LEANDROS FISCHER

Landscape and Identities

Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

KÖLNER ETHNOLOGISCHE BEITRÄGE

Herausgegeben von Michael J. Casimir

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Vorwort des Herausgebers

In den vergangenen Jahren wurde von der ethnologischen Forschung die Konstruktion von Landschaften in gesellschaftlichen Diskursen deutlich thematisiert. Dabei stand im Vordergrund wie Gemeinschaften ihre Identität in die naturräumliche Ausstattung einer Region - in Topographien, Vegetation und Hydrologie – einlesen. Entgegen früherer kulturökologischer Beschäftigungen mit dem Thema Landschaft stand nun nicht so sehr der bio-geophysische Einfluss des Menschen auf seine Umwelt im Vordergrund, sondern vor allem wie Landschaften als Medien bei der Konstruktion diverser Identitäten und Machtbezüge genutzt werden. Hierbei stehen häufig Landschaftskonstrukte im Vordergrund, die sich in einem längeren Traditionsprozess entwickelt haben. Landschaftskonstruktionen bezogen u.a. ihre Legitimation durch die historische Tiefe, die der Beziehung Mensch/Umwelt anhand konkreter Beispiele zugesprochen wurde. Leandros Fischer stellt sich in seiner Magisterschrift, die von Prof. Michael Bollig betreut wurde, einer Herausforderung für die ethnologische Landschaftsforschung: Flüchtlingslager sind Orte, in denen quasi per definitionem eine Traditionsbildung ausgeschlossen wird. Wie entwickeln sich an solchen Orten symbolische Ortsbezogenheiten und wie wird die alte und verlorene Heimat in die neue Heimat hineinprojeziert und findet ein solcher Verbindungsprozess überhaupt statt? . Fischer bearbeitet diese Thematik anhand palästinensischer Flüchtlingslager im Libanon. Seine Materialbasis beruht aus einigen gut ausgearbeitete Ethnographien mit deutlichen Bezügen zur Thematik und gründet sich weiterhin auf einer umfassenden Lektüre einschlägiger historischer Werke sowie auf Propagandamaterial verschiedener palästinensischer Organisationen.

Michael J. Casimir

Mein herzlicher Dank...

geht an all jene die die Entstehung dieser Arbeit ermöglicht haben. Ein besonderer Dank geht an Daphnos Economou und Burkhard Fischer, die mit ihren inhaltlichen und sprachlichen Anregungen einen sehr wichtigen Beitrag leisteten. Vielen Dank auch an Prof. Dr. Michael Bollig für seine Betreuung und kontinuerliche Unterstützung während des Schreibens dieser Arbeit.

Was die komplexe Problematik des Nahostkonfliktes angeht, schuldet diese Arbeit sehr viel an den Analysen von *Matzpen*, einer israelischen Gruppe der 60er und 70er Jahre. Dessen Mitbegründer, Prof. Moshé Machover, war immer bereit meine Fragen zu beantworten und mich mit Literaturhinweisen und Anregungen zu unterstützen. Dafür bin ich sehr dankbar.

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1. Introduction

The issue of the return of the Palestinian refugees remains as controversial as ever. Sixty years since the *Nakbah* and the fate of thousands of refugees gathered in camps of neighbouring Arab countries remains undecided. No other issue in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations generates as much animosity as the issue of the right of the Palestinians to return. The refugee camps of Lebanon have come especially to symbolize the severity of the modern Palestinian experience: Expulsion, statelessness, struggle, tragedy and marginalization. Yet, the prospect of the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza appears distant as long as the construction of settlements in the West Bank by Israel continues. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon find themselves stranded in a country that for the last 30 years has become the battlefield of religious sectarianism, of campaigns for regional domination, and of superpower rivalries.

The Palestinians – in spite of these obstacles – have managed to make their presence felt in the academic community; not an easy task, given that up to the late 1960s the world was largely oblivious of their existence. This was achieved thanks to the tireless efforts of academics, such as the late Edward Said, who fought against the cliché discursive reduction of the Palestinians into either fanatic terrorists or passive victims. The fieldwork undertaken in the camps of Lebanon by a few dedicated anthropologists has been invaluable to the completion of this thesis[1]. I have greatly benefited from the work of anthropologists such as Rosemary Sayigh, Julie Peteet and Laleh Khalili in tracing the time journey of Palestinian camp refugees. This journey affects and is affected by global trends such as colonialism, the rise and fall of Third World nationalism, the emergence of postcolonial identity and global humanitarian discourse.

To what extent does landscape contribute in the shaping of identity? And how is this manifested? As a cognitive component conveyed through nationalist rhetoric, as the provider of livelihood and consequently as a social boundary marker, or both?

In the first chapter, a historical overview of the factors that led to the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem is undertaken. This covers the years of the emergence of the Zionist movement in Palestine, the 1948 War and the *Nakbah*, the Lebanese political environment as host to the Palestinian refugee community leading up to the present. The Zionist project and its colonialist

[1] Though theoretically possible – anthropoligists are more than welcome in the camps of Lebanon - undertaking fieldwork is at present extremely difficult given the recent political developments in Lebanon.

character is examined in correlation to the significance of the Romanticist landscape discourse in the process of dispossessing the Palestinians. In turn, the Palestinian refugee usage of landscape discourse in seeking the establishment of an independent state is also analysed.

The three chapters that then follow are divided into fairly distinct chronological periods. The first deals with the experiences of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon after the *Nakbah*. It concentrates on the contradictions of traditional identities that are manifested spatially, with the transforming, modernizing effects of a state-like refugee regime. The second centres on the temporary break in the relationship between soil and territory that occurred at the time of the PLO's institutional presence in Lebanon, while the third examines the present landscape of the refugee camps, focusing on identity forming commemoration sites as well as on the re-emergence of traditional forms of identification.

The relationship of the Palestinian refugees with their Lebanese host environment and its influence on the camp landscape are also considered. The question of whether the Palestinians of Lebanon should be considered as part of a diaspora is raised. To what extent does attachment to landscape play a role in classifying the Palestinians in general and camp dwellers in particular as part of such a concept? Finally, an outline of the main Palestinian and Israeli arguments for and against the Right of Return is also provided.

2. Historical Overview

2.1. From the 1890´s to 1948

The roots of the Palestinian problem can be traced to the beginnings of the Zionist settler movement of the late 19th century. Zionism had developed as a nationalist movement propagating the *aliyah*[2] or ascent of the Jewish people to historical Palestine, then part of the ailing Ottoman Empire, in light of anti-Semitic pogroms in Eastern Europe, especially Czarist Russia. Up until the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the Zionist movement constituted one of many ideologies to be found amongst the Jewish diaspora, coexisting with an array of

[2] The first *aliyah* took place between 1882 and 1903 and involved the arrival of 35,000 Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe, who established the first Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine (cf. Avineri 1981; Laqueur 1972; Pappé 2004).

others, such as assimilationism and socialism. However, its fortunes were significantly enhanced after Britain and France divided among themselves the domains of the dismembered Ottoman Empire. Britain obtained a League of Nations mandate[3] over Palestine, Transjordan[4] and Iraq, while France obtained a similar mandate over Syria and what would later become Lebanon. In 1917, the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, formulated a policy statement – to become known as the "Balfour Declaration" – by which Britain had promised a "Jewish national home" in Palestine, giving a significant boost to Zionist aspirations for a Jewish state, which by now had become more concrete (Pappé 1992: 47). A *modus vivendi* developed between the Zionists and the Mandate authorities, as both had a common enemy in the face of rising anti-colonial Arab nationalism developing in the region[5]. Symmetrically, Arab national identity in Palestine varied from that in neighbouring countries, as it was marked not only by the desire to rid the land of European colonialism, but also from Zionist colonization, which was expanding more aggressively after World War I. The second *aliyah* (1904-1914) had brought as many as 60,000 new emigrants, which were more committed to political Zionism than the previous settlers (R. Khalidi 1997: 94).

Jewish settlers bought land from feudal Arab landowners, forcing the Arab peasants who cultivated those lands to flee (R. Sayigh 1979: 39). In addition, the main Jewish labour federation, the Histradut, was ensuring that Jewish employers wouldn´t hire Arabs as workers, on grounds that these were prepared to work for low wages to which Jews coming from Europe were not accustomed (Bernstein 1998; R. Sayigh 1979). Arab dissatisfaction at this situation manifested itself in the Great Arab Revolt between 1936 and 1939, which was eventually suppressed by 20,000 British troops and Zionist militias like the Haganah and the Irgun[6]. The rise of Nazism in Europe, culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust, signalled the dramatic increase in Jewish emigration to Palestine; partly because countries such as the United States effectively blocked the entry of many European Jews on their soil after the war (Pappé 1992: 21), but primarily due to the growing appeal Zionism and its concept of a Jewish state had on the persecuted Jews, now bitterly

[3] The mandate was granted by the Treaty of Sévres (10.8.1920), although the partition was sealed by the secret Sykes-Picot agreement, between France, Britain and Russia in 1916, and leaked by the Bolsheviks after their rise to power in 1917 (Pappé 2004: 66-67).

[4] As present-day Jordan was then known.

[5] Here I am referring to the overall tendency. Jewish-Arab relations were quite more complex and included both instances of cooperation and confrontation.

[6] The Haganah was the militia of the Labour Zionist movement, the predecessor of the Israeli Labour Party, while the Irgun (officially known as the National Military Organization) was a more underground movement affiliated with the right-wing Revisionist Zionist movement, later to become the Herut-party before becoming the present-day Likud-party. Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin was a leading member of the Irgun.

disappointed by the nation-states that failed to protect them. Faced with growing Arab discontent, the British imposed restrictions on Jews wishing to settle in Palestine. This, of course, backfired as the British were now under fire from both Arab and Jewish militias.

2.2. The Arab-Israeli War of 1948

As the importance of Palestine for the British Empire declined, following the independence of India in 1947, the British prepared to leave. What sets the case of Palestine apart from other cases of decolonization however, was the fact that the British did not hand power to indigenous leaders (such as Ghandi and Nehru India), but decided instead to refer the issue of Palestine to the United Nations. The UN presented the UN Partition Plan for Palestine on the 25th of November 1947, which was accepted by the Jews but rejected by the Arabs. The plan provided for the partition of Palestine in two, almost equal parts, even though the Jews counted for half of the Arab population[7] and most had arrived in the years following World War II. The tragedy of the Holocaust meant that the case for a Jewish state met with almost unanimous approval in the international community[8]. The fact that one of the key leaders of the Arab resistance to Zionist settlement, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Muhammad Amin Al-Husseini, was a notorious war criminal and Nazi-collaborator, did little to generate sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians (*ibid.*: 22-23)[9].

On May 14th 1948, just as the British were evacuating Palestine, David Ben Gurion declared the independence of the State of Israel. Immediately afterwards, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon attacked to assist the Arabs already fighting the Zionists in Palestine. Yet the Palestinians were unable to pose substantial resistance to the well-organized Jewish militias. Their leadership had put it´s faith in the Arab League, whose armies could not be relied upon to engage in serious battle (Pappé 1992: 57). At the time the nature of Palestinian society was such that a fully-fledged national consciousness had yet to develop. A feudal system from Ottoman times existed in much of the countryside, with rural lords living at the expense of peasants (cf. R. Sayigh 1979; R. Khalidi 1997). Their social status was secured not only by the Sultan (who assigned administrative tasks on them), but also on the tribal authority of clans, which in turn was passed

[7] ca. 660,000 Jews compared to around 1.3 million Arabs.

[8] Not only the Western powers supported the partition plan, but also the Soviet Union, which was chanelling arms to the Zionist militias through Czechoslovakia, seeing the establishment of a Jewish state as means to ending the existene of a British colony (Pappé 1992: 19-20).

[9] Al-Husseni had fanatically tied his destiny to that of the Axis Powers, erroneously believing that Hitler would win the war (Pappé 2004: 119-120).

on hereditary. In parallel, an urban elite of merchants existed in the cities, whose influence was increasing ever since the European penetration of the Ottoman markets in the 19th century. This new elite formed the backbone of the early Palestinian National Movement. But here again clan and family loyalties were stronger than national ones[10]. One consequent factor that further explains the Arab defeat of 1948 was the absence of any serious Arab interest in any state-building during the Mandate era and their dependence on the colonial authorities for the provision of services. By sharp contrast the Jews had been building in advance state-like institutions (both welfare and military) in anticipation of the British withdrawal (Pappé 1992: 58-60).

The war ended in 1949 with Israel conquering more territory than that provided in the partition plan (78% of Mandatory Palestine). The Egyptian and Transjordanian armies only managed to place under their control the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which they administered until Israel occupied them as well after the Six Day War in 1967.

2.3. *Nakbah* and the birth of the refugee problem

The war created a mass exodus of Palestinians from the lands of the newly founded state of Israel. According to the UN, around 711,000 Palestinians left their homes for other Arab countries, while 160,000 stayed inside the borders of Israel[11] during what Palestinians call the *Nakbah*, or catastrophe. While this fact is aknowledged by both sides of the conflict, there is a historical debate about the causes of the flight. Official Israeli propaganda had for years proclaimed that Palestinians left after being urged to do so by their leaders. The fact that Palestinians didn´t possess any documentation of the *Nakbah*, other than oral history, made it difficult for them to present their viewpoint. Only during the late 1980´s with the emergence of the New Historians in Israel did it become clear that no such orders were ever given (cf. Morris 1987). The debate between historians now shifted to whether the expulsion of Palestinians was part of a "master plan" or a by-product of warfare[12]. The dissident Israeli historian Ilan Pappé argues that the Zionist High Command may not have acted upon a plan devised *a priori* for the eviction of the entire Palestinian population, but that the rejection of the UN sanctioned partition plan by the Palestinians provided Zionists with the necessary political/diplomatic legitimation to proceed and

[10] Indeed, relations within the Palestinian community up to the Israeli declaration of independence were marked by the vendetta between the Husseini and Nashashibi clans (R. Sayigh 1979: 55).

[11] General Progress Report and Supplementary Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, covering the period from 11 December 1949 to 23 October 1950 (www.domino.un.org/unispal.nsf).

[12] A Zionist plan for the eviction of Palestinians,"Plan Daleth", is interpreted by Israeli historians, such as Benny Morris, as a purely military plan while Palestinian historians like Walid Khalidi interpret this as a plan with wider ideological implications (1988).

ethnically cleanse captured territory, benefiting thus from a *fait accompli* policy (Pappé 1992: 90-93). The most discussed incident during the *Nakbah* remains the massacre in the village of Deir Yassin between April 9th and April 11th 1948, where the forces of the Irgun massacred between 100 and 200 civilians. The psychological impact of the massacre was immense, as it dramatically accelerated the flight of Palestinians from their lands (*ibid.*: 96; Morris 1987).

The end of the 1948 war found Palestinians dispersed in refugee camps in Jordan, the West Bank, Gaza, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. Those who stayed inside Israel, mainly rural Palestinians, would live under martial law until 1966. Israel refused to allow those who were internally displaced to return and at the same time destroyed most of their depopulated villages (Boqa´i 1997: 73). To this day, Palestinian refugees demand the implementation of UN Resolution 194, which calls for the return of Palestinian refugees at the earliest possible date[13].

2.4. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: facts and figures

As the Palestinian refugees who fled to other countries had no other citizenship than the expired citizenship of the British Mandate of Palestine, their care and protection was not assigned to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)[14], but to the newly-created United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA is the main provider of services such as education, health and relief to Palestinian refugees. The organization defines Palestinian refugees as those whose normal place of residence between June 1946 and May 1948 was Palestine and whose property and means of livelihood were lost in the 1948 war, as well as their descendents[15]. Today, some 4,448,000 Palestinians are registered as refugees by UNRWA, 408,438 of them in Lebanon (UNRWA 2006). It should be noted however, that the number has been decreasing over the years, since insecurity and unemployment have driven many Palestinians out of Lebanon (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 62). Around 220,000 of those live in 12 camps, dispersed across Lebanon (see Appendix). The biggest of these camps are Ayn al-Hilweh near Sidon with 45,967 registered refugees, Nahr al-Bared near Tripoli with 31,303 refugees and Rashidiyyeh near Tyre with 29,361 refugees. Palestinians in Beirut live in 4 camps: Mar Elias, Burj al-Barajneh, Shatila and Dbayeh.

[13] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (www.domino.un.org/unispal.nsf).

[14] The UNHCR was created in the aftermath of World War II to accomodate the flow of refugees from Eastern Europe. Only refugees with citizenship are eligible for UNHCR aid. The UNHCR differs from UNRWA in the fact that the latter is not tasked with the resettlement of refugees, something that would amount to the renounciation of the right to return for Palestinians (Akram 2002: 38-39).

[15] www.unrwa-lebanon.org

Unlike Jordan, which has given the Palestinians citizenship, the refugees in Lebanon remain stateless. And unlike Syria, which has given them the right to work, they are barred from many professions, including medicine, law and engineering and as such they are allowed to work only menial jobs. They are not allowed to own, buy or sell property and are denied access to the country´s health and education systems (Shiblak 1996: 42-44), thus being barred from all spheres of public life. This state of affairs does not apply to the relatively small number of upper and upper middle class Palestinians who do not reside in the camps and have since acquired Lebanese citizenship, having established themselves in banking, tourism, manufacture and imports (R. Sayigh 1988: 285). Restrictions have increased in the 1990´s, as the Oslo accords, which postponed the issue of return for refugees for future negotiations, opened the possibility of a permanent resettlement in Lebanon, something all political factions in the country oppose. The refugee camps are constantly presented in the Lebanese media as areas of crime (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 53-54), or as terrorist hubs, something ostensibly demonstrated by the siege of the Nahr al-Bared camp in Tripoli in the summer of 2007. The reasons for the social and political marginalization of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon must be further sought within the context of the long drawn Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990.

2.4.1. From the *Nakbah* to 1982

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon can be categorized in three distinct chronological periods: The initial period after the *Nakbah* (1948-1969), the period between 1969 and 1982, characterized by the armed, as well as institutional presence of the PLO (the Palestinian Liberation Organization) in Lebanon; and finally, the period since the departure of the PLO until today, a period marked by renewed marginalization and insecurity. During the first period between 1948 and 1968, the Palestinians were confined to the camps, which were closely monitored by the Lebanese authorities in order to prevent any political activity. The refugees were viewed as a destabilizing factor to the already volatile Lebanese political landscape (R. Sayigh 1979: 102).

2.4.1.1. The political system of Lebanon

Although nominally a parliamentary republic, positions in Lebanon´s political system are allocated on a sectarian basis. For exmaple, the President must always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of Parliament a Shia and so on and so forth. Each constituency can only be contested by a specific sect during elections, making the growth of non-confessional political parties virtually impossible. Lebanon as such was transformed into its present state since the period of the French mandate by detaching a piece of historical Syria

inhabited by a slim majority of Maronites. The Maronite Christians – a Christian sect in communion with the Vatican – feel more connected to the West and France in particular, than with the rest of the Arab world[16]. The French had helped design the country's political system explicitly in favour of the Maronites well in advance of Lebanon's attainment of independence in 1946. Adding to the undemocratic, sectarian nature of the system was the fact that most of the countryside was ruled by *zaim* ("leaders"), feudal landlords, both Muslim and Christian, with their own private armies, who wrested real power in Lebanon and who were singularly determined to do all that was deemed necessary to pass on this power to their heirs (Fisk 2001: 75).

2.4.1.2. The "Fakhani Republic"

Because the Palestinians were mostly Sunni Muslims, the Lebanese Christian establishment tried to prevent them from integrating into society, fearing that the demographic balance could turn against them. The 1950s and 1960s saw a change in this demographic balance due to rising Christian emigration and higher Muslim birth rates. In conjunction to the failings of the Lebanese sectarian system, the Palestinians in 1968 initiated a guerrilla war against Israel, feeling that after the Arab defeat of 1967, only they themselves could undertake seriously the task of liberating their lands (R. Sayigh 1979).

The Cairo agreement, signed in 1969 between the PLO and Lebanon, gave Palestinians the right to attack Israel from within Lebanon and to have an armed presence in the camps. They created their own institutions and their new strength meant that the Lebanese army could not disarm them. It was a period known as the "Fakhani Republic", named after the Beirut suburb where the PLO was based. This created resentment among the pro-Western Maronite Christian establishment because it feared an erosion of its dominance over the country. But the local Muslims saw the Palestinians with sympathy, as they felt that a common enemy confronted both. In the wake of the civil war in 1975, the PLO aligned itself with the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), a coalition of mostly (but not exclusively) Muslim Arab nationalist, communist and socialist parties, which sought to get rid of the colonial heritage of an institutionally embedded sectarianism.

Although the causes of the civil war are to be found in the sectarian and class divisions of Lebanese society, it was the presence of Palestinians that helped ignite it. On April 13th 1975, the

[16] The Maronites allied themselves to the Crusaders in the Middle Ages. After the Muslim victory, they retreated to the mountains of Lebanon. In 1860, 12,000 Maronites were massacred during a civil war with the Druze until France intervened to protect them (Fisk 2001: 56-57).

Christian militiamen of the Phalange[17] massacred 27 Palestinians travelling on a bus in a Beirut suburb. The subsequent destruction of the urban slum of Karantina by Christian forces and the siege of the refugee camp Tel al-Za´tar in Beirut on January 1976, were the events that signalled the PLO´s entry to the war. During the initial fighting, an LNM victory was viewed as certain. To prevent this, the Christians requested Syrian assistance, which in turn sent troops over its border to assist them. Syria was constantly irritated by the independence the PLO had shown from Arab regimes and was affraid that events in Lebanon could spread over the border (Fisk 2001: 83). Its intervention helped prevent victory for the LNM and the Palestinians. However, the ever-shifting alliances within Lebanon and in the region as a whole meant that the war was far from over. The Phalange was beginning to develop military links with Israel, something Syria disliked. This resulted in an alliance between Syria and the LNM. In 1978, Israel invaded the south of Lebanon in retaliation for PLO attacks across the border. And in 1982, Israel invaded again, occupying one third of the country.

2.4.2. Renewed insecurity

2.4.2.1. The Shatila massacre

Israel invaded Lebanon after the attempted murder of its ambassador in London[18]. Israeli forces managed to reach Beirut in the summer of 1982 and, after an agreement in which the United States provided security guarranties for the refugees in the camps, the PLO departed from the country. This left the refugee population effectively unprotected now that PLO fighters were gone. In September, the designated president of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated. Although the murderer was a follower of a pro-Syrian Lebanese party, suspicion fell upon the Palestinians. On September 16th, Israeli soldiers stationed at the outer limits of the Shatila camp, allowed Phalange gunmen to enter the camp to massacre Palestinian refugees, which, depending on the sources, slaughtered between 700 and 3,500 civilians. The Israeli troops provided the vital logistical support for the militiamen to accomplish their mission (Siegel & Barbee 1983; Shahid 2002). The news of the massacre produced an international outcry, and about 400,000 Israelis protested in Tel Aviv, demanding explanations. A subsequent Israeli inquiry into the killings

[17] The Phalange, or *kataeb*, was an extremely right-wing Maronite movement influenced by European fascism. It was founded after its founder Pierre Gemayel had visited Nazi Germany during the 1936 Olympics. It was modeled on Franco´s Phalange in Spain and was hostile to pan-Arabism and the Palestinian presence in the country. (Fisk 2001: 65-66).

[18] The attempt was carried out by the Abu Nidal group, which had long split from the PLO.

found defence minister Ariel Sharon ultimately responsible and recommended that he should never hold public office again[19].

2.4.2.2. The War of the Camps

The withdrawal of the PLO left the refugees vulnerable to outside attacks. They now faced growing hostility from another segment of Lebanese society: the Shia Muslims. The Shia were always over-represented at the bottom layers of society. The fact that many of the refugee camps were located in the slum areas predominantly populated by Shias meant that the relations between the two communities had been very close and friendly – the Palestinians were even able to provide welfare services to the Shia poor at the peak of PLO influence in Lebanon (Peteet 2005: 135). But divisions emerged in the south of Lebanon as many religious Shia felt offended by the behaviour of the predominantly secular Palestinians, giving rise to anti-Palestinian sentiment among their community. The Islamic revolution in Iran further strengthened the confidence of the Shia and, since the PLO left in 1982, their two main organizations, Amal and Hizbullah, became the dominant factions in Muslim West Beirut. Whereas Hizbullah had an Islamist agenda and refrained from attacking the camps, Amal tried to assert itself on a communitarian rather than a religious basis[20]. As the prospect of an overthrow of the sectarian system became more distant, sectarianism remained the only way of gaining access to state resources. Consequently, Amal tried prove its national credentials by blaming, as the right-wing Christians did, the Palestinians for the disintegration of the country (*ibid.*: 153-154). This desire to be included in mainstream Lebanese nationalism resulted in the War of the Camps in the mid-80´s, during which Amal attacked the camps, causing hundreds of civilian casualties among the Palestinians.

2.4.2.3. The end of the civil war and the Cedar Revolution

The end of the civil war in 1990 found Lebanon under Syrian hegemony. The refugee camps continued to be places of confinement, guarded by Lebanese and Syrian army checkpoints. In the post-war climate, the marginalization of the Palestinians is viewed as one of the few elements of Lebanese national cohesion (R. Sayigh 1995: 37). As the centre of gravity of Palestinian resistance shifted from the Diaspora to the Occupied Territories, refugee camp residents in Lebanon felt abandoned and betrayed by the official PLO leadership which had deferred the issue

[19] For a detailed description of the events (although still lacking in many ways) see the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Events at the Refugee Camps in Beirut (The Kahan Commission), 8 February 1983 (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/kahan.html).

[20] For the different political approaches of the Lebanese Shia regarding Palestinians, see the interview of Hizbullah´s spiritual leader, Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (1988).

of their Return until further notice (*ibid.*: 41). Following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian troops, the "cedar revolution" of 2005 did little to improve the Palestinian's condition. On the contrary, it now became more vulnerable as Palestinians were to be viewed as Syrian agents, or worse, as Al Qaida sympathisers[21]. Under the guise of to the "War on Terror", the Lebanese army virtually destroyed the Nahr al-Bared camp in 2007, to root out Fatah al-Islam, an until then little known and, allegedly, Palestinian Islamist group[22].

3. Zionism and the Transformation of the Palestinian Landscape

3.1. The nature of the conflict

The landscape of Palestine has been for long a terrain upon which different ideological visions were projected. The Crusaders were the first to establish a cognitive topography of Palestine during their invasions, based on biblical descriptions. In more recent times, Zionism dramatically transformed the Palestinian landscape in order to establish a Jewish state. It did so, as it stemmed from the 19th century European tradition of Romantic nationalism, in which notions of landscape and nation are closely intertwined. The Palestinians of the mid-20th century, mostly peasants attached to their local identities, possessed no comparable vision to counter Zionist assertions. These would only later develop in the refugee camps, and here the absence of the concrete experience of the landscape resulted in deterritorialized and universalistic perceptions of Palestinianness.

By considering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as primarily national in character rather than religious, the phenomenon of nationalism and its relationship to the landscape must be addressed. Here I will focus on secular Zionism, a defining marker of Palestinian identity in the camps of Lebanon, and on secular Palestinian nationalism. These ideologies, both secular Zionism and secular Palestinian nationalism, are connected to European colonialism: the first as its offshoot and the second as a response to it. In contrast, political Islam and religious Zionism pursue a

[21] "Old fears haunt Lebanon camps", BBC, March 26 2005 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4376545.stm)

[22] The American journalist Seymour Hersh who revealed the My Lai massacre and the tortures in Abu Graib, claims that the militants are not Palestinians but foreign Sunni extremists who found refuge in the camps and who are indirectly funded by Saudi Arabia in an attempt to curb the influence of the pro-Iranian Hizbullah in Lebanon. (http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa_fact_hersh)

substantially different agenda[23]. Their emphasis on the Muslim or Jewish holiness of the land is more in line with notions of locations imbued with spiritual power (Colson 1997). Secular Zionism and Palestinian nationalism share a European-inspired vision of landscape. Landscape art of the Romantic period discloses much about the background of this vision. Landscape poetry was utilized to boost national identity, as was the case with German nationalism (Bollig, in press). While depictions of wild settings in paintings are understood to represent the bourgeois Self living in civilization, they are also meant as an "antidote to modernity" (Luig & Von Oppen 1997: 11-12). This ambivalent relationship to the modern world is for example evident in the construction of the Palestinian peasant as a national symbol.

The politics of landscape in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are not an abstraction, but an ongoing reality. In this chapter I will try to present a synopsis of the political economy of Zionism and its consequent impact on the landscape, as well as on the Palestinian ideological response to it.

3.1.1. Zionism as a colonization movement

Zionism developed as a direct response to the anti-Semitism that emerged in the "enlightened" European societies of the 19th century. It was anti-Semitism in these societies that inspired the Zionist visions of the movement's founding father. According to Theodor Herzl, the Jews could not rely on liberal democratic societies for their protection and should therefore seek to form a separate state of their own (Avineri 1981: 92-94)[24]. Like all nationalist mythologies, Zionism had a three-fold structure: An imagined golden age, a national tragedy and a glorious resurgence (Kedouri 1993). For the early Zionists, the national tragedy lay in the Diaspora, which was condemned as morally degrading and intolerable for all self-respecting Jews (Laqueur 1972: 591). Because life in the Diaspora was viewed as defined by persecution and hollow commercialism, Zionism also offered assurances to personal renewal (Selwyn 1995: 116). The aim of founding a state for the Jews led to the consideration of various geographical locations, including Uganda (Avineri 1981: 110). Palestine was ultimately chosen because of the role the Bible played in keeping alive the Jewish identity while in the Diaspora.

[23] Like in the Northern Ireland conflict, there is a misconception amongst both supporters and detractors of Zionism, that the conflict is religious in nature. Hence the supporters propagate the idea of a "Jewish state" while the detractors the idea of a single "secular democratic state for Muslims, Christians and Jews". As in many other colonization processes, Zionism resulted in the emergence of a new nation, the Israeli nation, with its own distinct language and secular culture. The conflict can thus be summarized as one between two nations: the Israeli and the Palestinian-Arab.

[24] Herzl was working as a correspondent in France for the Austrian *Neue Freie Presse* when the Dreyfus Affair broke out, a scandal about a Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, who allegedly passed secrets to the Germans. The affair exposed the widespread anti-Semitism present in French society (cf. Avineri 1981; Laqueur 1972).

The fact that Zionism wished to establish a state in a spatial location already inhabited by another people classified it, for all intents and purposes, as a colonization movement[25]. It remains so to this day, in the form of the state of Israel (Machover 2006: 4). Since the fall of Apartheid in South Africa, Israel is last remaining example of active colonization. This is partly due to the fact that its project was launched relatively late in time (Machover, personal communication; Laqueur 1972: 593). Colonization is still in progress in the form of Jewish settlement in the West Bank, the systematic seizure of land that belongs to Israel´s Palestinian citizens and the enforcement of the Law of Return[26].

However, the Israeli case differs in some respects from other colonizing processes. A feature that sets it apart is that unlike South Africa, the United States or Australia, the Jewish colonists did not enjoy the protection of a host major military power. Because of their weakness in this respect, Zionist leaders sought from the beginning to forge an alliance with a great power. Herzl summed up the position:

> For Europe, we would form there [in Palestine] part of the rampart against Asia, serving as an outpost of civilization against barbarism. As a neutral State, we would remain in contact with all of Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. (Theodor Herzl 1896, *Der Judenstaat*, quoted in Machover 2006: 10)

This alliance was not a matter of choice, but of necessity. While Palestine was still under Ottoman rule, Herzl tried unsuccessfully to gain the backing of the German Kaiser, who was then allied to the Sultan (Laqueur 1972: 100-112; Machover 2006: 11). Britain took over the role of protector of the area after 1917, to be followed by the United States after the end of World War II. The unique relationship between Zionism and the West was confirmed during the first 17 years of Israel's existence, when the inflow of capital from Western countries was greater by 6 billion dollars to its total outflow. Most notably, the main bulk of foreign investment in the country was directed towards non-profit making projects, such as free housing (Machover and Orr 1969).

Since the Six Day War of 1967, the United Sates have become Israel's chief strategic ally. By 2005, Israel received for that single financial year 2,202,240,000 dollars in military aid and

[25] This is not a moral judgement but an indeniable fact; to claim that colonization was in this case acceptable or otherwise, *is* a moral judgement, from which I refrain.

[26] The law states that any person who can prove Jewish descent has the right to emigrate to Israel. (http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws)

357,120,000 dollars in economic assistance, all in the form of grants[27]. In an unstable oil-rich region the United States were serviced in exchange by a stable ally, capable of shielding Western interests[28] from Arab nationalist challenges. Access to war-experienced Israeli military know-how and the testing of American military hardware in combat are additional benefits for the United States, resulting from this close relationship (Machover 2006: 27-30)[29].

3.1.2. Zionism as an example of non-exploitative colonization

Settler societies can be classified in accordance to whether the labour of the native population is exploited or not. In this respect, Israel is often wrongly compared to Apartheid South Africa. The settlers in South Africa exploited the black population as a cheap labour force during the expansion of mining and industry, thus establishing the Bantustans[30], while denying the indigenous population basic civil and human rights[31]. However, in the case of Palestine, the native inhabitants were not utilized in any manner whatsoever (Swedenburg 1990: 19). Zionism, with its explicit aim of "redeeming" the Jews, envisioned a society of workers and peasants. This could not have been achieved if the settlers employed Palestinian labour, irrespective of how much cheaper it may have been. Although in the early years of settlement the Arab peasants and the Bedouins were perceived as authentic residents of the Land of the Bible (Selwyn 1995: 117), the Palestinians were to be barred from the settler economy and marginalized to the point of being forced to leave, a process described in Zionist literature as "transfer" (cf. Machover 2006)[32]. Herzl, for instance, notes in his diaries:

> [the Jewish settlers] should try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly. (1960: 343)

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[27] U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification for the Year 2006 (http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/cbj/)

[28] See for example the Suez campaign where Israel sided with Britain and France to attack Egypt because of the latter's nationalization of the Suez canal, or, more relevant to the subject matter of this thesis, Israel's role in installing a pro-Western Christian government in Beirut in 1982 (cf. Pappé 2004).

[29] This form of relationship has inspired many theories, often anti-Semitic, but also academic in origin, like the recent controversial book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* by political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, which claims that a powerful pro-Israeli lobby forces the U.S. to act against its own interests. In fact, it seems that the U.S. and not Israel is the foremost beneficiary in this relationship.

[30] "Independent" black mini-states, recognized only by the Apartheid regime and acting as sources of cheap labour.

[31] In the exploitative model of colonization, the conflict often assumes the form of overt class struggle while in the exclusionist model that of a national struggle (Machover 2006: 19).

[32] The period after 1967 was an exception, as thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza did not flee as in 1948, but remained put to their lands, commuting daily to Israel for work. With the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987, Israel imposed work restrictions and brought many "guest-workers", mostly from Asia, to replace the Palestinians (Pappé 2004: 204-205).

This, in itself, was no paradox. As a movement originating from 19th century Europe, Zionism reflected the evolutionist perceptions of the time: European Jews represented progress, while Arab Palestinians were viewed as irrelevant and coming from another time (Bowman 1993: 74). This view of the Palestinians contributed to the makeup of the pre-1948 Israeli identity. As in most cases of nation building, the Israeli national self-identity was enhanced through the construction of an internal Other. The universalizing capacity of nationalism is in itself insufficient for state formation; it has to be complemented by ethnicity – a particularizing project within the process of state formation, which produces an order of imagined peoplehoods – where each ethnicity is assigned to a different hierarchical rank (Alonso 1994: 390-391). The identity of the dominant ethnic group is located at the core of the imagined community, and is therefore privileged (cf. Gilroy 1987). This holds true of present day Israel, where approximately 20% of its citizens are Palestinians. This two way process of inclusion and exclusion continues to have a profound impact on the Palestinian landscape, both within Israel and in the Occupied Territories.

3.2. Zionist landscape discourse: "To make the desert bloom"

A correlation exists between human emotions, national identity and particular features of the landscape (Bollig, in press). As such, "making the desert bloom" was one of the most important slogans advanced by the Zionist movement. A revived landscape had to be viewed in conjunction with the resurging Jewish national identity. The three-fold structure of nationalist myth construction would be of relevance in this particular instance too.

A Zionist thinker of the early settler period, Aharon David Gordon, was a major influence on the *kibbutz* movement. Central to his ideas was that manual labour could be the means to personal and national redemption. He rejected urban culture, a key feature of Jewish life in the Diaspora, and propagated the superiority of agrarian life, in correspondence to the late 19th century neo-Romantic mood in Europe (Avineri 1981: 151-152). He wrote in 1911:

> Our people can be brought to life only if each one of us re-creates himself though labour and a life close to nature. This is how we can, in time, have good farmers, good labourers, good Jews and good human beings (Gordon 1911, "Some Observations", quoted in Avineri 1981: 153)

These ideas survive in Israel to the present day. To give just one example, the Society for the Preservation of Nature in Israel (SPNI) is a state-sponsored society that organizes nature tours to bring young Israelis in touch with the features of the natural landscape. Close contact with the landscape and its conservation are central to Zionist ideology. These are understood as a unifying

factor and as a way of shielding the nation from both internal discord and external threats (Selwyn 1995: 131).

As anticipated, these ideas came in direct conflict with the Palestinians inhabiting this landscape. Therefore, the presence of the Palestinians had to be negated, as demonstrated by Golda Meir's famous saying that "there isn't such thing as the Palestinians" (quoted in Said 1984: 31). This is not to imply that the Zionists claimed that Palestine was empty of people at the time of their arrival in the late 1890s. Rather, the Arab identity was considered as either deterritorialized and nomadic (Peteet 2005: 42) or possessing an emotional attachment only to a defined place (a village or a house); and incapable therefore of exhibiting affinity towards any notion of a homeland (Benvenisti 2000: 246). Given that the Arab lands were extensive, it was further understood that the Palestinian Arabs would have few difficulties in relocating to other neighboring Arab countries. Ultimately, due to its presumed detachment from the landscape, Palestinian nationalism was deemed inferior to Zionism. Nationhood requires, after all, the existence of a direct relationship between a people and its culture on the one hand, and a geographically specific territory on the other (Peteet 2005: 43). In the SPNI landscape tours, the Arabs feature only as either invading soldiers, rich landlords, or as dark ghostlike presences on the hillsides, unworthy to comment upon (Selwyn 1995: 122).

In order to further justify its claim to the land, Zionism had also to redefine the period between its emergence and the Jewish presence during Biblical times, both in and outside Palestine[33]. This resulted in negative representations of life in the Diaspora. Parallel to that, Palestine was depicted as a wasteland (Peteet 2005: 37)[34]. The Palestinian's treatment of the land was marked by gross underdevelopment and stagnation, in contrast to the Zionist who strived to "make the desert bloom", a view resembling Western colonial depictions of the African landscape as one "waiting" to become recognizable through acquisition or "protection" (Luig & Von Oppen 1997: 20). Ultimately, the argument concludes, since the Palestinians are incapable of developing the land, they do not deserve to possess it (Peteet 2005: 41).

Based on the treatment of the landscape, the introduction by Israel of the Black Goat Law of 1975 is a good example of how the Other was to be kept out. This law restricted the areas on which the

[33] For example, the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel-Aviv gives the visitor the impression that no matter how glorious, life in the Diaspora will always be marked by persecution (Selywn 2001: 231).
[34] Julie Peteet notes that in Israeli excavations in Jerusalem, the term "recent periods" is employed to address a period spanning from the early Islamic era to the Ottoman times, ca. 1,300 years (2005: 39).

Bedouins were allowed to graze their goats, allegedly to forestall harmful overgrazing. This, in conjunction with the establishment of a paramilitary "Green Patrol", aimed at physically compelling the Bedouins to flee from rural areas and join urbanized settlements. This was perceived as a thinly veiled attempt to further appropriate Arab lands (Abu-Sa´ad 1997: 132; Selwyn 1995: 128).

The perception of Arab place as backward, as well the association of the Palestinians with violent features of the natural landscape, are still to be encountered in contemporary Israeli political discourse. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak compared the Middle East to a "jungle" and the Occupied Territories to a "swamp"[35], while the slain Israeli Tourism Minister, Rehavam Ze´evi, had once referred to Palestinians working illegally in Israel as "lice"[36].

3.2.1. "Trapped minority": The Palestinian citizens of Israel

The Palestinians in the Occupied Territories on the one hand and Israeli Palestinians on the other experience the transformation of the landscape in a quite different way. By contrast to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, the Israeli Palestinians enjoy full civic and individual rights (more than the citizens of any Arab country). However, they are denied *national collective* rights, something that keeps them vulnerable in a state that explicitly defines itself as Jewish above all else (Zreik 2003: 46). As a result, even though Israeli Palestinians have the right to vote, their participation in elections is not motivated by a desire to influence decisions but rather to elect Arab representatives who would simply "tell the truth" about their plight from within parliament (Rabinowitz 1994: 32).

Other than those who managed to remain in their ancestral homes, within the Israeli borders there are to be found Palestinians internally displaced who are denied the right to return to their villages[37]. In addition, around one tenth of Israeli Palestinians live in so-called "unrecognized villages" not listed as Arab localities by the authorities, which do not have any basic infrastructure (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 77). Their inhabitants are exposed to the danger of being summarily evicted (Cook 1997: 200). The state of emergency under which Palestinians had lived ended

[35] "Veteran Israeli Hawk Tries out Wings of a Dove", *New York Times*, May 21, 1996 (http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950CE3DD1039F932A15756C0A960958260)

[36] "Israeli minister assassinated", *The Guardian*, October 17, 2001 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/17/israel2)

[37] These are the so-called "present absentees". Israeli law prevents any Palestinians who fled the *Nakbah* from returning to their homes, regardless if they relocated to other Arab countries or within Israel (Masalha 1997: 13).

officially in 1966. Yet certain aspects of it have remained in place as Israel persists to legislate for the continued confiscation of land, to be used by Jewish newcomers, thus also further reducing the prospects of return for the Palestinian displaced (Masalha 1997: 25).

Zionism radically transformed the previously Arab landscape. The linguistic kinship of Arabic and Hebrew made the change of place names an easier task than usual. For instance, the village of Al-Bassa became Betzet, Saffuriyah became Tzippori and so forth (Benvenisti 2000: 17-19). New names and mapping corresponded well with Foucault's notion that knowledge equals power. Most of the Palestinians who stayed within Israel after 1948 are concentrated in the north of the country. Many live in scattered and isolated villages, something that hindered the ability to forge a coherent identity (Rabinowitz 2001: 67). Memories of the *Nakbah* constitute the most significant group solidarity factor. As a consequence, Arab landmarks pre-dating 1948, like mosques and churches, are viewed as disturbing reminders of defeat (*ibid.* : 75).

Even people who remain in their ancestral homes find the connection between space and place broken (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 38). As the pattern of rural Palestinian life is being disrupted, the continuing decline in the size of Arab land produces amongst Israeli Palestinians the feeling of being suffocated, of being found stuck in time, thus leading to an identity crisis (Rabinowitz 2001: 67). Israeli Palestinians are what Rabinowitz defines as a "trapped minority", a minority whose entrapment begins at the historical moment which the dominant group associates with victory, which remainins non-assimilated (either by choice or rejection by the dominant group, or both), and which displays chronic ideological and internal divisions due to its structural position between the host state and the mother nation (*ibid.*: 72-77). The Israeli Palestinians find themselves altering between different political options, including co-option by the state, political separation and Islamism. However, their most preferred option remains the struggle for equal national rights in Israel along with the affirmation of their Palestinian identity. For this reason they tend mostly to vote for Arab parties or for the non-Zionist Communist Party of Israel (cf. Pappé 2004; Rabinowitz 1994).

For the Israeli Palestinians the spatial separation from those living in the Occupied Territories or in the Diaspora has traumatic consequences. It has held them back from developments in their national identity (an aspect also examined in this thesis), something that has at times generated their portrayal of them by their compatriots as Zionist collaborators (Rabinowitz 2001: 74). However, a demonstration against land confiscation in March 30 1976, known as "Land Day",

during which six Israeli Palestinians were killed (Masalha 1997: 32), led to a reinvigorated national awareness and active solidarity with their fellow Palestinians in the Occupied Territories[38].

This newly found awareness of the Palestinian citizens has alarmed the Israeli political establishment, which in recent years has reaffirmed the Jewish character of the state and encouraged the proliferation of the "demographic threat" argument to the existence of Israel due to high Arab birth rates. This was complemented by restrictions on the civic rights of Palestinians, exemplified by the automatic annulment of parliamentary immunity for the Arab members of the Knesset as soon as they dare question the Jewish character of the state. (Rouhana & Sultany 2003: 12).

3.2.2. The landscape of the Occupation

Zionist politics have a notably different effect on the Palestinians of the West Bank and – until recently – of Gaza. Whereas the state in Israel is trying to transform previously Arab place, it is trying to separate itself from it in the Occupied Territories by all means available. This is best symbolized by the construction of the fence "separating"[39] the West Bank from Israel as well as by the by-pass roads that connect Israel to the settlements. Biblical archaeology plays a crucial role as excavations are anticipated to legitimize Jewish claims to the land (Weizman 2007: 39-41). Especially for the religious Zionist movements, the West Bank is a conceptualized landscape, one characterized by powerful religious meanings found in nature rather than within material culture or monuments (Ashmore & Knapp 1999: 11).

3.2.2.1. Settlements

The building of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza began almost immediately after the Israeli victory in the Six Day War. These were initially erected along the frontier with Jordan in order to give the population of pre-67 Israel an early warning in case of attack (McGarry 1998: 616). This model was mostly associated with the Labour Zionist movement where security considerations were foremost. The Revisionist Zionist movement preferred to construct settlements near places of biblical importance (Pappé 2004: 203). Approaches to settlement buildings were also divided

[38] During a demonstration to show solidarity with the *Al-Aqsa* Intifada in 2000, Israeli police shot dead 13 Palestinian citizens of Israel (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 78).

[39] "Separating" is the definiton used by the Israeli government. However, the fence´s course incorporates important pieces of Arab land to pre-67 Israel, including East Jerusalem, the establishment of which, as the capital of a Palestinian state is key demand of the PLO.

among governmental and non-governmental actors such as the Gush Emunim religious settler movement. The latter organized so-called "ascents", expeditions on hilltops in the West Bank before building settlements on them, to "regenerate the soul" and "achieve personal and national renewal" (Weizman 2007: 89). After construction was completed, settlements were typical examples of "gated communities", marked by a fear of the Outside, while symbolizing segregation and exclusionary land use practices (Low 2001). The confiscation of land to build these settlements was justified with security arguments or with reference to the Ottoman Land Law of 1858, which transferred the ownership of land if continuously uncultivated by the owner for ten years or more (Weizman 2007: 117).

3.2.2.2. By-pass roads

By-pass roads link this network of settlements with Israel as well as with one another. These inscriptions on the landscape are a striking symbol of power with a dual function. The first is to allow settlers and their visitors to travel without having to pass through Palestinian towns. The second is to serve military purposes. A network of checkpoints and video cameras along the roads ensure that the Palestinians remain "invisible" to travelers (Selwyn 2001: 228-229). The roads have "hollowed out" the Palestinian landscape as they often pass through, in tunnels under or bridges over Palestinian settlements. Such for example is the road from Tel Aviv to the settlement of Modi´in, which is trailed on both sides by high concrete walls, painted with idealized images of the surrounding landscape (Weizman 2007: 181). As these roads slice the West Bank into many pieces, they will also have an important political implication in the negotiating process for the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank: they divide the land and split the Palestinians from another. In short, the settlements and the roads have created an alternative landscape, "new realities on the ground", which further complicate the creation of a Palestinian sovereign state. Some symbolic functions have been attributed to this road network. Selwyn for instance notes that notions of open borders and free movement have been negatively received in Israel and are often associated with vulnerability and terrorist attacks. Separation from the Arab landscape is therefore seen as embodying security (2001).

3.2.2.3. The Separation Fence

Undoubtedly, the most famous symbol of the impact of occupation on the Palestinian landscape is the Fence or Wall separating Israel and Jewish settlements from Palestinian territory. Probably the most expensive construction project in the state's history (costing more than 3 billion dollars), the Separation Fence is concrete-build, 8-meters high and incorporates electronic fences, barbed wire,

radar, cameras, deep trenches, observation posts and patrol roads. The construction of the Fence began in 2002 and its route has been an important source of contention among different lobby groups, such as religious settlers, Palestinian peasants, human rights and environmentalist groups. Due to a variety of political pressures, the Fence's path has been redirected several times (Weizman 2007: 161-162).

The Israeli state presented the Fence as a temporary measure and justified its construction by advancing security concerns, particularly the growing number of suicide bomber attacks. However, the Fence has produced realities that seem far more permanent. The most striking of these is the creation of extraterritorial islands of Palestinian settlements to west of the Fence, "closed military zones" within it, and around a hundred Jewish settlements to the east of the Fence, rendering traditional perceptions of political space as a "contiguous territorial surface" irrelevant (*ibid.*: 167).

3.3. Palestinian reactions: landscape discourse

Faced with such policies, Palestinian nationalist rhetoric has placed great emphasis on landscape. In the past, national liberation movements in the Third World tended to adopt Western-inspired national narratives. The resemblance of the Palestinian nationalist landscape representations with those emanating from the Romanticist era (or, for that matter, from Zionist narratives) is most remarkable. The correspondence of such narratives to modernity is ambivalent to say the least. Like any other colonial movement, Zionism brought with it not only occupation and oppression but also a modernizing transformation of traditional life. This was particularly true during the period when the West Bank depended economically on Israel, both as a market for its goods and a source of cheap labour (between 1967 and the First Intifada), leading to the proletarianization of many Palestinians.

The PLO, a typical Third World liberation movement with a middle class leadership, evoked the ideal of rural life as a rallying cry against Israeli occupation. This involved an eclectic reconstruction of the rural past. The *muktar* (village headman) and the veil were excluded from the vision of the prospective state. Instead a modern integrated economy, based on agriculture and industry, was envisioned. Yet again, the economic transformation resulting from the Occupation has led to a renewed idealization of rural life, expressed through folk art and by the wish to rescue tradition. The artistic expressions of Palestinian rural life suggest liberation through the "return" to a utopian past of pastoral serenity, where humanity and nature are in complete harmony to each

other. Paintings of villages by West Bank artists show stone-and-mud dwellings immaculately blending with the rolling hills. Village society is reconstructed as if classless and functioning through a moral economy that supersedes capitalist development (Swedenburg 1990: 21-24)

3.3.1. Nature as part of the struggle

In the official Palestinian nationalist discourse, the land has been objectified by the map of historic Palestine and has been ascribed with human qualities: it can be patient and sad but also rebellious and vengeful (Linholm Schulz 2003: 127.). The map of Palestine has been also used as a symbol. The logo of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) shows a map with an arrow pointing out of Palestine, symbolizing the expulsion of the Palestinians, and another pointing towards it, symbolizing the return to the homeland (Bisharat 1997: 218). It was fashionable in the camps of Lebanon in the 70s to wear necklaces of miniature maps of Palestine (Peteet 2005: 150). Trees and plants have also been imbued with nationalist (i.e. mythical) connotations. As regular features of the Palestinian landscape, the cactus and the olive tree have come to symbolize the persistence of the Palestinians to remain attached to their land. The cactuses that have sprung up in the deserted houses and villages abandonded after the *Nakbah*, led to naratives of how the cactus always springs back to life – even after Israeli settlers had try to burn it on the ground (Swedenburg 1990: 22).

Apart from plants, natural phenomena have also been used in nationalist discourse, like hurricanes, typhoons, volcanoes, thunderbolts and earthquakes and as a norm are depicted in alliance with the Palestinian struggle[40].

Then again, in order to emphasize the closeness between land and people, the land is usually feminized, for the Palestinian martyr (*shaheed*)[41] to come to the rescue. Martyrdom is not a feature unique to Islamism; it occurs also in secular Palestinian nationalism. Only the martyr through his spilled blood is eternally reunited with the land (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 129-130).

[40] The pro-Syrian organization within the PLO for example is called *al-Saiqa* (thunderbolt) and Fatah´s military wing was called *al-Asifa* (storm).

[41] The term "martyr" doesn´t only apply to suicide bombers but also to every Palestinian that is killed in a war, be it a civilian caught in the crossfire or a fighter.

3.3.2. The peasant: from agent to signifier

Because of the largely rural character of Palestinian society before the *Nakbah*, the peasant, or *fellah*, was chosen as an inclusive and mobilizing symbol of resistance, the embodiment of struggle. As a middle-class movement trying to mobilize the masses, the PLO fashioned the peasant to a unifying symbol representing, along with the fighter (*feday*), the authentic Palestinian. The worker was carefully avoided since the appearance of that class symbolized defeat and neocolonial dependence on the Israeli economy (Sweedenburg 1990: 18).

Yet in order to serve the cause of a middle-class movement, the peasant had to be reconstructed. The Great Arab Revolt of 1936-39 saw the peasants being at the forefront of the struggle against British colonialism and Zionist land expropriation (cf. R. Sayigh 1979). The PLO stripped the peasantry off its capacity as a historical agent with subversive capabilities and distinct class interests. While being a peasant before 1948 was a symptom of backwardness for the Palestinian middle class, the redefined *fellah* was to be a national signifier, steadfast (*sumud*) in the insistence to stay put on the land of the fathers (Swedenburg 1990: 18-20). This must be seen bearing in mind Zionist efforts to present the Palestinians as a nomadic people lacking attachment to the landscape.

The contradictions found in the Palestinian national discourse became subtler but were not eliminated. In the rhetoric of the PLO the leadership in exile, symbolized by the *fedayeen,* conducts the national struggle. The task of the peasant is to remain in Palestine and resist attempts of expulsion. The leadership of the struggle is seen as acting on their behalf.

However, this situation has changed in recent years for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the 1990´s ended the dichotomy between Homeland and Exile in the national struggle. On the other hand, following the Intifada, Israel imposed more and more restrictions on Palestinians working inside Israel, leading to high levels of unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza. Recent years have also witnessed peasants actively opposing Zionist policies such as land expropriation and the construction of the Separation Fence (Weizman 2007: 171), often joining hands with activists on the Israeli side of the divide.

4. Landscape and Identity: *ayaam al-UNRWA*

Tent no. 50, on my left, is my new world
Rashid Hussein, Palestinian poet.

In this chapter an account of the circumstances of the refugees immediately after the *Nakbah* and up to the establishment of PLO institutions will be attempted. Since there is a significant shortage of data on the early experiences of the Palestinians in Lebanon, let alone any ethnographic records, for the most part I will draw on the fieldwork of Rosemary Sayigh and Julie Peteet. The two anthropologists began their fieldwork in the 1970s and the 1980s and the data they have collected has derived from interviews with camp residents based on their recollections.

When the Palestinians – most of them from Galilee – arrived in Lebanon in 1948, their presence was understood as temporary. Traditional Arab notions of hospitality prevailed: The host welcomed the guest but the guest also assured the host that he would not outwear his welcome. In those early days, the Lebanese army distributed flyers in the camps urging the refugees to "please the [Lebanese] as long as [they] are in their land" and to "treat [them] with care and respect as long as [they] are in their home" (Peteet 2005: 110). The Palestinians reciprocated not only by reassuring their hosts of their transitory presence, but also by declining initiatives and services which could be perceived to imply permanent resettlement. In the West Bank camp of Dayr Ammar, for example, the refugees destroyed a nursery built by the UNRWA as it was viewed to as a sign of resettlement (Bisharat 1997: 212). Similar incidents were repeated in camps across the region, both inside Lebanon and in other states.

4.1. Location and spatial arrangement

The process through which the camps were established was influenced by a number of factors. The camps were dispersed throughout Lebanon, but with a higher concentration in its eastern and southern regions. While some camps were rural in character, the camps near cities assumed the form of urban slums (Peteet 2005: 107-108). Christian refugees were given land by Lebanese churches, but the majority of the camps were located in or around Muslim areas, in conformity to the prevailing logic of Lebanese sectarianism (R. Sayigh 1994: 25). These camps were built either on uncultivable land – as the Lebanese state was not prepared to waste fertile land – or on abandoned military barracks dating from the era of the French mandate. The latter, structured on a regimented grid pattern, had been previously used to shelter Armenian refugees fleeing from Turkey as World War I came to a close (Sirhan 1975: 91; Peteet 2005: 198). The fact that the

Lebanese government declared the southernmost regions of the country as no-go areas for Palestinians to avoid high Palestinian concentrations on the borders with Israel, completed the separation of the Palestinian refugees from their home landscape. As the population of the camps grew, their spatial layout tended to become increasingly chaotic, as in the case of Ayn al-Hilweh, which developed into a succession of winding alleys resembling a maze. Some camps were formed by chance, as was the case with the Nahr al-Bared camp in Tripoli – initially intended to serve as a transit point to Syria, but where the refugees had to settle since Syria had closed its borders (Peteet 2005: 107).

Irrespective of the spatial layout of the camps, they were conceived as transitory, non-permanent places. They corresponded well to Marc Augé's conception of "non-places" (1994) and as such possessing no identity (*ibid.*: 92). The refugee camps were not places of choice but the outcome of violent displacement and attempted denationalization (Peteet 2005: 94). This sense of "non-place" was further enhanced after the host state encircled the camps with barbed wire and by prohibiting the erection of more permanent structures within them, such as houses or even zinc roofed shacks (*ibid.*: 103). The camps' boundaries were the cognitive border between the Palestinians and their hosts, very much resembling a borderland, a geopolitical territory that served as a demarcation line between two sides – While to a great extent arbitrarily defined and policed, it also functioned as a mixing zone, bringing people together through legal and illegal practices of crossing and communicating (Clifford 1999: 304).

As years and decades passed by, the refugees turned the camps into regular places of residence. The power of custom in ordinary life imposed within the camps specific forms of social organization and cultural maps, thus establishing meaningful places at odds with the original "non-place" rationale of the camps.

4.2. Relations with the host environment

Relation between refugees and their host environment were tense. The refugees were now landless in a society where land ownership was deemed the foremost source of wealth, power and political influence. This is aptly summarized by the Arabic proverb *"ardi'irdi"* ("my land is my honour") (Bisharat 1997: 214). The Palestinian refugees, therefore, found themselves at the bottom of social hierarchy. They were often attributed violent natures by locals, exemplified by the description of the camps as "zoos" (R. Sayigh 1979: 126). The Palestinians' plight had turned them into objects of superstitious fear and ridicule. This was sufficiently manifested by the exclusion of Palestinian

children from games, by pointing and mocking, by the absence of normal courtesy towards them and by their scapegoating (R. Sayigh 1979: 125-127).

At the economic level, the refugees faced the resentment of the Lebanese business class, which feared competition from its Palestinian counterpart, as much as the distrust of the indigenous working class, which saw the arrival of the refugees as competitors in the job market (Peteet 2005: 109-110) – This, in spite of the fact that the majority of the male refugees of working age were in fact unemployable peasants who knew only how to work the land (R. Sayigh 1979: 115).

4.3. Reconstructing the village in the camps

While the movement of rural Palestinians to the cities predated the *Nakbah*, the rural/urban divide became most visible in exile. Around 75,000 middle- and upper-class Palestinians had already departed on their own will after hearing of the UN Partition Plan (Bisharat 1997: 207-208) and before diplomacy broke into open warfare. They settled well in the cities of the host countries mainly thanks to their social and kinship networks (Peteet 2005: 206). However, the overwhelming majority of the refugees were peasants coming from tightly-knit village communities. The greater the pressure on such communities to modify their structural forms and cultural norms, the more they were disposed to symbolically reassert their boundaries (A. Cohen 1989: 44). As the village was found at the heart of rural Palestinian life before the *Nakbah*, the internment of whole villages into camps threatening with homogenization (i.e.. their blanket classification as refugees) produced the reaction of a reassertion of local identities as resistance to resettlement. A Palestinian in a Lebanese camp who left his village at the age of seven, could still vividly remember:

> If you ask me about my village, I can remember the most important things, and even the small ones. I think the reason for this is deprivation. Second, our families would always talk about the past, and about their land, so that these things are impressed on the mind of the Palestinian child. He feels the difference between that life and this. He longs for that life to continue, and to make his own life a part of that country (Palestine) (anonymous refugee quoted in R. Sayigh 1979: 11)

4.3.1. Storytelling

Stories help the survivors of a disaster retain their cohesion, as their collective psychology and experience is affirmed (Jackson 2002: 103). Stories about village life in Palestine enabled the numerous local identities to endure while in the camps. This became an important means for cultural survival, symbolized in the *dawaween*, informal social gatherings in the camps where the

elders recounted memories of Palestine (Peteet 2005: 116). Refugee stories were motivated by an existential need rather than emotion (Jackson 2002: 93). They were unstructured and often inflated by statements like "we lived in paradise" (quoted in R. Sayigh 1979:10). This was the only way available to them for passing on to their children their inheritance, their homes. (*ibid.*: 11).

4.3.2. Village life in Palestine

The social organization of the camps reflected in the early days the social organization within Palestine itself. It will be therefore useful to provide a summary of the latter, as a key to understanding its reconstructed version inside the refugee camps.

The majority of Palestinian Arabs, the peasants (*fellaheen*), were divided into, and identified themselves with, village units. A major reason for this was the Ottoman administrative system. Each administrative sub-unit (*nahiya*) consisted of several villages (Pappé 2004: 15), leading to a degree of decentralization. This led to a strong village solidarity, which both satisfied the need of the Ottomans for cheap administration, and of the peasants for security. Later the British, with their practice of "indirect rule" in their colonies, continued this tradition in the period of the Palestine Mandate. Village solidarity became even stronger during the time of the Great Revolt, when the colonial authorities introduced the practice of collective punishment of villages suspected of harbouring Arab fighters (R. Sayigh 1979: 14-15).

4.3.2.1. Economic status

Each village was a self-sufficient unit of production and consumption as the peasants produced most of their own foodstuff (*ibid.*: 28). Labour division was gendered, with women working in the home and men in the fields (Pappé 2004: 17). Poverty was widespread, mainly because of the peasants' access to land with limited fertility. Cultivable land was divided in the coastal plain (*sahel*) and the hill country (*jebel*), with peasants having only access to the latter, as a consequence of their standing in the social hierarchy. The rural class was most hard-hit in economic terms by the events at the beginning of the 20th century. During the end of Ottoman rule, the peasant tax paid in grain was replaced to one paid with money. Illiteracy and the difficulties in negotiating prices meant that peasants were easy victims for moneylenders. The British imposed a more rigid tax system, making assets such as trees and houses eligible for taxation, often using troops for collecting them, thus leading to growing debts and resentment (R. Sayigh 1979: 26-29). The economic transactions between the Zionist movement and rich Arab absentee landlords – most of them living outside of Palestine and owning around 20% of private land – made many

Palestinians landless or forced them to move to uncultivable land (Pappé 2004: 98-99). Equally disastrous for the many urbanized peasants, was the boycott of Arab labour called for by the Histradut, the Zionist trade union in 1929 (*ibid.*: 112)[42].

4.3.2.2. Social relations

In the absence of a strong centralized state, the main source of social security in the villages was the family. The most common words used for "house" by Palestinians, *beit* or *dar*, are also synonyms for "family". Kinship in the village through clans (*hamuleh*) was patrilineal and important in cementing village identity. All relationships between people of the same village were determined in kinship terms. Family loyalties and clan loyalties were not divergent but complementary and overlapping with each other. Feuds between clans over scarce resources, often resulting in honour killings, were balanced by social pressure for reconciliation (*"atwi"*) (R. Sayigh 1979: 21-24). Social control through mediation attempts by family members also helped to diffuse crime in the camps (Sirhan 1975: 193). Village and clan rivalries also took place in the "days of the Revolution" (*ayaam al-Thawra*), when village and clan loyalties merged with (but were not eclipsed by) political allegiances. In the camps feuds developed under political pretexts (Peteet 2005: 118), even though the number of honour killings remained low and were increasingly viewed by most Palestinians as a relic from times past (R. Sayigh 1979: 23). Village endogamy survived in the early years of displacement but growing intermarriage later would lead to the forging of close relations between different villages (Peteet 2005: 116).

Gender relations in rural Palestine were not different from those found in other traditional Arab societies, although it should be noted that there was an absence of the strict space segregation between public (male) and private (female) spaces, found in other Muslim societies (R. Sayigh 1979: 23). In exile, the spatial cramping of the refugee camps signalled an almost complete absence of privacy and the mixing of private and public space. Women would often cook food outside and wear informal dress in the smaller camps (Peteet 2005: 119). Strong morality codes of honour and reputation, especially as regards women, prevailed in the village and survived in the camps. Women were discouraged to walk outside the camp without protection, and the adherence to morality customs was one of the main competition points between families (R. Sayigh 1979: 24).

[42] The boycott was not always successful. Jewish and Arab workers took part together in a truck-drivers strike that paralyzed the country in 1931 (Pappé 2004: 113).

4.3.3. Local inscriptions on the camp landscape

The refugees translated their local identities into inscriptions in the camps they inhabited. In the days after the *Nakbah*, each camp was a microcosm of the Galilean landscape. Camp neighbourhoods were inhabited by people coming from a specific village (Khalili 2004: 11). The larger the village, the more distinct its area and the more dominant its role was in local affairs. Villages were relocated, newly landscaped and socially reconfigured, while their original geographic locations were renamed and occupied by settlers (Peteet 2005: 111). Even in the most spatially confined and geographically isolated situations of the camps, locality was carefully maintained. (Appadurai 1995: 205). The refugees used regional and village stereotypes to locate their new neighbours cognitively. For example, people from the village of Tarshiha were regarded as educated, ´Amqa people were loyal, Al Kabri people were hardworking, Al Bassa women were strong and dominant, Beduins were regarded as the real embodiers of Arab culture, Ghawarneh people were conservative and uneducated, and people from Saffuriyah, one of the largest villages in Galilee, were considered arrogant. While creating boundaries among themselves, the village refugees also distanced themselves from urban Palestinians who were considered educated but too concerned with appearances (Peteet 2005: 116-117).

In his study of locality production, Appadurai describes refugee camp neighbourhoods as one the most extreme examples of neighbourhoods that are context-produced rather than context-driven (1995: 217). Yet in the case of the Palestinians, village neighbourhoods generated a context of their own; the above-mentioned stereotypes produced difference, which was not of an exclusive nature. It was rather a way of expressing resistance to any attempt of resettlement and cultural homogenization. The preservation of the fabric of life before the *Nakbah* was deemed as essential for cultural survival. Furthermore, the proximity of so many villages to one another in the camps generated an environment in which an overall national identity could emerge. Women from different villages for example regularly exchanged recipes, leading to the creation of something resembling a national cuisine (Peteet 2005: 115).

4.4. Formation of refugee identity and the aid regime

Palestinian identity in the Lebanese camps in the early days was to a great extent shaped by the services of the UNRWA. That is why this era is referred to in their everyday talk as *ayaam al-UNRWA* (the UNRWA days) and the generation that grew up in those years as *jeel al-UNRWA* (the UNRWA generation). In line with the creation of agencies such as the UNHCR, the UNRWA was the product of the most recent developments in the field of refugee management. Following

World War II, most of the world's refugees originated from Eastern Europe, leading to an exilic bias (Aleinikoff 1995: 261-2), i.e. to a perception, influenced by Cold War anti-communist politics, that refugees should be provided with the best possible care. Explicitly political motives underlined such thinking, as illustrated by U.S. radio broadcasts in the 1950s regarding Palestinian refugees:

> Help fight Communism...The people of the Middle East are...weakened by hunger and homelessness...devoid of hope, the perfect prey for Communist promises... (quoted in Peteet 2005: 67)

Over the years, this shifted to a so-called source control bias, meaning that more pragmatic approaches were adopted such as the repatriation of the refugees, either to their country of origin or the host country (Aleinikoff 1995: 262). This meant that rich countries and organizations were no longer eager to provide exemplary conditions to refugees to keep them away from antagonistic ideologies. They now treated refugee situations as mere logistical matters of mass movement that had to be contained.

The UNRWA was set up especially for the Palestinian refugees, and has in its history balanced between providing the best possible conditions for refugees and trying to keep the dream of returning to Palestine alive. Like all aid regimes, its underlying assumption was that new places could be crafted through bureaucracies (Peteet 2005: 68). From the refugee perspective, the disparity between the manifested aims (return) and latent attempts (resettlement) of a bureaucracy became evident and influenced their behaviour towards it (Voutira & Bond 1995: 216). Fearing that they would have to give something back in return, Palestinian refugees were mistrustful of UNRWA, which they viewed as acting in collusion with the USA, Israel and the Arab regimes, as part of a resettlement scheme[43]. However at the same time, UNRWA supported the refugees through education and health programs that enabled them to face up to their predicament.

4.4.1. Perceptions of refugees in discourse

Mass movements of refugees always represent a problem, a failure of the state system that has to be resolved (*ibid.*: 257). This perception is reinforced by the notion of the national order of things (Malkki 1995), a view of the world's cultural divisions as truthfully corresponding to the political demarcation lines drawn on the geographical map. Statelessness and displacement are therefore described in mainstream discourse as something pathological, hence the use of botanical

[43] Israel did not oppose the creation of UNRWA because it viewed it as a means to resettle refugees (Peteet 2005: 62).

expressions such as “uprooting” when referring to refugees (Malkki 1997: 65). The cliché image of the refugee is constructed as an irrational figure whose judgement and reason has been compromised by his or her experience. Women and children tend to be visually over-represented in that image, as they embody the institutional, international expectation of a certain kind of helplessness (Malkki 1996: 384-388). As most refugee situations occur in poor parts of the world, where it is assumed by the host state that its infrastructure cannot cope without external aid (Voutira & Bond 1995: 212), refugees fall usually under the control of international aid regimes which have a logic of their own. These institutions not only tend to treat refugees as purely humanitarian issues but also as depoliticised and ahistorical figures. They try to present refugees as mute subjects, detached from their specific contexts (Malkki 1996: 378). In the case of the Palestinians in Lebanon however, the UNRWA did not silence the refugees but, through a series of measures, subscribed to their empowerment.

4.4.2. The refugee camps as places of biopower

Refugee camps are managed by extensive bureaucracies assigned with the task of allocating aid, with authority exercised through distance and mobility mostly possessed only by officials (Inhetveen 2006: 90). Their population is essentially multicultural, encompassing different mentalities, hierarchies, divisions of labour and administration (Voutira and Bond 1995: 210). The UNRWA generated a patron-refugee system of management (Peteet 2005: 83) with foreign aid officials at the top, and rank-and-file Palestinian employees acting as gatekeepers between the refugees and foreigners. It acted as a modern state institution for a people without a state in so far as social services and protection were concerned. An important characteristic of modern capitalist state power, as compared to the semi-feudal conditions in Palestine, is the constant presence of the state in all spheres of life, and the exercise of this control in ways quite more subtle than the direct threat or actual use of force.

In his concept of biopower, Foucault argued that power over death has been replaced by power to give and maintain life (1983). Biopower was expressed in the Lebanese camps by processes such as the classification and enumeration of those eligible for aid. Disciplining the refugees by issuing them with monthly rations of 10 kilos of flour and bread was integral to successfully managing the camps, which were run on firm discipline (Peteet 2005: 69). A refugee described his experience of going to school during those days as follows:

> Everyday we followed the same routine. The home-room teacher would come and inspect us, just like in the army. They inspected our hair, to make sure it is well combed, our clothes to make sure they are tidy... (Rafiq, refugee quoted in Peteet 2005: 84)

For a rural people that mostly produced what they ate before the *Nakbah*, the ration card was a strong symbol of subjection. If food constitutes an important part of cultural identity, then the ration cards represented for the refugees another attempt to deprive them of their identity and history. Despite this, the card also gave the Palestinians a symbol to claim as their own, for it represented their temporary status:

> It meant international recognition. It said: "You have lost your land. You have temporary status until you return". So Palestinians understood the ration card as a national identity card. It meant we had rights somewhere. (Rafiq, refugee quoted in Peteet 2005: 74

Classification highlighted differences within Palestinian society. Many tried to manipulate classification systems to receive more rations, leading to some social inequalities. Also, the aid system helped in emphasizing local and gender divisions. Families were classified as adult males and their dependents (*ibid.*: 71-72)[44]. The first rations were distributed based on village aggregates, contributing to the continuity of local identities. Classification also led to the creation of new identities, as the refugees were now not only classified by their locality of origin but also by their camp and host country[45]. Merging with nationalist discourse, it provided a cognitive image to the refugees of the nation as a non-contiguous unit encompassing different camps in different host countries instead of the localities from which they were displaced (*ibid.*: 73).

4.4.3. Shaping of national identity through education

An important transforming factor for the refugees was the education service provided by UNRWA. It was quite different from the education they had received in Palestine where the authorities, as in other colonies, were less concerned with mass education and more with the creation of an elite of local administrative bureaucrats (Abu-Lughod 1973: 103). Back in Palestine education facilities were concentrated in the cities, making access for the peasants difficult. The UNRWA schools differed from the few religious rural schools in that they were accessible to girls and consisted of a standardized curriculum with examinations (Peteet 2005: 87). In addition, their quality was superior to that of Lebanese schools, leading to resentment by the locals (*ibid.*: 74)[46].

The mass education of women transformed gender relations significantly. In the early days their enrolment figures still lagged behind those of men, but by the mid-60s the gap closed. The empowerment of women enabled them to join the ranks of political organizations during the

[44] To this day, women refugees cannot pass refugee status on to their children.

[45] Palestinians meeting abroad will often refer to each other as "Palestinians of Lebanon", "of Syria" and so forth.

[46] They were superior to public Lebanese schools. High standard education was only accessible to rich Lebanese and urban Palestinians who could afford it (Peteet 2005: 74).

height of PLO influence in Lebanon. Women began to take decisions, often breaking free from traditional family authority. Whereas the routine of young women in Palestine was centred on the house, in the camps it revolved around school. Young men were also affected by secular education, as traditional notions of masculinity encouraged by religious schools in Palestine were put into questions by the values and skills it promoted. Due to education, they found themselves being granted the same respect as older men (*ibid.*: 88-89).

In his work *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson identifies the development of print capitalism as the key factor in the development of national consciousness. It helped spread the knowledge necessary for the infusion of the national Self in the population at large (2006: 44-45). Knowledge systems that were confined to a small nationalist elite in Palestine now became available to the refugees at large through mass education. Yet the curriculum of UNRWA was a source of controversy. While in theory obliged to refrain from politics in the classroom, the more permanent the character of the agency became, the more Palestinians employed by it as teachers were willing to bend this rule. Rafiq, a refugee notes:

> In the curriculum there was no political education and yet the teachers managed to slip in all sorts of information about our cause, what had happened, how it had happened, what the Israelis did, what the Arabs did. So we were always fed this information unofficially; it wasn't part of the curriculum...Yet this was a chance to learn it. (quoted in Peteet 2005: 90)

Parallel to normal schools, the UNRWA offered vocational training opportunities to enable refugees to support themselves and form a regional upwardly mobile labour force (*ibid.*: 86). Graduates from UNRWA vocational schools often went on to work as skilled workers in the oil fields of the Gulf, thus sending back money to their families in the camps.

It was in the schools that the younger generation of Palestinians became fully aware of their situation, through the exchange of experiences with fellow students from other villages. The UNRWA and its services were critical in shaping Palestinian identity in the camps. Although starting with intentions common to other refugee regimes, like the rehabilitation and eventual resettlement of refugees, it's services had unintended political implications (Al-Husseini 2000: 52). UNRWA status was a sign of protection and of an eventual return to an independent Palestine. Although mistrustful of the agency at the beginning, the Palestinians would come to appreciate its services and remember the *ayaam al-UNRWA* nostalgically:

> UNRWA was a buffer between us and the reality of being refugees. It provided us with the means to live. (Abu Salim, refugee in Shatila, quoted in Peteet 2005: 52)

During the *ayaam al-Thawra*, during the "days of the Revolution", the UNRWA and the Palestinian resistance movement would cooperate. This led to the significant downsizing of the agency's operations in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion in 1982 and the destruction of UNRWA facilities as "legitimate terrorist targets".

5. Landscape and Identity: *ayaam al-Thawra*

Nineteen sixty-eight was a year of rupture for the Palestinians in Lebanon. The PLO, led by Yassir Arafat's Fatah faction, launched a guerilla war against Israel from the south of the country. This aggravated tensions with the Lebanese security forces resulting in skirmishes. The Palestinian resistance benefited from massive support from the local population who saw this as undermining their country's sectarian status quo. The confrontation between the Lebanese government forces and Fatah came to a head on 23rd April 1969 when the army clashed with guerillas in the southern village of Bint Jbeil (cf. R. Sayigh 1979). Massive demonstrations ensued in all Palestinian camps and by September every camp in Lebanon was set free from the control of the *Deuxieme Bureau*, the Lebanese intelligence service. The resulting Cairo Agreement made now the presence of armed Palestinian fighters in the camps official, transforming their character from places of confinement to autonomous, national spaces (Peteet 2005: 133). Additionally, following its expulsion from Jordan[47] in 1970, the PLO made Beirut its headquarters and the unofficial capital of a Palestinian state in the making. In Palestinian discourse, the period that ensued is remembered as *ayaam al-Thawra* (days of the Revolution). This was not a fully-fledged revolution[48], but it did involve a very high degree of grass-roots mobilization among the camp population.

5.1. Extraterritorial nation-building

Armed struggle for the PLO was not necessarily the means to liberate Palestine but an instrument to assert itself as an internationally recognized state-level actor with undisputed negotiating authority. Armed activity also served to protect the new state-building process underway in the refugee camps (Y. Sayigh 1997: 27). The PLO institutionalized its presence in the camps by

[47] Those events subsequently became known as "Black September", named after the month during which King Hussein, fearful of increased Palestinian power, decided to crack down on the movement.
[48] In the Arab world the term "revolution" is used quite loosely. Even coups and palace revolts are invariably conferred with the definition.

establishing, along with its political-military infrastructure, a complex economic and social edifice that complemented the services provided by UNRWA[49].

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in Lebanon operated 11 major hospitals and 60 clinics where access was free of charge for PLO members while non-PLO members, Palestinians and Lebanese, were given access through the PLO Institution of Social Affairs and Welfare. International assistance - in the form of volunteers, training and funds - was provided by the World Health Organization, by countries such as Sweden, Japan and East Germany, as well as international solidarity organizations. The PRCS also had an accessible Social Department, for the vocational training of unemployed camp women (Rubenberg 1983: 62-65).

Another important institution was the Palestine Martyrs Works Society (SAMED), which was the PLO's principal section for economic activity. SAMED had 46 factories in Lebanon whose purpose was to produce consumer goods for camp residents who could not afford to buy them from the Lebanese market, and to export products such as textiles to the Arab and Eastern European countries. SAMED also engaged in agriculture by maintaining a network of farms in sub-Saharan African countries, producing goods for Palestinian consumption but also advancing diplomatic relations through the provision of agricultural training to African farmers to compete with similar Israeli efforts in the continent. (*ibid.*: 66-69).

5.2. The camps as translocalities

Gupta and Ferguson define the state through the basic functions of verticality and encompassment (2002): Verticality describes the hierarchical structure of the state while encompassment refers to the state's claim to encompass different localities. The PLO operated on a hierarchical structure (cf. Rubenberg 1983) and encompassed many different Palestinian inhabited localities, comprising the Palestinian "imagined community" (Anderson 2006): the camps in exile, the Palestinians of Israel, the Occupied Territories and the Diaspora in non-Arab countries. Social Welfare and Economic activities in conjunction with military operations, gave to the PLO the character of a state actor.

In examining the relation between territory, state and nation, Appadurai makes the distinction between "soil", the spatialized discourse of belonging, and territory, alluding to the geopolitical

[49] The two institutions would cooperate in those years, as many UNRWA staff were also members of the Resistance movement.

integrity, surveyability, policing and subsistence (2003: 340). Undoubtedly, the soil-aspects of the Palestinian national discourse in Lebanon remained the villages and land left behind in Palestine. But the territorial aspects were to be found in the camps that housed the PLO's civilian and military infrastructure, thus replacing the broken relationship between land and nation with the one between nation and state – The new national consciousness was spatialized in the camps' territory. The camps became *translocalities*, localities which, while officially part of another nation-state (in this case Lebanon), are divorced from their national contexts and are drawn in to transnational allegiances and interests (*ibid.*: 343). Beirut in particular was a plural translocality, as it became the unofficial capital of a Palestinian state in the making, but also, during the civil war, the locality upon which different political utopias, such as the formation of a Christian westernized Lebanon or the establishment of an Iranian-inspired Islamic republic were projected.

This territorial assertion of a state-like entity in another country through the establishment of institutions and movement-controlling mechanisms such as checkpoints, should not be perceived as evidence of a Palestinian desire to take over Lebanon, but as a response to pressure from an already established sovereign state (Israel) which manifested its opposition to the Palestinians in territorial terms (*ibid.*: 342; Chapter 3).

5.3. The new geography of the camps

By the late 1960s, the camps were growing demographically, leading to more permanent cement constructions, and the adding of second floors and private bathrooms. As already argued in Chapter 4, the spatial arrangement of the refugee camps in the years immediately after the *Nakbah* reflected the social organization of the peasants in Palestine, suggested by the preservation of the village framework. During the *ayaam al-Thawra*, the village did not fade away from the camp landscape. Albeit somewhat overshadowed, the village unit was complemented by new landmarks such as the offices of political organizations that functioned as public spaces alongside already existing centers such as mosques or the offices of UNRWA. Whereas in the past camp residents located their neighbours by naming camp quarters after villages in Galilee, now in many camps quarters were named after political organizations. The largest organization within the PLO, Fatah, was dominant not only politically but also spatially[50]. Other neighbourhoods were named *Hayy Sai´qa* (Sai´qa neighbourhood) of *Hayy Jebhat al-Tahrir* (Liberation Front[51] neighbourhood). The new character of the camps as national spaces was reinforced by the naming of institutions within

[50] During the civil war, the south of Lebanon was also known as "Fatah-Land".
[51] The PFLP.

the camps (schools, hospitals etc.) after cities in Palestine, for example the Haifa Hospital in the Burj al-Barajneh camp (Peteet 2005: 133-137).

An equally important development of that period was the suspension of the camps' internal and external boundaries. In the case of Shatila, the camp borders stretched northwards due to demographic growth, while the city of Beirut expanded southwards, also as a result of growing economic migration of Shia from southern Lebanon (*ibid.*: 135). The camp population became more diverse as many Palestinians migrated to Europe and the Gulf to work or to the Eastern Block to study on PLO scholarships (*ibid.*: 142). Low-income Shia often moved in, thus diminishing the village spatial integrity that once existed (*ibid.*: 135). After the suppression of the PLO in Jordan in 1970, many of its Palestinians moved to the camps of Lebanon. The added presence of many Europeans and Americans – mainly medical personnel that arrived in response to calls for international support – gave the camps an additional character as cosmopolitan and transnational spaces (*ibid.*: 134).

The blurring of the camps' boundaries was the spatial expression of the relationship between the Palestinians and the Lebanese at that time. For the poorest sections of the Lebanese population, the grass-roots activity of the Palestinians became an example to emulate. Furthermore, the secular character of their ideology contrasted sharply with the sectarian nature of the country's political system[52]. For the Palestinians outside the camps, the camps were expressions of authentic Palestinianness, as they embodied everything in the modern Palestinian experience: The suffering of the exiled, the peasant past as maintained in refugee particularisms, and the will to fight, as symbolized by the presence of the *fedayeen* in the camps. These spaces also provoked a mix of guilt and admiration among richer, urban Palestinians who nonetheless also expressed revulsion at the refugees' standard of living (*ibid.*: 144). For the Palestinians inside the camps, the new spatial realities and the militancy associated with the Revolution would play an important part in shaping their identity.

5.4. The formation of the fighter identity

Ideologically, the PLO had espoused theories of anticolonial nationalism that influenced liberation movements throughout the era of decolonization. These were to a great extent inspired by Frantz

[52] In Lebanon, the term "sect" does not necessarily denote one's religious beliefs. Although religious persuasions form their symbolic boundary markers, sects mostly resemble ethnic groups.

Fanon's[53] belief in the redeeming quality of violence in anticolonial struggle (2008). Fighting became a form of ritual activity, weapons were fetishized, and combat activity turned into an end in itself. As a result, military losses were transformed into moral victories in Palestinian nationalist rhetoric; this aura of sacralization legitimized losses and sacrifices (Khalili 2007: 739). The funerals of Martyrs in the camps resembled weddings, exhorting the role not only of active fighting but also of passive suffering as part of the overall struggle (*ibid.*: 749).

The Palestinians of the camps had always resented the term "refugee" because of its negative connotations of vulnerability and helplessness[54]. Instead the term "returnee" was used to underline the desire to return and the temporarieness of their condition. Empowered by the new freedom of the camps, the camp residents also started using terms like "revolutionary", "struggler", or "militant" (Peteet 1998: 75). This was not merely an indication of an emerging culture of violence – the images of Palestinians hijacking aircraft did certainly produce such representations throughout the world in the 1970s – but it symbolized a future-oriented activism and progress; it symbolized moving forward instead of just waiting to return (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 122). The Palestinian camp refugees in Lebanon were especially radicalized due to their social position as an ethnically defined and overexploited proletariat (cf. Sayigh 1978). For them, struggle came as if natural to them:

> Books (about Palestine) are for foreigners. It is from my nature that I struggle. (camp refugee quoted in R. Sayigh 1977b: 29)

This was something as essential as one's gender. The Palestinian refugee and author Ghasan Kanafani writes in his novel *Of Men and Rifles*:

> You cannot ask a fighter why he is fighting. It is as if you asked a man why he is a male. (quoted in Lindholm Schulz 2003: 126)

The loss of bodily connection to a national homeland is often equated with the loss of moral bearings (Malkki 1997: 63). Therefore fighting in this case acquires a new meaning: Not only lost land but also lost honour has to be reclaimed (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 126; Cockburn 1988: 20). The word *feday* – fighter – literally translated means "one who redeems a captive" or "someone who sacrifices" (Khalili 2007: 742). Men who fought display certain nostalgia for that era:

> As a civilian you don't do anything. You are lazy, you sit around, drink coffee and visit with people. But as a military person, military life is respected, it teaches you discipline, bravery, pride of your dignity, ethics, how to treat people, which is why I prefer the military life. It

[53] Frantz Fanon was himself active in the guerrilla struggle aginst the French in Algeria.
[54] For more on this point see present thesis, Chapter 4.

> was my aim in life to fight, so when I was wounded I was happy to get better and go to fight some more. (Abu Hussein, former guerilla, Burj al-Barajneh camp, quoted in Khalili 2007: 742)

Whereas essentialist identities of belonging to an "imagined community" – whether an ethnicity, a religion or a nation – are exclusivist and may easily degenerate into chauvinism, identities of "doing" (working or struggling for instance) as well as identities of "becoming" (e.g. the citizen of a future state) tend to have a more inclusive outlook. Significantly, one of the main slogans advanced at the time was "Anyone who struggles is a Palestinian". Echoing this, the PLO offered military training in its camps to numerous militant organizations, spanning from the Middle East to Latin America and Western Europe. Foreign trainees who displayed excellence in their courses were often described by their instructors as "real Palestinians" (Peteet 2005: 146).

Another development was the changing attitude of Palestinians towards Arab identity. Most Palestinians in the 1950s and 1960s had placed their faith in the pan-Arabism of Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser. However, following the Arab defeat in the Six Day War, a Palestinian identity emerged. While overlapping with the Arab identity[55], it also differed from it as a consequence of the experience of statelessness, exile and struggle. Indicative of how influential struggle had been in this process is the fact that when camp refugees were asked through a questionnaire to select an identity other than the Palestinian, many responded by choosing that of countries with liberation movements like Vietnam or Cuba, Algeria being the only Arab country mentioned (R. Sayigh 1977a: 11). This process made many Palestinians to envision their return not to social conditions that predated their exile, but to a new secular democratic state for all its citizens[56]. This inclusiveness contrasted to the Zionist ethno-religious state project.

Accompanying this newly found struggle-identity was a continuing contrasting of past and present Palestinian resistance efforts, suggesting a generation gap. The old struggle of 1948 was backward; the new one was modern:

> Today's Revolution is an educated revolution. The other was unplanned […] But now the Revolution is based on planning, on scientific thinking. (a worker in the camp, quoted in R. Sayigh 1977a: 20)

Again, the new struggle entailed high levels of popular involvement in contrast to the old one:

[55] The two identities were not alternatives. Moreover, camp residents perceived Palestinianism as the more intense and exemplary form of Arabism, setting them apart from other Arabs who were allegedly diverging from it (R. Sayigh 1977b: 22).

[56] The PLO would abandon this goal in the 1970s in favour of a bi-national solution and then a two-state solution.

> The whole people didn't participate in the first Revolution, it wasn't spread throughout Palestine. (camp student, quoted in R. Sayigh 1977a: 20)

There was also criticism among the young of the political culture of the older generation some of who had expressed even admiration for Hitler in the 1940s:

> Praise of Hitler was part of the wrong culture that was spread among us. Political understanding was missing. (camp resident quoted in R. Sayigh 1979: 46)

Loyalties also shifted during the late 1960s and the 1970s. Village and kin loyalties did not disappear but their relevance faded. A former guerilla remarked:

> We became one village. Palestine was the name. In the camps, the resistance and one's activities mattered more than the village from where one came. (quoted in Peteet 2005: 134)

Parties and organizations played an important role in shaping the new identity. A distinction was made between parties (*ahzab*), which were seen as "belonging to Arab governments", "reactionary" and "pro-American" on the one hand, and organizations (*tanzeemat, harakat*), which were viewed as the embodiment of the new struggle. The cult of personality around leaders was rare, and if a leader was mentioned it was mostly Yassir Arafat, whom the refugees praised for "living the life of the people" (R. Sayigh 1977b: 32).

5.4.1. Women´s empowerment in the Revolution

Women had always participated, even if marginally, in Palestinian national struggles of the 20th century. But with the *Nakbah* and the experience of exile, the already existing strict attitudes became more entrenched, as many exile communities tend to reconstruct themselves as the "ideal" embodiments of their native culture, often displaying conservative gender attitudes. A refugee woman who participated in the 1936 revolt for example remarked:

> The Palestinian used to be much more advanced in his own country and women were more independent and freer […] in the camps the Palestinian became ultrastrict even fanatic about the "honour" of his women. Perhaps this was because he had lost everything that gave his live meaning and "honour" was the only possession remaining to him. (quoted in Berger Gluck 1995: 7)

For women, the *ayaam al-Thawra* signaled greater mobility and social freedom. Many women rushed to join the new groups that came in the camps. A famous saying was that "the man is boss at home but that man and woman are both equal in the struggle" (R. Sayigh 1977a: 14), indicating how women were constantly torn between two cultural models: the traditional one of being restricted at home, and that of becoming an equal member in society through the experience of struggle (Mansour 1977: 75). Social conservatism towards women still prevailed, owing to the

rural background of most refugees. However, conservative attitudes can change rapidly under conditions of crisis, as were the circumstances in the camps (R. Sayigh 1977a: 18).

The various factions of the PLO began to acknowledge the new potentialities posed by the contribution of women to the struggle, with the leftist factions of the PLO, the DFLP[57] and the PFLP, being the most vocal supporters of women's rights. However, it must be stressed, that the new attitude towards women was essentially functional. The leadership did not advocate women's emancipation as a right in itself but rather because it served military objectives. The most influential women's organization, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) completely subordinated itself to the PLO leadership, thus losing its autonomy and any potential it had as a feminist force (Berger Gluck 1995: 7).

The level of mobility women enjoy can broadly measure their status. During the early period of exile, women could move relatively freely through the streets of the camps, which, as in all other Middle Eastern cultures, were defined as a male domain. Inside the camps women were comparatively free of harassment by young men, who could otherwise face sanctions from the community. Streets outside the camp were quite a different story. The influx of *fedayeen* from Jordan who did not have family in the camps initially raised the alarm among parents. However, the fact that these men were affiliated to political organizations meant that they were ultimately accountable to someone. As a result, parential hesitations in allowing daughters to move freely quickly faded (Peteet 2005: 138-139). The growing spatial mobility of women also led to the weakening of village-based clan loyalties, as men and women from different villages began to intermarry (*ibid.*: 142).

6. The Era of Reconfinement: From 1982 to Present

6.1. Confrontation with state violence

The *ayaam al-Thawra* came to an end in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon and expelled the PLO leadership from the country. However, the process of reconfinement started several years before with the onset of the civil war. Parallel to the Palestinians' numerical and logistical

[57] The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

build-up, the Lebanese Christian Right was beginning to mobilize its forces for an armed confrontation. This was reflected in the increasingly aggressive language adopted towards the Palestinians. For the Christians, the Palestinians had taken advantage of their host. "We offered them half a loaf and they took the other half" was an often-repeated expression of that sentiment. While initially referred to as guests (*dayoof*), the Palestinians were now attributed with the politically loaded term *ghuraba*, strangers. The presence of the camps as autonomous rebellious spaces irritated the Christian Right, which regarded them as an eyesore on the Lebanese landscape.

The activities of the Phalange suggested an aesthetic of place destruction. Its leaders talked openly of constructing tennis courts and shopping malls on the sites of destroyed camps such as Tel al-Za´tar (*ibid.*: 144-145)[58]. In the process of the civil war, the Phalange evolved into a Christian fundamentalist organization. It started as an organization with fascist characteristics, such as the personality cult around a leader. But after the death of its young leader, Bashir Gemayel, it also increasingly became defined by a religious rhetoric. The organization was connected to the Maronite clergy and placed particular value in Lebanon's antique Phoenician past and in the more recent French influences. The Lebanese Christians were viewed as on a "*mission civilatrice*" in the region, and their setbacks were explained by the "moral degeneration" of the West, which had forsaken its Christian values, thus failing to protect them. This outlook was complemented by a discourse of spiritual renewal (Hage 1992: 35).

In this context, the armed presence of the Palestinians represented the most abhorrent form of the Other, which by all means had to be eliminated. After all, the Palestinians were predominantly Muslim and Arab in identity, foreign in origin, and to a high degree politically left-oriented. Linguistic differences were used to identify this Other. Christian soldiers would often ask Palestinians at checkpoints to say "tomato", which in Lebanese Arabic is pronounced *bandura* and in Palestinian *banadura*. "Wrong" pronunciation meant detention, even death (Peteet 1995: 176, quoted in Linholm Schulz 2003: 60). The hatred towards the Palestinians culminated in the Sabra and Shatila massacre by Christian death squads in 1982.

[58] This willingness for place destruction driven by an existential fear of the Other was reaffirmed in the summer of 2007 in the destruction of the Nahr al-Bared camp, which was justified through the alleged presence of Al Qaeda cells in the camps.

These death squads came into the open at a time when similar operations occurred in other parts of the globe, especially Latin America. While not part of the state apparatus as such, death squads are usually sanctioned by the state and enable governments to maintain a "plausible denial" of involvement in their deeds (Sluka 2000: 5). This particularly vicious exercise in state repression was to be repeated in Lebanon where the personnel of the death squads and of the Christian-dominated state overlapped.

Two anthropological views have emerged on the origins of state violence in general. One holds that the crisis of the state is the reason behind an increase in state violence, while the other suggests that elites that resort to terror do so because the state is strong and can therefore get away with it (*ibid.*: 30-1). The first approach seems to better fit the Lebanese experience: The growing strength of the Palestinians questioned the legitimacy of the sectarian state, which in turn sparked the violent reaction of the ruling Christian elites.

6.2. The Palestinian-Shia split and the War of the Camps

While the clash between the Palestinians and the Christians was largely anticipated, what proved strategically disastrous for the Palestinians was the collapse of their cordial relations with the Shia. This happened for a number of reasons. To begin with, Fatah attempted to increase its influence in the predominantly Shia south by engaging in the establishment of local organizations, otherwise known as "shops" (*dalakin*). The *dalakin* owed political loyalty to their Palestinian paymasters, but otherwise were little more than criminal street gangs. The religiously devout Shia accused the mainly secular Palestinians of behaving arrogantly towards them at military checkpoints and of abusing their power. They also felt that they had paid the highest price for Israeli air strikes, which usually occurred after Palestinian guerrillas attacked from within Shia territory (Brynen 1989: 57).

The Days of the Revolution gave rise to growing interaction and the establishment of social networks between Palestinians and Lebanese Shia, which in turn brought about the blurring of camp boundaries. Now the Shia residing inside the camps were urged to leave by their leaders, turning the camps once more into homogenous spaces and identifiable targets At the same time, Palestinians residing outside the camps faced intimidation campaigns intended to force them back into the ghetto. Amal had begun to delineate geographically the camps of Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh in Beirut, by blowing up the houses found on their outer limits. This was done both to isolate the camps and expose them for surveillance purposes. Observation posts were erected

around the camps by the Shia Amal militias, which Palestinian men tended to avoid, as the risk of being shot at was extremely high. Women were tasked with the delivery of supplies, which nonetheless were invariably gunned down by snipers (Peteet 2005: 161-167). The War of the Camps was now underway.

The siege of the camps by their once friendly Shia neighbours shocked the Palestinians. Yet, the development of social visiting networks, especially between Palestinian and Shia women, was helpful to the besieged Palestinians. A former fighter describes the situation:

> Do you really think we were completely cut off from the outside? We would have died! We had Shia friends in Amal who looked the other way and allowed us to smuggle in food, medicine and weapons. Others we paid. These Shia kids did not know what they were fighting for and they were terrified…We knew them well – we had been neighbours and friends for many years. (quoted in Peteet 2005: 155)

Appadurai indicates that often ethnocidal violence is not only caused from uncertainty about the Other but also because of uncertainty about the ethnic Self (1998: 244, quoted in Peteet 2005: 160). The Shia were trying to assert themselves as part of a newly found Lebanese national collective identity which ascribed the troubles faced by the country on outsiders. This was a field traditionally hegemonized by the Maronite Christians, who de-emphasized the country's Arab character in favour of a Western-oriented identity.

6.3. The emergence of new communities

6.3.1. Communities of suffering

The spatial reconfinement of the Palestinians, the suspension of their nation-building process, and the hardships suffered by the refugees over the last two decades has resulted in the formation of new identities and communities. The identity of the Palestinians in the camps of Lebanon now became overtly multifaceted. Whereas in the *ayaam al-UNRWA* it was local and in the *ayaam al-Thawra* predominantly national, currently it combines a mixture of localism, of a nationalism more conditioned by the refugees' marginalization rather than official top-down rhetoric, and of attachment to places of collective suffering.

The latter component has influenced the formation of new homogenizing identifications. The displaced survivors of the destroyed Tel al-Za´tar camp were relocated to Shatila and were from then on identified as the "Tel al-Za´tar people". Their suffering has generated new social networks that endure to this day. A poetic example of this trend is found in a story recited throughout the camps during the 1990s of a boy who saw a dream. In it, the refugees return to

Palestine and, while most of them return to their villages of origin, the survivors of the Shatila massacre come together and form a new community (Peteet 1998: 63).

Identification with places embodying suffering serves specific purposes: While it expresses resilience to the disruptive effects of oppressor violence and the impunity enjoyed by its perpetrators, at the same time it is a step towards an alternative route to nation building – often at odds with that envisioned by the ethnically defined nationalist discourse (Afflito 2000: 120-121).

Places associated with suffering play an important part in the Palestinian collective consciousness. They are seen as part of the greater geography of displacement and national suffering, including places ranging from Deir Yassin in Palestine to Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon. Each successive tragedy is seen as a continuation of the one preceding it (Peteet 2005: 203). As the theme of displacement has become all pervading in the Palestinian experience of the last 60 years, it has strengthened rather than weakened the determination of the refugees never to be displaced again. Longing for a return to Palestine has merged with a longing for a *ayaam al-Thawra* and its territorial manifestations as was the Tel al-Za´tar camp (Peteet 2005: 215).

6.3.2. The moral community

Reconfinement has severely restricted interaction with the world outside the camps. The camps – once cosmopolitan places of interaction with foreigners or Palestinian-friendly Lebanese – are today also inhabited by people perceived as a threat, such as non-Palestinian Arab guest workers or unknown Palestinians from other camps (*ibid.*: 178). Relations between camp and non-camp urban Palestinians have also grown more distant since 1982.

In her study of Hutu refugees in Tanzania (1989), Malkki has shown how refugees living in mixed urban settings lead a cosmopolitan lifestyle while those living in camps were engaged in a permanent cultural reproduction of a collective identity, seen as the essential incarnation of the collective Self from a moral qualities viewpoint. Enclosed and limited in their movement, the Palestinian camp refugees rediscovered traditional forms of association, such as kinship and village origins. Furthermore, the camp Palestinians' negative experiences with Others led in recent years to a "moral community" formation whose perceived superior morality sets them apart from the Lebanese as well as other Palestinians. Politically, they regard their secularism

as a sign of "modernity", unlike the "backwardness" of religion-based Lebanese politics. They remember themselves as honourable fighters in contrast to the Lebanese. Gender and sexuality have also been used to construct a morally superior Self, as Palestinian camp narratives suggest that Lebanese men and women are unfaithful in relationships and "loose". Lebanese women are seen as lazy and as being preoccupied with appearances "even when the cupboard is empty", by contrast to Palestinian women who make sacrifices for their family. The allusion to an empty cupboard points to a lack of hospitality, a key in the construction of honour and prestige. On the other hand, camp residents are unwilling to discuss incidents of prostitution or theft inside their locale. (Peteet 1998: 78-82).

6.4. The camps' present spatial layout

Soon after the civil war, the centre of Beirut underwent a process of reconstruction, largely financed by the Solidere Corporation of the late Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri. This was a highly controversial project as critics accused Solidere of putting too much emphasis on commercial culture, creating a generic sanitized space, cleared of its turbulent past and oriented towards global consumption[59]. The new look was meant to spatially bury the past of civil unrest. While all factions appear willing to overcome their differences, their shared distrust of the Palestinians is demonstrated spatially by the limitations imposed on Palestinian place-making capabilities. After the war, the Lebanese authorities officially notified UNRWA that rebuilding in the Sabra and Shatila camps was not allowed and a large-scale eviction plan was put into motion against unauthorized Palestinian settlements in the camps (Aql 1995: 57; R. Sayigh 1994: 43). Any improvement in the living conditions of the camps was regarded as a potential threat (Peteet 2005: 173). In a post-civil war national narrative that sees the country's problems as having been the work of "outsiders", the Palestinians are (unlike the armies of Israel and Syria) the most accessible scapegoat. The division of Beirut in a modern future-oriented city centre on the one hand and the slum areas of the camps on the other is not very much unlike the urban segregation established in Apartheid South Africa (Bollig, in press).

The camps' present-day boundaries date mostly from the War of the Camps. In Beirut, where the camps are located in Shia areas, the green and yellow banners of Amal and Hizbullah, and the pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini and Amal's founder Imam Mousa Sadr, serve as a symbolic reminder of Shia power but, more importantly, clearly demarcate the boundaries of the refugee

[59] „Middle East Pieces", *New York Times*, 21 May 2006 (http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/21/magazine/21khoury.html?pagewanted=1&fta=y)

camps. Reconfinement also imposed a rearrangement of internal space in the camps. In Shatila, the mosque reemerged as the centre of the camp, mainly because the Amal militia destroyed the surrounding area as well as because a great number of Palestinians found refuge there during the siege. It now stands as the main reference point of actual physical as well as cognitive movement; the residents pass by it every day while it also serves as a place for remembering the dead. Furthermore, streets and alleys are no longer named after armed organizations or localities in Palestine, but after violent events. Examples of this are the Street of the Massacre in Shatila and the Sniper's Alley in Burj al-Barajneh (*ibid.*: 203). The walls of the camp alleys are filled with black banners, Koranic verses and pictures of dead martyrs, creating a landscape of sorrow and a "memoryskape" of all those events in which Palestinians lost their lives: the *Nakbah*, the Sabra and Shatila massacre and the War of the Camps.

One of the most visible things in the camps is the near absolute absence of men. Many have died; some are working aboard, while others keep a low profile. Given that military cultures are male-dominated, male identity tends to emerge damaged from a military defeat, while women might (just might) gain some empowerment through the fact that they have survived (Sideris 2001: 52). With the absence of war as a kind of male ritual of passage, unemployed men in the camps tend to re-assert traditional notions of masculinity in their personal and interpersonal relations (cf. Khawaja & Tewtel-Salem 2004).

6.4.1. A landscape of commemoration

Commemoration practices are central to present-day refugee life. These reveal differences in narratives within the Palestinian community. Some of these differences are political in character and manifest themselves openly. A monument for the assassinated cartoonist Naji al-Ali, a vocal critic of Arafat, was erected in Ayn al-Hilweh, but was later torn down by "persons unknown" (Khalili 2005: 39). Other differences are latent and revolve around the discrepancy between official nationalist rhetoric and grass-roots practices. While officialdom treats the massacres and defeats as proof of a "heroic struggle" to fulfil Palestinian destiny, grass-roots narratives see these events as a part of a "collective suffering" that competes for attention in the global arena of human rights discourse. This latter trend can be ascribed in part to the global decline of Third World national liberation currents with their emphasis on struggle on the one hand, and the emergence of a transnational NGO-related discourse of suffering on the other (Khalili 2005, 2007). Since the Oslo Accord, which deferred the refugee issue to future talks, the Palestinians in Lebanon feel betrayed by the PLO leadership. Women are especially vocal

in the criticism of the leadership, using organic metaphors to illustrate their anger. To give just one example: "Arafat fattened himself on our milk and blood" (Peteet 2005: 201)[60]. Grass-roots narratives therefore claim membership in the nation-building process from which the refugees feel excluded.

The Palestinians in Lebanon are confronted with two main problems in their commemoration efforts. Firstly, others often appropriate their commemorations and narratives. In an attempt to destroy any record of the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the site of the mass grave was transformed into a rubbish dump. Then in 1999, Hizbullah took control of the site and built a wall around the grave and planted flowers. However, it has used this site since to promote its own political agenda (see Appendix). The banners now adorning the grave demonstrate this. Even more tellingly, during the 2002 commemoration of the massacre, Hizbullah invited to the ceremony a speaker from Amal, causing the angry departure of the Palestinians present. Secondly, most places of Palestinian collective suffering are out of bounds. Openly commemorating on site the massacre of Tel al-Za´tar or the destruction of the urban slum of Karantina, carried out in concert by Christian and Syrian forces, is just not possible. After the Tel al-Za´tar camp was razed to the ground, the site was redeveloped as the headquarters of the Phalange. In 1998 the Karantina slum was turned into a nightclub. Its architect turned the site into an allegory of sorts. While now a site of pleasure, the theme of the erected structure is a war bunker, intended as a criticism to the political amnesia that has beset the country since the end of the civil war (Khalili 2005: 42-44, see Appendix).

6.4.1.1. Cemeteries and monuments

Cemeteries and graves are an important feature of the culture of commemoration manifested in the camps and a potent symbol of the interaction between collective nationalist narratives and individual mourning. During the civil war, the PLO constructed two "martyr's cemeteries" in the camps of Shatila and Ayn al-Hilweh to bury the Palestinian dead. Being buried in such a nationally-defined place, gives the dead national "sanctity" in addition to the already existing religious aura (*ibid.*: 32).

[60] This is a good example of the way in which women are viewed in nationalist state formation discourses: either as participants in military struggles or as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities (Alonso 1994: 385).

The Shatila cemetery is unique in the Middle East. It is one of the few burial grounds that contain the remains of Muslims as well as Christians and Jews[61]. Apart from Palestinians, the cemetery includes the remains of Turkish, German, Irish, and Iranian guerrillas that fought alongside the Palestinians, a sign of the inclusiveness of the struggler identity (argued more fully in Chapter 5). Yet cemeteries are also a focal point for established tensions. Palestinians have tended in recent years to bury their dead in a non-nationalist context, something to be interpreted either as a move beyond or beneath the national concept.

On the one hand, Islamic practices have become more visible, as graves are again religiously segregated and burial ceremonies are more influenced by religion than nationalism. Also, emphasizing the element of suffering rather than national struggle is meant to present the refugees as global humanitarian subjects:

> I want my sons and my grandsons to know what happened, what the world and the Arabs have done to us, how they betrayed us. I want the world to know. (Woman in Shatila, quoted in Khalili 2005: 35)

On the other hand, the reemergence of local identities also had an impact on burial customs. For example, olive trees are planted above graves in urban settings such as traffic roundabouts to reproduce the ideal image of a Palestinian cemetery. In addition, the graves of fighters killed in the War of the Camps, most of them born in the camps, bear the name of their Palestinian village as their place of origin. This is intended to challenge the Zionist narrative of the Palestinians' detachment from their homes by placing the concrete element of locality above the abstraction of nation. It is also a refusal to acknowledge their exile by omitting the name of a country in which they have suffered so much (*ibid.*: 35).

Commemorative monuments not only demonstrate tensions among Palestinian narratives but also their troubled relationship with the host country. The claim of land ownership through the ancestral grave is a feature common in rural cultures, as in the case of the Himba in Namibia (cf. Bollig 1997). It is also to found in nationalist discourse. The desecration of graves during the Civil War thus took on a symbolic meaning. In 1983, for example, the Phalange turned the martyrs' cemetery in Ayn al-Hilweh into a football ground. The purpose was to prevent the Palestinians from burying their dead on Lebanese soil, indicative of the core nationalist belief

[61] Among the killed in Shatila were also nine elderly Jewish women married to Palestinians (Khalili 2005: 45, footnote).

that the union between body and soil constitutes the solidification of the deceased's bond to the land (Khalili 2005: 36).

Cemeteries are not the only place to serve as memorial locations. All other places in the camp landscape associated with suffering are attributed this function. These include nurseries, hospitals, as well as mosques. The Shatila mosque in particular was used as a burial ground during the War of the Camps due to the inaccessibility of the cemetery at the time. Places where missiles fell and people were killed are also marked. Although accidental places of mourning, these locations are incorporated to the commemorative practices while serving as landmarks in everyday life (*ibid.*: 38, see Appendix).

6.4.2. The reemergence of the village

One of the most remarkable phenomena of recent years is the reemergence of local identifications in the camps. Because localities are life worlds constituted by relatively stable associations of people often known to each other (Appadurai 2003: 338), this form of concrete identification has become more attractive than the abstract "imagined community" of people who will probably never meet each other (Anderson 2006: 6), especially in times of crisis.

When Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, it was possible for the first time in many years for refugees to see the Palestinian landscape again, sometimes reconnecting with relatives on the other side of the border (Khalili 2004: 10). The viewing distance from the land is often evoked as evidence of belonging to it:

> What sets us here in the region of Tyre apart from other Palestinians of Lebanon is that we are very close to nothern Palestine. We see our country every day, and that strengthens our hope of return despite the duration of our exile and our dispersion. (Muhammad, refugee in Rashidiyyeh, quoted in Aql 1995: 57)

Far from disappearing, local identities are now stronger than during the *Thawra*-era. Evidence of their appeal is the fact that village notables continue to exercise some influence in camp affairs. Although these are managed by "popular committees" dominated by political factions stemming from the *Thawra*-era, origin-based "village committees" and funds (*sanduq*) have appeared in recent years. These concentrate on social rather than on political issues, in providing for example financial assistance to their members for organizing events such as funerals and weddings (*ibid.*: 12).

Another event contributing to the vitality of village-based identities is the publishing of "village books" written by members of the post-1948 generations. These are mostly popular historical ethnographies of left-behind villages in Palestine describing family histories, farming methods and customs, which are not distributed by the political organizations in the camps but by the authors themselves, though informal networks of family and friends (*ibid,*: 15). This emphasis on the cultural aspects of everyday life is most interesting because none of the official narratives have dealt with it. Even the resurgent Islamic-oriented currents tend to highlight the Muslim sacredness of the land rather than focus on concrete life-stories (*ibid.*: 9).

A number of radio and television programs have also made their appearance for Lebanese as well as Palestinian audiences, where elderly Palestinians recall their memories of the land. These are characterized by repeated references to the beauty of a natural landscape filled with orchards, springs, and rivers. Trees are given detailed description and the perceived superior quality of Palestinian agricultural products is often mentioned. The emphasis on natural landscape is not mere nostalgia. It is meant to challenge the Zionist narrative of "making the desert bloom" (*ibid.*: 17). Imagining Palestine as a naturally ideal place can also be seen as a reaction to the terrible living conditions in the camps:

> But is this place we live in, Shatila, really our identity? Of course not! What can we belong to in Shatila? To the garbage? Or to the alleyways that stink of sewage? (Mariam, refugee in Shatila[62])

6.5. Palestine: an imagined place

If print capitalism was essential to the formation of nationalist consciousness, then new decentralized forms of communications contribute to the maintenance and expansion of localist discourse. The Internet and satellite television can be seen as examples of what Harvey called the "time-space compression" of globalized capitalism, a process that enables nationalism's tendency to universality while at the same time undermining its tendency to particularism, thus creating a tension between space and place (1989: 240-241).

An Internet explosion has taken place in recent years in the camps, assisted by transnational Palestinian NGO's such as the Across Borders Project (www.acrossborders.ps), which has set up Internet centres in the Burj al-Shemali and Nahr al-Bared camps. There, Palestinian camp youth maintain online contacts with their counterparts in the Occupied Territories through

[62] "Through Children's Eyes: Children's Rights in Shatila Camp", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn 1999.

chatrooms, creating transnational and politically defined cyberspaces where images of places in Israel and Palestine are exchanged in the form of digital files. Identification with localities is expressed by the adding to the name of email addresses the name of the village of origin or the number "48" (Khalili 2004: 11). The Internet has brought members of the Palestinian "imagined community" closer to one another while simultaneously benefiting concrete forms of local identification which are structurally opposed to the homogenizing project of the nation-state (Appadurai 2003: 338).

The introduction of the Internet and other technologies in the narratives of displaced people attests to the fact that imagined communities are increasingly becoming attached to imagined places, as refugees gather around remembered or imagined homelands in a world that seems to deny such firm territorial anchors (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 39). Paradoxically, 60 years after the *Nakbah*, Palestine seems closer to the new generations of camp residents than it was for the *jeel al-Filastin*, the generation that was expelled.

7. The Palestinian Refugees of Lebanon as Part of a Diaspora

Are the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon part of a Palestinian Diaspora? This is a politically charged question, tied to the debate about the Right of Return. Every diasporic dimension involves a homeland and possibly a homecoming. A great deal of anthropological diaspora research uses Safran's working definition to classify a diaspora as such. For Safran, a diaspora is an expatriate minority community whose members and their ancestors have been dispersed from an original "center" to two or more "peripheral" regions, who retain a collective memory or vision about their homeland, who believe that they are not – and will never be – accepted by their host society, who regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return when conditions are appropriate, who believe that they should collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and its safety and prosperity, and whose group solidarity is defined by this special relationship to the homeland. (1999: 365).

Taking these criteria into account, Safran names among others the Palestinians as an example of a diaspora although he later asserts that no example confirms the "ideal type" of the Jewish

Diaspora. Clifford has shown that the application of the term "diaspora" in Safran´s sense does not fully conform to the Jewish case and names examples of a thriving and cosmopolitan Jewish diaspora life, particularly in the Muslim world before 1492, as evidence, thus questioning the desire to return to the homeland as essential (1999: 218). Indeed, it is important to transcend the victim tradition which is located at the heart of any definition of the concept, as in many cases – Jewish, Armenian, Lebanese and even Palestinian – living among Others resulted in cultural achievements that would not have been possible in the home country (R. Cohen 1999: 272).

Safran's definition is also weakened by its lack of a materialist perspective: Do unemployed camp Palestinians in Lebanon, for example, feel the same connection to Palestine as middle-class Palestinians residing in Europe or America? After all, the strength and viability of an ethnic identity away from a homeland are often determined by the economic interests and the class position of individuals (Patterson 1999: 605). This is not to say that non-camp Palestinians of non-peasant origins are sentimentally detached from their homeland, but rather that their experience of exile is qualitatively different; migration and exile may be as much about cognitive movement as they are about the actual physical movement of groups and individuals from one locality to another (Dawson and Johnson 2001: 319). The author Ghada Karmi, after decades of exile in Britain, shares through her autobiography her experience of returning to her Jerusalem home from which she had to flee as a child in the following way:

> There was nothing to which I could attach my longing for home. This was not my house… I had a sense of frustrated hopelessness. Floatsam and jetsam, I thought, that's how we ended up, not a stick or stone to mark our existence. No homeland, no reference point, only a fragile, diplaced and misfit Arab family in England to take on those crucial roles. (2002: 445)

On the other hand, a camp woman who had the rare opportunity to visit her native home in what is now Israel, described her experience in a different light:

> I still knew it even though it looked different. I remembered where certain houses were and were some of the fields… As I left, I lamented that I wished I still lived here… (Um ´Omar, refugee, quoted in Peteet 2005: 213)[63]

[63] The home was inhabited by a Yemeni Jewish woman who looked after it and connected with Um ´Omar due to their common narratives of displacement. Interestingly, this phenomenon was revealed in other situations such as in Cyprus in 2003, when the opening of the demarcation line lead to visits of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot refugees to their ancestral homes.

Yet the most problematic aspect of Safran's thesis is his likening of the Palestinians' situation to that of the Sudeten and Silesian Germans, expelled from Czechoslovakia and Poland after World War II, and settled in the Federal Republic of Germany. Like the Germans – Safran's argument goes – the Palestinians did not have to make cultural and linguistic sacrifices as they were living within the boundaries of the Arab nation (1999: 368). Regarding the Sudeten and Silesian Germans, it suffices here to say that their treatment in the Federal Republic simply does not bare comparison to the historic circumstances and the hardships experienced by Palestinian refugees in the case of sectarian-based state of Lebanon. What distinguishes the Palestinians from the Other is their statelessness[64], in a world where citizenship denotes basic (if not limitless) protection from external threat through legal, political, diplomatic, and if, need be, military means. The Palestinian identity manifests itself in places, such as airports, borders and checkpoints, where citizenship is checked and verified (R. Khalidi 1997: 1). The author Fawaz Turki, who grew up in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, explains:

> I get off the plane at Frankfurt. I have no visa. Only my stateless travel document. 'You have no visa. You can't enter the country', I am told by the immigration officer. 'You are stateless; a visa is necessary'. Help me man, ignore my little document of disgrace… (1972: 93, quoted in Lindholm Schulz 2003: 89)

Having no state is evidence of vulnerability to harassment. Out of demographic concerns for example, Lebanon expelled Palestinian refugees to Jordan in the early 1990s (Shiblak 1996: 40). Libya also expelled Palestinians with Lebanese residency documents, allegedly to make apparent to the international community the dysfunction of the Oslo agreement. Lebanon refused their reentry to the country, sparking a crisis that left many stranded at border checkpoints and aboard ships (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 91).

Despite the unifying element of statelessness, it would be wrong to speak of *the* Palestinian Diaspora as if it were a homogenous block. Like its Afro-Carribean counterpart, Palestinian diasporic identity is marked by continuity as well as difference. While retaining continuity, in the Palestinian case through statelessness, the diasporic community is divided by boundaries of difference that are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference (Hall 1999: 304). Difference is thus created by the individual and collective rights Palestinians may or may not enjoy in the states of their residence. Furthermore, the degree of attachment to a place of origin is also subject to the position of a community in the social hierarchy both at

[64] Palestinians with the citizenships of other countries may also feel this sense of statelessness, as do for example Kurds with Turkish or Iraqi citizenship, although those merely possessing UNRWA documents are the ones worst affected in their daily lives.

home and in exile. With this in mind, it can be argued that rural Palestinians who became refugees in Lebanon have the strongest desire to return to their homeland. Being directly attached to the landscape, due to its function as the source of their livelihood, was the motivating force behind the return aspirations of the first generation, the *jeel al-Nakbah*. Being marginalized from society was and remains the foremost reason for passing on this association to the next generations.

7.1. Perspectives on the Right of Return

7.1.1. The Palestinian perspective

For the Palestinians, the Right of Return (*haq al-awda*) is nonnegotiable, as they firmly insist on the implementation of UN Resolution 194. However, there exists no clear definition of what this Right of Return entails. It is perceived mostly as an abstract moral issue – Its acknowledgement implies recognition that the Palestinians are a people with national rights, including that of living in their ancestral homeland. Its rejection is understood as a denial of the Palestinians' attachment to their homeland and of the injustices they have suffered since 1948 (R. Khalidi 1992: 31-2).

Over the years, the PLO has shifted away from an "absolute" Right of Return, as a result of a military liberation of Palestine, to the provisions of Resolution 194, which offers compensation as an alternative to those who do not wish to return. Whatever the outcome of the negotiations between Israel and the PNA on the issue of return, priority is to be given to the Palestinians in Lebanon, as they have suffered the most, and because of their contribution in the construction of the PLO's state-like structures of in exile, whose successor the PNA is (*ibid.*: 36-38). However, a possible return of the Lebanon-based refugees – mostly originating from Galilee – to a future Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza is inconceivable for most, as less than 1 percent of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have any family connections there (Brynen 1997: 48).

The possibility of resettlement or *towteen* is one feared by both Palestinians and Lebanese. At times of negotiations between the PNA and Israel this fear is strongly expressed. But the Palestinians in Lebanon fear deeper still that the Right of Return will never become a point of serious negotiations. The Lebanese of all sects oppose resettlement on various grounds – either because they sympathize with the Palestinians or because they wish no disturbance of the sectarian status quo (R. Sayigh 1995: 45).

7.1.2. The Israeli perspective

As argued in Chapter 3, the belief that the Palestinians did not "exist" was for years a major pillar of Israeli policy. Although Israel has since *de jure* recognized the Palestinians, the prospect of an eventual return of the Palestinian refugees remains an anathema. Higher Arab birth rates could lead to a situation where Israeli Jews could find themselves in a minority, thus putting under question the entire rationale behind the project of founding a Jewish state. Many in Israel maintain that the problem would have been solved by now, had the Arab governments integrated the refugees (Shiblak 1996: 36-37). This however, absolves the state of Israel from its responsibility in the creation of the refugee problem. Shimon Peres described the Right of Return as:

> a maximalist claim; if accepted, it would wipe out the national character of the State of Israel, making the Jewish majority into a minority. Consequently, there is no chance that it will be accepted, either now or in the future. (quoted in Brynen 1997: 42)

The reason for this explicit rejection of Palestinian return lies in the European Jewish experience of finding itself in the position of a religious minority in a hostile Christianized West – an experience that ranged from marginalization to persecution, culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust. The possibility of coexistence with the Arabs in Palestine is thus dwarfed by the experiences of the past (Dumper 2007: 5). To even contemplate providing a formula for the solution of such a complex issue as the Palestinian refugees' right to return would be utopian. However, it can be said with a fair degree of confidence that the persecution of the Jews was not solely the outcome of their minority status within European societies (although it certainly did contribute to their vulnerability). It can be attributed to a number of social factors. To mention only two, the Christian anti-Semitism of the ruling elites of those societies, which historically prevented Jews from integrating while assigning them a position similar to that of the Southeast Asian Chinese – both the "middlemen" and scapegoats –, and the fusion of traditional anti-Semitic prejudices with the evolutionary racism of the late 19th century that resulted in Nazism and the Holocaust.

8. Conclusion

The Palestinian refugee issue has its roots in the conflict between the Zionist project and the indigenous Palestinian population. Zionism is the last European project of nation-state formation. Because it aspired to establish a state in a foreign country it was essentially a colonization project. Present day Israel continues to pursue colonization policies in the form of further settlement creation in the West Bank, the denial of national rights to the Israeli Palestinian minority, and the implementation of the Law of Return. Like the United States and Australia earlier and unlike South Africa under the Apartheid, Israel constitutes a non-exploitative, exclusionist example of colonization. The labour of the indigenous Palestinian population remains – whenever the situations allow it – deliberately unutilized. In order to achieve a unified identity among the ex-Diaspora settler Jews, Zionism developed a sophisticated landscape discourse, based on the Biblical tradition and the desire for personal and spiritual renewal. A resurgent landscape was meant to symbolize a resurgent national identity.

Due to political fragmentation and the divide between the urban elite and the rural majority, the Palestinians were unable to resist the expropriation of their land. By 1948 Israel "bloomed" on the land deserted by the Palestinians in the *Nakbah*. Modern Palestinian nationalism largely developed in exile. As in all other nationalist mythologies, the homogeneity and continuity of the Palestinian community is imagined. The PLO, as a predominantly middle-class movement, only reluctantly mobilized the mass of the rural Palestinian peasants, who were to become – by and large – urbanized refugees. The social composition and political orientation of the PLO are evidenced by its own landscape discourse, which resembles its European Romantic nationalist and Zionist counterparts. Here the peasant is reconstructed from a social agent into a national signifier.

The refugees who fled to Lebanon found themselves in a country defined by sectarian divisions, epitomized by the marginalization of the Muslim majority vis-à-vis the predominantly Christian establishment. The camps became places of containment and surveillance. The refugees were the recipients of UNRWA services, which, in an era of modernization and decolonization in the Third World, acted as a transforming agent in their lives. The UNRWA acted as a substitute to state authorities in the areas of health, education and social security. Ultimately, it contributed to the spread of a nationalist consciousness

amongst the subsequent generations of refugees. Bearing vivid memories of pre-1948 Palestine, the first generations of refugees tried to reconstruct their pre-exile cognitive boundaries through the preservation of traditional structures and stereotypes.

The beginning of the *Thawra* period altered Palestinian perceptions of space and place. While maintaining the desire to return, the refugees also felt empowered by the new spatial freedom of the camps. These evolved into autonomous spaces of state-formation through the establishment of institutions and services that complemented or replaced those of UNRWA. The blurring of the camps' boundaries also symbolized the establishment of solidarity relations between Palestinian refugees and the Lebanese poor, predominantly of Shia origin. While still greatly influenced by traditional nationalist discourse, Palestinian national identity was increasingly being shaped by the universal element of struggle; boosted by the absence of a Palestinian landscape as an everyday experience and through heightened politicization. Terms such as "revolutionary" or "returnee" challenged the status of the refugees as the passive subjects of humanitarian missions.

For women, the *Thawra* signified the loosening of patriarchal structures. This emancipatory development was, however, conditioned by the requirements of an armed struggle directed by male-dominated organizations, whose views on warfare were mixed with perceptions of it as a male ritual of passage, as well as notions of restoring the honour lost along with the land.

The eviction of the PLO from Beirut in 1982 marked the beginning of renewed confinement and vulnerability for camp refugees. They were once more exposed to attack, as exemplified by the destruction of the camps' perimeters during the War of the Camps and the Sabra and Shatila massacre. These tragic developments led to new forms of identification and the development of social networks among the survivors. The increasing isolation of the refugees from their host environment, as well as from on another, also led to the emergence of a "moral community". Distinction from the host community was now achieved through perceived superior moral qualities.

The landscape of the camps today is dominated by a culture of commemoration, as expressed through the proliferation of monuments and tombs. Commemoration practices reveal the presence of different narratives within the Palestinian community. While official nationalist narratives celebrate martyrdom as heroic sacrifice for the good of the nation, grass-roots

narratives emphasize the aspect of suffering. This allows to compete in the global arena of humanitarian discourse, but also to claim membership in the official nation-building process from which the camp Palestinians feel excluded. The decline of secular Palestinian nationalism partly opened the way to Islamist politics, evident in burial rituals, but also to grass-roots practices of remembering, as through publishing popular ethnographies of Palestinian villages. This localist perspective has been further strengthened by two recent events: The departure of Israel from southern Lebanon, which brought Palestine "closer", and the widespread use of the Internet, which enables the formation of "direct" personal contacts with Palestine.

The Palestinians in Lebanon are part of the wider Palestinian Diaspora. Yet a diaspora is not to be perceived as a homogenous body. The degree of attachment to the homeland exhibited by its members depends on such factors as social status and the treatment received from the host society. Because the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were peasants who relied completely on the land for their livelihood, the element of landscape constituted a concrete reality, as opposed to its abstract usage in nationalist discourse. This fact, combined with the marginalization of the refugees in the camps of Lebanon, makes these refugees preserve a strong desire for return.

The State of Israel categorically refuses to grant the Right of Return to the refugees on grounds of demographic concerns. This right however, is nonegotiable for the Palestinians. Their demand for its implementation is not merely one of a practical nature and does not necessarily derive from the assumed legitimacy of a nationalist ideology and its landscape discourse - It constitutes an existential matter of fundamental justice.

9. Appendix

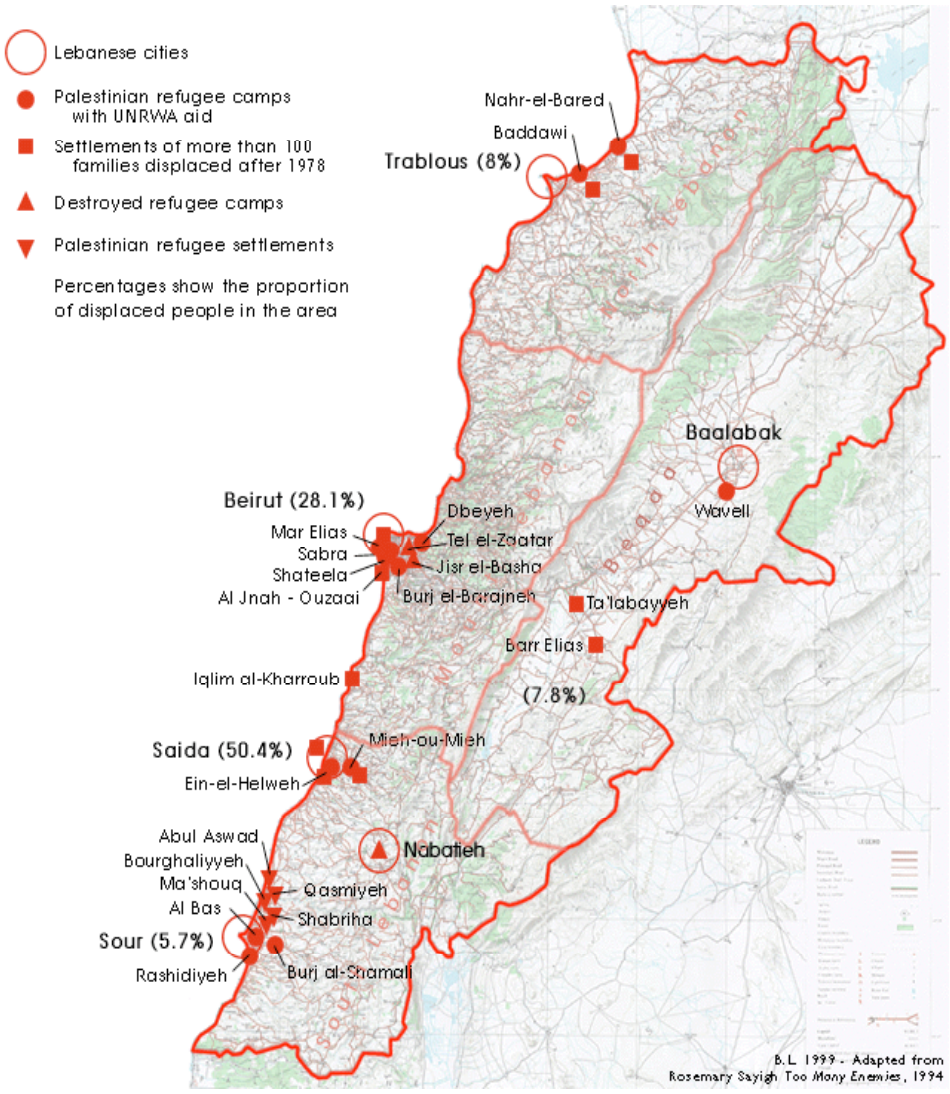

Image 1: Location and status of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (1999)
Source: Al Mashriq website
(http://almashriq.hiof.no/base/refugees.html)

Image 2: Entrance to mass grave in Shatila, built by a nearby Hizbullah-controlled municipality
Source: Palestine Remembered website
(http://www.palestineremembered.com/GeoPoints/Shatila_R_C__2671/#Pictures)

Image 3: Quotidian memorial site in Burj al Barjaneh where women died in the War of the Camps in their attempt to bring supplies into the camp
Source: Palestine Remembered website
(http://www.palestineremembered.com/GeoPoints/Burj_al_Barajneih_R_C__2672/#Pictures)

Image 4: The BO18 nightclub, built on the site of the Karantina slum, razed to the ground in 1976 by Phalangist militiamen. Estimated casualties: 1,000 to 1,500 Palestinian refugees.
Source: Bernard Khoury
(http://www.bernardkhoury.com/projectDetails.aspx?ID=127)

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