return to Palestine.

Abu 'Imrān: When Palestine returns, I will rip my Jordanian passport up into tiny pieces. Yes, when Palestine returns, I will rip it up and take my passport. I miss my country. When I say that I'll rip up my passport, I don't mean that I hate Jordan. But I love Palestine and I am attached to Palestine and my Palestinianness.

The three excerpts above all illustrate an important distinction between the meaning of “Jordanian” as a category for citizenship and ethno-national identification. All three of the individuals above understood the term “Jordanian” as a meaningful category of identification that described their status as citizens of Jordan. Thus Faisal acknowledged his “official” status as a “Jordanian” by virtue of his *jinsīyya*. Similarly, Asad used the category “Jordanian” to refer to his citizenship. But the three individuals above also drew an explicit line between their status as Jordanian citizens and their ethno-national identification. Although their citizenship allowed them to identify as “Jordanians,” that identification was limited by their ethno-national identification as “Palestinians.” By identifying as Palestinian, in other words, Palestinians precluded the chance that their status as Jordanians could slip into an ethno-national category. Although “Jordanian” could be an ethno-national category, their identification as “Palestinians” prevented that meaning from taking hold. As Faisal explained, his feelings *within* were that of a

Palestinian; “Palestinian” was an organic rather than official category of identification; it defined some dimension of his being. To illustrate the significance of this identification, he used the idea of return to show that he belonged to Palestine in a way that he didn’t to Jordan. For Faisal, the strong desire to return to Palestine authenticated his connection to Palestine and underscored his disidentification with Jordan. In a similar vein, Abu ‘Imrān said he would rip his passport and, consequently, his status as a Jordanian, into pieces if he was able to return to Palestine. Identifying as a Palestinian meant that he had a special relationship to Palestine that he did not have with Jordan. His attachments to Palestine reflected his identification as a Palestinian and thus limited any connections he might have with Jordan.

While the excerpts above suggest the limits Palestinians placed upon the categorical meaning of “Jordanian,” they also reveal the practical importance of that category as an official status. As Asad described above, his status as a Jordanian allowed him to “excel” as a Palestinian since it afforded him particular privileges that were unavailable to Palestinians on the inside (West Bank and Gaza). This idea was common among many Palestinian refugees, in particular, whose Jordanian citizenship facilitated their ability to work and travel as “Jordanians.” According to Jordanian labor laws, all foreign Arab residents are prohibited from working within the public sphere. They cannot, for example, access any government jobs nor can they work within the military. Moreover, a 1996 law stipulated that any non-citizens who wanted to work in the private sector were required to obtain permits from the Ministry of Labor and their employers were required to pay the cost of the permit. Despite their status as refugees, Palestinians’ status as citizens affords them the right to work as Jordanians and avoids the legal restrictions placed upon other foreign residents. As Hassan expressed during our discussions:

I am a citizen of Jordan but it doesn’t affect my identity as a Palestinian at all. It does, however, make things easier for matters in Jordan and in life in general. For

example, it makes things easier when dealing with the government. It also makes travel easier because I have a passport and travel like a Jordanian. In terms of work, I can find a job in some government circles because of my national number<sup>156</sup>.

Similarly, Mustafā described his status as a Jordanian citizen in terms of a practical advantage important for satisfying his religious obligations. “My citizenship is important only because it lets me travel easier,” he said. “I can make hajj or ‘umra. I can also visit Syria. *This is what being a Jordanian means to me*<sup>157</sup>.” For Mustafā, as for many Palestinian refugees, the category “Jordanian” thus served as a practical one tied to specific practices that facilitated their opportunities *as Palestinians*. That is, their ascribed status as Jordanians functioned to distinguish them as Palestinians who, unlike other Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, or in other Arab countries, could work and travel with less difficulty. In addition, by emphasizing the practical nature of their “Jordanian” status, they were also disidentifying with the term’s potential ethno-national meaning. Palestinians like Mustafā and Asad thus restricted the meaning of Jordanian to a functional status while retaining their ethno-national identification as a Palestinian. For a Palestinian, being “Jordanian” could only mean having a particular status that allows for benefits like simpler travel and work opportunities.

The function of “Palestinian” as a marked term thus offered an important insight into the way Palestinians understood their location in Jordan. For Palestinian refugees, their “Jordanian” status as citizens did not reflect the ideological bond between a nation and a state. They were not “Jordanian” in either ethnic or national terms. Rather, “Jordanian” represented a condition of existence that afforded them particular civic privileges. It did not, in other words, mark one as

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<sup>156</sup> In Jordan, the *raqam watanī* (national number) is required by the government for employment or any other national matters.

<sup>157</sup> Emphasis mine.

an ethno-national Jordanian. That identification was precluded by an individual's identification as a "Palestinian."

### **Conclusion:**

Central to this dissertation is the question of Palestinian identification in Jordan. In the preceding and current chapter, I have therefore outlined a key element of the political field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) in which Palestinian identification took place in 2006-2007 or, as Brubaker would claim, how Palestinian nationhood "happened" (Brubaker 1996). I focused, first, on the development of Transjordanian nationalism and the positions taken within this nationalizing discourse vis-à-vis the Palestinians. According to many Transjordanian nationalists, Palestinians constitute an external population within the Jordanian nation-state. They do not belong to Jordan nor do they deserve access to the state as it is the exclusive province of the "true" Jordanians. Second, I examined the de-Palestinianization of the state as a policy constitutive both of the "Jordanianization" of Jordan and the "Palestinianization" of the Palestinians. By privileging Transjordanians within the state apparatus, the Hashemite-ruled government of Jordan also facilitated a process of de-Palestinianization. This process, in turn, had two important effects upon Palestinian refugees. First, it hardened the presumed boundaries between "Palestinians" and "Jordanians" by discriminating against Palestinians within particular areas of the state. Second, the state reinforced the sense among Palestinians that they were not, indeed could not, be Jordanian. De-Palestinianization, in this sense, served to promote a dual process wherein the distinction between Jordanian and Palestinian identification could be practically grounded in terms of access to the state.

In these chapters, I also outlined the ethno-national stance taken by Palestinians in Jordan vis-à-vis Jordanians and the state. I argued that the nationalizing discourse of Transjordanian

nationalists and the discriminatory practices of the state were an essential feature of Palestinian ethno-national identification. Faced with Jordanian exclusivism, Palestinians engaged in a complex form of identification in which pan-Arab and religious discourse were meant to establish their legitimacy in Jordan as a community deserving of citizenship and equality. As Arabs and Muslims, Palestinians claimed to belong to Jordan in cultural and religious terms. Such a discourse allowed Palestinians to assert the particularities of their ethno-national identification without necessarily compromising their necessary links to Jordan. Unlike the articulations of Palestinian pluralists, however, the Palestinian refugees I discussed in this chapter did not want to become Jordanians. Instead, they wanted to maintain a primary identification as Palestinians inextricably linked to their place of origin, Palestine. Palestinians thus disidentified with their Jordanian status as citizens in order to assert a particular ethno-identification as Palestinians. They were “guests” whose status in Jordan was that of a community among its hosts.

The idea that pan-Arabism and Islam could “solve” the question of Palestinians in Jordan was not without its complications. By engaging in the universalizing discourses of pan-Arabism and Islam, Palestinians were reinforcing the idea that their presence and contributions in Jordan were insufficient for legitimizing their status in Jordan *as Palestinians*. Instead, they emphasized their identification as Arabs and Muslims in ways that ostensibly resolved the questions of (1) who they were in Jordan (ethnic Arab Muslim Palestinians), (2) what they were in Jordan (guests), and (3) where they truly belonged (in Palestine). According to this logic, Palestinian belonging in Jordan could be legitimized in terms of “identity” alone. In this sense, Palestinians accepted a key claim among Transjordanian nationalists, namely that “Jordan is for Jordanians” and Palestinians, as such, belong in Palestine. This poses several risks for Palestinians that are at

the heart of the “problem” Palestinians hoped to resolve. In Jordan, all non-Palestinian Arabs are treated as “foreign residents” and legally denied formal equality with Jordanian citizens. By articulating their connections to Jordan in purely cultural (Arab) and religious (Islam) terms, Palestinians were thus affirming that their status is, in some ways, no different from any other Arab Muslim residents in Jordan. Consequently, the Transjordanians have a strong bit of support in Palestinian refugee discourse for their hopes to denationalize Palestinians since, according to Jordanian laws, neither Arabness nor Islam are sufficient for establishing equality.

In the next two chapters, I shift the analysis away from Jordanian nationalism and the state to consider an important feature of Palestinian identification: the homeland. First, I consider the meaning of the homeland for refugees within an origins discourse, or as a referent-origin. Within this discourse, the homeland emerges as a timeless, unchanging territory from which Palestinians derive their essential identity, which, like their homeland, is also unchanging. Thus for both the older and younger generations of refugees, the homeland “persists” despite the vicissitudes of geopolitical realities. In addition, I examine how the homeland functions as a symbolic means for being national without nationalism. Through the symbolic representation of the homeland, I show how Palestinians can articulate national identifications in ways that defy the Jordanian prohibition on being nationalist.

In the final chapter, I proceed to examine how Palestinians refugees engage with the homeland nationalism of Hamas. Through the example of the “homeland,” I show how the meaning of Palestine reflects key attention to the trans-border politics of the Palestinian national arena in the West Bank and Gaza. Instead of passive spectators of homeland politics, I argue that Palestinian refugees engage in homeland debates and position themselves within those debates in ways that become visible through a central point of identification: the homeland.

Nationalizing the homeland in religious terms thus reflects Palestinian refugees' engagement with the nationalist politics of home but also offers them an empowering discourse to promote from an essentially marginalized position both in Jordan and in the Palestinian political arena.

## **Chapter Six: Homeland Matters**

In the last two chapters, I examined the intersections between Jordanian nationalist discourse, state practice, and ethno-national identifications among Palestinian refugees. I argued that the discriminatory discourse and policies of Transjordanian nationalists and the state facilitated particular forms of identification among Palestinians concerned with normalizing their status as Jordanian citizens while maintaining a distinct ethno-national identity as Palestinians. In this chapter, I consider a particular theme of Palestinian identification: the homeland. Throughout the refugee camps, the homeland emerged as an important symbolic resource through which Palestinians could articulate a claim to a particular “Palestinian identity” grounded in a discourse of origins. This chapter situates the homeland within an identity discourse in which genealogy and territory converge to constitute an important aspect of Palestinian identification among refugees. I show how the idea of the homeland functioned to establish a trans-historical connection between a certain imagined people and a certain imagined territory (Eastmond 1998; Benedict Anderson 2006). In addition, this chapter examines how, through symbolic representations in everyday contexts, the homeland allowed Palestinians to assert national identifications without explicitly engaging in nationalist politics.

### **Introduction:**

Interdisciplinary work on questions of ethnicity, nationalism, and diasporas has given considerable attention to the significance of homelands for understanding the relationship between people and place (Clifford 1994; Dufoix 2008; Robin Cohen 1997; Vertovec and Robin Cohen 1999; Tölölyan 2007; Anthony D. Smith 2004; Anthony D. Smith 1991). For scholars of ethnicity and nationalism such as Anthony Smith, the concept of the homeland is central to the formation of both *ethnies* and nations. *Ethnies*, according to Smith, are named human



communities connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites (Anthony D. Smith 2002, 13). Concerning nationalism, Smith finds two particular functions of the homeland. First, the concept of the homeland may act as a title-deed, a political claim to a specified area of land and its resources, often in the teeth of opposition from rival claimants (Anthony D. Smith 2002, 31). In this capacity, the homeland is inextricably linked to the nation's material well-being: its resources provide the economic foundation of the nation's growth and survival. Second, Smith believes that the homeland constitutes an historic or ancestral land that not only provides the setting upon which the "nation's" history is inscribed<sup>158</sup> but, like the nation itself, takes on its own particular identity distinguishable in its landscapes from "other" territories and histories. As Smith has argued, every nationalism seeks to cultivate and preserve its own special values in its own manner and on a territory it considers a historic homeland (Anthony Smith 1999, 333).

The homeland has also emerged at the center of transnational studies and has achieved particular prominence among scholars of diasporas. Concerned with transnational cultural flows, the mass movement of populations, and the increasing deterritorialization of peoples, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson described the homeland as one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 11). According to them, attention to the "pulverized space of post-modernity" reveals that the meaning of "home" and "homelands" no longer reflects the stable relationships anthropologists once assumed between people and places. Instead, the situation of migrants, refugees, and stateless people underscores

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<sup>158</sup> According to Smith, the homeland provides the "arena and indispensable setting for the great men and women, and the turning points, in the nation's history – battles, treaties, synods and assemblies, the exploits of heroes and the shrines and schools of saints and sages (Anthony D. Smith 2002, 32)."

the ways in which home and homelands serve as symbolic anchors for dispersed communities who use memories of place to imaginatively construct their new lived world (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 11). For scholars like Robin Cohen and William Safran, the homeland concept is at the center of all diaspora communities in at least two ways: (1) as an idealized ancestral territory grounded in collective memory and tied to a myth of return and (2) as a putative ancestral home demanding a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity (Robin Cohen 1996; Safran 1991; Robin Cohen 1997). Taking the Jewish diaspora as the paradigmatic case, both Cohen and Safran understand the homeland as a key concept not only for identifying diasporas but also for determining the *kind* of diasporas they might be: victim, labor, trade, imperial, or cultural. In addition, more recent scholarship has emphasized the role of the homeland and diasporas in the formation of ethno-national solidarity and conflict. Noting the significance of diasporic communities to homeland nationalist programs, Yossi Shain, for example, has described diasporas as key constituencies of concern for nationalist leaders, their adversaries, and for international diplomatic activities (Shain 2002, 116). Concerned with the security, prosperity, and, in some cases, realization of the putative homeland, diaspora communities often serve as an important mobilizing force behind separatist or inter-state conflicts whose conceptions of and commitments to the homeland can mean the difference between prolonged war and sustainable peace.

More recently, critics have revealed several limitations within the idea that homeland connections are sufficient for characterizing the relationship between people and place in diasporic terms (Dufoix 2008; Brubaker 2005; Anthias 1998). By emphasizing the more general idea of a connection *to* the homeland, these critics argue that diaspora scholars have often ignored the complex meanings *of* that homeland for the various populations living in distinct

circumstances. In so doing, scholars have precluded their ability to account for how the specific local conditions affecting each population factor into the production of homeland connections and, in some cases, politics. As Stephane Dufoix noted, studies of “diasporas” often fail to present the workings of the thing they ought best describe: the relationship to a “referent-origin” (Dufoix 2008, 2). Such inadequacies in diaspora accounts often result in a flattening of difference whereby the concept of homeland remains unspecified and otherwise disparate populations are forced into bounded categorical groups that need to be explained, not assumed (Brubaker 2006). Moreover, Floya Anthias has argued that the application of the diaspora category often reflects a failure to specify the distinct conditions under which populations migrate and, more importantly, ignores the impact of local conditions upon these populations. Putative diasporas have thus appeared in ways that suggest far more homogeneity than actually exists and have essentialized the relationship between people and place. According to Anthias, such populations are not homogenous for their movements may have taken place at different historical periods and for different reasons (Anthias 1998, 564). In addition, the different countries in which these populations reside often present different social conditions, opportunities, and exclusions that can lead to distinct representations of the community and their relationship to the homeland.

Within the field of Palestinian studies, discussions rarely escape the gravitational pull of the homeland. Among scholars of the refugee crisis, the homeland constitutes the basis of various key concerns including history and the Arab/Israeli wars (Morris 2009; Segev 2007; Masalha 1992; Pappe 2007), statelessness and human rights (Akram 2002; Takkenberg 1998; Perez 2010; Gabiam 2006), repatriation, return, and compensation (Fischbach 2003; Aruri 2001), and identity (Masalha 2005; Yezid Sayigh 2000; Rosemary Sayigh 2008a; Staughton Lynd,

Bahour, and Alice Lynd 1998). Notwithstanding the diversity of approaches to the homeland within Palestinian studies, two particular approaches stand out for their distinct conclusions. First, some have argued that the homeland represents the basis of a common identity grounded in memories of the landscapes and lifeways of pre-Partition Palestine and memorialized in literature and commemorations (Sa'di 2002; Staughton Lynd, Bahour, and Alice Lynd 1998; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Hammer 2005). Emphasizing the role of displacement and experience of exile among mostly Palestinian refugees, these scholars rightfully note the importance of loss and longing in the formation of a common identification for Palestinians living outside of their former territories or born in countries as refugees. Second, there is the idea that the homeland reflects disparate articulations of a population fragmented by the various effects and conditions of displacement. Drawing on literary representations of “the Palestinians” and “Palestine,” this approach is best seen in the work of Glenn Bowman who, in his essay, *A Country of Words: Conceiving the Palestinian Nation from the Position of Exile*,” argues that:

[T]he “various and scattered...fate” of the Palestinians after the originary 1948 loss of their homeland has resulted...in the construction of a number of different ‘Palestines’ corresponding to the different experiences of Palestinians in the places of their exile. The nation-building process which Darwish refers to in the final lines of his poem is, I contend, made difficult by the different senses of what it means to be Palestinian engendered by more than forty years of dislocation and dispersion (Bowman 1994, 138).

According to Bowman, the idea of a “Palestinian community” and “homeland” are complicated by the specific conditions Palestinians experience in their diverse circumstances. Through a careful examination of community and homeland representations by the Palestinian journalist and author, Fawaz Turki, the Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said, and the Palestinian novelist, Raja Shehadeh, Bowman highlights the importance of “dissonance and distinction” within putative national groups. In the Palestinian situation, he concludes, where the national

community is spread all over the world in a number of relatively autonomous enclaves, the nebulousness of the term “Palestinian” renders it incapable of providing any sense of the distinguishing characteristics which would allow Palestinians to recognize their situation as “like” that of other Palestinians in different situations (Bowman 1994, 148).

This chapter takes Bowman’s analysis above to consider the discourse of refugees in the camps of Jordan. In so doing, I am not rejecting previous studies that indicate a commonality of meaning within the idea of a Palestinian homeland among refugees in the Middle East. On the contrary, I think my own research reveals certain themes that are consistent with other homeland conceptions among Palestinian refugee communities in other locales. However, I also believe that there are certain differences in the meaning of the homeland that are specific to the local contexts of each community. These differences reflect what Bowman described as “dissonance and distinction” and underscore the fact that, while people may “imagine” (Benedict Anderson 2006) the same things—a homeland or a nation—, their imaginations need not be the same. Indeed, as Joane Nagel has suggested, cultural construction and reconstruction are ongoing tasks in which new and renovated cultural symbols, activities, and materials are continually being added to and removed from existing cultural repertoires (Joane Nagel 1994, 162). Thus my analysis seeks to specify the meaning of the homeland as an imagined cultural symbol among Palestinian refugees in Amman.

In this chapter, I examine the meaning of the Palestinian homeland for refugees in Jordan and consider its significance for understanding how Palestinians identify in ethnic, religious, and national terms. This chapter shows that, for Palestinian refugees in Amman, the homeland matters: it is a central point of identification and important aspect of what Palestinians believe makes them uniquely Palestinian. Divided into four sections, this chapter aims to elucidate

several features of the Palestinian homeland as conceived by camp refugees. In the first section, I begin with a brief history of the colonial and post-colonial geography of Palestine giving particular attention to its shifting territorial borders and location within the regional context. Because it is the Palestine of the British Mandate that refugees consistently refer to as their homeland, my aim in this section is to provide a sketch of that territory and the changes that have occurred since the partition of Palestine in 1947.

The next section considers how descriptions of the homeland among two particular categories of refugees—those born in Palestine and those born in Jordan—reflected the widespread idea of an unchanging Palestinian geography. Despite their location within distinct generational groups, both articulated a similar conception of the homeland rooted in the colonial borders of the British Mandate. That is, despite the post-colonial realities of the 1948 War, the 1967 occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, and the contemporary division between the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip and PA-ruled West Bank, Palestinian refugees of both generations described their homeland as a timeless territory extant prior to the colonial demarcations of the British. I suggest that the common conceptualization of Palestine among Palestinians reflects the continuing significance of the Nakba and Naksa generations for the younger generations. Having “known” Palestine as a united territory, their knowledge and experience functions as an invaluable resource for the younger generations who have never visited the homeland.

The third section of this chapter considers the significance of the homeland for understanding the meaning of Palestinian ethno-national identifications. As I will show, for Palestinian refugees, identifying the homeland was no trivial matter. It not only indicated a commitment to preserving a connection to a particular territory but also reflected a common will to resist the ongoing erasure (Piterberg 2001) of that place by a population claiming the land as

its own. For the Palestinians I interviewed in Jordan, the meaning of the homeland was thus essential for maintaining their connections to that territory and asserting a particular kind of ethno-national identity in the process. Identifying Palestine was, in other words, an important strategy for claiming an ethno-national Palestinian identity and a right to return. To illustrate this point, I examine how the homeland formed the basis of a distinct ethno-national identity rooted in a discourse of “origins.” It emerged as a powerful referent-origin that provided the foundation for constructing and managing the idea of a Palestinian community living beyond the territorial borders of Palestine (Dufoix 2008). More specifically, the idea of Palestine enabled a distinct ethnic identification grounded in genealogical ties (Ho 2002) and reflecting a claim to what Anthony Smith described as a “common community of descent.” According to this idea, whether an individual is within her community or has emigrated to another, she remains ineluctably and organically a member of the community of her birth and is forever stamped by it (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 11). The idea of Palestine thus offered a conceptual point of identification through which Palestinians displaced from their homeland and their descendants in Amman could link themselves to a particular territory and people and distinguish themselves in terms of a unique ethno-national identity.

In the fourth and final section of this chapter, I consider symbolic representations of the homeland within the context of everyday life among Palestinian refugees. In the spirit of Eric Hobsbawm’s call for analyzing nationalism “from below,” I offer an ethnographic account of Palestinian nationhood in Jordan as expressed through homeland representations (Hobsbawm 1992). Looked at ethnographically, I show how symbolic representations of the homeland reflect what Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss have called “everyday nationhood” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). According to them, understanding how the nation is produced and

reproduced in the specific contexts of ordinary people engaged in ordinary life reveals important insights into the meaning of nationhood beyond those expressed in the discourse and practice of nationalist elites. In Jordan, where public expressions of Palestinian nationalism are strictly monitored and controlled, I argue that representations of the homeland offer refugees an important opportunity to symbolically engage in the practice of nationhood. As Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori noted in their examination of Muslim politics, symbols acquire focal political significance in ways that are not always predictable: the symbolic is not a residual dimension of purportedly real politics; still less is it an insubstantial screed upon which real issues are cast in pale and passive form; the symbolic is real politics, articulated in a special and often most powerful way (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 10). In this sense, I suggest that material expressions of the homeland are important symbols of ethno-national identification that allow Palestinians to be “national” in everyday life without earning the suspicions of the Jordanians by being explicitly “nationalist.”

### **Palestine: A Brief History of Borders:**

The geographic borders of modern Palestine reflect the colonial architecture of two particular documents: the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. Completed in October 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement divided former Ottoman provinces into two distinct spheres of influence: British and French. The agreement assigned France direct influence over what was then Greater Syria, which included southwestern Turkey in the north and Lebanon in the west, and areas of northern Iraq (Kamrava 2005, 40). The British, on the other hand, gained control over the remaining areas of Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, and what was then Transjordan. Palestine was designated an international zone and thus ostensibly free from the dictates of any single colonial power. In November 1917, however, the status of Palestine as a uniquely British



colony became clear when the Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur James Balfour, declared his government's commitment to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (Pappe 2006, 67). Expressed in the form of a letter to Baron Rothschild, a leading Zionist leader of the British Jewish community, the Declaration did not specify the borders of Palestine nor of the proposed Jewish state. It did, however, function within the framework of the British Mandate, which included two territories: Mandate Palestine and what is today the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Not until the termination of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1947 would the geographic identity of modern Palestine fully emerge, if only to be shattered again. Exhausted by the war in Europe, the British decided to turn over the responsibility for the mandate in Palestine to the United Nations (Kamrava 2005, 79). Against the objections of the Arab states and, more importantly, at the expense of the rights and interests of Palestine's indigenous Arab population, the U.N. General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 calling for the partition of Palestine into two distinct states. Although representing approximately 33% of the population and owning only 7% of the land, the Jewish community was offered 55% of Palestine while the Arabs, constituting the remaining 67% of the population, were assigned 45% of the land (Kamrava 2005; Pappe 2006; Masalha 1992; Segev 2001; Khalidi 2007). Moreover, the plan left a substantial segment of the Arab population within areas designated Jewish territory. Unable to resolve the question of Jerusalem, the resolution placed the city under international auspices.

Despite its putative purpose as a solution to the ongoing territorial dispute between Palestinian Arabs and mostly European Jewish immigrants, the Partition Plan failed to establish an equitable framework for resolving the conflict and ultimately brought on the very thing it was supposed to prevent: war. Not long after the British began withdrawing from Palestine, Zionist forces, Palestinian Arabs and, later, several units from surrounding Arab States, engaged in all-

out war resulting in dramatic territorial and political changes. By 1950, almost 75% of Mandate Palestine was firmly under the control of Zionist forces and approximately 850,000 of Palestine's Arabs were refugees living in Gaza (200,000), Lebanon (105,000), Syria (80,000), and Jordan (460,000<sup>159</sup>). The unconquered areas of central Palestine were officially annexed by what became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the tiny coastal strip of Gaza fell under Egyptian administrative control. Not until 1967 would the regional map shift again when Israeli forces conquered the Jordanian West Bank, Syrian Golan Heights, the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip. The results of the war seemed to obliterate any trace of Mandate Palestine as Israel now occupied territory belonging to three Arab States. The situation changed again in 1973 when Egyptian and Syrian forces briefly reclaimed their territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Although neither the occupied West Bank nor the Gaza Strip were freed from Israeli control, the war and subsequent peace agreement between Israel and Egypt known as the Camp David Accords reestablished the Sinai Peninsula as Egyptian territory and normalized Egyptian-Israeli relations. Moreover, the agreement returned a substantial portion of the geography of the Middle East to the 1948 status quo.

Long after the conclusion of the 1973 War, two particular events restored the question of Palestine to its proper place within the borders of Mandate Palestine. First, in 1988, the late King Hussein announced the administrative and legal severance of the West Bank from Jordan. According to the plan, the West Bank would be officially recognized as territory subject to negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It was thus no longer part of the Hashemite Kingdom and all of its inhabitants were stripped of their Jordanian citizenship. The second event was the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 between

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<sup>159</sup> This figure includes refugees displaced into what became the West Bank of Jordan.

PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, and Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Despite the fact that the accords did not address the question of borders, control over the Gaza Strip and West Bank and the fate of their populations were nevertheless the primary matters under consideration. The agreement, in other words, reflected the implicit question of Palestine by focusing on territories formerly under the British Mandate. After more than 40 years of geopolitical shifts, the territorial conflict over Palestine returned to its original geographic location, albeit with new internal parameters.

**Locating the Homeland: *Min Al-Bahar ilāl Nahar* (From the Sea to the River):**

Within the Palestinian refugee camps of Jordan, at least four generational groups can be identified. First, it is still possible to meet individuals from jīl Al-Nakba (the Nakba generation) who lived in Palestine until the 1948 war. For this generation, the idea of Palestine reflects their lived experiences either as children or adolescents born and raised within what was in 1948 called Mandate Palestine. Second, there are those Palestinians who were displaced during the 1967 war. Known as jīl Al-Naksa (the “Setback” generation), this category of Palestinians captures two distinct experiences: (1) non-refugee Palestinians who were born and raised in either Gaza or the West Bank that became refugees in 1967 as a result of the Six Day War or (2) refugee Palestinians originally displaced in 1948 who were again displaced in 1967 from either Gaza or the West Bank. In both cases, these Palestinians lived in Palestine for some portion of their lives and thus developed a tangible sense of what the homeland was like from their lived experience<sup>160</sup>. The third generation I wish to identify includes those Palestinians who were born

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<sup>160</sup> This is not to suggest that because Palestinians lived in “the homeland” until 1948 or 1967, that their conception of or life in that homeland were the same. It is to suggest, however, that their ability to speak from an experience within the homeland affords them a certain authenticity that is apparent in the fact that Palestinians themselves call these “generations” connected to their displacements during the Nakba and Naksa.

on the East Bank of Jordan either to refugee parents from jīl Al-Nakba or jīl Al-Naksa. For this group, Palestine was the land of their ancestors known to them mostly through the memories communicated by their parents and other relatives who once lived in Palestine. Some of these Palestinians, however, may have actually visited parts of Palestine in the West Bank before 1967 when Jordan still controlled the area or, to a lesser extent, after 1967 when the Israelis occupied the territory. Finally, there are the grandchildren of jīl Al-Nakba and jīl Al-Naksa who were also born and raised on the East Bank after the Jordanian government severed its administrative links with the West Bank and Palestinian Authority assumed limited responsibility for the territory.

The generational categories listed above do not *contain* Palestinians. Within each category, there are a variety of distinctions one can consider in order to expand or contract my generational assignments. For example, one could distinguish between Palestinians displaced during the 1948 war according to their geographic location (Haifa or Ramla), their socio-economic status, or the conditions under which they were displaced (expelled or fled). The Nakba generation, in other words, is a categorical designation that does not represent a real category of persons defined in some essential way. It is, however, a category used by Palestinians themselves to locate individuals within categories of experience titled, in this case, Al-Nakba and Al-Naksa. For my purposes here, the categories above are analytical and only mean to highlight two important points about the homeland that reflect generational factors: (1) the idealization of the homeland and (2) the significance of one generation for the other in that process.



Figure Eleven: Mandate Palestine<sup>161</sup>

<sup>161</sup> From

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_Jewish\\_settlements\\_in\\_Palestine\\_in\\_1947.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Jewish_settlements_in_Palestine_in_1947.png)

In her study of Palestinians born in exile who “returned” to Palestine following the Oslo Peace Accords, Julianne Hammer identified a key distinction between several Palestinian generations and their connections to the homeland. According to Hammer, Palestinians could be identified in terms of three categories that helped elucidate their connections to Palestine: the 1948 generation who were born in Palestine, a generation of Palestinians born outside of Palestine but who nevertheless visited it, and a generation born in exile who had never visited Palestine. For this last generation, Hammer described the homeland as an “imagined” or “idealized” place reflecting memories, pictures, stories, and the media (Hammer 2005, 67-68). Raised within Palestinian minority communities, their idea of and attachment to Palestine was formed within the exiled community who could speak about the homeland from personal experience and whose sentimental connections reflected the trauma of their displacement and ongoing desire to return. Among the Palestinian children and grandchildren of the Nakba and Naksa generations I interviewed in the camps, the meaning of the homeland reflected a similar inter-generational exchange as that described by Hammer. For them, Palestine was an idealized space unchangeable in its fundamental constitution. That is, Palestine was an indivisible territory that defied the territorial changes of the modern period. As imagined, “Palestine” was and always would be.

Yūnus, for example, lived in the Hittīn refugee camp known locally as “mukhayyam Shnellor” after the German rehabilitation center extant prior to the establishment of the camp. His parents were both Naksa refugees displaced during the 1967 war. Raised within Gaza before the Israeli occupation, Yūnus’s mother and father lived in Palestinian territory and could describe their country through memories formed during their childhood and early adolescent years. Unlike his parents, Yūnus was born in the Hittīn camp and never visited Gaza or any other

Palestinian territory. Thus for him, an important dimension of the meaning of Palestine reflected the accounts offered by his parents, relatives, and other refugees who once lived in the territory. Given the geopolitical changes that occurred since his parents' displacement from Palestinian territory, I wanted to understand how Yūnus conceptualized the homeland. In particular, I wanted to know *where* Palestine was in both time and space. When I asked him about the location of Palestine, about the Palestine to which he referred to as *his* homeland, Yūnus's response was precise: "Palestine is the land between *Al-Bahar wal-Nahar* (the sea and the river)." For Yūnus, the partition of Palestine was not a geographic fact. Rather, it represented a transitory change that did not alter the fundamental location of the homeland, which still existed within the geological borders of "the sea" and "the river."

As I pursued this question among many refugees whose parents were born in Palestine and lived there long enough to have developed some memories of their lives back home, I soon learned that Yūnus's answer was not unique. Many young Palestinians who had never visited the territory identified their homeland in terms of the pre-Partition borders. In particular, my discussions of the homeland with refugees in the camps revealed a common refrain that captured the imagined quality of Palestine: *Filastīn min Al-Bahar ilāl-Nahar* (Palestine is the land between the sea and the river). Yūsuf, for example, was another Palestinian refugee born in the Hittīn camp. Unlike Yūnus, Yūsuf's parents were born in the refugee camps of Jordan. His grandparents, however, were displaced from Palestine in 1948 and were thus referred to as *jīl Al-Nakba*. According to Yūsuf, it was his grandparents who taught him about the homeland. When I asked him to describe the territory to which he referred, Yūsuf offered the following answer: "Palestine [is] geographically the *dawlah* (country) that comes to the shores of the Mediterranean

Sea. To the east of it is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. To the north of it is Lebanon and to the south of it is Egypt and the Arabian Gulf, which is the Red Sea.”

Māzin was another young Palestinian born in Jordan within the camps. I met him through the director at an Islamic orphanage, who allowed me to observe the activities at the center. Māzin volunteered at the orphanage as it reflected his religious duty to care for the orphans. Māzin’s parents were both Nakba refugees and, although he was older than both Yūnus and Yūsuf, like them, he never visited any Palestinian territory. According to Māzin, most of his ideas of Palestine were learned from his parents and relatives who once lived in Palestine. When I asked him to identify the place he called home, Māzin responded with a curious grin.

“Palestine is Palestine,” he said. “Khalīl, *Arṭhā* (Jericho), and Haifa, they’re all Palestine.” For Māzin, the status of Palestine was clear and unchanging. Despite his family’s displacement and the establishment of Israel, the territorial constitution of the homeland remained the same.

“Where else can Palestine be,” he asked. Hānī, another Jordan-born Palestinian whose grandparents were from the Nakba generation, described the *wattan* (homeland) as the land between two waters. During our discussions, he emphasized that his grandparents played a critical role in his idea of the homeland. From them, he said “he learned about himself.”

Interested in his conception of the homeland, I also asked him about Palestine. In response, Hānī offered the following words: “Min Al-bahar ilāl Nahar.” “*Min Lubnān fīl shamāl ilāl Masar fīl junūb* (From Lebanon in the north to Egypt in the south).” “*Kulha Filastīn* (All of it is Palestine),” he said.

Thus conceived, the location of the Palestinian homeland in time and space had several important implications for the meaning of the past, present, and future. For the past, the unchanging character of the homeland meant that the events following the 1948 war did not alter



the fundamental composition of Palestine. Accordingly, for the younger generation of Jordan-born Palestinian refugees, the establishment of the State of Israel represented a foreign occupying presence on what was essentially still Palestine. Like the British occupation, the Israeli occupation of Palestine was perceived as an impermanent event that would also reach its end. For both the present and future, this generations' conception of the homeland also offered a basic rejection of any attempts by either the PLO or the international community to establish a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. Amjad, for example, a young Palestinian from the Hussein camp whose grandparents were both displaced during the Nakba, rejected the idea that the Palestinian homeland was anywhere but between the sea and the river. The Palestinian homeland, he claimed, was the pre-Partition Palestine of his grandparents' time. Consequently, the idea that Israel had successfully replaced Palestine was unacceptable:

Palestine is Israel<sup>162</sup>. Palestine is Israel! From the sea to the river, Palestine *baladnā* (is our country). Our rights were shattered in 1948. The rights of my father and his father were shattered. But Palestine is Palestine. I don't consider the West Bank Palestine because Palestine is the whole country. If Palestine were established on Gaza and the West Bank, that would not be my country! All of it is Palestine!

For Amjad, a political settlement in which a Palestinian state would be established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip could not legitimately be described as Palestine. In his view, like the view of his parents and their parents, the homeland could not be divided. Similarly, Omar, an Imam from the Wihdāt camp whose parents were of the Naksa generation rejected the claim that Palestine was now Israel. For Omar, Palestine was the Palestine that belonged to his parents. This, he explained, was something that he learned from his parents and would teach to his own children and any other generation to come.

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<sup>162</sup> By the phrase "Palestine is Israel," Amjad meant that what is currently known as Israel is *really* Palestine. When an individual looks at Israel, he explained, one is actually seeing Palestine.

First of all, I don't accept that there is an Israeli state. There is no "West Bank." All of it is Palestine. If the West Bank is Palestine, does that mean that the people of the West Bank have Palestine and we don't because we fled in 1948? Being a citizen in another country doesn't delete our rights in Palestine. Palestine means all of Palestine. There is no Jewish right [over even] a grain of sand. It's true that some were living in Palestine before the 1948 War but that doesn't mean that gives them the right to take all of this land. We have all of Palestine from the east to the west and from the north to the south.

According to Omar, the past represented an historic injustice in which the rights of Palestinians to their homeland were stolen. Like Amjad, the establishment of the Israeli state thus represented a violation of Palestinians' right to Palestine but not the erasure of Palestine. Israeli claims to Palestine as an exclusively Jewish homeland by the Likud Party<sup>163</sup>, for example, were thus inadmissible. Palestine could not be partitioned nor could it be negotiated. Moreover, Omar explicitly rejected the idea that a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza could be called Palestine. The homeland was either all of the pre-Partition territory or none of it.

The idea among Jordan-born Palestinians that Palestine remained a territorial homeland unchanged (and unchangeable) was not necessarily of their own making. For some, it reflected the knowledge and sentiments shared by their parents, relatives, and the older Palestinian generations in general. As many younger Palestinians explained to me, the *jīl Al-Nakba* and the *jīl Al-Naksa* played an essential role in shaping their understanding and knowledge of the homeland and their attachments to it. According to the youth, Palestine was and would always be the Palestine of their parents or grandparents. Although borders might change, one Palestinian said, the integrity of Palestine as a place between "the sea" and "the river" was everlasting. Moreover, the older generations were claimed as an essential link to their homeland

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<sup>163</sup> According to the Likud Party Platform, settlements represent the right of Jews to the land of Israel including the West Bank and Gaza. In the platform, it states that "the Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria [West Bank] and Gaza are the realization of Zionist values. *Settlement of the land is a clear expression of the unassailable right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel* and constitutes an important asset in the defense of the vital interests of the State of Israel.

and considered responsible for preserving this connection through their unique knowledge and experience. Having lived in the territory as an undivided country, their stories about Palestine and descriptions of its local features and lifestyles before the dispossession offered a unique insight into the history of the homeland. Without them, many Palestinians would have few opportunities for learning about the intimate features of Palestinian life before 1948. Indeed, their experiences were located at the center of a generational exchange of rights and duties between those who knew Palestine and those who didn't. As Rochelle Davis noted in her examination of memory books, the older generation is understood as having the duty and the responsibility to undertake memory projects whereas the younger generations possess the right and responsibility to want to know this information (Rochelle Davis 2010, 54). For the younger generation born in Jordan, The Nakba and Naksa generations' first-hand accounts of Palestinian life in Palestine provided an oral history of a people no longer united and a territory no longer in place. More importantly, the older generation offered the young a sentimental account of the past communicated through stories of displacement, loss, and the violence of war. More than the transmission of abstract information, the displaced generations of 1948 instilled in the young an emotional connection to Palestine built of their own longing to return and the ongoing challenges of life in exile.

To understand the significance of the Nakba and Naksa generations for younger Palestinians, consider the example of Um Fādī. Um Fādī was a Palestinian from the Nakba generation living as a widow in the Wihdāt camp. Unlike most of my interviews, our meeting was unsolicited. It was at the request of several young Palestinian refugees that she and I met and decided to conduct an interview. I had just finished a few interviews and an afternoon of observations at a local Islamic center when Um Fādī entered the room. Two of the younger

Palestinians at the center fetched her from her home. According to them, I “needed” to meet Um Fādī since she, like many others from the Nakba and Naksa generations in the camps, provided the younger generation with vital information about the homeland.

Um Fādī, or *hajja*<sup>164</sup>, couldn’t tell me her exact age but appeared to be in her 80s.

Brought from her home, she arrived dressed in what was described as the clothing of the *fellahīn* (rural Palestinian peasants): a long black ‘*abāya*<sup>165</sup> decorated with intricate patterns in red, green, yellow, and white. She told me that she was born and lived in Palestine under the British occupation and was displaced in 1948 during the war. Um Fādī spoke in a distinguishable accent. Her dialect reflected the specific words and tones of her original village Sūbā in Palestine, not Jordan. During an hour-long interview, she shared various details about the life she lost in 1948. She spoke nostalgically, for example, of the pristine landscapes and exceptional quality of Palestinian fruits and vegetables. Portrayed as a Garden of Eden in which the rich productivity of the land and its unique produce reflected the “natural order of things” when Palestinians lived in Palestine, Um Fādī conjured nostalgic and idealized recollections of home and the homeland (Bardenstein 1999, 151). “The water was sweet and one could taste its sweetness in the fruits we grew,” she explained. Contrasting her Palestinian existence to the exilic condition of life in Jordan, Um Fādī spoke about the “ancient olive groves” producing the “richest” oil in the region. “The fruits were sweeter than those you find in Jordan,” she explained. Charged with emotional appeals to Palestinian leaders, the Jordanian King, and God,

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<sup>164</sup> Hajja, as used in this context, is a term of respect offered to an older Arab woman. In literal terms, the word identifies an individual as one who has completed the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca known as hajj.

<sup>165</sup> An ‘*abāya* is a long robe-like garment covering most of the body except for the hands and feet.

she longed for the home of her fathers and decried the theft of her homeland by *Al-Yahūd* (the Jews).

For the younger Palestinians in the room, she was revered as the embodiment of an esoteric truth. Her life and words represented an invaluable account of Palestine before the partition and occupation. Moreover, Um Fādī's knowledge and experiences underscored the importance of the struggle to reclaim the stolen homeland and restore Palestine to its forgotten owners. Um Fādī, I was told, was a Palestinian from Palestine. "Her experiences are wisdom to us," one Palestinian said. The youth listened closely to every word she shared. "*Ya ba yay, Filastīn bilādī* (oh dear God, Palestine is my country)," she exclaimed. "Palestine is our home." "When I was born I knew I was Palestinian and Palestine, all of it, was ours." When asked about the future, Um Fādī immediately spoke of return. According to her, the homeland was what she knew when *she* was in Palestine. Back then, she said, there was no West Bank or Gaza; it was all Palestine. Thus returning to anything but the Palestine she knew, Um Fādī explained, was a meaningless new migration.

Although Um Fādī's importance for the young extended from her location within a generational group (the Nakba generation), her status as *a woman* of that generation was of specific value linked reflecting ideas about biological and social reproduction. On one hand, Um Fādī was a biological reproducer of the nation: her marriage to a Palestinian man and the children they shared together represented the fulfillment of her commitments both as a woman to her family and as a woman to her "nation." Constituted within a nationalist paradigm, Um Fādī's role as a mother served as the completion of a national duty: she helped ensure the existence of the nation through the reproduction of the new generation. On the other hand, Um Fādī's knowledge of Palestine allowed her to fulfill the nationalist mission of cultural

reproduction. Having produced children already, Um Fādī's stories represented much more than the experiences of an individual from Palestine; within the logic of nationalism, her life represented the basis of national reproduction via cultural history. Functioning within an ethno-national framework, Um Fādī's life was reconfigured as a story about "the Palestinians." Beyond her biological role in national reproduction, in other words, Um Fādī was now participating in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity as a transmitter of its "history" and "culture" (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Campling 1989).

The preceding discussion demonstrates that Palestinians born in Jordan who have never visited any Palestinian territory depend to a significant degree upon the experience of the older generations for their conception of the homeland. Accordingly, their idea of Palestine reflects an idealization formed primarily through the experiences, memories, stories, and nostalgic representations of the Nakba and Naksa generations. Palestine was and is the bounded territory from which their parents and/or grandparents came: Mandate Palestine. Interestingly enough, the Palestinians I met did not describe the homeland in terms of the mandate period even though the borders they identified reflected the colonial period. Palestinians thus fixed the boundaries of the homeland within time but only to articulate a place that transcended time. Within the territorial imagination of Palestinians born in Jordan, the homeland emerged as it once was, if only for a short time: as the land between the sea and the river, south of Lebanon and north of Egypt. In this sense, the homeland represented a territorial continuity that, like the Palestinian people, defied fragmentation. Just as the Palestinian people could remain a united people despite their displacement, so too could Palestine remain a united country in the face of partition, conquest, and colonization. In both cases, a sense of continuity and stability was imagined and projected onto the land and people so that a homeland and its people could remain united.

In this section, I chose to focus on the territorial conception of Palestine since it provides a starting point for understanding *what* the homeland is or, more precisely, *where* it is. In the next section, I therefore proceed to offer a deeper account of the homeland for Palestinian refugees.

### **Palestinians and Palestine: An Original Community:**

Concerned with the “origins” of nations, Anthony Smith distinguished between what he called Western and non-Western models of the nation. According to Smith, Western models of nations were seen as cultural communities whose members were united, if not made homogeneous, by common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 11). Stressing the idea that within Western nations one could *choose* to belong, Smith defined non-Western nations in “ethnic” terms in which choice was not an option. In the non-Western ethnic nation, whether an individual stayed in her community or emigrated to another, she nevertheless remained ineluctably and organically a member of the community of her birth. Thus ethnic nations were, according to Smith, first and foremost communities of common descent (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 11). In this formulation, Smith emphasized the genealogical over the territorial. Indeed, Smith likened the bonds of ethnic nations to the bonds of kinship in which descent, not land, mattered most. The point here, Smith argued, is that, within this conception, the nation can trace its roots to an imputed common ancestry and that therefore its members are brothers and sisters, or at least cousins, differentiated by family ties from outsiders (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 12).

Despite the distinction between ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ nations described above, Smith nevertheless claimed that both dimensions are blended into contemporary nation forms. In this sense, a nation could presumably articulate territorial claims reflecting the rights of “the people”

to their “ancestral homelands” and, at other times, emphasize its genealogical ties. To illustrate the point, Smith explained how, under the Jacobins, French nationalism reflected an essentially civic and territorial idea; it preached the unity of the republic *patrie* and the fraternity of its citizens in a political-legal community (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 13). Yet in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, French nationalism took a decidedly cultural turn in which the clerical-monarchist Right, for example, held onto a genealogical conception of the “French” organic nation. From the French case we can thus see that, despite the conceptual distinction between civic and ethnic nations, certain fundamental assumptions nevertheless underscore their commonality: both models rely on common ideas about what particular beliefs can constitute a nation. For Smith, it is this very multidimensionality that has made national identity such a flexible and persistent force in modern life and politics and has allowed it to combine effectively with other powerful ideologies and movements without losing its character (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 15).

Although not without its complications<sup>166</sup>, Smith’s attention to the genealogical dimensions of ethnic and national identification are important for understanding two key issues about the homeland within the Palestinian context I describe below. First, Palestinian refugees overwhelmingly identify in genealogical terms. Reflecting Smith’s conception of a community of common descent, Palestinians routinely identify through a genealogical discourse of origins that not only constructs organic boundaries of inclusion but also provides the parameters of exclusion through which Palestinians disidentify with Jordanians. Palestinians thus identify in terms of an interminable and, to borrow Smith’s term, ineluctable genealogy that maintains their status as Palestinians despite their location in Jordan.

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<sup>166</sup> For alternative approaches to the question of nations and nationalism, see (Brubaker 1996; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Billig 1995; Chatterjee 1993a)



Second, Palestinians' genealogical articulations go beyond the mere claim to a common ancestry to include a common origin in a particular territory: Palestine. In this sense, it is not just that Palestinians can identify a common ancestor that matters; rather, it is the fact of that ancestor's lived experience in the homeland that makes the genealogical tie of particular importance. Thus whereas Smith sees the ethnic nation as one grounded in genealogical ties, the case of the Palestinians I describe below shows that genealogy is not so easily disentangled from territory and thus ethno-national identifications can reflect an inseparable link between descent and place. A community of common descent, in other words, matters precisely because of the location of that lineage within a particular territory. More specifically, it is that an individual can identify an ancestor's birth in *Palestine* that enables their particular claim to being Palestinian. This idea is adequately captured in Engseng Ho's account of the relationship between naming and nations when he states that names identify persons and groups beyond the sphere of biological and cultural reproduction to include territory (Ho 2002, 215). Although in my account it isn't that *specific* names are genealogically Palestinian in virtue of their link to Palestine (although without a doubt, some names are marked as "Palestinian"), Ho's considerations of the connection between genealogies and territory nevertheless speaks to the critical link between descent and territory for Palestinian refugees.



**Figure Twelve: Aerial View of Baqa'a Refugee Camp**<sup>167</sup>

Walking through the Baqa'a refugee camp is much like walking through any other camp in Amman. Its mostly unpainted walls and monotonous structures create an atmosphere of anonymity. From the streets, for example, mosques are often indiscernible from the surrounding buildings. Trapped within the suffocating streets of the camp, finding a minaret can be a challenging endeavor. In addition, most of the homes are nothing more than box-like dwellings crammed into an already confining space. On the outside, their concrete walls bear few signs of distinction and often blend seamlessly into an undivided block of several other homes. With poverty an obvious fact of the camp, a painted home is an unusual sign of luxury. Unnamed and poorly paved, the camp streets run parallel to open sewage drains where children often play. Barely able to accommodate one vehicle, some of the streets seem too narrow to meet the most

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<sup>167</sup> Photo taken by author.

basic standard of function. Much like the future of its inhabitants, the Baqa'a camp is a bleak urban landscape.



**Figure Thirteen: Baq'a Refugee Camp**<sup>168</sup>

Within a landscape marked by monotony, one must search for signs of distinction. In Baqa'a, this requires a local's perspective. On the surface, for instance, no particular number of visits is likely to reveal the fact that the names of camp mosques reflect the origins of its surrounding inhabitants. The Nablus mosque is thus located within an indiscernible enclave of Palestinians originally from the Palestinian city of the same name. This fact eluded me for weeks. I had visited the camp numerous times but, on the surface, the connections between physical space and refugees' origins remained invisible. Indeed, it wasn't until I met Um Mahdi that I learned of the reasoning behind the name. "Masjid Al-Quds," she explained, "is where you will find the Palestinians from Quds." It was, as she explained, a sign of their origins. A Naksa refugee herself, Um Mahdi claimed that the spatial configuration of the camps were meant to

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<sup>168</sup> Photo taken by author.

preserve its residents' origins<sup>169</sup>. Everyone knew where everyone else was from if they lived together, Um Mahdi claimed. "This way, Palestinians from Quds can marry other Palestinians from Quds." "Our neighborhoods here," she said, "reflect our origins there." Walking through the streets of the camp, Um Mahdi also pointed to the graffiti on the walls (Figure 13). "Allah," "Palestine," and "Al-Quds" decorated the exterior of a home in her neighborhood. "You see, our origins are never behind us. We can never forget."



**Figure Fourteen: Graffiti on Wall in Baqa'a Refugee Camp<sup>170</sup>**

Um Mahdi's explications of the relationship between origins and camp space were complemented by her ideas about another kind of relationship: genealogy and identity. In her interview, she explained that Palestine was not only within the camp; it was also within the people. The homeland was the territorial source of her genealogical identity as a Palestinian. "My [paternal] grandfather is Palestinian," she said. "My whole family on his side is

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<sup>169</sup> For an in-depth account of the relationship between camp spaces and their connections to spaces of pre-Partition Palestine, see (Peteet 2009a; Rosemary Sayigh 1994a; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007).

<sup>170</sup> Photo taken by author.

Palestinian.” All of them! They were all born in Palestine.” Referring to her family’s resettlement in Jordan, she queried: “How can I say that I am Jordanian and no longer Palestinian? No! I am Palestinian. Palestine is inside us.” Like Palestinian refugees who rejected the idea that their Jordanian status as citizens made them “Jordanian,” Um Mahdi rejected the idea that her territorial origin in Jordan made her “Jordanian.” Whether born in Jordan or any other territory, Um Mahdi, like many Palestinian refugees, believed that her descent led to Palestine and Palestine made her Palestinian. She was part of a community of common descent.

The idea that descent and territory were the basis of Palestinian identification was a significant feature of Palestinian discourse. Throughout the camps, Palestine was described as a territorial space through which descent was made Palestinian. In this sense, whether one’s “origins” could be traced to a location beyond Palestine’s imagined borders did not challenge their claim to being Palestinians since, once in the territory, the lineage itself was transformed. For example, my discussions with Palestinians in Baqa’a led me to the home of Um ‘Arif. Born in Gaza, she and her family fled their homes during the war of 1967. Despite living most of her life in Jordan, Um ‘Arif nevertheless felt a strong connection to Palestine and described it as the source of her territorial and genealogical origins.

My origins as a person are from Mecca and can be traced to *sayyidnā* Ali bin Abi Talib<sup>171</sup>. But I say that I am a Palestinian because I *am* Palestinian: me, my origins, my parents and grandparents, my ancestors, all of them are from Palestine and I am from them. So I am Palestinian in regards to *mawlid wa Al-Nasha*’ (my birth and upbringing) and my *’irq* (roots) and *dam* (blood). In everything, I am Palestinian. Palestine is my country and I am proud to be Palestinian. I love Palestine.

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<sup>171</sup> Ali bin Abi Talib was the Prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law.

Two particular ideas are significant within the account above. First, although Um ‘Arif identifies a historical connection to the noble family of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca, she nevertheless privileged her more immediate genealogical roots in Palestine. In her account, she “stopped” the motion of her genealogy within the territorial borders of Palestine (Ho 2002, 216). The movement of her lineage through time in what came before (Mecca) and what came after (Jordan) were thus unable to defy the specific location of Palestine. It is within Palestine, in other words, that her genealogical tree struck a root and established a true “origin” (Ho 2002, 216). Second, the meaning of Palestine in her account reflected an important convergence between the ideas of territory and genealogy. According to Um ‘Arif, her Palestinianness stemmed both from her territorial (‘irq) and genealogical (dam) roots in the territory. Genealogically speaking, she was a child of the ancestors located *in* Palestine and, more significantly, a relative *of* Palestine itself. Palestine, more than a birth-place, was thus a constitutive dimension of her being. Within her veins ran *Palestinian* blood: the blood of her ancestors and the land itself. Her idea of the homeland represented a relation to territory similar to the idea of an individual relation to kin. By describing her blood as Palestinian, Um ‘Arif was effectively identifying a genealogical connection with her homeland.

Um ‘Arif was not alone in her genealogical relationship to territory. Throughout my discussions with Palestinians, Palestine was often described in terms reflecting an idiom of birth and kinship. Many Palestinians, for example, explained how the homeland was a territorial site but also constitutive of an essential part of their identity. Wherever a Palestinian is found, they would say, so too is Palestine found within them. Mahdi, for example, a young Palestinian refugee born in Jordan, described Palestine as an inextricable part of Palestinians’ beings wherever they may be. “Our fathers and grandfathers,” he said, “who now live in Iraq, Syria,

Lebanon, the Gulf, or even Cuba, were all displaced from Palestine.” “They were forced to leave their homeland.” “But wherever they may be,” he emphasized, “they cannot forget their homeland, Palestine; it is within them.” Like Um ‘Arif and Mahdi, many Palestinians linked their territorial and genealogical origins in ways that underscored an essential Palestinian identity. While speaking with Māzin about Palestine, for example, he described his homeland in terms much like those of Um ‘Arif. “Palestine is in my blood,” he said. “It runs deep within me and my ancestors’ veins.” During my interview with Maryam, a young Palestinian woman from the Baqa’a camp, she also described Palestine in a way that blended her territorial and genealogical roots. Palestine, for Maryam, was the territorial origin of her ancestors who passed on their connection to the homeland as one would pass on his or her genes. “We are originally Palestinian,” she said. “Our grandparents, all of them, were born in Palestine and it has remained within us. It’s as if [Palestine] was planted within us. *Ajdādnā* (our ancestors) are all from Palestine so we too are Palestinians and [we] came to Jordan as Palestinian refugees.” For Maryam, although displacement brought her family to Jordan physically, their genealogical relationship to Palestine remained unchanged.

The idea of Palestine as the source of one’s origins also reflected an ethnicization (Brubaker 2006) of identity grounded in shared cultural practices. According to this idea of the homeland, Palestine was the source of a unique way of life that gave meaning to a Palestinian ethnicity distinguishable from other Arabs and Jordanians in particular. During a focus group interview with several Palestinian women at an Islamic center, for example, the homeland was described in terms of two kinds of origins. At times, Palestine was simply the location of one’s ancestors. Hind, for example, described Palestine as the land of her parents, grandparents, and ancestors. “Palestine,” she explained, “is the land of *ajdādnā*.” “Our connection to Palestine is

derived from their connection to Palestine.” Just as she was connected to her parents genealogically, Hind explained, she was also connected to her homeland, Palestine. At other times, however, Palestine was more than the territorial origin of the ancestors. Adding to Hind’s account, for example, Na’ima explained that Palestine was not simply the location of her origins. Palestine, she explained, was also constitutive of an ethnicity that was distinguishably Palestinian.

“Where we are born is not the only thing that defines us. It does not limit us. Look at us, we were born in Jordan but are all Palestinians regardless of where we [were] born because it is not just about our birth place. It’s also about *turāthnā* (our heritage). I have never seen Palestine myself but my heritage is Palestinian. All people have a heritage. We too have a heritage that is Palestinian. We have our clothing, our cultural habits and manners, our traditions, etc. All of these *are originally from Palestine* and are sources of our identity.”

Na’ima’s account above was illustrative of a common idea about the homeland among many of the Palestinians I interviewed. First, it reflected the idea of an essential Palestinian culture defined primarily in relation to the idea of a distinct Jordanian culture. Palestine, it was said, had its own unique cultural traditions that gave meaning to a distinct Palestinian culture. Hanān, for example, described Palestinian cultures as diverse but united. Despite their differences, in other words, they nevertheless constituted an encompassing Palestinian culture.

“Palestinian cultures are numerous but they are one. For example, look at our clothing. The *shāsheh* and the embroidered gown known as the *thobe* are different but unique. In terms of our cuisine, we also have many traditional dishes that are similar across the region. In our customs too, we are the same. We are hospitable toward our guests. We also have marriage traditions that are Palestinian. These traditions are rooted in us and *la nattkhallah* (we don’t discard them). We inherit these cultural habits from our generations and insha’Allah they will remain with us for the length of our lives so as long as we teach our children and our children teach their children, and so on.”

Interestingly enough, Hanān’s account admits a tension grounded in the idea that Palestinian ethnicity is both essential but perishable. As an essential quality of Palestinians, traditions reflect



a commonality among Palestinians across space and time. It is, in other words, a permanent feature of “the Palestinians” capable of defying local circumstances. Yet the effects of displacement threaten its essential quality. Thus, although “rooted” within them, Palestinians must nevertheless “teach” their children (ethnicize them) how to be ethnically Palestinian.

More than a positive affirmation of a unique Palestinian ethnicity, the idea that Palestinians had their own unique foods, clothing, and manners was often used to distinguish themselves from Jordanians. Ranā, for example, suggested that Palestinian customs were visible within their homes, which were different from Jordanian homes. “If you enter a house, you will know that it is a Palestinian house,” she said. “You can tell if the home is a Jordanian or Circassian home by its style or organization. You will know if it’s Palestinian by its owner too. Turāthnā are different from others.” According to Ranā, Palestinian homes were reflective of Palestinian ethnicity. For example, Ranā claimed that a “Palestinian” home was cleaner since Palestinians had more “culture” than many Jordanians. Palestinians’ urban and “cultured” status was distinct from the more rural and Bedouin culture of the Jordanians. In addition, Palestinian homes were more “authentic” than other homes. This, she explained, was visible in the originality of Palestinian cultural artifacts including the traditional “Palestinian” textiles and even foods.

For many refugees, the idea of a Palestinian heritage also reflected an effort to resist what they called the *Judaization* of Palestine and its culture. According to many Palestinians I met, the loss of Palestine not only meant the destruction of their homeland but also the appropriation of its culture by Israelis as Jewish. During my interview with Marwa, for example, she explained how Palestinians struggled to preserve their traditions against Israeli claims that it belonged to them. “The Jews *jarradū* (stripped) the Palestinians of everything we had! Even on

the level of our culture, they tried to take that too. Now you hear the Jews saying that humus is “Israeli” and even that the thobe we embroider is theirs.” Marwa also believed that Jordanians were trying to steal Palestinian culture. According to her, the lack of an “authentic” Jordanian culture meant that the Jordanians wanted to take Palestinian culture and claim it as their own. For example, many refugees described how Jordanians appropriated Palestinian clothing for themselves claiming it as a distinctive “Jordanian” tradition. The fellāhi thobe, I was told, was stolen by Jordanians and claimed as their own. “It is as if the Palestinians never came to Jordan or aren’t in Jordan today,” one Palestinian expressed. “What we brought was taken without any credit.” Rather than seeing Jordanian culture as an expression of Palestinian and Transjordanian traditions, Palestinians claimed that what might be described as cultural “mixing” reflected a sort of theft. Thus Palestinians believed they faced the dual threat of the colonization of their culture by Israel and Jordan.

“When the Palestinians came to Jordan, *endajammū* (we mixed) with the Jordanian people. Then they began to say that our heritage was theirs. Yes, our heritage was stolen by the Jordanians too. The thobe that is sold in Britain and America is sold as if it were a part of Jordanian heritage. My husband, he traveled to America and saw a woman wearing a thobe. He asked her where she bought it and do you know what she said? “I bought it in Israel.” “It is an Israeli thobe,” she said. She referred to it as Israeli dress!”

Nadā expressed a similar idea. “Even at the level of our clothing,” she explained, “the Jews want to steal Palestine.” “They want to claim everything [Palestinian] as their own. Our heritage, our culture, our land, everything, they want to take it from us!” Faced with the imminent threat of cultural colonization, Hanān described how she taught her daughter and children about their heritage.

“We teach our daughters how to sew. I have a daughter in the fourth grade and I tell her “mama, come on and I’ll teach you the Palestinian embroidery.” Every day she learns more and once we teach our children these things, it is impossible for them to forget. It’s impossible to lose because it sticks with them. I teach my

children and I know that they will teach their children. I make sure that we hold on to our heritage. And we hold on to our culture, our habits, our traditions. And insha'Allah, these will be inherited by each successive generation. Palestine and its culture will not be forgotten.”

Hanān’s comments underscored the importance of maintaining Palestinian culture beyond the mere promotion of an identity. For Hanān, as for many Palestinians, the maintenance of Palestinian culture was imperative; it represented an effort to affirm the distinctiveness of the Palestinian people and to resist the threat of erasure posed by the Judaization of Palestine and the promotion of Jordanian national culture to the exclusion of Palestinian contributions.



**Figure Fifteen: Palestinian Displaying a “Palestinian” Abaya**<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Photo taken by author.

In this sense, the idea that the homeland constituted an essential ethnicization of Palestinians in Jordan not only reflected the claim to *being ethnic* but also revealed a common anxiety among refugees concerning their displacement from Palestine and the establishment and expansion of Israel in their absence. Their awareness of the creation of Israel and the concomitant process of “Judaization” compelled a narrative of resistance in which the preservation of “Palestinian culture” represented much more than the reproduction of a heritage; it suggested an attempt to preserve the very nature of the homeland itself. The failure to “reproduce” Palestinian culture threatened both the survival of Palestine and the Palestinians.

The fear that Palestine was under threat by the promotion of Jewish national culture in Israel was not without its merit. For years scholars have described how the creation of Israel has been inextricably linked both ideologically and practically to the “erasure” of Palestine (Piterberg 2001). For example, Aron Shai (Shai 2006) has noted the historical roles of the Israel Land Administration (ILA) and the Israel Archaeological Survey Society (IASS) in the destruction of Palestinian homes in territories conquered in 1948 and 1967. According to Shai, both institutions have been critical to the formation of a non-Palestinian Israel in which all things deemed non-Jewish represent an aberration of the “real” past. Thus the IASS has played an essential role in the “clearing” of any “abandoned Arab villages” through systematic demolitions meant to reclaim the “original” land and past. Moreover, Nadia Abu El-Hajj (2006) has described the function of archaeology within the production of a national culture grounded in the erasure of anything Palestinian. In Israel, Abu El-Haj explained that archaeology was not just a scientific endeavor but, more importantly, a national cultural one (Abu El-Haj 2006). Hence the demolition of Palestinian property in Palestine has been framed by the Zionist belief that the “clearing” of Palestine is inextricably linked to the “restoration” of a mythical Jewish past

covered by the dross accumulated during Jews exilic period. Seen this way, the claim to an original Palestinian culture rooted in Palestine underscored the specific situation of displaced Palestinians, whose marginal position vis-à-vis the land and conflict meant that an “ethnic” homeland was much more than an idea: it was a strategy of survival.

### **Being National Without Nationalism: Materializing the Homeland in Everyday Life:**

Nations, wrote Eric Hobsbawm, are dual phenomenon constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless analyzed from below, that is, in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of *ordinary people*, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist (Hobsbawm 1992, 10). Drawing our attention to the “ground” of nationalism, Hobsbawm challenged scholars to look beyond the study of nations as a study of the elite to include the ordinary people for whom nationalists claim to speak. This view from below, argued Hobsbawm, is a view of nations seen not from the vantage point of governments and nationalists, but rather by the ordinary persons who are the objects of national action and propaganda (Hobsbawm 1992, 11). Answering Hobsbawm’s call for the study of nationalism from below, Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss developed an analytical framework for examining what they called “everyday nationhood.” Nationhood, according to Fox and Miller-Idriss, is negotiated and reproduced in everyday life in ways that reveal people’s attachments to “nations” and how they have become a part of the taken-for-granted landscape of things (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 537). By considering the everyday lives of ordinary people in which particular forms of nationhood, not nationalism, are enacted, both Fox and Miller-Idriss believed scholars could access some of the less visible albeit significant ways in which nationalism finds its expressions on the ground. Rather than “deducing the quotidian meaning and salience of nationalism from its political and cultural privileging, the study of everyday nationhood

examines the actual practices through which ordinary people engage and enact nationhood and nationalism *in the varied contexts of their everyday lives*<sup>173</sup> (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008).”

In the following section, I examine material representations of the homeland within the politics of ethno-national identification among Palestinian refugees in Jordan. As I will show, the homeland and its various sites are important symbols for Palestinian identity and nationhood that offer refugees an opportunity to enact national practices without being explicitly nationalist. Through the homeland, Palestinians produce and reproduce the “nation” in ways that not only promote the maintenance of national identification in the context of displacement but also avoid provoking Transjordanian nationalists.

Traveling through Jordan, a country heavily populated by Palestinian refugees and their descendants, one is struck by the invisibility of Palestinian national symbols. This is a curious fact considering that many of Jordan’s Palestinians have relatives living across the border in the West Bank and, to a lesser extent, in Gaza. In addition, one would think that the economic and social links between Palestinians living in the East and West Banks would translate into some sort of assertion of Palestinian national identification on the streets of Jordan. Despite this, very little about the public sphere seems to indicate the presence of Palestinian politics or nationalism in the lives of Palestinians in Jordan. In cities like Amman, for example, where Palestinians are believed to constitute a significant “demographic majority,” one would expect to encounter some signs of Palestinian nationalism. Instead, however, the opposite is the case; what one sees is that anything Palestinian is conspicuously absent. Neither flags nor nationalist posters are visible on the walls or streets of Amman. The refugee camps are not very different in this respect. Throughout my research, I visited several different refugee camps throughout Jordan. Save for

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<sup>173</sup> Emphasis is mine.

the occasional graffiti on the walls, nothing obviously Palestinian was displayed in public. This was particularly surprising to me given that my arrival in early January nearly coincided with the Palestinian national elections. Although Palestinians in Jordan were prevented from participating in the elections, I expected to find some public indication of Palestinian involvement in the elections, symbolic or otherwise. Yet the elections came and went and nothing explicitly nationalist could be seen.

The invisibility of Palestinian nationalism on the streets of Jordan was not, as I learned, an indication of Palestinian indifference to nationalism. On the contrary, it reflected a calculated response to a well-established policy of prohibiting Palestinian forms of nationalist expression in Jordan beginning after the war of Black September. Prior to the war, Palestinian organizations exercised significant autonomy within the Kingdom. As a result, public displays of Palestinian nationalism in daily life were a regular feature of the Jordanian landscape. But with the growing popularity of Palestinian nationalists and the expansion and recklessness of guerilla forces, King Hussein and his loyalists began to fear for the future of Hashemite rule. Thus in 1970, Palestinian guerillas and Hashemite loyalists engaged in a bloody battle ending with the expulsion of the guerillas and a concerted effort by the King to prevent any future threats to his rule. Accordingly, Palestinian nationalism was no longer tolerated. But the logic of Black September has facilitated an indefinite policy of control in which any forms of Palestinian nationalism represents a threat to the “security” of the Kingdom. Thus, until today, Jordanian authorities have treated Palestinian nationalism as an affront to the integrity of the Hashemite Crown and the Jordanian people. In 1988, for example, when approximately 150 Palestinians demonstrated against Israeli repression in the Occupied Territories, Jordanian authorities reacted violently. In addition to police attacks, Jordanian authorities arrested at least 23 members of the

Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)<sup>174</sup>. Similarly, following the outbreak of the second Intifada in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2001, the Jordanian government reinstated its ban on public demonstrations. According to local papers, the measure reflected the idea that "marches pose a threat to security and stability and hamper the people's interests"<sup>175</sup>.

This is not to say that Palestinians cannot express any identification with Palestine in Jordan. Some demonstrations, for example, are permissible if approved by the authorities in advance<sup>176</sup>. Moreover, Palestinians are permitted to organize "cultural" events that can function as symbolic representations of Palestinian national identification. Thus during my research, I attended a small exhibit in the upper-class neighborhood of Shmaisānī celebrating Palestinian "identity" through music, food, and a variety of Palestinian artifacts. In addition to ceramic art and an assortment of Palestinian textiles, a number of artistic posters and photos populated the scene. Prominent within the exhibit was Naji Al-Ali's well-known cartoon character, Handala, who decorated the work of several local artists. Notwithstanding the few images of Handala, olive trees, and several colorful depictions of Palestinian peasants, the entire event seemed slightly out of touch with the contemporary context. Given the intensity of Palestinian politics across the border, I was struck by the anachronistic representations of "Palestinian art." For example, several of the displays incorporated revolutionary imagery typical of the 1970s and 1980s including the face of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Superimposed on a Palestinian flag, Che's face served to locate the Palestinian struggle within the bygone period of socialist revolution and

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<sup>174</sup> See (Rice 1988).

<sup>175</sup> See (Hunaydi 2010)

<sup>176</sup> Organizing a protest, however, may come with certain risks given that displays of Palestinian interest in Palestine can be easily interpreted as disloyalty to Jordan. In such circumstances, Palestinians are less likely to organize any public protests.



Third World Nationalism. In this case, symbols of Palestinian identity were blended with more generic icons of “revolution” and anti-imperial art. In addition, contemporary forms of nationalistic expression such as martyr posters or the propaganda art of Palestinian political organizations like Fatah and Hamas were also missing. Strangely enough, neither PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat, nor Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yasīn, were anywhere to be found despite their prominence in Palestinian politics and recent deaths.

The suppression of Palestinian nationalism in Jordan was particularly apparent during two critical events that occurred during my fieldwork. First, there was Hamas’s electoral victory in January 2006 and its ascent to power in the Gaza Strip in 2007. Although Palestinians in Jordan could not vote in the elections, the event was of great significance to Palestinians on the street. Many of the Palestinians I knew were glued to their television sets waiting for the impact of the Islamic organization’s victory over Fatah. Pleased by the Islamic movement’s success, for example, a close Palestinian friend of mine spoke about his visits to the late Ahmed Yasīn during his hospitalization in Amman. Offering both his support and admiration for the militant Islamic movement in Palestine, Muhammad believed that Hamas would change the course of Palestinian politics and the future of refugees in Jordan. Like other Palestinians I knew, he was excited by Hamas’s victory and seemed hopeful about the years to come. The excitement, however, quickly vanished when, in 2007, Hamas and Fatah engaged in a bloody battle in Gaza representing an unprecedented breakdown of Palestinian unity. Within the private spaces of Palestinian homes and centers, the conflict was the subject of intense debates in Jordan. Palestinian families and friends were engulfed by a conflict perceived as having important implications for the future of Palestinians in Jordan and the world. In the camps, little could be said without returning to the subject of the Palestinian divide. Asad, for example, the Palestinian director of an Islamic

charity associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, expressed his hopes for a successful Hamas takeover. “They won the vote,” he explained, “and that gives them the right to rule.” Whether in support of Hamas or Fatah, one thing was clear: beyond the silence of the streets, Palestinians were deeply involved in the politics of Palestine.

The second event of importance was the Israel/Hizbullah War in the summer of 2006. Despite the significance of the conflict for the region, no visible signs of support (or condemnation) of Hizbullah could be seen on the streets of Amman. Indeed, nothing seemed to be happening at all. Viewed from the street, it was as if there was no war. Yet many of the Palestinians I met said they wanted to demonstrate their support for Hizbullah. Described as the newest front in the ongoing conflict between Israel and “the Arabs,” refugees in camps and cities staked their claim on the Lebanese side of the struggle. Even among Palestinians I knew who were staunchly anti-Shiite, Hizbullah was widely perceived as a courageous force fighting on the Palestinians’ side. In private, for example, Palestinians bragged about the strength of Hizbullah fighters and the cowardice of the Arab governments. Not since the war of 1973, a Palestinian acquaintance said, had the Arabs seen such resilience. One Palestinian I knew said that, for the duration of the war, he would suspend his attitude towards Shiites and pray for their victory over the Israelis. Although his friend had given him a video lecture explaining the “deceit of the Shiites,” he decided to leave it aside until the war was over and the outcome was clear. The silence within Jordan became even clearer as I traveled across the border to Syria. In Damascus, scarcely a space in the old city could be found without a public display of Syrian support for Hizbullah. Flags, t-shirts, audio cassettes of Hassan Nasrallah, and an assortment of Hizbullah-related products crowded the courtyard outside of the Umayyad mosque. On the surface, at least, Hizbullah was at the center of public attention and expression.

Suffice it to say that Palestinians have few opportunities for expressing national identifications in Jordan. Fearful of provoking civil war sensitivities among Transjordanian nationalists or raising suspicions among Jordan's security force, the *mukhābarāt*, many Palestinians avoid any conspicuous expressions of Palestinian national politics in public life. But the absence of explicit forms of Palestinian nationalism from the streets of Jordan does not necessarily mean that Palestinians do not engage in the practice of national representations. On the contrary, within both the public and private spheres of Palestinian social life, assertions of Palestinian national identification are visible albeit in less conspicuous forms.



**Figure Sixteen: Framed Image<sup>177</sup>** – The text on the top reads “The Return,” on the bottom reads “Jerusalem is Ours,” and in the center reads “Palestine”

Among refugees, two particular symbols of national identification are common: Al-Quds and Palestine. According to Geertz, symbols are cultural ciphers through which meanings are assigned to phenomena and attachments made between people and things (Geertz 1977, 216). In

<sup>177</sup> Photo taken by author in home in Baqa'a refugee camp.

the context of nationalism, symbols such as flags, anthems, and statues offer individuals an important opportunity to not only use objects to represent the nation to which they claim membership but also to represent their solidarities within that nation with their co-nationals. Bearing a flag thus communicates the dual message that one identifies with a particular nation and evokes her solidarity with others who share that identification. As Fox and Miller-Idriss have observed, public spaces adorned with symbolic accoutrements of the nation provide explicitly national parameters to facilitate the organization of experience of national solidarities (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 545).



**Figure Seventeen: Image of The Dome of the Rock (left), Al-Aqsā Mosque (Right), and patterns of the “Palestinian” Kafiya (background)**<sup>178</sup>

Within the public and private spaces of Palestinian life, one of the most ubiquitous national symbols is that of Al-Quds. When riding a bus, for example, it is not uncommon to find images of *Masjid Al-Aqsā* (the Aqsa Mosque) or *Masjid Qubbat As-Sakhra* (the Dome of the

<sup>178</sup> Photo taken by author of postcard hung on interior space of Islamic center.

Rock) in the form of a sticker decorating the passenger wall or as a cut-out dangling from a rearview mirror. In shops as well, large framed images of Qubbat As-Sakhra can be found hanging conspicuously above the counter. These images are particular to Palestinians; their absence can often mean that the driver or shop owner is not Palestinian. As such, they functioned as a multivocal symbol (Turner 1970a) and an important marker of difference in two senses. First, they distinguished individuals as “Palestinian” since the symbols of Jerusalem came to represent an attachment to Palestine. Jerusalem, in this sense, came to stand for all of Palestine and its people. By displaying it, an individual conveyed the idea that Jerusalem mattered and it mattered because she was a Palestinian. The homeland and its people thus converged within the image of Jerusalem. Second, these symbols identified the kind of relationship an individual had with Palestine and the Palestinians. For example, throughout the refugee camps I found images of Al-Quds bearing particular phrases such as “*Al-Quds Lanā*” (Our Jerusalem or Jerusalem is Ours) or “*Al-Hulum*” (the Dream). For Palestinians, the captions were essential: they moved beyond the general connection to Al-Quds as a religious site for Muslims (and Christians), a connection that Jordanians could also potentially assert, and established a more specific relationship to Palestine as a Palestinian national homeland. In this sense, “the dream” gave the symbol of Al-Quds a multivocal quality signifying both the specific desire to return Jerusalem and the Palestinians to Palestine and resist Israeli nationalist claims to that territory. Moreover, the captions nationalized Jerusalem by articulating a position vis-à-vis the status of Jerusalem as an occupied territory. The claim that Jerusalem is “ours,” in other words, represented an explicit nationalist challenge to the Israeli claim that Jerusalem is “theirs.”



**Figure Eighteen: Image of Al-Aqsā Mosque and “The Dream”<sup>179</sup>**

Beyond the public realm, the interior spaces of the home and private institutional settings also contained important national symbols. One of the most common material representations of Palestine I noticed during my research was the map. As Peter Jackson has noted, maps codify knowledge and represent it in symbolic terms. They project a preferred reading of the material world mirrored in the depiction of social space (Jackson 1989, 186). The maps I observed among Palestinian refugees were no exception in this regard. They represented a symbolic effort to sustain the national composition of a people displaced and a homeland destroyed. Because the space of Palestine depicted in the maps no longer existed, these representations of Palestine reflected an attempt to transmit knowledge of a place no longer knowable through experience to a people no longer united in space. In so doing, the maps depicted an odd configuration of time and space. They represented an image of the past that paradoxically has yet to be realized: the nation-state of Palestine.

<sup>179</sup> Photo taken by author at Baqa'a refugee camp.

Depicting Palestine as the geographic territory of the British Mandate, several variations of the pre-Partition map were noteworthy. One of the more common maps depicted the entire territory under the mandate period and included a complete list of Palestinian villages and cities, many of which were depopulated and destroyed by Zionist forces or the Israeli state during or after the 1948 war or Nakba. The effort to document these sites served three purposes. First, identifying the specific location of Palestinian villages, towns, and cities reflected an effort to preserve the geographic sites of what were originally Palestinian spaces despite their historic fate. For Palestinians, these spaces still existed albeit in a transient state. They were at once the former homes of Palestinian refugees and the present and future spaces of the eventual return of their original inhabitants and restoration of what previously existed. Second, the identification of these spaces allowed the younger generation to develop a cohesive concept of Palestine in which all sites remain located within the historic territory. The maps ensured, in other words, that Palestine *was* and *is* despite historical events and contemporary realities. On a more basic level, Palestinians also suggested that there was no other way to depict the homeland. Without these sites, what else could Palestine be? Third, the maps reinforced the convergence of land and people in a way that reinforced a particular nation form, one rooted in the pre-Partition period. Palestine, as the homeland of the Palestinian nation, could only be such if the nation was in its proper place, which consisted of the entirety of Mandate Palestine. The maps thus served to underscore the indivisibility of Palestine and the Palestinians.

A second variation of the map of Palestine depicted the homeland and the aftermath of post-partition events. At a small youth club in the center of the Baqa'a refugee camp, for example, I saw a map depicting the routes taken by refugees who fled their natal villages in 1948 to locations in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and what remained of Palestine after the war. The center

provided a large indoor space where Palestinian youth could engage in table tennis and other athletic activities. Placed within such centers, the maps functioned to nationalize space by symbolically incorporating “the nation’s” history in an otherwise non-national context. Engaged in everyday activities, the youth became active spectators submerged in a national space symbolically representing “their” location within the Palestinian past as refugees. Performing the rituals of everyday life “here” in Jordan as refugees, the maps revealed the story behind their non-presence “there” in Palestine. Put another way, the maps not only offered knowledge about what Palestine was before the partition but also showed, in geographic terms, how Palestinians became part of a fractured geography in the region.



**Figure Nineteen: “Palestine” by Ismā’il Shamūt<sup>180</sup>**

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<sup>180</sup> Photo taken by author.



Few maps represented the post-Partition geography of Palestine reflected in contemporary cartographic depictions of the region. Thus neither the West Bank nor Gaza Strip was identified as a distinct region within the territorial space of the maps. Instead, Gaza was depicted in its pre-1948 form as any other region within the country. The West Bank, on the other hand, was simply non-existent. Another important aspect of the maps was their refusal to accept the geography of the present. In as much as current maps of Israel erase any traces of Palestine, so too did the maps of Palestine I saw erase Israel. Where Israel was depicted, it was only to emphasize the historic colonization of the homeland by Jewish populations and the dismal prospects of a Palestinian future. For example, one map included a series of panels reflecting four periods in the colonization of Palestine. In each panel, the map indicated how much land was lost to Israeli control culminating in the contemporary period in which Palestinian land reflected less than 10% of the entire historic territory. In either case, the maps were clear: Palestine remained an undivided territory defined according to the pre-partition period threatened by the specter of erasure and Israeli colonization.

On several occasions, Palestinians gave me extra copies of their maps as a way of sharing and preserving the historic character of the homeland. According to some Palestinians, the maps would ensure that the Palestine they know will never be forgotten. In private institutions such as *Markaz Itām Al-Islāmī* (The Islamic Orphan Center) in the *Zaytūna* camp, depictions of the Palestinian homeland went even further to include explicitly nationalist symbols<sup>181</sup>. The lobby, for example, displayed a large map of pre-partition Palestine. Hung immediately above a row of three chairs facing the offices, the map reflected a pedagogical purpose as much as a national one. When I asked the director about the map, he informed me that it, like other maps in the

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<sup>181</sup> I have used a pseudonym for the camp and location in order to protect the identity of participants and the institution of which they are members.

center, was used to teach the children about their homeland and nation. “The children must not forget their homeland or the fact that they have brothers and sisters back home,” he said.

In addition to the maps, most of the office desks and walls were decorated with images of Jerusalem or small wooden items depicting Palestine. On the desk of one of the center’s instructors stood a small free-standing Palestine carved out of an olive tree. According to him, it was made of an olive tree because the trees are part of Palestine. “Our lives in Palestine were dependent on the olive trees and our homeland is nothing without them,” he explained. In a more telling example of nationalist commitment, the markaz walls were decorated with a conspicuous assortment of stickers bearing the images of Hamas leaders including the movement’s spiritual founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yasīn, and its former spokesman in Gaza, Dr. Abdel Azīz Ar-Rantīsī. Both figures were assassinated by the Israeli military in 2004 and are widely seen as Palestinian martyrs. The images were striking for their reverence; both Yasīn and Rantisi were often shown from angles that gave them iconic qualities. In one image, Rantisi was shown offering a kiss on Yasīn’s forehead as if to demonstrate the sheikh’s paternal authority and saintly status. The stickers were also remarkable for their visibility. Until then, I had not seen any display of support for Palestinian organizations or leaders.

Particular symbols of Palestine were also brought into larger contexts in ways that nationalized space without explicitly challenging the centrality of Jordanian nationalism. In the summer of 2007, for example, I visited an UNRWA facility on the outskirts of Amman for a large festival celebrating the end of the summer camp program for refugees. The event was well attended and included administrative figures from UNRWA and representatives from private organizations that assisted with the camp. To open the ceremony, a group of Palestinian children surrounded a large flag pole and jointly raised the Jordanian flag. Shortly thereafter, the children

marched together in single file line toward a large space with dozens of seats for an audience and a stage for the speakers and performers. Behind the seating area hung an immense banner with an image of Al-Aqsā mosque on the upper left hand corner. At the center of the banner was an outline of the Dome of the Rock. On the left ran two stripes (one red, one green) that crossed at the bottom and were outlined by white. Finally, on the upper right hand corner was a faded image of the “Palestinian” hatta or kafiya.

Several features of the event highlight the ways in which Palestinians, even within the denationalized presence of UNRWA, can engage in nationalizing practices without being nationalist. First, by opening the event with the raising of a Jordanian flag, the organizers paid tribute to Jordan through the most important of nationalist symbols: the Jordanian flag. Yet the flag did not dominate the visual space of the event. On the contrary, the stage and seats were organized in a large open space well beyond the presence of the flagpole. Thus the flag hung high above the event in a space invisible to its participants. The second feature of the event concerned the banner. Much like the symbolic representations of the homeland seen in the camps, the banner also promoted a sense of Palestinian solidarity without necessarily challenging the limits of Jordanian tolerance. Yet this banner came closer than most symbols in two ways. First, by including the colors of the Palestinian flag—black, red, green, and white—, the banner represented a key symbol of nationalism without actually displaying they symbol itself; the colors stood for the flag.



**Figure Twenty: Dome of the Rock (center), Al-Aqsā (top left corner), and pattern of “Palestinian” Kafiya (top right corner)<sup>182</sup>**

Second, the image of the kafiya represented an important symbol of Palestinian identification that has particular meaning in Jordan. For many Palestinians, the red and white kafiya worn by many Jordanians is seen as a symbol of “Jordanian identity.” Thus wearing the black and white kafiya has come to signify one’s identification as a Palestinian. By including the kafiya in the banner, Palestinians were effectively identifying in terms that not only suggested their symbolic commonality as Palestinians but also their commonality as “not Jordanians.” The third feature concerned an act performed by the children during the march. Walking in a single file line, the children (at one point) raised their hands together and used their index and middle fingers to form a “V.” The V, in this context, was of no minor importance. This was routinely used by the late Yasser Arafat during and after the Intifāda to mean “victory” against the Israelis. By raising their hands at this otherwise non-national event celebrating a summer camp among

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<sup>182</sup> Photo taken by author.

refugees, the V came to symbolize an important national act specific to Palestinians and the Palestinian resistance against Israel. Symbolically, the V enacted a simple but important form of national identification specific to Palestinians.



**Figure Twenty-One: Children Raising Arms and Forming “V” with Hands**<sup>183</sup>

Much like the Islamic center described above, Palestinian homes also contained a variety of nationalizing symbols. For example, several homes I visited were decorated with framed portraits of the late *Fatah* leader, Yaser Arafat. Within other homes, including Abu ‘Imrān’s, the walls bore nationalist symbols of Hamas. When I asked him about the symbols, he offered the following response: “Palestinians care about Hamas. We chose them as our leaders.” Support for Hamas was particularly popular among the younger generation who often placed stickers in their rooms on furniture or their school notebooks. In Warda’s room, for example, a young Palestinian who lived in southeast Amman, the wardrobe unit was covered with nationalist stickers including images of both Fatah and Hamas members, flags, and Intifada-related imagery. She also showed me bracelets she made bearing the colors of the Palestinian flag. During several interviews with families of higher economic standing, my Palestinian hosts would point

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<sup>183</sup> Photo taken by author.

to a variety of items reflective of their attachments to Palestine. Photographs, coffee cups, and unused cooking items were all presented as symbols of Palestine demonstrating a family's origins and attachment to the nation. Depending on the income of the family, the scale and quality of items could range from the simple possession of a map to an extravagant collection of clothing and furniture. One home was particularly remarkable for its elaborate assortment of items representing the family's origins in *Khalīl* (Hebron). Hand-woven pillows, sheets, and framed textile patterns decorated the guest room while a small depiction of pre-Partition Palestine carved from the wood of an olive tree was prominently displayed in the center of the room. Khalīl was one of the cities marked on the carving. All of these items, I was told, were distinctly *Khalīlī* (of Hebron) and symbolized their specific roots in Palestine.

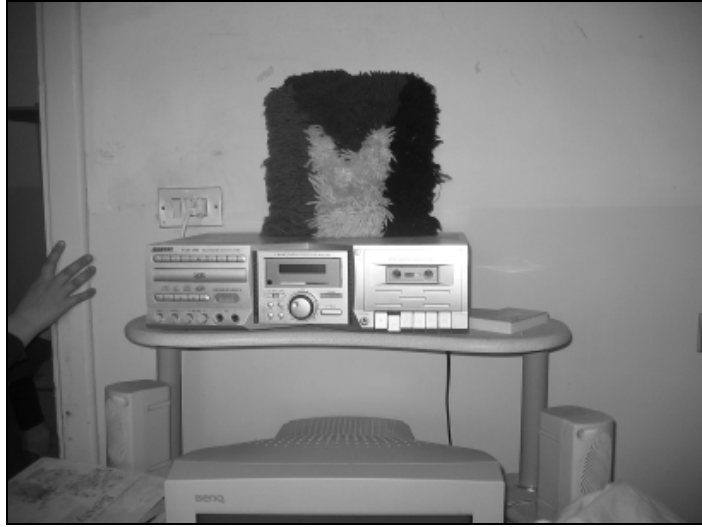


**Figure Twenty-Two: Wood Carving of “Nakba Palestine” with Palestinian Flag Colors and Image of “Refugee”<sup>184</sup>**

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<sup>184</sup> Photo taken by author in home in Baqa’a refugee camp.

The variety of items notwithstanding, it was clear that representing the homeland either through material depictions of pre-partition Palestine or through nationalist symbols of affiliation including the Palestinian flag or images of Yaser Arafat and Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn was a common and important feature of Palestinian space. For many Palestinians, these representations provided an essential reminder of their origins in Palestine and specific connections to a village or city. “The human always searches for his or her roots,” Asad explained. “My mother and father are from a village in Al-Quds called *‘Ayn Karam*. We must know this because the Palestinian issue is a problem for an entire country. The Palestinian, in particular, needs [to know] his identity because, without it, he is nothing. He will lose everything.” For Asad, as for many Palestinians, maps and other material expressions of Palestine and Palestinianness were important for identifying one’s origin and ongoing connection to Palestine. In this sense, maps of pre-partition Palestine represented much more than the memory of Palestine before the war of 1948; they also represented the very existence of its people and their enduring claim to belong. Moreover, the images gave Palestinians an opportunity to display their “national” attachments through symbols that could avoid the limitations set by Jordanian nationalism. Through Jerusalem in public or through a map in private, Palestinian refugees could use symbols to assert an important identification as a “nation” connected to a homeland.



**Figure Twenty-Three: Woven Palestinian Flag in Home in Baq'a Camp<sup>185</sup>**

In addition, nationalist imagery functioned as a symbolic representation of an individual's participation in homeland politics. Through the images of political figures such as Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn, Palestinians could articulate their interest and connection to contemporary debates in Palestinian national politics. Stickers of Hamas could thus represent one's support for the organization's recent electoral victory over the hitherto dominant political party, Fatah. Similarly, combining images of Hamas and Fatah could represent one's allegiance to both parties and join the broader call for national unity. Thus Warda displayed stickers of both Arafat and Yasīn on her furniture. The two images, she said, showed her support for a national unity government and desire to end the split between both organizations. "We are all Palestinians," she said. "We cannot be divided."

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<sup>185</sup> Photo taken by author.





**Figure Twenty-Four: Large Armoire Displaying Images of Hamas Leaders and Fatah Leader, Yasser Arafat<sup>186</sup>**

**Conclusion:**

The positioning and repositioning of Caribbean cultural identities, wrote Stuart Hall, can be related to at least three presences, one of which is the *Presence Africaine*, or the presence of Africa (Hall 2003, 240). According to Hall, the presence of Africa was so important to Caribbean peoples that everyone, regardless of ethnic or racial background, would have to “look it in the face” and “speak its name.” Yet Hall was careful to note the instability of “Africa” as a source of “identities” since, like the African diaspora, it too experienced four hundred years of displacement and dismemberment. “The original “Africa” is no longer there. It too has been transformed (Hall 2003, 241).” Drawing on the work of Edward Said, Hall described the African presence as one constituted within an imaginative geography and history, which helps the mind

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<sup>186</sup> Photo taken by author in home in Wihdāt refugee camp.

to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the difference between what is close to it and what is far away [Said cited in (Hall 2003, 241)].

A similar consideration of the Palestinian refugee context in Jordan reveals what might be described as the “presence of Palestine.” As a “source” of one’s origin, Palestine remains an inextricable presence without which certain imaginings of the “Palestinians” in Jordan cannot take place. In this chapter, I’ve examined the meaning of this presence as an imagined homeland within a discourse of identity grounded in ideas about genealogical and territorial origins. Among refugees, the idea of Palestine reflects a timeless territorial space paradoxically rooted in the British colonial imaginary called “Mandate Palestine.” According to this idea, the very borders that facilitated Palestine’s partition were represented as the “essential” borders of the homeland that transcended time and space. Thus despite the partition of Palestine and displacement of the Palestinians, the homeland emerged as a fundamentally intact albeit occupied space awaiting the return of its population.

The presence of Palestine I described also underscored the significance of the Nakba and Naksa generations in the meaning of the homeland for their Jordan-born relatives. Born in the refugee camps of Amman, I argued that the imagined homeland among the youth reflected the imaginings of the displaced generations that once lived in Palestine. Fashioned within the memories of the “original refugees,” Palestine was transmitted to the youth in ways that ensured the existence of a certain “Palestine” and the claim to return. Moreover, the presence of Palestine emerged within the genealogical claims of a people rooted in place. As a community of common descent linked to a particular territory, Palestinians could deny the facts of their birth and lives in Jordan by articulating an interminable genealogical presence in Palestine and the fundamental presence of Palestine in them.

Finally, this chapter considered the function of the homeland within the practice of everyday nationhood. Moving beyond the analysis of nationalism ‘from above,’ I examined the ways in which ordinary people engaged in nationalizing practices without becoming nationalist. As Fox and Miller-Idriss noted, national symbols – flags, anthems, statues and landmarks – are neatly packaged distillations of the nation: they are the linchpins that connect people to the nation (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 545). In Jordan, where Palestinian nationalism is strictly controlled, I argued that refugees asserted their national identifications in less conspicuous means. It was through symbolic representations of the homeland manifested in maps, carvings, or depictions of specific sites such as (the) Al-Aqsā mosque that Palestinians could assert national identifications and promote certain solidarities. Yet these practices were not the usual productions of national elites; rather, they were the mundane enactments of nationhood that suggest the importance of the everyday in the meaning and experience of “nation.” Again, as Fox and Miller-Idriss noted:

This is nationhood as it is meaningfully embodied, expressed and sometimes performed in the routine contexts of everyday life. The nation as a discursive construct is reproduced not only through direct discursive engagement, but also as it is implicated tangentially through talk and interaction. It is the practical accomplishment of ordinary people talking about themselves and their surroundings in ways that implicate and reproduce a national view of the world. These are the micro-settings for the invocation and reproduction of nationhood in everyday life (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 542).

From the analysis above, two particular conclusions can be drawn regarding refugee conceptions of the homeland and Palestinian identification. First, the Palestine “imagined” by refugees is highly idealized both by the displaced generation of the Nakba and Naksa and by the Jordan-born youth. For the Nakba and Naksa generation, the homeland is often described in terms that distinguish it from Jordan. Thus the landscapes, fruits, and vegetables of Palestine are juxtaposed with those of Jordan. In this sense, the homeland signifies less an actual place than it

does a desired time when the displaced generations of '48 and '67 were living in Palestine. Jordan represents the consequence of displacement, which can only ever be less than the full experience of life before the dislocation. For the younger generations born in Jordan, the homeland is also idealized albeit in slightly different terms. For them, Palestine represents not what *was* so much as what is hoped *to be*: the mythical space of return in which all things will be “normal again.” Faced with the hardships of life as a refugee in Jordan, the younger generations have internalized the idealizations of the older generations not only as the idea of a place and being in the past but also as the projection of the future, or the return. Together, these idealized conceptions of the homeland offer Palestinians an important sense of commonality grounded in their shared sense of what Palestine means: a past unchanged, an impermanent present, and an inevitable future.

The second conclusion extends from the first and is elucidated more clearly in the following chapter, namely that the homeland is a multivocal symbol through which Palestinian identification becomes possible in particular ways. Thus as I show in chapter six below, it would be a mistake to assume that the homeland is idealized according to the nostalgic longings of the Nakba and Naksa generation alone. On the contrary, the inclusion of religion in Palestinian national discourse has reconfigured the meaning of the homeland in new ways that transcend the nostalgia of the Nakba and Naksa generation. Whereas the Nakba and Naksa generation emphasized its pre-Partition past as the natural home of the Palestinians, many Palestinian refugees imagine the homeland as a religious space sacred to Palestinians in particular and Muslims in general. In this sense, representations of Palestine as a Muslim territory seen in the next chapter underscore Maurice Halbwach's point that the image of the past shared by a population is strongly shaped by the needs of the present (Halbwachs 1992). As will become

clear below, the idea of Muslim Palestine represents much more than the imaginings of a generation tied to the past; it suggests the hopes and aspirations of a population firmly entrenched in the present.

## **Chapter Seven:** **Muslim Palestine: Homeland, National Politics, and the Islamic Nation of Palestine**

In the following discussion, I examine the significance of religious nationalism for Palestinian refugees in Jordan. In particular, I explore how the religious nationalist discourse of Hamas in the Palestinian context of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been adopted by Palestinian refugees in Jordan and is reflected in local identifications of the Palestinian people, homeland and struggle. I argue that national identifications among Palestinian refugees in Jordan not only reflect the influence of Hamas in the camps but also the willful engagement of Palestinians with homeland politics. Despite their marginal status as refugees living beyond the center of Palestinian national politics, Palestinians are not passive spectators of homeland nationalism. Rather, they stake meaningful claims within homeland politics from afar in ways that underscores the significance of national politics for their specific situation in Jordan. Thus for Palestinian refugees in Jordan, the terms of religious nationalism allowed Palestinians to claim a place, and take a stance, within Palestinian national politics (to participate in nationhood) and to assert their eternal bonds to the homeland and its people.

### **Introduction:**

The *Markaz Itām Al-Islāmī* (The Islamic Orphan Center) sat in the center of the *Zaytuna* camp at the top of *Jabal Al-Sharaf*<sup>187</sup>. Connected to one of the many mosques scattered throughout the camp, it was also adjacent to the UNRWA compound where the camp's primary and secondary schools were located. Like the U.N. compound, the Markaz was a peculiarly bland and unnoticeable place. The exterior was flat and white with little aesthetic value. The building itself was a small, three-story box with no distinguishing marks except for the layers of

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<sup>187</sup> I have used a pseudonym for the camp and location in order to protect the identity of participants and the institution of which they are members.

paint peeling off the lower walls and the sign featuring a child in a white *thobe* sitting cross-legged while reading the Qur'an. Neither inviting nor un-inviting, it stood there alongside the typical U.N. compound that, like most U.N. compounds, reminded you that you were in a typical refugee camp.

The Markaz was also a brief walk from the camp's central market. Packed with local vendors and shoppers from the camp and surrounding area, the streets were crowded and noisy. Cars and buses jammed the narrow streets as parents shopped and children played. Years ago, the commercial zone belonged to the PLO and served as their main offices in Jordan. Instead of the plethora of small-scale retail stores found today, the center housed scores of PLO facilities including clinics and training centers. After the PLO's expulsion in 1970, Jordanian authorities stripped the center down and abolished all political and military activity. They also erected their own police station on the west entrance of the camp<sup>188</sup>. Today, the commercial center was still the center of gravity for the camp albeit for social and economic reasons. With the mosque and U.N. compound to the east, the market was a public space where children played, Muslims prayed, and consumers shopped. It was without a doubt still the nucleus of the camp.

My first visit to the Markaz was only my second visit to the camp. Accustomed to the more spacious and recognizable surroundings of the Hāshmī Shamālī, I couldn't help but feel the mark of my inexperienced presence in an area where life moved at an unfamiliar pace. A sprawling urban slum, the Zaytuna camp was immense and crowded. Its homes were tightly woven together along the sides of narrow, bumpy streets. Barely a car squeezed by through most of the camp's passages and even the sun fought its way through the encroaching concrete landscape. Like most areas of East Amman, Zaytuna was crowded and bustling with activity. In

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<sup>188</sup> I also saw police stations within four other official UNRWA refugee camps.

the camp, however, the limited space gave the impression of an innumerable crowd of people aggressively moving past one another as they carved a path within the dense stream of bodies. Even in the spacious center, cars, carts, and donkeys carrying burdensome loads of produce forced their way through the massive crowds shopping or conversing in the plaza. But the camp was an intimate and exciting place. The physical density of the landscape and people produced a vibrant social life where congregation was an inevitable result of daily life. Walking through the camp, I noticed the routine engagement of its residents whose close living experience produced a social familiarity and clear sense of an “inside.” People knew and noticed one another; strangers were also noticed.

The Markaz was designed for orphan boys and young men. Only a few blocks away was its sister branch for orphan girls and widowed women. Both institutions were private and run under a broader network of Islamic charities called *jam’iyya Al-Markaz Al-Islāmī Al-Khayrīya* (Association of The Islamic Charitable Centers). Funding came from private donors in Jordan, the region, and beyond. As the director of the women’s orphanage, Um Hāzim, explained, “We even used to receive support from individuals in the United States.” “After September 11, the money stopped coming.” Neither facility had any connection to the United Nations and thus ran its own independent curriculum and activities including religious instruction and fieldtrips. Most of the young men and women who worked in the *Marākaz*<sup>189</sup> lived in the camps. As one volunteer explained to me, the Qur’an places great emphasis on the care of orphans. Participating in the orphanages was thus a good way to promote the principles of his religion and support the young boys and girls who needed the attention. The staff worked closely with the

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<sup>189</sup> Marākaz is the Arabic plural for markaz and means “centers” in English.



children and teens on a range of activities including sports, theater, and religious learning. The orphans also traveled to various sites including the holy city of Mecca for *Al-‘Umra*<sup>190</sup>.

Located on the second and third floors of the building, the Markaz was wide and spacious. It held numerous offices, a large activities area containing a small theatrical stage, volleyball net, and a large inflatable for the younger children. The Markaz also had a large kitchen and several classrooms overlooking the UN compound below. Decorating the walls were a variety of stickers and pictures of the two main Palestinian Muslim holy sites in Al-Quds: Masjid Al-Aqsā and Masjid Qubbat As-Sakhra. In addition to the religious national symbols of the homeland, several maps of pre-Partition Palestine were prominently placed within the lobby. The maps displayed the names of hundreds of Palestinian villages and city centers. Finally, the Markaz’s walls were decorated with a conspicuous assortment of stickers bearing the images of Hamas leaders including the movement’s spiritual founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn, and its former spokesman in Gaza, Dr. Abdel Azīz Al-Rantīsī. The stickers were remarkable for their visibility. Until then, I had not seen any public display of support for Palestinian organizations like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or its leaders. To be sure, shop owners and even bus drivers decorated their walls and windows with pictures of the homeland including the holy sites of Jerusalem. But those images were less explicitly nationalist than these<sup>191</sup>. The Markaz broke this pattern by displaying the stickers in conspicuous areas throughout the building.

The *mudīr* (director) of the Markaz provided a warm and cordial reception. Fluent in both English and Arabic, he listened intently as I described my research interests in both

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<sup>190</sup> Al-‘Umra is a pilgrimage Muslims can take to Mecca at any time of the year. While it is highly regarded as desirable, Al-‘Umra does not substitute the mandatory *Hajj* pilgrimage, which every able-bodied Muslim must complete in her or his lifetime, economic circumstances permitting.

<sup>191</sup> See preceding chapter for discussion of these images.

languages. Although not a camp resident himself, he had worked for the Markaz for a considerable amount of time and expressed deep satisfaction with his work. He agreed to an interview and offered me a tour of the Markaz. We walked throughout the center as he described the daily routine of activities. After school, he explained, the children would come to the center for religious classes and general activities including sports and games. The staff would also help them with creative activities including plays and songs. As we toured the center, the mudīr also introduced me to many of the children with the terms “*Muslim Amrīkī*” (American Muslim). The children were excited to meet me and were generally friendly and inquisitive. After touring the facilities and discussing the purpose and structure of the Markaz, the mudīr invited me to return for a full day of interviews with him and other staff members. He also offered to bring local volunteers from the camp for a broader interview pool. I agreed and returned the following day.



**Figure Twenty-Five: Symbol on Markaz Brochure (left) and Symbol of Hamas (right)<sup>192</sup>**

Over the course of the next two weeks, I returned to the Markaz several times for formal and informal interviews and participant observation. Meeting first with the mudīr, subsequent visits offered me numerous opportunities to speak with staff, local volunteers, and the children as well. I also frequented the women’s branch of the orphanage nearby. Throughout my visits, it became clear that a distinct pattern of religious-national identification was slowly emerging. Woven into discussions about the Palestinian people, Palestine, and the national cause were key

<sup>192</sup> Photo taken by author of brochure. Hamas symbol from [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/2d/Small\\_hamas\\_logo.gif](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/2d/Small_hamas_logo.gif)

religious terms like “Islam” and “Muslims.” Palestine, for example, was often described as a “Muslim land” of sacred value that could not be divided by “negotiations.” Upon first glance, I thought the significance of religion for ethno-national claims and the meaning of the homeland was directly linked to the religious nature of the Markaz itself. Where else would religion matter if not in an Islamic institution? But as my research progressed and participant pool expanded, the question of religion remained central in many ways. As I later discovered, the religious national discourse of Hamas reflected in the idea of “Muslim Palestine” and the “Islamic” struggle for its liberation were ubiquitous; whether during my discussions with a local Imam in the Wihdāt camp, during focus group interviews at a women’s center, or during interviews with refugees in their homes throughout the various camps of Amman, Islam was intimately connected with particular ideas about the Palestinian “nation,” homeland, and struggle. As such, it functioned as an important categorical mode of identification in which religion represented a fundamental commonality between some Palestinians (certainly not all) and enabled particular claims about the meaning and rights of the Palestinian “nation.”

In this chapter, I examine the meaning of Palestine as a Muslim homeland among refugees and argue that the sacred conception of Palestine as a Muslim territory reflects two points about Palestinian ethno-national identifications. First, the religious conception of Palestine as a Muslim homeland underscores the influence and importance of the religious nationalist movement, Hamas, to Palestinians in Jordan. Although marginalized from the center of Palestinian national politics in the West Bank and Gaza, the religious meaning of Palestine articulated by refugees in Jordan shows that they are nonetheless engaged in national debates of the homeland: they take a stance vis-à-vis homeland nationalist agendas and claim its relevance through particular discourses. In this sense, national articulations of the homeland among

Palestinian refugees indicate the importance of thinking about nationhood as a contingent event. According to Rogers Brubaker, nationhood or nationness is something that happens; it is a contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision that suddenly crystallizes rather than develops (Brubaker 1996, 19). Located within the context of Hamas's electoral victory, I believe that Palestinian discourse about the homeland as a religious space speaks not necessarily to the development of religious nationalism among refugees but to the "moment" in which that discourse took place. It was within the context of Hamas's ascent to power within the national institutions of the quasi-state in Palestine that refugees engaged in religious national discourse, it "crystallized". The moment of the elections and victory was a nationalizing event that transformed interpretive frames, perceptions, and evaluations among refugees (Brubaker 1996, 20). If it ever was before, in 2006-2007 Palestine *became* a Muslim homeland and Palestinians *became* a Muslim nation within the context of Hamas's victory.

Second, this chapter emphasizes the local importance of religious nationalism for Palestinian refugees seeking to challenge their marginal status within the arena of homeland politics and within the conflict with Israel more generally. As I will show, religious national identifications of the "Palestinians" and "Palestine" provided refugees with a powerful discourse in which to frame their connection to the homeland and the legitimacy of the struggle for its liberation from Zionist colonization. On one hand, the religious construction of Muslim Palestine allowed Palestinians to assert their claims to the homeland in terms that transcended the realities of time and space. According to this idea, Palestine was the eternal homeland of Palestinian Muslims despite their prolonged displacement and the creation of the State of Israel. Religious national discourse, in this sense, was an empowering discourse in which Palestinians could assert an eternal claim to Palestine and their ineluctable membership within a sacred

community (Anthony D. Smith 2004). On the other hand, religious nationalism allowed Palestinians to locate their struggle within a broader arena that implicated all Muslims. Insofar as Palestine constituted part of the broader Islamic homeland, Palestinian Muslims and Muslims in general had a “duty” to defend the territory from occupation or colonization by any foreign force. Consequently, the logic of this discourse meant that the fight against Zionism represented the realization of an Islamic obligation upon all Muslims to protect Palestine from Zionist conquest and restore the territory to its rightful place within an imagined Islamic geography.

In this sense, the religious meaning of Palestine articulated by Palestinians in Amman reflected many of the basic claims asserted by Hamas. By identifying the Palestinian homeland as a distinctly Muslim territory, for example, Palestinians were participating in Hamas’s effort to reframe the national conflict with Zionism as a fundamentally religious one with implications for the entire Muslim world<sup>193</sup>. Palestine was thus the local site of a broader struggle between Muslims and imperial forces and Jews over the legitimate control of an essentially religious territory. But the idea of Muslim Palestine offered by the Palestinians I interviewed cannot be understood exclusively in terms of Hamas’s religious nationalist agenda. Indeed, as refugees marginalized from the center of the conflict over Palestine, the meaning of Palestine as a sacred Muslim territory had specific value beyond that of a religious struggle. For the Palestinians in Amman, the idea of Muslim Palestine reflected their rejection of the consequences of partition

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<sup>193</sup> It is true that Hamas is an explicitly nationalist movement defined by the struggle against Zionism in the specific territory of Palestine. However, Hamas nevertheless conceptualizes its form of nationalism as religious. That is, notwithstanding its nationalist agenda in Palestine, Hamas sees the struggle for Palestine within a broader framework of a Muslim struggle against foreign invasion and rule. According to the movement, all Muslims have an obligation to defend Palestine even though Palestinians have a specific role in virtue of their residence in the homeland. Hamas thus represents a religious nationalist organization with both national and transnational dimensions.

and displacement and, more importantly, underscored the importance of their claim to an eternal right to return to their homeland.

Divided into four sections, this chapter begins with a brief contextualization of my arrival in the field and the democratic victory of Hamas. The next section offers a background to Jordan's political relations with Hamas. Then, I locate the idea of Palestine as a territory of Islamic importance within nationalist history. Finally, in the last section, I explore several elements within Palestinian discourse among refugees from several refugee camps. Within this discourse, I emphasize the ways in which Palestine is constructed as a land of religious significance to Muslims, in particular.

### **Hamas and The Democratic Landslide:**

Less than two weeks after I arrived in the Jordanian capital, Amman, a democratic revolution rocked the Palestinian political landscape. On January 25, 2006, The Islamic Resistance Movement, *Hamas*<sup>194</sup>, won a sweeping electoral victory claiming 72 seats in the Palestinian National Authority's (PA) 132-member parliament<sup>195</sup>. Much to the surprise of the United States, who pushed for the elections as a condition for restarting the so-called peace process, the favored Palestinian party, *Fatah*, suffered a dramatic defeat. Winning only 45 seats, the hitherto unchallenged party not only failed to maintain its control over the PA but also lost its exclusive mandate to represent the Palestinian national movement. By all accounts, Hamas's triumph signaled the beginning of a new era in Palestinian politics and nationalism in which religion would play a decisive role (Usher 2006, 20).

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<sup>194</sup> Hamas is the acronym for *Harakat Al-Muqāwwama Al-Islāmīyyah*. Hamas also means "enthusiasm" or "zeal."

<sup>195</sup> The PNA is the quasi-government of the Palestinian Occupied Territories including the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Established in 1994 according to the Oslo Accords, the PA functions as an "interim administrative body" within select areas of the occupied territories.

Despite international disbelief, Hamas's victory was neither a surprise nor a shock to most of the region; indeed, its victory was long in the making. Having played a critical role in the renewed effort to resist Israel's 40-year occupation and colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip known as the Al-Aqsā Intifāda, Hamas's popularity had grown dramatically over the last few years. Although widely known for its resistance activities including "martyr operations" or suicide attacks, the movement gained significant credibility among the Palestinian public through its distinguished yet humble leadership<sup>196</sup>, extensive network of social services, and distinct brand of religious national politics (Khalili 2009; Lybarger 2007; Chehab 2008; Mishal and Sela 2006; Hroub 2000; Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010). Moreover, Hamas came to represent a compelling alternative to the ineffective peace-making and corrupt practices of the dominant Palestinian party, Fatah (Usher 2006). As Khaled Hroub noted:

At a time of unprecedented hardship, humiliation, and despair, as Palestinians s[aw] that all they ha[d] gotten for the historic concessions made by their leadership [wa]s massive destruction and the dismemberment of their remaining lands, Hamas [wa]s seen as the voice of Palestinian dignity and the symbol of defense of Palestinian rights (Hroub 2004, 22).

The importance of Hamas's ascent to political power notwithstanding, I was in Jordan, not Palestine. Although a dramatic event in Palestine, the victory primarily represented a shift in the domestic politics of the Palestinian territories and Israel. More importantly, Hamas won a "national" election in which only Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank could vote; Palestinians in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon were excluded from participating. Thus while I was certain that the elections were paramount for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, I was

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<sup>196</sup> Hamas's spiritual founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn, was a Palestinian refugee who lived most of his life in the squalid refugee camps of Gaza. Similarly, 'Abdel Aziz Al-Rantīsi was also a Palestinian refugee who spent most of his life in the refugee camps of Gaza. Despite their leadership roles and, in Al-Rantīsi's case, his educational achievements, both figures were perceived as uncorrupted by the elitism characteristic of many Fatah members.

unsure of its importance for Palestinians in Jordan. I didn't know what, if any, significance the change in Palestinian government would have for the Jordanian context. As I later learned, however, the shift was critical.

Shortly after the electoral dust began to settle, the ramifications of Hamas's victory in Jordan began to emerge. Within the first few months of my research, the Jordanian press produced several articles covering the elections and their implications for Palestinian national politics. Joining international speculation about the rise of Muslim politics<sup>197</sup>, commentators in Jordan and throughout the Middle East discussed and debated the significance of the elections for both the Palestinian and regional context. Beyond the press, the elections sent a clear message to Muslim political actors who swiftly claimed Hamas's democratic success as their own. Emboldened by the Palestinian elections, for example, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, the Islamic Action Front<sup>198</sup> (IAF), prepared for its own electoral challenges with a renewed optimism in the "Islamic option." As Hazam Al-Huneidi, leader of the Muslim political bloc in Jordan's parliament declared, "All over the Arab world, the Islamists have the majority in the street (Cambanis 2006)."

Perhaps the most significant reaction I observed came from the Jordanian government, whose close but troubled relations with Hamas long preceded the movement's electoral success. Faced with domestic, regional, and international pressure, the Kingdom accused the organization of a treacherous scheme to attack Jordanian institutions and thus maintained its almost decade-long policy of political separation. As dramatic as the government's reaction was, however, it

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<sup>197</sup> Drawing on the work of Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, I use the terms "Muslim politics" instead of the more common terms "political Islam" or "Islamism" (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004).

<sup>198</sup> The Islamic Action Front is the English translation for *Jabhat Al-'Aml Al-Islamīyyah*.



nevertheless reflected an established tradition of calculated distance with the Muslim movement. Indeed, since the organization's formation in 1987 during the Intifada, the Jordanian government has maintained a frigid and suspicious relationship with Hamas. In order to understand why, a brief historical digression will help.

### **Hamas and the Hashemite Kingdom:**

With roots deep within the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas has always maintained close ties with the organization's branches in Egypt and Jordan. As Ziad Abu-Amr noted, since its inception, Hamas has been closely interconnected with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, which has provided it with a wide range of doctrinal, political, moral, and material support (Abu-Amr 1993, 16). Through most of its early years, Hamas thus kept a relatively low profile refraining from activities that could compromise its important links to the Jordanian Brotherhood and avoiding any altercations with the monarchy.

Tensions between Hamas and the Jordanian regime began in the 1990s. According to Khaled Hroub, Hamas's relations with the Jordanian government underwent several particularly strenuous moments grounded in the organization's resistance activities in the Occupied Territories (Hroub 2000, 167). Relations were first strained in April 1994, when two Palestinian citizens of Jordan—both Hamas members—were stripped of their passports for publicly declaring their attacks in the “heartland of Palestine.” Similarly, in 1995, Hamas-led attacks in the Occupied Territories led the Israeli government to pressure the Jordanians to act against the movement. Jordanian authorities subsequently expelled two of Hamas's members from the Kingdom. The third and most serious episode occurred in March 1996, when a series of suicide attacks in Jerusalem, ‘Asqalan, and Tel Aviv led the Jordanian authorities to arrest several Hamas activists and severely tightened the organization's activities (Hroub 2000, 167). In

September 1997, tensions reemerged when the Jordanian government arrested Hamas's spokesman at the time, Ibrahim Ghosheh. Days after Ghosheh's detention, Hamas-Jordan relations were tested again when Jordanian authorities foiled an attempt by Israeli Mossad agents to assassinate Hamas's political chief in Amman, Khāled Mesh'al. By that time, Hamas had earned itself the status of a terrorist organization for its role in attacks on Israeli soldiers and, occasionally, civilians. Given its political branch in Amman, the Israelis sought to attack Hamas's leadership by poisoning Mesh'al in contravention of its treaty with Jordan<sup>199</sup>. Following the capture of both agents, the late King Hussein demanded that the Israelis immediately provide the antidote and release Hamas's imprisoned spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn, in exchange for its own agents. Despite its swift resolution, the fiasco was of considerable significance; it not only threatened the viability of Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel but also compromised the continued presence of Hamas in Jordan.

In 1999, relations reached a critical turning point when Jordanian authorities accused Hamas of covert paramilitary training and supporting local Muslim political parties against the Hashemite monarchy. Until then, Hamas's problems with the monarchy were framed within a Palestinian context: it was Hamas's activities in the Occupied Territories that threatened their relations with the Kingdom. This time, however, the Jordanians accused Hamas of attempting to undermine the Jordanian regime itself. After a three-month standoff and under U.S. and Israeli pressure, the recently appointed King 'Abdullah II expelled four of Hamas's political leaders and ordered all Hamas offices to close and cease activities (Muslih 1999; Orme 1999).

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<sup>199</sup> Article 4 of the treaty states that "[b]oth Parties, acknowledging that mutual understanding and cooperation in security-related matters will form a significant part of their relations and will further enhance the security of the region, take upon themselves to base their security relations on mutual trust, advancement of joint interests and co-operation, and to aim towards a regional framework of partnership in peace."

After expelling Hamas's leadership in 1999, the Jordanians had few incentives for reconsidering their relationship with the organization. For starters, the Israelis and U.S. were extremely critical of Jordan's hospitality towards Hamas. The organization's blunt opposition to the Oslo Accords and its willingness to challenge the ongoing occupation through violence made it difficult for the Jordanians to host Hamas and still declare its support for the peace process. Moreover, Hamas represented the PA's chief competitor in the Occupied Territories. Allowing the organization to maintain a stable base in the Kingdom brought significant pressure from Yasser Arafat, who was busy suppressing Hamas in Palestine. Suffice it to say that the Kingdom had few good reasons for allowing Hamas to continue its activities within its borders and thus avoided the question altogether for as long as it could.

In 2006, the collapse of the peace process and Hamas's electoral victory facilitated Jordan's renewed interest in the organization. One reason was domestic: the Jordanians feared that Hamas's successful performance in the Palestinian context could galvanize local support for its own Muslim political opposition party, the IAF. To be sure, the government perceived the possibility of a Hamas-style victory for the IAF in the coming 2007 parliamentary elections as particularly troubling. Moreover, the Jordanians had worked long and hard to normalize their relations with the PLO. For years King Hussein struggled with the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" to reach an agreement on their approach to Israel and matters of Palestinian statehood. Confronting a new political actor—one that saw political negotiations as useless and held an openly hostile stance towards the occupying Israeli government—during one of the most tumultuous periods in the region's history suggested serious problems for the Kingdom's ability to promote peace and control its domestic politics. Finally, the U.S.-led war on terror had dramatically altered the Jordanians' position in the

international arena. Waging two wars in predominantly Muslim countries in the name of a war against terror, the U.S. drew a clear line between who was and who wasn't an ally. According to the logic of the Bush administration, Hamas was certainly not a friend. Primarily dependent upon the U.S. for economic and political support, the Jordanians understood that embracing Hamas could prove a difficult task with significant risks.

About three months after the elections, the Jordanian government took its position. On April 2006, Jordanian authorities arrested almost twenty Hamas members accusing the organization of smuggling arms into the Kingdom in order to launch internal attacks against Jordanian institutions. The Jordanians immediately canceled a visit scheduled with senior Hamas leader and new Palestinian foreign minister, Mahmoud Zahar. The first of its kind in almost a decade, Zahar's visit was widely perceived as an opportunity to warm relations between Hamas and the Jordanian regime. Hamas officials immediately denied the allegations stating that the arrests and arms were nothing short of a political ploy designed to satisfy U.S. and Israeli pressure. Whatever the facts of the case, the entire scenario offered the Jordanians an easy way out of a difficult situation. By accusing Hamas of threatening the Kingdom's domestic security, the Jordanians managed to kill several birds with one stone. First, the episode allowed Jordan to keep a safe distance from Hamas without compromising its relationships with Israel, the PLO, and the United States. Second and relatedly, the affair allowed Jordan to blame Hamas for its own marginalization. This facilitated the idea that the Jordanians were only reacting to the organization's activities and not participating in the growing international effort to isolate it. Finally, the episode allowed Jordan to suggest that Hamas was an internal threat to the Jordanian nation and state. Following the 2005 suicide attacks in Amman, this allegation had a particular

resonance among Jordanians—Palestinians and Transjordanians alike—who saw any threats to the Kingdom's security as particularly troublesome (Fattah and Slackman 2005).

The preceding discussion is not without its significance for the purposes of my ethnographic exposition. It provides an essential background for understanding the relevance of Hamas and the importance of its victory in the Palestinian elections on a major albeit neglected segment of the Palestinian population: Palestinian refugees. Although Hamas's victory produced a wide range of reactions in both the regional and international context, little attention was given to its meaning and consequences for millions of Palestinians throughout the region who were precluded from participating in the national elections of their homeland. More importantly, while Hamas's role in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were well documented throughout the Al-Aqsā Intifāda, their connection to and influence among displaced Palestinian communities of countries like Jordan was largely unseen. Despite this, Hamas's activities and its distinctive blend of secular and religious politics have reached the eyes and ears of Palestinians throughout the region. Whether as citizens of Jordan or stateless refugees in Lebanon, the elections and subsequent split in the Palestinian political and national movement has been of great interest and importance to Palestinians living beyond the Occupied Territories. In countries like Jordan, where many Palestinians are registered refugees awaiting a permanent resolution to their displacement, the rise of Hamas and its successful performance in the elections were of particular importance: a difference in the Palestinian government could mean the difference between the realization of their rights or prolonged marginalization.

### **Muslim Palestine:**

The idea of Palestine as a land of religious importance to Palestinian nationalists has a long historical record. Rahsid Khalidi, for example, citing the work of Alexander Scholch,

described the religious connotations of Palestine expressed in the *Fadā'il Al-Quds* literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which offered pilgrims and visitors information about Jerusalem and holy sites throughout historic Palestine (Khalidi 1998, 29). Extending beyond *bayt Al-Maqdas* (the holy city – Jerusalem) to include the cities of Hebron, Jericho, Bethlehem, Nablus, Al-Ramla, Safad, Ascalon, Acre, Gaza, and Nazareth, the *Fadā'il Al-Quds* literature suggested the special and sacred character of Palestine as an expansive geographic space of religious significance.

According to Khalidi, this literature reinforced the sense in which, for Muslims and Christians, Palestine was a unique sacred entity (Khalidi 1998, 151). In addition, before the populist revolt of the 1930s and continuing until the Partition in 1948, Palestinian notables and guerrillas employed various forms of discourse in which Palestine emerged as a space saturated with religious meaning and with sacred value (Johnson 1983; Swedenburg 2003). Calling for jihād against the British and Zionists, for example, 'Izz Al-Dīn Al-Qassām, a local preacher in the Palestinian city of Haifa, worked among poor and peasant Palestinians to advance the liberation of Palestine from foreign rule and settlement. Much like the Muslim Brotherhood of today, Al-Qassām's message promoted an Islamic reformation of society in which literacy and morality went hand-in-hand; through religious education, Palestinians could cleanse their communities of gambling, drinking, and prostitution and prepare for the broader struggle for the liberation of the homeland (Johnson 1983, 40). Likening the struggle for Palestine against the British and Zionists to the 12<sup>th</sup> century struggle of Salah Al-Dīn against the Crusaders, Al-Qassām understood his mission in religious terms and invoked the Islamic significance of Palestine as an integral feature of the broader Muslim world. Before his death in 1935 at the hands of British police forces, Al-Qassām's final words were: "this is the jihād for God and the *homeland*" (Johnson 1983, 44).

More recently, however, the particular idea of Palestine as a uniquely Muslim territory has gained significant traction among Palestinian Muslims. To a large extent, the increasing popularity of what has been called “Muslim Palestine” (Nusse 1998) can be attributed to the Islamic Resistance Movement known as Hamas. Playing a critical role in organizing both social welfare and resistance activities within the Occupied Territories during the Intifāda, their distinct brand of religious nationalism has become a viable discourse for Palestinians seeking an alternative to secular politics and fresh approach to the conflict with Zionism. Echoing historical conceptions of Palestine as an integral component of the larger Islamic homeland, the idea of Muslim Palestine articulated by Hamas stands as one of the most precise and popular offered by any Palestinian national movement. According to Article 11 of its charter, for example:

“The Islamic Resistance Movement [firmly] believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic *Waqf* [Trust] upon all Muslim generations till the day of Resurrection. It is not right to give it up nor any part of it. Neither a single Arab state nor all of the Arab states, neither a King nor a leader, nor all the kings or leaders, nor any organization—Palestinian or Arab—have such authority because the land of Palestine is an Islamic Trust upon all Muslim generations until the day of Resurrection. And who has the true spokespersonship for all the Muslim generations till the day of Resurrection (Maqdsi 1993, 125)?”

Palestine’s unique Islamic character is further articulated in Article 14, where the homeland is described as an “Islamic land accommodating the first *Qibla*, the third Holy Sanctuary, [and] the place where the ascent of the Messenger took place (Maqdsi 1993, 126).”

Such articulations come in sharp contrast to the secular nationalism espoused by several Palestinian organizations. Drafted by the PLO, for example, the Palestinian National Charter of 1968 offers no similar reference to the homeland; neither Islam nor Muslims appear as elements of the Palestinian call for liberation or the character of the homeland. This, according to Loren Lybarger, reflected the PLO’s commitment to a type of secular nationalism that subordinated religious notions of collectivity (e.g. the Islamic conception of the *umma*) to a common ethnic-

national identity spanning regional, religious, and clan-based solidarities (Lybarger 2007, 34). Preferring a more inclusive brand of nationalism, one that could cut across religious and socio-economic lines, the PLO promoted a vision of a nation that integrated existing solidarities among Palestinians into one overarching identity. Thus within the Charter we find a generic articulation of Palestinian identity including anyone who had a “material, spiritual, and historical connection with Palestine.” Moreover, the Charter promotes an expansive sense of Arab nationalism linking Palestine and the Palestinians to the broader territorial concept of the Arab people and homeland. Article 1 of the Charter, for example, states that “Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab nation.”

### **Islam, Nationalism, and the Homeland:**

Speaking with Mark Juergensmeyer in 1989, the former spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yāsīn, described the idea of a secular state as profoundly misguided since there “is no such thing...in Islam.” During the same interview, Yāsīn also claimed that there is “no clear distinction between religion and politics.” In these statements, Yāsīn revealed three important points about the meaning of religious nationalism. First, Yāsīn’s comments underscored his position as a religious nationalist. Religious nationalists, according to Juergensmeyer, are individuals with both religious and political interests who are distinguishable from secular nationalists in that they are responding to a political situation in a religious way (Juergensmeyer 1994, 6). Responding to the problem of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, Yāsīn saw Islam as the only solution. Second, his comments reflected a key claim among religious nationalists throughout the world: in the modern world, it is the secular state that has failed. As Juergensmeyer noted, religious nationalists see the Western model of nationhood—both



democratic and socialist—as having failed, and they view religion as a hopeful alternative, a base for criticism and change (Juergensmeyer 1994, 2). Third, Yāsīn did not imply that religion and the state were incompatible. On the contrary, according to religious nationalists such as Yāsīn, religion and the state are not only compatible but are best when united. Although religious nationalists reject secular ideas, Juergensmeyer adds that nationalists do not necessarily reject secular politics, including the political apparatus of the modern nation-state<sup>200</sup> (Juergensmeyer 1994, 6).

In the context of Palestine, Yāsīn’s brand of religious nationalism integrated religion into the framework of Palestinian secular nationalism in ways that enabled two sets of claims. First, Yāsīn promoted the idea that Palestine was (and is) a territorially bounded geographic space that needed to be liberated in order to return the Palestinian people to their proper place and establish a Palestinian Islamic state. In this sense, Yāsīn relied on the secular idea of a sovereign nation-state but altered it by describing its political structure as “Islamic.” Second, although Yāsīn claimed that Palestine was of importance to the entire Muslim umma, he nevertheless promoted the idea that Palestine was of particular value to Palestinians. Here Yāsīn was careful to avoid fully endorsing the secular idea of a Palestinian nation. Thus his claim was not that Palestine was a “Palestinian” issue alone; it was a matter of importance to all Muslims. Yet he was not willing to dissolve the particularism of Palestinian nationalism altogether by articulating a broader Islamic agenda in which all Muslims were equally invested in the conflict. Not unlike his PLO predecessors, Yāsīn thus struggled to articulate an essentially national problem in transnational terms. Whereas the PLO wrestled with the question of Palestine as both an Arab

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<sup>200</sup> A similar approach is offered by Anthony Smith, who identifies religious nationalism as a nationalism that is specifically religious in form and content. Smith goes on to add that religious nationalists are unique in that they vehemently oppose the secular state and its nationalisms (Anthony D. Smith 2004, 14).

and Palestinian issue, Yāsīn struggled with the question of Palestine as both a Muslim and Palestinian issue.

Notwithstanding these tensions, Yāsīn and Hamas managed to construct a viable religious national discourse that has achieved considerable standing within the Palestinian political arena. One of the most important effects of this discourse has been to reconstitute the meaning of Palestine and the Palestinians in religious terms. As Helena Schulz noted in her study of Palestinian nationalism, Hamas has succeeded in placing Islam at the center of Palestinian identification in ways that privileged the status of Muslim Palestinians and, consequently, the homeland's value to Muslims (Schulz 2000, 128). This was clearly visible among Palestinians I met in the refugee camps following Hamas's electoral victory in 2006. Indeed, for the next two years, my observations and conversations with Palestinian refugees underscored the centrality of Islam to Palestinian national discourse. One of the principal ideas articulated by refugees I interviewed, for example, was that Palestine was an exclusively Muslim territory. Because Palestine has sacred Muslim sites including the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsā mosque, and was the location of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven known as *Al-Mi'rāj*, Palestine was said to be of particular importance to the Muslims<sup>201</sup>.

Rāshid, for example, believed Palestine was a primarily Muslim land. Introduced by my friend, a Palestinian journalist who worked for a local religious paper, Rāshid was a refugee living in the Baqa'a camp. Displaced as a child during the 1967 War, he and his family lived modestly within a small corner dwelling that was walking distance from his cell phone shop. Rāshid identified himself as a Shiite Muslim. He and three other families were the only

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<sup>201</sup> These are not the only sites or events related to Palestine that give it its religious significance. For a more thorough discussion of the religious significance of Palestine to Palestinians, see (Bazian 2006).

Palestinian Shiites I met during my research in Jordan. Nevertheless, Rāshid claimed that Palestine was of equal religious value to him as it was to all Palestinian Muslims. “Alhamdulillah (Praise to God),” he said during our discussion, “Palestine is our land and is an Islamic land.” “It is like a creed and (the) Al-Aqsā mosque is our sanctuary. Palestine will thus be defended with our blood.” During my discussion with Rīma, a Palestinian woman at an Islamic women’s center in the Nāsr camp, a similar idea was conveyed. According to her, Palestine was a religious land with a specific connection to Muslims. “All Muslims have a right in Palestine,” she said, “because Al-Aqsā mosque is there; it ties us [Muslims] all to Palestine.” “There are *mūqaddassāt* (holy sites) in Palestine that makes it our Islamic land.”

In a visit with Abu ‘Imrān in the Baqa’a camp, I asked him about the status of Palestine for the refugees. “What,” I asked, “is the significance of Palestine for you as a Palestinian and for the Palestinians in Jordan?” Emphasizing his homeland’s religious value as a Muslim territory, he responded with the following words:

“You are a Muslim (Michael) and you are my brother in Islam. And the country of Islam is for all Muslims. And Palestine is for all the Muslims in the world. Palestine is for all the Muslims and the Palestinian issue is [fundamentally] an Islamic issue. So this is more important than my existence as a Palestinian. But this does not negate [the importance it has for a Palestinian]. We say that Palestine is not for the Palestinians alone. Palestine is for the Muslims. And we do not...we will not forget Palestine. We did not and will not forget Palestine and we will remember it for the rest of our lives and we will work for the sake of its return to its people –the legitimate people—in all the permissible (observable, in religious terms) ways. And Palestine has to do with the Arabic and Islamic umma.

The above excerpts represent a common theme among Palestinians reflecting a key claim within Hamas’s national discourse, namely that the Palestinian homeland was a Muslim territory with relevance to the entire Muslim umma. In these representations, both the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the sufferings of its people were considered of direct importance to

Muslims throughout the world. In as much as Palestine was a Muslim territory, Muslims were obligated to join in the Palestinian national struggle against the Israeli colonization and occupation of Palestine. Moreover, by constructing the conflict in religious terms, Palestinians were also attempting to legitimize their struggle (and all of its tactics) as an “Islamic” jihād for a “national” cause. In this way, the uniqueness of Palestinian religious nationalism became readily apparent. By nationalizing “Islam,” Palestinians could claim the religious validity of their struggle despite its secular national character<sup>202</sup>. As Andrea Nusse noted:

On the question of nationalism, Hamas makes an even more innovative unorthodox move away from Islamic thought of the past. The Palestinian fundamentalists discarded the old incompatibility between Islam based on ideological grounds and the Western idea of the nation-state, which is based on territorial claims: “Fatherland (watan) and nationalism (watanīyya)...are part of the Islamic creed” (Nusse 1998, 49-50).

The status of Palestine as a Muslim territory raised an important question about its relationship to Christian Palestinians. Like the Muslims, Christian Palestinians have also suffered the pains of war, displacement, and occupation. Moreover, Palestinian Christians have played an essential role in the formation of resistance organizations including the PLO and they continue to struggle against the occupation today. During my interviews with Muslim Palestinians, I therefore asked about the relationship between Christians and Muslims and the status of their claims to Palestine. The most common response concerned the idea that both religious communities shared the same origin and goals in Palestine. “Both Christians and Muslims,” Rīma said, “suffered the same and thus felt the same about their homeland.” Similarly, Asad, a Palestinian refugee who worked at an Islamic orphanage, described the

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<sup>202</sup> Whereas others have argued that groups like Hamas and their discourse “Islamicize” nationalism (Litvak 1998), I see religious nationalism in the Palestinian milieu as a vacillation between nationalizing Islam and Islamicizing nationalism. For a more in depth discussion of this debate, see Hroub, 2000 (especially chapter 2).

differences between the two communities as “trivial.” For him, both shared a commonality of experience and, more importantly, a common goal: the liberation of Palestine and the realization of the right to return to the homeland.

“The Muslim and Christian Palestinian share the same foundation and goal. There are no differences in our goals. We are from the same country and share the same struggle. Just as in Palestine, during the holidays, we still visit each other and share everything. There is no conflict between us.”

Regarding the more specific issue of Christian Palestinian rights to Palestine, however, Palestinian Muslims offered an important qualification. As an Islamic territory, Palestine belonged to the Muslims and it could only be ruled by a Muslim government. Christians, as *ahl-Al-Kitāb* (people of the book), had rights to their holy sites and, as Palestinians, had rights to live in their homeland. They did not, however, have the right to rule over Muslims. During her discussion of the homeland, for example, I asked Amal, a young Palestinian from the Wihdāt camp, what she believed regarding the rights of Christians in Palestine. In a clear and assertive response, she said:

“Regardless of whether one is Christian or Muslim, they all have a right to their holy sites in Palestine. There is no conflict between the religions. In terms of the Palestinians in the diaspora spread throughout the world including Europe, even if he has British or American citizenship, he carries in his veins [his Palestinianness] and in his dialect [he expresses his connection to Palestine]. He is therefore a Palestinian and has his rights in his homeland. But Palestine belongs to the Muslims. Since ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab<sup>203</sup> *fatah* Al-Quds (“opened” Jerusalem), it has belonged to the Muslims”

For Amal, an individual’s origin in Palestine was sufficient for establishing her rights in the territory. Christian Palestinians thus had as much right to Palestine as Muslim Palestinians. But that right was restricted in religious national terms. As her comments illustrate above, insofar as Christians are Palestinian, they had a right to live in Palestine. Moreover, because they are

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<sup>203</sup> ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab was the second caliph of the Muslim ummah.

Christians, they also had a right to their holy sights within Palestine. They did not, however, have the right to rule as an authority over the territory. That right was the exclusive privilege of “the Muslims” extending from the Caliph ‘Umar’s conquest of Jerusalem. Abu ‘Imrān offered a similar answer to the question of Christian Palestinians. Although Palestine was a Muslim territory, he said, Islam did not preclude the rights of Christians or even Jews in Palestine. “They could live in Muslim Palestine without fear.”

“First, the Christians are our brothers in humanity. They are our brothers as members of the human family and Islam compels cooperation between all humans. Islam *yukarram* (bestows one with generosity) and honors the person. It honors the person because they are a human with dignity. And in the book of God, the holy Qur’an, God says *walaqad karrāmnā bani Adam* (and we bestow generosity upon the children of Adam) regardless of his religion, regardless of his color, regardless of sex, regardless of anything. Islam straightens the conduct of the people and fixes the conditions of humankind. We are thus prepared to coexist with the Christians and even the Jews without wars, without the assault of one group on another. And in our country, there can be a Muslim and there can be a Christian, and there can also be a Jew, for sure, there can even be an atheist! They are all welcome. In Islamic history Christians used to live within the Islamic *dawlah* (nation) and their poor used to take from the Muslim treasury without occupation.”

Abu ‘Imrān’s comments above indicate several common and important ideas about the identification of Palestine as a Muslim homeland. First, his vision of Palestine as a Muslim territory did not, in his view, necessarily negate the rights of non-Muslim Palestinians to live within it. Christians thus had rights within Palestine both because of their religious status as people of the book and as Palestinians displaced from the homeland. Moreover, many Palestinians did not see the presence of Jews in Palestine as a necessary source of conflict. Rather, it was the idea of an exclusivist Jewish state in Palestine that contradicted the idea of Muslim Palestine. As Abu ‘Imrān stressed, Christians, Jews, and even atheists were welcome to live in Palestine but under Muslim rule. A second and related point concerned the idea of Muslim authority in Palestine. Most Palestinians believed that only through a return to Islam

could Palestine be liberated. Consequently, Palestine's liberation at the hands of the Muslims would bring about Muslim rule in the territory. Hamas, as the leading Palestinian national movement, reflected the closest approximation of an Islamic authority and their success in the Palestinian national elections served to underscore the idea that only through Islam could Palestine be freed from Israeli control. Interestingly, the Palestinians I met did not discuss the possibility of future elections in which, at least potentially, non-Muslim parties could emerge victorious. The elections only surfaced in light of Hamas's success, thus leaving the question of an open democratic future unanswered. Finally, Palestinians conceptualized Muslim Palestine as a utopian ideal in which both Christians and Jews could live in peace and as relative equals, yet subordinate to the Muslims. Insofar as the idea of Muslim Palestine did not represent the exclusivism of the Zionist idea of Jewish Israel—that is, the idea that Israel exists only for the Jews—the homeland was seen as a progressive ideal and solution to the conflict in general. Islam, in other words, was the solution<sup>204</sup>.

Interestingly enough, such articulations reflected a critical irony. The idea of Palestine as a definitively and exclusively “Islamic” territory mirrored key ideas offered by religious Zionists who claim that Israel is, and always has been, an exclusively “Jewish” space. Much like the master narrative of Zionism, in which ancient Israel represents the eternal homeland of the Jewish people manifested today in the expanding geography of the State of Israel (Piterberg 2001), representations of Palestine as a Muslim homeland for the Palestinians constructed a similar narrative. Accordingly, the modern configuration of Palestine seen during the Mandate period came to represent an ancient territory belonging to the Muslims since the time of the second Muslim Caliph, ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattāb. Like “Israel” and its relationship to the Jews,

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<sup>204</sup> For a detailed exposition of Hamas's official and practical position on Christian Palestinians, see Hroub, 2000 (especially chapter 3, pgs. 139).

“Palestine” was once the sacred homeland of the Palestinians. Within this claim, however, we see the tension between the universal idea of Palestine as a “Muslim” territory and the particular idea of Palestine as a “national” territory. Whereas the Zionist narrative promotes a vision of “Israel” as the eternal homeland of the Jewish people, who are conceived as a religious nation, the religious national discourse of Palestinian refugees did not necessarily claim Palestine as the eternal homeland for the Muslim umma. Instead, Palestine represented a primarily “Palestinian” space that was of value to all Muslims but was not necessarily their homeland. In this sense, while the liberation of Palestine represented a meaningful issue for the entire umma, Palestine was nevertheless the specific homeland of the Palestinians.

Understood as a Muslim territory, the idea of Muslim Palestine among refugees also reflected the claim that no authority could legitimately partition the homeland. Embracing the religious national discourse of Hamas, Palestine was widely described as an Islamic waqf<sup>205</sup> that could not be divided by any secular political authority. Consequently, political negotiations based on the partition of Palestine in 1947 represented a violation of the basic unity of Palestine as a distinct territory but also as an integral component of the broader Islamic homeland. According to Rāshid, for example, the status of Palestine as an Islamic land meant that it could not be negotiated. As he stated, “Palestine is an Islamic land.” “There is no person anywhere in the world, whether Mahmūd Abbas or otherwise that can reject this fact. Maybe a man under pressure can say that Palestine is the land of Gaza or some parts of the West Bank. But Palestine is from the river to the sea.” Echoing Rāshid’s ideas, ‘Aqil, another Palestinian refugee from the Hittīn camp, rejected any attempts by the Palestinian Authority to negotiate a settlement with Israel that did not include the totality of Muslim Palestine. “Palestine,” he explained, “is an

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<sup>205</sup> In Arabic, the term “waqf” can mean a religious endowment and/or unalienable property.



Islamic land.” “It is not Jewish nor was it divided in 1947. Maybe the politicians speak this way but we know that this is not true. Palestine cannot be divided.”

More fundamentally, the indivisibility of Palestine meant that Jewish rule in the territory was essentially illegitimate and the struggle against Israel was an Islamic duty. The Israeli State, in other words, could not legitimately assert its authority in Palestine since its rule was contrary to Muslim rights in the territory. As Shādi expressed during our interview in the Wihdāt camp, “the Jews do not have the right to control or occupy our land even if we are not there.” “We reject their occupation and anyone who says that the Jews have rights over our country, well...why don’t they give them a piece of their own land? Palestine is part of the Islamic lands. Why did they come and expel the people from Palestine and steal our homes and homeland?” The illegitimacy of Israeli rule in the homeland also underscored the legitimacy of armed struggle to liberate Palestine. In terms similar to those expressed by Hamas, Ghassān, for example, stated that:

“The land of Palestine is an Islamic land. *Bighadh Al-Basar* (shame upon those) to those that describe Palestine as a divided Arabic land! Palestine will not be returned by or through negotiations. Palestine will be returned by the power of arms just as it was taken. *la taqūm Al-Sā’a* (The Day of Judgment) will not come until the Jews understand the right of the Palestinian people to their land. And this is a central point. Every Palestinian in the *shatāt* (diaspora) knows this. And even the Jews know that Palestine will be returned to the Muslims.”

Referring to the struggle for Palestine, Yūnus also suggested the futility of negotiations. In his view, the liberation of Palestine could not be solved through a political process.

“The issue of Palestine is not just an issue of land and displacement. It’s an issue for the Muslim umma. The Jews took our land and treated us like we were nothing. It is known that Palestine, whoever owns it, [they] will have control over the whole world. During the days that the Muslims controlled Palestine, we ruled most of the world. So today, the issue of Palestine will not be solved through peace negotiations. Peace and all of this political talk is empty.”

According to Yūnus, Israeli rule in Palestine could not be negotiated. The only solution was the return of Palestine to the Muslims. Nādia, a Muslim Palestinian from a women's center in Wihdāt, also framed the struggle for Palestine in religious terms. Palestine, she affirmed, is an Islamic land and will be returned to its "rightful" owners.

"100% of the *ahadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) say that Palestine will be returned to us. Even if not during our generation or the next generation, or even the generation after that, Palestine will return to the following generation of Palestinians. There will be a generation [of Palestinians] to whom the God of all worlds will return Palestine. By the will of God, we will struggle (*jāhid*) for Palestine and it will return to us."

As a struggle for the liberation of a Muslim territory, the Palestinian resistance was understood to afford fighters a particular religious status. Specifically, insofar as the fight for Palestine was a religiously sanctioned struggle, its *mujāhidīn* (fighters in the jihad) were granted the status of martyrs<sup>206</sup>. Nādia, for example, described the Palestinian resistance movement as a divinely guided struggle of religious significance. To die for the cause of Muslim Palestine thus meant that one died as a martyr.

"Our goal [to liberate Palestine] is *biamar Allah ta'Allah* (by the will of God). It is *ākharawī* (pertaining to the day of judgment): it is religious. Our end is by the will of God almighty because the Prophet said that Palestine is for the Muslims and he who dies without his country is a martyr. And the Prophet said that he who dies without his family is also a martyr. We are without Palestine, our homeland. If we die fighting for our homeland or die without our homeland, then we are all martyrs. Whether with Palestine or without it, our struggle means we are the winners by God."

The idea that death in the struggle for Palestine earns one the status of martyrdom has been a fairly consistent theme within the religious national discourse of Hamas and Islamic Jihād since the first Intifāda (Abu-Amr 1994; Abu-Amr 1993; Hroub 2000; Abufarha 2009). In the First Communiqué of Hamas, for example, the theme of martyrdom emerged several times in

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<sup>206</sup> The status of martyrs has been thoroughly discussed in several works including (Allen 2006; Abufarha 2009; Khalili 2009).

connection to the Palestinian resistance. Released at the beginning of the Intifāda in 1987, the message offered a framework for understanding Palestinian resistance and sacrifice in religious terms. In the opening paragraph, the Communiqué reads: “Indeed, during one week, hundreds of wounded and tens of martyrs offered their lives in the path of God to uphold their nation’s glory and honor, to restore our rights in our homeland, and to elevate God’s banner in the land (Hroub 2000, 265).” Referring to the “criminal occupation” of “the Jews,” Hamas warned Israel that “their policy of violence shall beget naught but a more powerful counter policy by our sons and youths who love the eternal life in heaven more than the enemies love this life.” Later, the Communiqué warned Israeli settlers that “[o]ur people know the way of sacrifice and martyrdom and are generous in this regard; their military and settlement policies shall avail them nothing (Hroub 2000, 266).”

The religious meaning of the national struggle for Palestine and the status of “those who struggle *fīl sabīl-illah* (in the path of God)” as martyrs articulated above was also visible within the *da’wa*<sup>207</sup> activities of young Palestinians within the refugee camps. Several students I met who attended a college in Zarqā’ said they promoted the message of Islam among Palestinians in order to “remind” them of their duty as Muslims in the national cause. Concerned about the Jordanian authorities and the idea that their work represented “extremism,” these Palestinians often relied on more anonymous methods of communication including the distribution of audio cassettes and multi-media cds. For example, one of the students I met, Fahad<sup>208</sup>, provided me

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<sup>207</sup> In Arabic, the word “da’wa” means to call, appeal, request or summons. Within the context of the activities I refer to, students described da’wa as their efforts to “remind” other Palestinians about the message of Islam and to call upon them to “return” to the teachings of Islam.

<sup>208</sup> Fahad is a pseudonym.

with one of the cds his organization distributed among Palestinians<sup>209</sup>. On the cd were a variety of multimedia options including audio lectures by Hamas leaders, recitations of Qur’anic verses and key verses for *thikr*<sup>210</sup>, *anāshīd*<sup>211</sup>, photographs of the resistance in Palestine, and position points of the organization. One of the more striking features of the disc concerned its attempt to blend the national struggle of Palestine with a larger imagined “Islamic” struggle against “invaders,” “colonizers,” and “infidels.”

For example, in the organization’s position points shown below, the group articulated a call for a “return to Islam” and promoted the vision of a pan-Islamic struggle in which Palestine was but one site of a larger Muslim battle. Titled “*thawābatnā n’alnahā lakum*” (Our Positions Clarified for You<sup>212</sup>), the page begins with the idea that deviation from Islam has limited Muslims’ ability to deal effectively with “their” issues. It then proceeds to underscore the importance of *intīmā*, or attachment to the “homeland,” which according to them, is a foundational brick in the unity of Arab Muslims (*Al-Wahda Al-‘Arabīya Al-Islāmīya*). In this sense, the liberation of particular homelands represented a duty necessary for the realization of a broader goal of restoring the integrity of the united Arab-Islamic peoples. Although the idea of a united “Arab-Islamic” people is suggested, the page goes on to describe the conditions of non-Arab countries including Chechnya and Afghanistan as “bleeding wounds” that Muslims must

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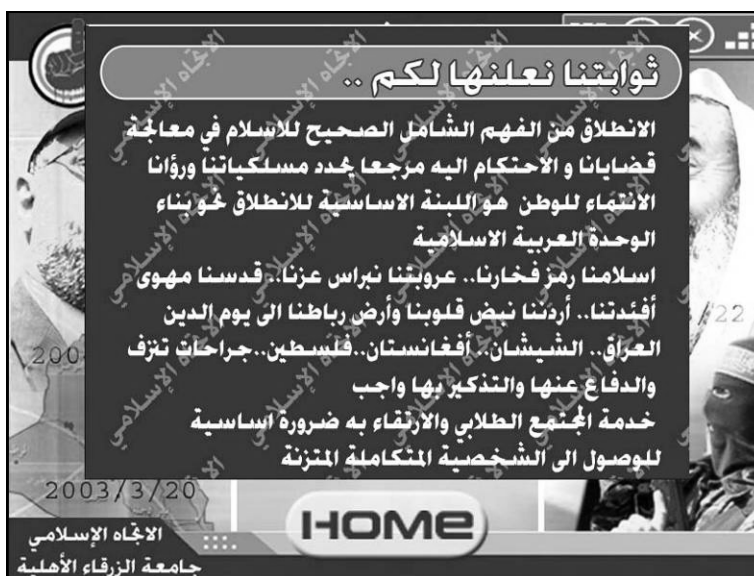
<sup>209</sup> The cd mentioned no particular group or organization. Rather, it referred to “*Al-Ittijāha Al-Islāmī, Jām’iat Al-Zarqā’ Al-Ahlīya*” (The Islamic Position of the Civil University of Zarqā’).

<sup>210</sup> Thikr, in this context, refers to particular words and/or phrases (such as *Allahu Akbar*, or “God is great”) or key selections from the Quran meant for promoting the “remembrance of God” through religious invocations.

<sup>211</sup> Anāshīd, in Arabic, literally means “songs.” However, anāshīd is commonly used to refer to songs that do not include particular instruments and thus do not violate what some Muslims believe is a prohibition on music.

<sup>212</sup> This is a rough translation by the author.

“remember (be aware of) and/or defend.” The position points conclude by stating that “activism” on the part of the students is necessary for the completion of a “balanced personality.”



**Figure Twenty-Six: Position Page of the CD translated as “Our Positions Clarified for You”**

Whereas in the position page the students promoted a more generic vision of a pan-Islamic struggle in which the liberation of Palestine constituted an integral albeit particular effort, the menu page (and following pages) offered a much clearer appeal to Palestinians regarding the relevance of Palestine as an “Islamic” national struggle and the importance of martyrdom. For example, in the menu page shown below, titled “*qādatnā shahdā*” (our martyred leaders), only two “Palestinian martyrs” are represented: Abdl Azīz Al-Rantīsī and Ahmed Yāsīn. In addition, while the figure depicted in the lower right-hand corner *could* be any “Muslim” fighter, it is clear that the image is that of a Hamas fighter<sup>213</sup>, which again emphasizes the “Palestinian” dimension of the struggle. Moreover, the first option in the menu (top left-hand icon) specifically concerns the martyrdom of Al-Rantīsī and Yāsīn. Within this feature, the cd

<sup>213</sup> Hamas fighters are known for their black hoods and green bandanas bearing the Muslim testament of faith, “there is no God but God and Muhammad is God’s messenger.”

provides an in-depth account of the two Palestinian leaders and their dedication and sacrifice (martyrdom) for the struggle. In the top center icon, titled “good morning my country” (“*sabāh Al-Khair yā bilādī*”), and the bottom right-hand icon, titled “the voice of the homeland” (“*sawt Al-Watan*”), Palestine again emerges as a prominent feature of the organization’s da’wa. In both cases, “country” and “homeland” refer specifically to Palestine and thus further emphasize the centrality of the Palestinian national Islamic struggle in the pan-Islamic battle.



**Figure Twenty-Seven: Menu Page from Multimedia CD titled “Our Martyred Leaders”**

Another feature the cd included was a song exclusively about martyrdom. In the opening line, the singer asks the question (twice), “*min yabghā Al-Shahāda, min yabghā Al-Shahāda, mukhlisan wa lahā tamannā* (who wants martyrdom, who wants martyrdom, sincerely and desired).” Proposing the question of martyrdom within the contemporary period, the song proceeds to list various Muslim martyrs of the past including Zayd, Mus’ab, Hamza, Ja’far, Al-Barā’, Al-Ghāfaqī, and Ibn Rawāhah, and several historical Muslim battles of importance including Hittīn. Although the song was sung in a conspicuously Saudi dialect (of Riyadh) and

is a popular online feature available with its own video, its presence in the cd nevertheless gave it “local” meaning among a population who felt connected to a homeland and its people’s battle with a particular “enemy.” Its use within the da’wa effort to “raise Islamic awareness” among Palestinians in the camps thus had the effect of legitimizing the “Islamic” resistance in Palestine in terms of an imagined pan-Islamic struggle. Within the context of a disc replete with Palestinian references, it linked the contemporary resistance of Hamas via “martyrs” like Rantīsī and Yāsīn to a tradition of Muslim struggle in the past and thus raised a national struggle to the status of a religious one.



**Figure Twenty-Eight: Photographs of Hams Fighter (Compare with Fighter Depicted in Menu Page Above)<sup>214</sup>**

The representation of the Palestinian struggle as a religious national cause also emerged in more standardized cultural expressions. Palestinian refugees I met also expressed ideas about the homeland and struggle through artistic oral expressions including poetry. During my time at the Wihdāt camp, for example, I organized several meetings with a local Imam named Omar. Omar was a short, soft-spoken man in his early thirties. Born and raised in the camp, he was studying at a local university to acquire his degree in Islamic studies with a focus on shari’a (Muslim jurisprudence). Omar spent considerable time interacting with the youth. Attached to

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<sup>214</sup> See <http://gimmetruth.wordpress.com/2006/10/07/hamas-photo-essay/> .

an orphanage, his mosque was well attended for most prayers. After the prayers, Omar would often sit with young Palestinians to discuss religious topics or any issues that he might be able to comment on from a “religious perspective.” Recently, Omar joined a group of Palestinian youth on a trip to the Wādī Mūjib, a spectacular gorge in western Jordan near the Dead Sea. While discussing the trip, Omar informed me that he would recite poetry with the youth that he learned as a child. Concerned with the homeland and struggle for liberation, the poems represented a codified artistic expression through which Omar could teach the youth about Palestine. During our discussions, Omar shared several of the poems he recited on the excursion. Below is one example.

*“The wound is deep and the night is too long, but the wound is the candle.  
Because we believe that Al-Quds is our address and identity, we declared war on  
the arrogant Jews.”*

*O brothers, I want to tell you a story.  
Allah is one and has no partners.*

*This story is about a woman who lived a long time ago. Once upon a time, this  
woman had four children: Muhammad, Ahmed, Ghassan, and the youngest,  
‘Adnan.  
After they grew up [became men], they witnessed the cunning of the pigs. And so  
they asked their mother, “O mother! Why don’t we have a yard? And where is  
our father? You told us he would return. Why do we live in tents unlike our  
neighbors?”*

*Their mother replied, “O dear sons.” “We used to have the most beautiful yards.  
Your father ploughed them with his own hands and planted grapevines and  
pomegranates. It was full of water and shade. It was full of green and peace.  
Beside it was a hill whose breeze healed the [sick]. Beside it was an orchard  
yard where we grew citrus and sweet fruits. At the orchard, there were wells that  
your father dug for those who were thirsty. Opposite the wells was a long street  
that led directly to [the village of] Bisaam. On the side of the street, many flowers  
grew and bloomed: roses, Arabian jasmine, and daisies. To the west we built a  
house in front of our home. In front of the house was a yard and in it was a place  
to keep the horses [a stable]. Your father’s horse was a great horse and he was a  
great knight. In the house, we had coffee and cardamom. We used to tell stories  
and we used to spend the nights together while the moon above was watching us.  
Our world was secure. You were small children and you used to go to the*



*orchards. You could pick whatever fruits you desired and played within the bushes.”*

*“O my children, time passed and the grapes and pomegranates grew. But the tyrant, my dear, was deceitful and disloyal. The enemies attacked us and killed the children in front of the women’s eyes. Your father, my children, was killed while defending the orchard. Some were martyred while the rest of the people fled. Today, you have grown and matured. You have become brave men. Palestine is waiting, is waiting for all of its knights. O children, we want you to release us, release us from the oppression.”*

*Ahmed and ‘Adnan volunteered. Muhammad and Ghassan followed them. They all went to Palestine and headed to the orchard yard. At the yard’s borders, the moon sent its shining rays.*

*They were all martyred during the raid. They couldn’t see the yard.*

*At the tent’s door, the mother stood up. Um Ahmed, the mother of the brave men said, “Thanks to God, I cannot thank anyone but you my Lord. My husband and children are for Palestine: the land and the faith [Islam]. I will cry and weep. Oh my God, I am still happy.”*

The above poem is rich with a variety of important ideas concerning the homeland.

However, several particular themes about the homeland and the Palestinian national struggle are worth considering. First, the poem provides several detailed descriptions of the homeland that resonate with ideas about heaven in the Qur’an and Islamic traditions such as ahadith. The prominence of the orchard as a place of peace and bounty, for example reflects much of the imagery associate with heaven in the Qur’an. The Qur’an, regularly refers to heaven as a place for the righteous in which gardens are plenty, rivers flow, and fruits are bountiful<sup>215</sup>. In addition, the poem suggests important ideas about the gendered aspects of the “nation” and its struggle for Palestine. Throughout the song, it is the men that emerge as the noble defenders of the “land and faith.” The father, for example, is described as a knight with a “great horse.” Later, he is killed in battle defending his home and homeland and achieves that status of a

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<sup>215</sup> See, for example, chapter 55, verses 46-76.

“martyr.” Similarly, his sons are told the story of their lands and their father’s sacrifice. As he died fighting for the liberation of their homeland, so too are his sons expected to join the noble struggle for Palestine. Thus the four sons travel to their homeland and, like their father, are slain by the enemy. For their sacrifice, they are rewarded with the religious status of martyrs.

The account above reveals an important distinction between the meaning of nationalist agency for men and women. For men, represented by both the father and his sons, struggle suggests a key site for enacting a specifically masculine form of national commitment rooted in the idea of liberating Palestine as the (feminized) mother-land from its conquest by the (masculinized) Zionist invaders. As Massad has shown in his examination of Palestinian nationalist discourse (1999), the Palestinian homeland represents a feminine space violated (“raped”) by Zionist forces during the war and partition in 1947-8. The partition of Palestine, in this sense, represents both the masculinization of Zionism, whose forces conquered the land, and the emasculation of the Palestinians, who failed to come to its defense. According to this logic, liberation of the land through violent struggle not only represents salvation for the conquered woman/mother of the Palestinian nation but also the remasculinization of Palestinian men. As warriors fighting for the homeland, Palestinian men enact a specifically masculine agency aimed at restoring the dignity of Palestine (as the mother-land) through its liberation and the remasculinization of Palestinian men as its liberators. For those who die in the struggle, their status as martyrs also functions to reestablish their masculinity albeit through sacrifice. As Minoo Moallem has described in Iran, by sacrificing his life to the community and showing his commitment and responsibility, the “warrior brother” and martyr remasculinizes the Muslim man both as a nationalist reclaiming the homeland and as a Muslim reasserting Islam (Moallem 1999,

331). Although he may have failed to reconstitute his masculinity as the liberator of Palestine, he nevertheless restores his masculinity through the ultimate sacrifice for the homeland: his life.

Women in this poem emerge as a different set of actors with a distinct sense of “national” duty. Initially, women are depicted as witnesses to the suffering of their people. They are the passive spectators who see the brutality of the “invaders” and the emasculation of the men. “The enemies attacked us and killed the children in front of the women’s eyes,” the mother explains. Women are not involved in the resistance and do not die as martyrs. Their status remains equal to that of the land itself, which suffers the violation of the colonizers who conquered Palestine. Women have to “watch” as mothers and wives as the masculine conquerors capture the land and murder their children and husbands.

In the next section of the poem, women’s roles are transformed by the post-conquest period. Reconstituted by the ideology of national liberation, women become agents of struggle albeit within the limited role of “mother.” Here nationalism reconfigures women’s agency in terms of their biological functions, specifically their ability to reproduce the nation. Expressed in the poem by the willingness to send her sons off to the struggle, the nationalist conception of reproduction as national agency is adequately captured by the Hamas Charter, which in Article 17, identifies the role of Muslim women as that of a “manufacturers of men” and “guides for the new generation.” By birthing and raising four sons, the mother’s role is transformed from that of social reproduction to national resistance: by birthing the nation she is fulfilling her national duty (Kanaaneh, 2002). Her agency is thus defined by her biological role as the “producer” of men who are sent off to liberate the conquered homeland. “Nurturing” her sons with the story of Palestine and their father’s honorable struggle and death, she prepares them for their own fates as

victors or martyrs in the cause of liberation and realizes her bio-social role as national producer.

Again, these ideas are also reflected within the Hamas Charter, which in Article 18 states that:

“The women in the house and the family of jihād fighters, whether they are mothers or sisters, carry out the most important duty of caring for the home and raising the children upon the moral concepts and values which derive from Islam; and of educating their sons to observe the religious injunctions in preparation for the duty of jihad awaiting them (Maqdsi 1993, 128).”

Finally, the poem offers a compelling view into the meaning of the struggle for Palestine in two respects. First, the song highlights the dual nature of the fight for Muslim Palestine: the struggle is both for the liberation of a homeland and defense of a faith. To be sure, the lyrics give particular attention to the specific meaning of Palestine for its original inhabitants. The homeland thus emerges through the lens of a particular family and the aesthetics of their home-life prior to the dispossession. The unique significance of the homeland to this individual family notwithstanding, it is nevertheless the struggle for liberation that underscores Palestine’s broader value. By defending their land and faith, the four boys earn their righteous status as martyrs. As such, Palestine can be seen as a sacred place constitutive of a righteous struggle in which the path to liberation earns one the status of *mujāhid*<sup>216</sup> and, if killed, the status of *shahīd* (martyr).

The second meaning of the struggle for Palestine that emerges is deeply sentimental and reveals a complex ambivalence over the idea and experience of loss. In the song, the four sons learn from their mother about the beauty of their homeland and the loss of their father who defended it with his life. In the end, the mother encourages her boys to join the fight for Palestine. If successful, they will liberate the homeland and free its people from oppression. If they fail, they will join their father and the untold number of martyrs who died defending their land and faith. Two of the sons volunteer to join the struggle and the remaining two sons follow.

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<sup>216</sup> Mujāhid is the singular Arabic word for mujāhidīn (ones who engage in jihad).

All four sons are killed “at the yard’s border.” After learning of their death, the mother offers an interesting expression of mixed sadness and joy. “Thanks to God,” she says, “I cannot thank anyone but my Lord.” “My husband and children are for Palestine: the land and the faith. I will cry and weep. Oh my God, I am still happy.”

The poem above suggests a similar problematic concerning the struggle for Palestine. Fighting for the homeland is both a righteous and noble cause. Indeed, what higher status can one achieve but that of a martyr fighting in the path of God? At the same time, what sadder fate can a mother confront than the loss of her husband and children? The liberation of the homeland thus presents serious risks that martyrdom cannot neatly resolve. Although the achieved status of martyrdom indicates the nobility and honor of the cause, the sadness of death is nevertheless inescapable. Contrary to popular ideas that Palestinians “love death more than life<sup>217</sup>,” the mother’s words above thus indicate a complex ambiguity. She can rejoice in her sons’ sacrifice, but also mourns their death.

### **Conclusion:**

The foregoing discussion underscores how ideas about the homeland among Palestinian refugees in Amman reveal the deepening relationship between religious and national identifications of the “Palestinians” and “Palestine”. The various selections provided above all point to the common idea among refugees that Palestine, as the homeland, is a distinctly “Muslim space.” Furthermore, they suggest that the status of Palestine as a national yet Muslim territory is achieved through the assertion of two fundamental claims. The first claim is that the Palestine is a Muslim homeland in virtue of the presence of specific holy sites such as the holy city of Al-Quds and *Al-Haram Al-Sharīf* (the Noble Sanctuary). The second claim is that

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<sup>217</sup> See, for example, accounts offered by *Jihad Watch* or *The Middle East Media Research Institute*, especially work by Steven Stalinsky.

Palestine's Islamic status reflects its historical location within a broader Muslim territorial geography. Palestine, in this sense, is not only a Muslim country but also an integral component of an imagined Muslim homeland. The dissolution of Palestine as part of that homeland thus threatens both the specific situation of Palestinian Muslims and the broader Muslim umma. Consequently, the status of Palestine as an Islamic territory or, in the words of Hamas, as an Islamic waqf, precludes the possibility of its division or rule by any non-Muslim authority. The homeland is thus secured as both an individual country for Muslim Palestinians and an integral component of a Muslim homeland<sup>218</sup> with specific value derived from the importance of its holy sites.

The idea of Muslim Palestine articulated above also suggests the influence of religious nationalism and, in particular, the religious nationalist discourse of Hamas, in the Jordanian context. To be sure, many Palestinians I interviewed expressed their support for Hamas and identified the organization as the "true leaders" of the national movement. Islam, they believed, was the proper framework for (1) understanding the value of Palestine, (2) conceptualizing the resistance in Palestine, and (3) believing in the eventual liberation of the homeland. But support for Hamas and the use of religious nationalist discourse should not be read as a mere endorsement of religious politics. Instead, reliance on the religious nationalist discourse of Hamas should also be seen within the specific context of displacement in which Palestinian refugees lived. The appeal of the idea of Muslim Palestine, in other words, cannot be divorced from the growing marginalization of refugees from the Palestinian political process in general

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<sup>218</sup> According to Anthony Smith, "[an] 'historic land' is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual, and beneficial, influence over several generations. The homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations, the place where 'our' sages, saints, and heroes lived, worked, prayed and fought. All this makes the homeland unique (Anthony D. Smith 1993, 9)." It is this sense that the idea of an "Islamic homeland" emerges as a meaningful and arguably stable idea.

and the larger conflict with Israel in particular. As a population divorced from the center of Palestinian national politics and as citizen-refugees living in Jordan, I believe that the appeal of religious nationalist discourse not only reflected the growing influence of Hamas among Palestinians but also the marginalization of Palestinians as refugees and their position vis-à-vis Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel. More than the secular idea of Arab Palestine, the meaning of “Muslim Palestine” had strategic importance for the homeland’s displaced community.

As refugees, Palestinians occupy a liminal position (Turner 1970b) both within Jordan and the Palestinian political arena. In Jordan, Palestinians have suffered systematic policies of political and economic marginalization in a process ‘Adnan Abu-Odeh has called de-Palestinianization (Abu-Odeh 1999b). One of the most obvious forms of discrimination has occurred within the state security forces where Palestinians have been excluded in order to maintain a Transjordanians majority. According to Abu-Odeh, the effect of such practices has been to trigger a self-perpetuating divisiveness in which Jordanians look at Palestinian-Jordanians as disloyal suspects (Abu-Odeh 1999b, 198). Economically, Palestinians have also been excluded from employment in the public sector including the military and public service work. Unable to access public jobs, many Palestinians have been forced into the uncertainties of menial work within the private sector.

In addition, as refugees with Jordanian citizenship, Palestinians have also been marginalized from the Palestinian national arena. Since the signing of the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the Occupied Territories, the exigencies of state-building have led to a serious neglect of refugee rights. In particular, given Israel’s resistance to confronting the question of the refugees and the PA’s focus on ending the occupation of the West

Bank and Gaza Strip, resolving the status of refugees has become a marginal issue. Most recently, the marginalization of Palestinian refugees from the center of national-decision making was reflected in their exclusion from the 2006 national elections. By excluding refugees in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, from participating in the elections, both the Palestinian Authority and Israel were sending the strong message that refugees were not part of the Palestinian political process. Rather, the refugees were an “issue” to be resolved from the “inside,” namely the West Bank and Gaza.

Given their marginal status, there are several reasons why Palestinian refugees have adopted the framework of religious nationalism for their homeland and cause. One of the most important reasons for claiming the religious status of Palestine is that it allowed Palestinians to assert a religious connection to their homeland. This, in turn, had several important implications. Unlike the secular framework of Arab nationalism, the Islamic quality of Palestine provided a more powerful claim over the indivisibility of the land and its status among Muslims. Such an idea could not come at a more critical time. Within the last decade, Palestinian refugees have seen few signs of any resolution to their displacement coming from the PLO and, in particular, the PA. Indeed, many Palestinians explained to me how the PLO’s acceptance of a two-state solution was a tacit negation of the right of return. Their rights, many Palestinians said, were meaningless to a secular world that only recognized “Jewish rights.” As a Muslim territory, however, Palestine had a special value. Despite their marginalization from the PLO, Islam assured them that their rights in Palestine were secure. This was powerfully demonstrated by Hamas, who has consistently insisted upon the Palestinian refugees’ right to return to their homes in 1948. Although willing to establish a long-term truce with the Israeli state, Hamas has



nevertheless maintained the position that the Palestinians have a religious right to their land and must be permitted to return.

Similarly, asserting the religious status of Palestine also presented a compelling counter-claim to the Zionist idea of Palestine (Israel) as an exclusively Jewish homeland. As expressed above, many Palestinians rejected the idea that Jews have a religious claim to Palestine as their exclusive territory. Recognizing that the idea of an Arab right in Palestine had achieved nothing in the confrontation with the “Jews,” the idea of a Muslim homeland reset the terms of the conflict in ways that did not—indeed, could not—compromise their rights. Finally, the status of Palestine as a Muslim territory helped to broaden the scope of the national conflict to include the Muslim umma. To be sure, the occupation and colonization of Palestine has always appealed to the sensibilities of Muslims throughout the world. Since the emergence of the PLO in 1964, however, the liberation movement has been primarily led by secular organizations. Their claims and resistance was thus grounded in the secular world of national rights.

With the rise of Islamic Jihād and Hamas during the first Intifada, the terms of the conflict dramatically changed. Drawing on the inspiration of the Iranian Revolution and reflecting a broader shift towards Muslim politics throughout the region, Palestinian religious nationalists have effectively reframed the conflict in religious terms facilitating a new approach and creating a new resonance within the Muslim world<sup>219</sup>. As Palestinians described above, the issue is a Muslim issue and thus can only be solved through Islam. Any agreement developed according to secular terms is therefore illegitimate unless consistent with the sacred rights of Palestinians and Muslims to Palestine.

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<sup>219</sup> For more on the rise of Palestinian religious politics, see (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010; Lybarger 2007; Abu-Amr 1993; Mishal and Sela 2006; Hroub 2004; Hroub 2000).

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusions**

This dissertation is a study of the “politics of identification” among Palestinian refugees in Jordan. As such, it is concerned with understanding how the idioms of ethnicity, religion, and nationhood were used in the claim to a distinct “Palestinian identity” in Jordan. The chapters in the dissertation have thus examined the myriad ways in which ethnic, religious, and national forms of identification were deployed within the overall attempt to articulate a distinct “Palestinian identity.” In the following discussion, I will present some of my key findings within my chapters and discuss their significance for understanding issues that transcend the specific case of Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

### **Displacement and the Politics of Identity:**

In the opening data chapter of this dissertation, I examined how Palestinians identified as refugees in both refugee camps and urban areas of Amman. Guided by the work of scholars interested in the relationship between displacement, refugee status, and what Liisa Malkki called “the national order of things”(Malkki, 1994; Daniel and Knudsen, 1995; Eastmond, 1998; Van Hear, 1998), I was interested in understanding how, after 60 years of displacement, Palestinian refugees and their descendants thought about their experience and what significance it had (if any) for their identity as Palestinian citizens of Jordan. What I discovered was that identifying as a refugee mattered in several ways that revealed critical aspects about the meaning of that identification for Palestinians and the relationship between people and place more generally.

One of my key findings in this chapter was that the possession of Jordanian citizenship did not resolve the issue of displacement for Palestinians or end their claim to being refugees. On the contrary, for both Palestinians in camps and the city (whether official refugees or not), identifying as a refugee remained a widespread contemporary practice. For Palestinians living in

the camps, at least one reason was abundantly clear: their legal status as Jordanian citizens did very little to mitigate the disastrous effects of displacement. Forced from their homes, properties, and livelihoods in 1948 and/or 1967, these Palestinians and their descendants remained landless and generally poor living within the destitute conditions of refugee camps scattered throughout the country. As the less fortunate of Jordan's Palestinian refugees, their lives were circumscribed by the structures of aid established and operated by UNRWA following the wars of Palestine. Thus unlike other Jordanian citizens, Palestinian refugees' housing, healthcare, and education were provided not by the Jordanian state, but by an international aid agency designed to "temporarily" alleviate the consequences of displacement. In this sense, dislocation and its ongoing consequences complicated the meaning of Jordanian citizenship for these Palestinians; their official status as refugees and its concomitant entitlements undermined the significance of citizenship as a lived experience.

The practical effects of displacement lived by Palestinian camp refugees was not the only reason Jordanian citizenship failed to weaken their identification as refugees. As my data shows, identifying as a refugee went beyond the question of camp life and official status. Indeed, camp Palestinians often ignored the significance of their official refugee status and their camp existence when claiming a refugee identity. Like Palestinians in the city, they identified as refugees in terms of (1) their direct experience of displacement or (2) their genealogical connection to someone who was displaced from Palestine in the past. In the first case, Palestinians understood refugee identity both as a result of displacement and an inability to return. Thus whether an individual was forced into a camp or was able to secure a livelihood in one of Amman's urban neighborhoods, identifying as a refugee was less the result of an official

status than it was the result of an identity and existence grounded in the experience of displacement.

For Palestinians who were neither displaced or living in camps, their identification as refugees reflected the patrilineal logic of kinship: they were refugees in virtue of their connection to a male relative who was displaced from Palestine in 1948 and/or 1967. This “inheritance of exile,” as I called it, could be understood in two ways. On one hand, it suggested that refugee identity referred to an experiential commonality that facilitated “group” identification and solidarity. Either as refugees displaced from Palestine or as their descendants born in Jordan, Palestinians claimed a common experience and memory of displacement and inherited its fundamental condition of *being* out of place. Whether born in Palestine or Jordan, being a refugee underscored a Palestinians’ claim to belonging to, and in, Palestine. On the other hand, the inheritance of exile also functioned within a broader identification as a distinct ethno-national community. Identifying as a refugee was “nationalized” to the extent that it functioned both as a key marker of sameness that cut across social distinctions among Palestinians and as a source of difference that established ethno-national categorical borders between Palestinians and Jordanians. Identifying as a refugee was *always also* identifying as a Palestinian and *not* as a Jordanian. Refugeeeness, in this sense, was inextricably linked to Palestinianness.

Beyond the question of citizenship and refugee status, my findings in this chapter also revealed an important complication within the shared identification among Palestinians as refugees. Indeed, the sentiment of solidarity (Weber 2009) among Palestinians as refugees described above was not without its internal complications. Contrasting ideas about the meaning of refugee “identity” among Palestinians in the city and the camps showed a critical limitation to the presumed sameness of that identity grounded in distinct cultural perceptions of place. For

Palestinians living in the city, the distinction between life in the camps and the city was essential for understanding the *kind* of refugee an individual could be. In particular, city refugees identified camp refugees with a unique sense of cultural ambivalence: camp refugees were *of* them but not *like* them. According to this logic, the camp refugee was identifiable as a unique social type distinguishable by the impact of camp life; the social and material conditions of the camps resulted in a distinct form of personhood unlike the personhood found in the cities. Camp refugees were thus socially inferior beings constituted by the extreme and polluting conditions of camp life. From the camps, however, Palestinian refugees spoke in no similar terms. For them, camp conditions did not draw the same social line between Palestinians; all were equally refugees suffering from the general conditions of displacement, not life in the camps or city. Despite the camps' poor conditions, in other words, refugees were identified as all the same.

Within the scope of refugee studies, the case of Palestinian refugees in Jordan discussed in this dissertation highlights at least two important general points. First, we see that the idea of citizenship and resettlement as solutions to displacement has serious limitations. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, solving the predicament of refugees can include some form of return (repatriation) to a home country, resettlement via local integration, or resettlement in a third country. Common to all three approaches is the necessity of reestablishing the national status of refugees as citizens either in their original country of citizenship or a second/third country. For Palestinians in Jordan, this much has already occurred: although the result of a policy of forced integration through the Jordanian annexation of central Palestine, Palestinian refugees (and, for some time, natives of the West Bank) became citizens of Jordan over 50 years ago and (most of them) remain such today. Yet these citizen refugees

remain significantly concerned with the latter term of their status. In their view, citizenship has not solved their predicament and the idea that they are refugees in need of a solution lingers on.

The fact that many Palestinian refugees remain in refugee camps is certainly relevant here. For these Palestinians, citizenship has failed to resolve displacement in the basic sense that it has failed to terminate their refugee existence in camps and dependency on international aid. This fact, however, only underscores the point that citizenship, on its own, is an insufficient solution for displacement. It shows that the extension of citizenship must go hand-in-hand with efforts capable of making that status meaningful in everyday life. In the camps of Jordan, the practical limitations of citizenship have only served to reinforce the idea among many Palestinians that the solution to their plight lies not in “naturalization” in Jordan but in repatriation to Palestine since it is only “there” that they believe true naturalization and an end to their exile can occur.

A second point about the Palestinian refugees of Jordan concerns the meaning of refugee identity. Among Palestinian refugees of the camps and cities of Jordan, we find that the statuses ascribed to them—their identifications—by institutions such as UNRWA are not limited to the practical functions these statuses were meant to facilitate. Rather, the identifications expressed by Palestinians in Jordan show that these statuses take on lives of their own: they become socially meaningful in ways that transcend their official meanings and are subjected to the cultural logics of their bearers. Thus identifying as a refugee has become a socially meaningful claim that not only asserts a commonality of experience for Palestinians but also provides the basis of an important boundary between Palestinians of “the camps” and “the city.”

### **The Politics of Ethno-National Identity in Jordan:**

At the core of this dissertation is the question of Palestinian identity in Jordan. Among a population of refugee-citizens and their descendants, I sought to understand what the possibilities and limits were to the meaning of “Palestinian” as a category of identification. Thus, in many ways, chapters four and five of my dissertation constitute a critical section of my research. They reflected not only my interest in examining the meaning of Palestinian “identity” as Palestinians claimed it but, more importantly, how their social location within Jordan impacted the production of that meaning. These two chapters thus explored how the meaning of Palestinian identity was constituted within the local national conditions of life in Jordan.

One of my key findings in these two chapters concerned the workings of ethnicity and nationhood among Jordanians and Palestinians. In particular, I discovered that, to a large extent, understanding the meaning of Palestinian identity in Jordan required an understanding of Jordanian identity in Jordan. Grasping the nexus between these two identifications, that were at once ethnic and national, revealed several critical ideas about the meaning of each and how the presumed dichotomy between Palestinians and Jordanians could be sustained both at the level of discourse and practice.

First, my research examined how two important factors in Jordan facilitated the distinction between Jordanian and Palestinian “identities:” the discourse of Transjordanian nationalists and the policies of the Hashemite state. Far from the framework of a pluralistic or civic nationalism, I showed how Transjordanian nationalists promoted an exclusive vision of nationhood in which Palestinians represented an external ethno-national community undeserving of equal citizenship or access to the state. Historically, this discourse developed within the post-war period in which British colonialists and the Hashemite family proceeded to establish a state

on territory never before integrated as a bounded entity. Frustrated by the imposition of rule by foreign influences including British colonial administrators and the soon-to-be Hashemite King Abdallah I, and the appointment of non-indigenous figures from areas in Syria and Palestine to government posts, local forces developed an ultimately unsuccessful opposition premised on a “Transjordanian” claim to the state in virtue of their native presence on the territory. This discourse continued and crystallized in a new form after the influx of Palestinian refugees in 1948, who overwhelmed the local population as part of an expanded Jordanian territory and became the new “other” in Jordan until today.

Much as before, the contemporary meaning of a Transjordanian identity grounded in a pre-colonial indigeneity continues to dominate the thinking of various elements in Jordan that see Palestinians as a distinct ethno-national community. As such, Transjordanian nationalists promote a discourse in which Palestinians represent an external threat to the national character of the territory and state. In order for Jordan to remain a truly Jordanian state, Transjordanian nationalists believe that Palestinians must be prevented from accessing key sites of state power. Accordingly, both the rights of citizenship and access to state institutions must be exclusively held by Transjordanians, who represent the “true” nation of Jordan. Palestinian citizens of Jordan are thus perceived as non-Jordanians belonging not in Jordan but in their proper place in the national order of things, namely Palestine.

Although Transjordanian nationalists do not yet represent the dominant position in Jordan, their impact on state policies, in addition to the Hashemites’ historically contentious position with the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinians, have given practical meaning to the idea that Palestinians are not Jordanian and that Jordan is not their country. On one hand, the fact that the Hashemites themselves are not indigenous to the country and once cooperated with



British colonial authorities has led both the late King Hussein and his heir, King Abdallah II, at different times, to appease Transjordanian nationalists by promoting policies supportive of a Transjordanian exclusivism. On the other hand, the conflict between King Hussein and the PLO in 1970, which threatened the very existence of the state as a Hashemite entity, produced lasting tendencies of institutional discrimination. Described by Abu-Odeh as the de-Palestinianization of Jordan, these policies have privileged Transjordanians over Palestinians and resulted in long-lasting feelings of discrimination among Palestinians, who see their status in Jordan as subordinate to their Transjordanian co-nationals. Moreover, the categorical discrimination of Palestinians has served to reinforce the very idea that two mutually exclusive groups populate the Kingdom and that these distinct peoples cannot share a state created for Jordanians.

Within this political context, Palestinians articulate a range of identifications that underscore the importance of two often contentious positions: normalizing their status as citizens and maintaining their “identity” as an ethno-national community connected to Palestine. Concerning their legal status as Jordanian citizens, Palestinians employ the discourse of pan-Arabism and religion to claim an essential commonality with Jordanians. As ethnic Arabs with a common history, culture, language, and religion (Islam), Palestinians claim a “rightful” place in Jordan. Moreover, as Muslims in a Muslim-majority country, Palestinian refugees assert a religious commonality with Jordanians that subordinates national distinctions while privileging divine connections grounded in faith. In one telling example of this logic (one often invoked by the late King Hussein), Palestinians equated their status in Jordan with that of the historical *muhājirīn* displaced from Mecca to the city of Medina. Much as their Muslim predecessors, Palestinians claimed that they deserve a sacred status as “temporary” refugees until their return to Palestine becomes possible. Thus the discriminatory treatment of Palestinians by Jordanian

nationalists and the state is characterized as a violation of both Arab ethno-nationalism and the obligations of Muslims toward other Muslims in need of assistance.

Although Palestinians promote the universalizing claims of pan-Arab and religious discourse, they nevertheless stop short of abandoning the particular claims of Palestinian national discourse. Indeed, Palestinians identify in ways that underscores their interest in “preserving” an identity that is ethnically and nationally distinct from Transjordanian identity. Thus while Palestinians identify with Jordanians as Arabs and Muslims, they also *disidentify* with Jordanians and claim a unique ethno-national identity distinguishable in terms of their connections to Palestine and a distinct ethnicity and nationhood. According to this logic, the fact that Palestinians draw on ethnic categories for establishing their commonality with Jordanians does not mean that they do not also claim a unique ethnic identity distinct from that of Jordanians. Despite their birth in Jordan and inability to visit Palestine, for example, many Palestinian refugees believe they have unique “traditions” expressive of their origins in Palestine and that differentiate them from Jordanians. Thus one can distinguish between “Palestinian” dress and “Jordanian” dress and the “Palestinian” dialect and the “Jordanian” dialect of Arabic. These ethnic markers serve to underscore the differences between both communities and preserve cultural boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Although Palestinians are Arabs, in other words, they are nonetheless *Palestinian* Arabs who belong to Palestine, not Jordan.

Constitutive of what I have called the politics of identification, the above data is significant for understanding the workings of ethnicity and nationhood in Jordan in several ways. We see, for example, that the meaning of ethnicity and nationhood for Palestinians does not simply reflect an effort to maintain a positive identification as a distinct ethno-national community. Instead, by examining Transjordanian national discourse and state policies, we find

that the meaning of Palestinian identifications is a reflection of several intersecting factors including (1) their exclusion from Jordanian nationalism, (2) their practical exclusion from the state (de-Palestinianization), and (3) their own desire to identify with an imagined (Anderson 2006) ethnic-nation and its homeland. To use Roger Brubaker's terms, the meaning of Palestinian ethnic and national claims in Jordan can be understood as "positions" within a political field constituted by the "nationalizing-nationalism" of Transjordanians, the Hashemite-ruled state, and the long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992) of Palestinian refugees wishing to maintain their connection to the Palestinian nation and homeland.

Understanding ethnicity and nationhood this way offers a compelling alternative to the idea that ethnicity, grounded in primordial ties, presents a challenge to the possibility of nationhood. Clifford Geertz, for example, was once troubled by the significance of primordial attachments including religion and ethnicity. He saw them as direct threats to the modern bonds of nationhood in the post-colonial world that could potentially undermine the weaker bonds of a nascent civic nationalism. In his estimation, the newly emergent states of the developing world were "abnormally susceptible to serious disaffection based on primordial attachments" including race, language, and culture (Geertz 1963, 110-111).

Looking at the context of Jordan, Geertz was not altogether wrong: presumed ethnic commonalities have, at different times, presented serious threats to the stability of Jordan as a Hashemite state ruling over Jordanians and Palestinians. Thus the idea that Palestinians and Jordanians represent distinct ethno-national communities has created significant challenges for the possibility of an integrated, multi-ethnic Jordanian state united under the Hashemite crown. Yet the very "primordialness" of ethnicity cannot be taken for granted. As we've seen above, the meaning of ethnicity is always constituted within specific situations. As Paul Brass has claimed:

The very sense of being a member of a coherent and clearly demarcated group is not simply given by tradition but raised in certain contexts—especially when there are either tensions with other groups or efforts by leaders to mobilize followers on the basis of that collective identity (Calhoun 1997, 32).

Thus the meaning of ethnicity and nationhood must be seen not as stable inherited bonds but as ambivalent categories of identification capable reflecting a diverse set of ideas about commonalities grounded in religion, language, and culture at different times and under different circumstances. For example, ethnic identifications among Palestinians can, on one hand, invoke the Arabic language as a commonality underscoring a fundamental sameness between themselves and Jordanians and, on the other hand, identify “their” Arabic as a mark of critical difference between themselves and Jordanians. Arabic, in other words, matters as much as a point of unity between Palestinians and Jordanians as an important point of distinction. Such configurations emerge not as a result of any primordial demands but as a direct reflection of a contemporary tension concerning the rise of Transjordanian exclusivism and Palestinians’ own national affiliations.

Thus we must understand that, although ethno-national identifications may include supposed primordial commonalities such as language, religion, and culture, it is often the workings of power that make such identifications meaningful. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis have shown, ethnic identifications cannot solely be understood as positive identifications; they must be expanded to include shared conditions of existence under the state. Ethnic and national identifications, in this sense, can involve the “partaking of the social conditions of a group, which is positioned in a particular way in terms of the social allocation of resources, within a context of difference to other groups, as well as commonalities and differences within” (Anthias and Yuva-Davis 1993, 9). Such positioning can include one’s access to political, social, and

economic resources or, as in the Palestinians' case, an individual's status as a citizen. As Anthony Marx has noted, citizenship is a key institutional mechanism for establishing boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in the nation-state (Marx 1998, 5). Thus, as in Jordan, ideas about ethnic and/or national differences can underscore the inequalities of citizenship by "groups" positioned as such and identified through presumed ethno-national markers of similarity and difference.

In this sense, the function of ethnic and national identifications among Palestinian refugees also serves to underscore an important issue about citizenship. As in most states, the politics of nationalism in Jordan center on citizenship as the link between the putative nation and the state. Thus Transjordanians claim that citizenship is the glue that binds them to the Jordanian state. Seen from the perspective of Transjordanian nationalists, expanding the boundaries of citizenship to include Palestinians not only weakens the meaning of an ethnic Jordanian nation—a nation grounded in a common ethnicity—but also undermines their relationship to the state, which they believe is their exclusive privilege. Citizenship, in other words, is understood as a national right, that is, a right of *the* nation to *the* state. Palestinians endorse a similar conception of ethnicity and nationhood. Identifying primarily as Palestinians in terms of a presumed ethnic commonality, they claim a "natural" connection to Palestine. Consequently, they too identify Jordan as a territory belonging to its own ethnic-nation of Jordanians. Yet Palestinians do not see citizenship as the link between a nation and a state. For them, citizenship can be severed from the "nation" and function as a non-national set of rights grounded in a universal ethnicity (as Arabs) and religion (as Muslims). It can serve as a temporary privilege offered toward non-national residents sharing just enough to be legal equals but not enough to "nationalize" them as Jordanians.

The difference between Transjordanian and Palestinian ideas about citizenship highlights the contemporary challenge of a world conceived in terms of nations with states. Both Palestinians and Jordanians accept the ideology of nationalism in which distinct nations belong to, and in, their proper place in the world. Thus the very idea of being Palestinian necessitates a Palestine to which they belong and from which their Palestinianness becomes possible. Ditto for Jordanians. But the trouble here is not necessarily that Palestinians and Jordanians engage in the ideology of nationalism but how they do so. One can therefore see the wisdom in the pluralist approach in Jordan by Palestinians seeking to dislodge ethno-national identity from citizenship and promote the idea that being Jordanian can be limited to one's status as a citizen. In this configuration, Transjordanians and Palestinians can coexist as Jordanians within the framework of civic nationalism. In other words, two "peoples," one state.

### **Identifying the Homeland: Diaspora, Diasporization, and Nationhood:**

In an effort to specify the meaning and application of the term "diaspora," William Safran developed a typological approach centered on several features that distinguished diasporic peoples from other displaced or migrant populations. For Safran, six particular features had to be in place for a migrant community to count as a diaspora: dispersal from a center (home territory) to two or more places, a collective mythology of the homeland, partial alienation from the host society, a commitment to the maintenance (and sometimes creation) and prosperity of the homeland, an idealization of return to an original homeland, and a derivation of collective consciousness and solidarity from a relationship with the homeland (Safran 1991, 83). Drawing on the work of Safran, Robin Cohen elaborated the typology to include two particular features reflecting attention to the function of ethnicity in diasporic formations. According to Cohen, diasporas could also be distinguished by (1) a strong ethnic group consciousness based on a

sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and belief in a common fate and (2) a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement (Cohen, 1997).

In addition to the features offered above, Cohen provided a further system of classification meant both to identify a group as a diaspora and to distinguish between groups as particular *kinds* of diasporas. Grounding his categories in the specific causes of dispersal, Cohen identified five categories of diasporas including labor diasporas, trade diasporas, imperial diasporas, cultural diasporas, and victim diasporas (Cohen 1997). Using the Jewish diaspora as the paradigmatic case, Cohen gave considerable attention to the circumstances of victim diasporas whose categorization as such included four particular features. First, victim diasporas had to be the direct result of a forced, and often traumatic dispersal from an original homeland to two or more regions. Second, they had to bear a collective memory or myth about the location, history, and achievements of their former homeland. The third feature of a victim diaspora concerned the meaning of the homeland. According to Cohen, victim diasporas also shared an idealization of the homeland and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, and prosperity. Fourth, victim diasporas were unique for their emphasis on a collective return often expressed through a widespread movement. Finally, victim diasporas were distinct for their shared sense of group consciousness across generations and geographic locations based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and common destiny (Cohen 1997).

Drawing on the work of Safran and Cohen, Kim Butler (2001) emphasized the significance of the temporal-historical component in developing the diaspora concept. According to Butler, in order for a community to exist as a diaspora, it must be multi-generational: diasporic peoples must combine the individual migration experience with the collective history of group dispersal and regeneration of communities abroad (Butler 2001, 192).

Butler's point was significant for its attention to the issue of prolonged displacement. In her view, one could not assume that the ethnic status of a migrant community across generations alone would suffice for establishing its identity as diasporic. As Tololyan noted, it may be that, after several generations, the descendants of the first generation of emigrants cease to be a "segment" of the homeland's population in any meaningful sense (Tololyan 2007, 649). Thus examining the mechanisms by which individuals promote a sense of commonality across generations becomes essential for distinguishing between migrants and diasporas. Again, as Tololyan noted:

The community endures as a distinct diaspora, not because its members individually remember grandma or the village, but thanks to the collective work of memory commemoration, the performance of difference, the cultivation of ideologies of identity, and the institutionalization of practices of connection to the homeland (Tololyan 2007, 650).

The typological approaches listed above are not without their problems. Indeed, both Butler and Tololyan were keenly aware of some of the dangers inherent in treating diasporas as "groups" bearing particular "features." Thus both Butler and Tololyan emphasized the importance of looking not *at* diasporas but instead examining the processes of what they called diasporization. For Butler, scholars of diaspora should shift their focus away from identifying which groups actually are diasporas and instead considering "diaspora" as a framework for the study of particular processes and expressions of community formation (Butler 2001, 194). Echoing Butler's attention to process, Tololyan called for an approach capable of examining how displaced peoples erect boundaries of similarity and difference in the formation of communities. Thus Tololyan argued that "it may be best to think of diasporas not as the name of a fixed concept and social formation but as a process of collective identification and form of identity, marked by ever-changing differences that chart the shifting boundaries of certain communities



hierarchically embedded as enclaves with porous boundaries within other, larger communities (Tololyan 2007, 650).”

For some critics of diaspora studies, the typological approach not only incorrectly assumed a *givenness* of diasporas but also failed in important methodological ways. For example, Stephane Dufoix criticized studies of “diasporas” for their failure to present the workings of the key features they ought best describe: the relationship to a homeland or “referent-origin” (Dufoix 2). According to Roger Brubaker, such inadequacies often lead to a flattening of difference whereby the concept of homeland remains unspecified and otherwise disparate populations are forced into bounded categorical groups that need to be explained, not assumed (Brubaker 2006). Similarly, Floya Anthias argued that the application of the diaspora category also reflects a failure to specify the distinct conditions under which populations migrate and, more importantly, ignores the impact of local conditions upon these populations. In her view, diasporas have thus appeared in ways that suggest far more homogeneity than actually exists and have essentialized the relationship between people and place. According to Anthias, such populations are not homogenous for their movements may have taken place at different historical periods and for different reasons (Anthias 1998). In addition, the different countries in which these populations reside often present different social conditions, opportunities, and exclusions that can lead to distinct representations of the community and their relationship to the homeland.

The preceding discussion provides an important background for chapters six and seven of my dissertation. In these two chapters, I considered these theoretical issues when examining the specific question of the Palestinian homeland among Palestinian refugees in Jordan. I did so for two reasons. First, the idea that Palestinians constitute a diaspora community is now a well-

established idea within the field of Palestinian studies (Hammer 2005, Schulz and Hammer 2003). Thus many scholars regularly refer to a Palestinian diaspora noting, in particular, the trauma of displacement, the importance of the homeland in the lives of refugees, and Palestinians' emphasis on the right of return enshrined in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194. Moreover, it is also common to hear Palestinians refer to their situation as uniquely diasporic. Thus throughout my research period, I often heard Palestinians refer to themselves as members of *Al-Shattāt Al-Filastīnī*, or The Palestinian Diaspora.

Drawing on the typologies offered by the work of Safran and Cohen—in particular Cohen's notion of a victim diaspora—it would have been easy to “authenticate” Palestinians' diaspora status by identifying the necessary features of a diaspora group among Palestinian refugees. Indeed, Palestinians' accounts of displacement and their identifications of and with Palestine suggested that Palestinians were, according to Safran and Cohen, a clear-cut diaspora. Such an approach, however, would have limited my analysis since examining the meaning of the homeland for Palestinians would have mattered less than simply determining whether the homeland was a common multi-generational topic for Palestinians when identifying as an ethno-national community. In other words, my analysis would have illustrated one of the key weaknesses of the typological analysis of diasporas: it would have emphasized the question of who is (or isn't) a diaspora at the expense of determining how the scattered members of a distant place diasporized, if at all, in particular ways. In this sense, my analysis attempted to incorporate Butler and Tololyan's emphasis on the processes by which the Palestinian homeland became a meaningful concept for a displaced people across generations. I considered their insights important since they compelled me to consider the mechanisms by which Palestinians identified through, and as, a diaspora. If one of the key features of a community identifying as a diaspora

concerns the homeland, then it was my task to sift through the meanings of that homeland as an idealized place of significance to Palestinian refugees living “abroad.” To return to Dufoix and Brubaker’s concerns with the meaning of the homeland, I was interested in the possibility of a Palestinian diaspora and/or the process of diasporization and thus explored the very idea of the homeland and its implications for the construction of social boundaries of inclusion/exclusion that may or may not be unique to Palestinians in Jordan.

By examining both the meaning of the Palestinian homeland and its role in the constitution of ethnic, religious, and national identifications among Palestinians, I discovered that what are often termed diasporic configurations of “identity” are not as clear cut as scholars would like. Specifically, my research underscored the importance of understanding how the idealization of a homeland across generations can function in a variety of ways that do not necessarily result in a distinguishably diasporic formation of “community.” For example, while many scholars have pointed to the common effort by displaced peoples to idealize their places of origin, few have offered critical examinations of exactly what it means to “idealize” the homeland. Thus one of my key interests in chapters six and seven was determining what Palestinians meant by the idea of Palestine. What, I asked, was the Palestine to which refugees referred? In most cases, the concept of Palestine identified by Palestinians was captured within the common refrain, “min Al-Nahar ilal Bahar” [from the (Jordan) river to the (Mediterranean) sea]. For refugees and their descendants, the idealization of the Palestinian homeland was thus articulated through an unchanging geography grounded in the colonial imaginary of Palestine under the British Mandate. According to image of the homeland represented by Palestinian refugees, the colonial boundaries of Palestine under the British Mandate (1917-1948) were extracted from time and space and idealized as pre-colonial borders distinguishing a unique

space within the region that was essentially Palestinian. Moreover, these borders were transcendent insofar as they not only preceded the colonial period but also defied the post-colonial Zionist conquest and establishment of Israel. In this sense, much as Jewish Zionists claimed Israel, Palestinians claimed Palestine as a timeless and permanent homeland unchanged by the realities of history or the present.

Beyond the geographic idealization of the homeland, my findings also revealed the critical function of that homeland in the identifications of Palestinians as a distinct ethno-national community. In particular, the idea of Palestine articulated by Palestinians enabled the claim to a distinct ethno-national identity grounded in genealogical ties rooted in Palestine and reflecting a claim to what Anthony Smith described as a common community of descent. According to this idea, whether an individual is within his/her community or has emigrated to another, she/he remains ineluctably and organically a member of the community and is forever stamped by it (Smith 1993). The idea of Palestine thus offered a conceptual point of identification through which Palestinians displaced from their homeland and their descendants could link themselves to a particular people and territory and distinguish themselves in terms of a unique ethno-national identity. This was visible in two ways. First, Palestinian refugees overwhelmingly identified in genealogical terms; that is, they identified through a genealogical discourse of “origins” claiming a primary identification as Palestinian rooted in a common ancestry. These genealogical claims functioned both to reinforce the idea that being Palestinian was an essential “identity” transmitted by blood and to stiffen the borders between themselves and Jordanians. Through the logic of genealogy, in other words, Palestinians not only constructed organic boundaries of inclusion within an ethno-national community but also provided the parameters of exclusion through which Palestinians could disidentify with Jordanians. Through the framework of

descent, Palestinians identified in terms of an interminable and, to borrow Smith's terms, ineluctable genealogy that maintained their status as Palestinians despite their location in Jordan.

Second, Palestinians' genealogical articulations went beyond the mere claim to a common ancestry to include a common origin in a particular territory: Palestine. In this sense, it was not just that Palestinians could identify a common ancestor that mattered; rather, it was the fact of that ancestor's lived experience in the homeland that made the genealogical tie of particular importance. It was through a territorialized genealogy that Palestinians could identify as a distinct community linked both to Palestine and the Palestinians. Thus whereas Smith saw the ethnic nation as one grounded in genealogical ties, the case of the Palestinians I described showed that genealogy was not so easily disentangled from territory and thus ethno-national identifications can reflect an inseparable link between descent and place. A community of common descent, in other words, matters precisely because of the location of that lineage within a particular territory. More specifically, it was that an individual could identify an ancestor's birth in *Palestine* that enabled her particular claim to being Palestinian. This idea is adequately captured in Engseng Ho's account of the relationship between naming and nations when he states that names identify persons and groups beyond the sphere of biological and cultural reproduction to include territory (Ho 2002, 215). Although in my account it isn't that *specific* names were genealogically Palestinian in virtue of their link to Palestine (although without a doubt, some names are marked as "Palestinian"), Ho's considerations of the connection between genealogies and territory nevertheless speaks to the critical link between descent and territory for Palestinian refugees.

In addition to examining the idealization of the homeland in discourse, my analysis considered the function of the idealized and materialized homeland in everyday life. In

particular, my research showed how the homeland, as a symbolic artifact of everyday life represented in maps, artwork, and through images of Jerusalem, articulated an important national distinction in Jordan. Essential for understanding how symbolic representations of the homeland functioned within what Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss called “everyday nationhood” was the historic context in which such representations took place. Whereas one could have easily identified these homeland materializations as mere expressions of diasporic longing, I showed how these representations were intimately linked to the suppression of Palestinian nationalism in Jordan. Because the civil war of 1970 between Hashemite loyalists and Palestinian guerillas facilitated a political context in which manifestations of Palestinian national affiliations have been interpreted as affronts to Jordanian nationalism, I argued that the typical symbols of nationalism, such as flags or images of nationalist leaders, have been prohibited from public display. Yet the suppression of Palestinian nationalism did not eradicate everyday forms of national identification. In particular, my research showed that material representations of the homeland allowed Palestinians to assert national identifications in ways that were not explicitly nationalist. Thus images of Jerusalem including the Dome of the Rock functioned as multi-vocal symbols of the homeland that represented both religious and national ties to Palestine. Much more than expressions of diasporic attachments to a homeland, images of Jerusalem and artistic carvings of Nakba Palestine expressed national identifications among Palestinians that subtly challenged the idea that Jordan was an exclusively “Jordanian” national context.

Finally, my examination of the homeland revealed important insights into the way Palestinians’ idealizations of the homeland not only reflected the local national context of Jordan but also underscored the significance of homeland national politics for Palestinians living as refugees in Jordan. In particular, I argued that the sacred conception of Palestine as a Muslim

territory articulated by Palestinians suggested two points about Palestinian ethno-national identifications. First, the religious conception of Palestine as a Muslim homeland revealed the influence and importance of the religious nationalist movement, Hamas, to Palestinians in Jordan. Although marginalized from the center of Palestinian national politics in the West Bank and Gaza, the religious meaning of Palestine articulated by refugees in Jordan showed that they are nonetheless engaged in national debates of the homeland: they take a stance vis-à-vis homeland nationalist agendas and claim its relevance through particular discourses. In this sense, national articulations of the homeland among Palestinian refugees indicated the importance of thinking about nationhood as a contingent event. According to Rogers Brubaker, nationhood or nationness is something that happens; it is a contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision that suddenly crystallizes rather than develops (Brubaker 1996, 19). Located within the context of Hamas's electoral victory, I believe that Palestinian discourse about the homeland as a religious space spoke not necessarily to the development of religious nationalism among refugees but to the "moment" in which that discourse took place. It was within the context of Hamas's ascent to power within the national institutions of the quasi-state in Palestine that refugees engaged in religious national discourse, it "crystallized". The moment of the elections and victory was a nationalizing event that transformed interpretive frames, perceptions, and evaluations among refugees (Brubaker 1996, 20). If it ever was before, in 2006-2007 Palestine *became* a Muslim homeland and Palestinians *became* a Muslim nation within the context of Hamas's victory.

Second, my analysis emphasized the local importance of religious nationalism for Palestinian refugees seeking to challenge their marginal status within the arena of homeland politics and within the conflict with Israel more generally. As I showed, religious national

identifications of the “Palestinians” and “Palestine” provided refugees with a powerful discourse in which to frame their connection to the homeland and the legitimacy of the struggle for its liberation from Zionist colonization. On one hand, the religious construction of Muslim Palestine allowed Palestinians to assert their claims to the homeland in terms that transcended the realities of time and space. According to this idea, Palestine was the eternal homeland of Palestinian Muslims despite their prolonged displacement and the creation of the State of Israel. Religious national discourse, in this sense, was an empowering discourse in which Palestinians could assert an eternal claim to Palestine and their ineluctable membership within a sacred community (Smith, 2004). On the other hand, religious nationalism allowed Palestinians to locate their struggle within a broader arena that implicated all Muslims. Insofar as Palestine constituted part of the broader Islamic homeland, Palestinian Muslims and Muslims in general had a “duty” to defend the territory from occupation or colonization by any foreign force. Consequently, the logic of this discourse meant that the fight against Zionism represented the realization of an Islamic obligation upon all Muslims to protect Palestine from Zionist conquest and restore the territory to its rightful place within an imagined Islamic geography.

### **Conclusions:**

The chapters in the dissertation have examined the myriad ways in which ethnic, religious, and national forms of identification were deployed within the overall attempt to articulate a distinct “Palestinian identity.” At times, my research showed how Palestinians claimed ethnic and religious forms of belonging in ways that reflected the politics of their location in Jordan as citizen-refugees. Thus Palestinians resisted the exclusionary discourse of Transjordanian nationalists and the discrimination of the Hashemite-Jordanian state by asserting their commonality with Jordanians as Arabs and Muslims. At other times, my research showed



how ethnic and religious identifications functioned to promote the distinctiveness of Palestinian “identity” and reflected Palestinians’ engagement with the homeland politics of Palestine, not Jordan. With a common “origin” in the homeland, Palestinians claimed a unique Palestinian ethno-national identity distinguishable both genealogically and culturally from Jordan and the Jordanian people. Moreover, through the framework of religious nationalism espoused by Hamas in Palestine, Palestinian refugees asserted a sacred connection to the “homeland” and Palestinian “nation” in Jordan. Through religious forms of identification, Palestinians thus claimed an interminable belonging to Palestine and enacted a national form of politics without engaging in nationalism or being nationalist.

In my examination, I also considered how Palestinian identifications as “refugees” functioned within the local context as an important boundary of both inclusion and exclusion. For Palestinians, refugee status was expanded beyond its official meanings to provide an essential point of commonality through which Palestinians could claim membership in a larger community in exile. Grounded in claims to a common experience of displacement and exile, both Palestinians living in UNRWA refugee camps and Palestinians living throughout urban areas of Amman identified as “refugees.” In this case, displacement was conceived as an ongoing event and process beginning with the removal from Palestine and inherited across generations as a condition of being out of place. The idea of return thus not only represented the physical movement back to Palestine but also the termination of a condition of exile through the restoration of the Palestinian people to their rightful place in Palestine. Although the claim to a common refugee identity rooted in the experiences of displacement and exile established an important link between Palestinians across space and time, my research also showed that material and symbolic boundaries between the city and the camps nevertheless had significant

consequences for what it meant to *be* a refugee living in both spaces. Palestinian refugees in the city thus held particular views about the camp and its residents that enabled a moral discourse about the Palestinian community grounded in the experience and meaning of life in the camps.

My dissertation has focused on the specific case of refugees in Jordan, but the issues raised in my research speak to larger question regarding the meaning of ethno-national politics as seen from the context of everyday life. Regarding the question of ethno-national politics, the case of Palestinian refugees in Jordan highlights at least two important points. First, my research provides an important example of how ethnicity and nationhood reflect not the essential and/or enduring qualities of bounded “groups” but rather categories of practice used in the formation of “groupness” in particular settings. In this sense, my study breaks with traditional studies of ethnicity and nation that treat individuals as members of “ethno-national groups” and instead emphasizes what people *do* with ethnic and national categories in the claim to group belonging (or distancing). As Brubaker et al. noted, the analytical study of categories invites us to think about how ethnic and national categories function from above –how they are proposed, propagated, imposed, institutionalized, discursively articulated, and organizationally entrenched –and from below –how categories are appropriated, internalized, subverted, evaded, or tarnished (Brubaker et al. 2008, 12). In this sense, my research is less a study of “the Palestinians” in Jordan as it is a study of how the meaning of “Palestinian” is articulated through ethno-national categories in the social-political context of Jordan.

Second, the data in this dissertation reveals the importance of understanding how ethno-national politics occur not in the lives of elites, but in the everyday claims of “ordinary” people living in marginal political spaces. To be sure, the Palestinian refugees I examined in this study are not nationalists; they have no formal national movement representing their “interests” in

Jordan nor do they engage in national debates as “Palestinians.” This, however, does not mean that Palestinians are not national. On the contrary, the Palestinians I researched engaged in everyday nationalizing discourses and practices that underscored the salience of nationalism in their lives. Illustrating what Jon Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss called “talking the nation,” Palestinians were national without being nationalist.

People talk about [the nation] and they make discursive claims for, about, and in the name of the nation. As Craig Calhoun points out, ‘nations are constituted largely by these claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, to evaluate peoples and practices.’ The nation, in this view, is a discursive construct. (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 538).

Thus as a study of the “everyday,” my research contributed to a growing literature concerned with the study of ethno-national politics from below. Like Marita Eastmond’s attention to the situation of Bosnian refugees in Switzerland, my study focused on how nationalist ideologies were perceived from the vantage point of local life, where identities and boundaries were negotiated in everyday interaction and in relation to other social identities (Eastmond 1998, 162-163).

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