Nationalizing and Denationalizing the Sacred:

Shrines and Shifting Identities in the Israeli-Occupied Territories

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This essay examines the Christian and Muslim Palestinian uses of two West Bank Christian holy places - the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Mar Elyas (The Prophet Elijah) located on the Hebron Road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and the municipal shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh (The Well of the Lady) in Beit Sahour, a mile to the east of Bethlehem. It shows how Palestinians of different religious affiliations interpret the significance of a holy place and define their relationship to it. The investigation of the activities taking place around the shrine of Mar Elyas on the prophet's feast day in 1984 shows that the place had very different meanings to the various groups of people who attended the feast. My analysis will show how the members of these groups interpreted the site and their engagement with it. This multivocality of place raises the issue of the politics involved in "fixing" its meaning.

Moving both in space and time to Beit Sahour during the first Intifada, I examine the veneration of another holy place – the Bîr es-Sayideh shrine – by Christian and Muslim Beit Sahourans who regard it as a central feature of their town's identity. I show how they succeeded in maintaining their religious relationship with the holy place without succumbing to the pressure imposed upon them by religious hierarchies to fix the identity of that place (and of themselves as users of the place) in sectarian terms. Over the years since then I have noted the ways in which, in response to social, economic and political forces, these socially significant places have come to mean very different things to the communities

which engage them. In the concluding pages of this paper I analyze the way various forces, both internal and external to the Palestinian communities, have worked since the 1991 Oslo Accords to change and disrupt those patterns of reverence.

A key to understanding the way the groups here imagine the communities they belong to is the central role played by members' perceptions of "antagonisms" mobilized against them.[1] During the early phases of my fieldwork (made up of a number of extended visits between 1983 and 1990),[2] Muslim and Christian Beit Sahourans regarded the activities of both religious institutions and the State of Israel as equally threatening to what they perceived as their interests. In response to this perception, they forged a secular nationalist communal identity which allowed them to reject communalism[3] and unite against and resist the external forces of both "foreign" religious institutions and the "colonial settler state." This identity was, however, neither inevitable nor fixed and remained hegemonic only as long as it appeared to offer a viable solution to the dilemmas of the peoples it constitutes as an "imagined community."[4] The elements which make up communal identity - not only the persons brought together within the definition but also the interests which are seen to join them, the strategies perceived as best serving those interests and the antagonisms believed to beset them - are labile and redefinitions of any of these can lead to a shifting of the entire field of identity thereby making enemies of former neighbors and allies of previous antagonists.

Robert Hertz's largely disregarded work, *St. Besse: A Study of an Alpine Cult*[5], first published in 1913, raises the still salient issue of the way a single religious site is interpreted in very different ways by discrete communities which engage there in commemorative festivities.[6] Hertz stressed that the holy place speaks for and of a community and that therefore the meaning of such a site has to be analyzed not in terms of the place itself but in

relation to the social practices of the communities which revere it and the identities those activities generate. Following the trajectory mapped by Hertz, I explore the meaning of two Palestinian holy places in the light of the changing models of community brought to them by their worshipers. In doing so I consider the wider analytic domain of identity and the situations in which it is constituted.

"Identity" like "ethnicity," became a central issue in anthropological inquiry in the wake of Frederik Barth's programatic assertion that we need to attend "to problems of boundary maintenance" and "ask ourselves what is needed to make ethnic distinctions *emerge* in an area."[7] Studies of ethnic and national identities[8] have emphasized the role played by the "other" who lies beyond those boundaries in defining the identity of the "self" which lies within. In this paper I develop that work in line with Laclau and Mouffe's theory of "antagonism"[9] in order to explore the processes through which persons come to formulate identities for themselves and their communities in periods of radical social conflict.

In the situation I described in 1993, when the original paper was written, Palestinians were engaged (as they are now) in a national liberation struggle. Palestinians under Israeli occupation, whether Christian or Muslim, were constructing new forms of community and affiliation appropriate to confrontation with an enemy they perceived as dedicated to their extirpation. Significant similarities exist here between the creation of a "Palestinian" entity in the face of Israeli antagonism and the unification of Nilotic tribes in the southern Sudan by prophets in the context of substantial foreign aggression.[10] Evans-Pritchard noted there that the presence of prophets in Nuer society was a "recent development"[11] and attributed "the strong tendency towards federation between adjacent tribes...to the new Arab-European menace. Opposition between Nuer and their neighbours had always been sectional. They were now confronted by a more formidable and a common enemy."[12] Lienhardt, in discussing

the origins of the divinities who possessed various Dinka prophets, suggested that these divinities had recently come from outside the domain of the Dinka. He stated that the free divinity Deng kur " was the Nuer prophet Ngungdeng, father of Gwek who rallied the Nuer against the British."[13]. Other Western Dinka prophet-inspiring divinities were believed by the Dinka to have entered Dinkaland from areas in which the Mahdi, an Arab prophet who waged holy war against the British, had operated .[14] Implicit in both texts is the important recognition that novel forms of mobilization and affiliation were generated by confrontation with a powerful external antagonist. Lienhardt's recognition that the cultural borders between the Dinka and surrounding "peoples" can be blurred by shared antagonisms suggests that those borders, and the identities constituted within them, were far from fixed. Nonetheless Evans-Pritchard and, to a lesser degree, Lienhardt, tended in their ethnographies to present events as though they had occurred in a stable ethnographic present. Both thus understated the impact on Nuer and Dinka societies of the British occupation of the Sudan.[15]

In consequence, the segmentary model bequeathed to anthropological theory by these works stressed the systematicity of pre-modern societies at the expense of attending to the processes of transformation imposed upon such "systems" by the contingencies of conflict and historical change. In focussing on the historical context of the cultural transformations effected in contemporary Palestinian society, I demonstrate that segmentary opposition can be a useful model for understanding political mobilization in modern as well as in pre-modern societies. However, in using this model, I shift emphasis from the systematic workings of the internal structures of society to the role of the outside enemy in forcing reformulation of the terrain "inside." In so doing I suggest that the "inside" is neither stable nor systematic but is itself a response to the assault on its inhabitants from outside. By considering changes in the meanings of holy places and traditions related to them in contemporary Palestinian society, I will demonstrate how holy sites serve as monuments to

imaginings of community and how such monuments prove to be as labile as are those
communities themselves.

The Shrine of Mar Elyas (1984)

In *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (1927), the Palestinian folklorist Taufik
Canaan detailed how Palestinian Muslims in the early part of this century inscribed central
moments of their individual and collective lives on the Palestinian landscape. He also noted
that "the various ideas described in the following pages are common to both Mohammedans
and Christians among the Palestinian peasantry; where the two groups differ the differences
are only superficial."[16] This assertion found validation in the 1980s and 1990s
in the practices of villagers and townspeople from the region of Bethlehem, in particular at
the Greek Orthodox monastery of Mar Elyas.

On the day preceding the saint's day,[17] local Muslims accompanied Christians to Mar Elyas, a
holy place on the peripheries of Bethlehem district, both to visit the monastic chapel and to
join friends, family and neighbors on the grounds of the monastery. Outside the nearly
inoperative sixth century building, the area was bright with small groups of men, women and
children picnicking under the olive trees and listening to the music of *ouds* (Arab lutes) and
transistor radios. In front of the church, men, women and children amassed, waiting to enter
the shrine. Some of them carried loaves of bread baked with mastic (and stamped with an
image of the Prophet Elijah), bottles of oil, and votive candles (some of which were three
inches thick and as tall as the bearer). Once inside, the local people would shuffle past priests
and monks performing the divine offices of the coming feast day.[18] Arriving at the front of
the church, those bearing gifts would then light candles, leave olive oil before the icons, and
hand their loaves to a novice monk. He, in turn, would distribute bits of sanctified bread -
some of which would be eaten on the spot, the rest distributed later to family and neighbors

outside and at home. After making their contributions, the donors would join others gathered around an icon of St. George and wait their turns to place a chain attached to the wall of the church around their necks, kiss it three times, and step through it. The monks of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher[19] struggled in the meantime to amplify the Holy Word sufficiently to have it heard above the babble ofthronging Palestinians and the perpetual clanking of the chain.

This cacophony of groups, contending within the same restricted space to perform actions deemed appropriate to the place and time, was echoed in the interpretations they imposed upon those actions. One monk explained to me that the chain had been found in a cave beneath the monastery and that, since the cave, like the monastery, is dedicated to Elyas and believed to be the spot where the Old Testament prophet fled from the persecution of Jezebel (1Kings 19), local people see the chain as one which had bound the saint.[20] According to him their fervent attention to the chain is an expression of their deep devotion to the prophet:

> Those who enchain themselves with it - around the neck and around the waist - bind themselves to the saint and make themselves one with him. All the sacrifices, like the oil for the lamps, the bread, the candles, express this self-dedication. Elyas is a mediator between God and the people, and they can talk to him when they can't talk directly to God.

The monk explained, however, that this devotion, while spiritually correct, is actually misguided; the chain had bound Christians during Muslim persecutions and is associated with the monastery because in the past local Christians had hidden from their oppressors in the caves beneath it.

The monk's story was echoed in the stories of some of the lay persons. George Hadweh, then a leader of the Greek Orthodox Boy Scout troop which came from the nearby town of Beit Jala to help in the ceremonies. explained to me that Elyas was a great protector of the Christians during their persecutions. Ponting to an icon of Elijah killing the prophets of Baal, Hadweh told me, with a blithe disregard for scriptural chronology, that it represented Elyas slaughtering Jews and Muslims who persecuted the Christians. The chain, Hadweh said, is an ancient chain found in a cave beneath the monastery which "may have bound Elyas or... may have bound persecuted Christians." By revering the chain people call on Elyas to deliver them from their afflictions just as God delivered Elyas from his and Elyas delivered the Christians from theirs. The chain, Hadweh added, is particularly useful for alleviating insanity.

Other local people, including two Muslim women who had just stepped through the chain, told me that it is linked to another at the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George in the nearby Muslim village of 'Khadr. Canaan wrote that the chain at 'Khadr was used specifically to bind, and thereby cure, the insane.[21] Persons approaching the Mar Elyas chain did not, however, restrict the efficacy of that chain to curing insanity but asserted that it also alleviated a number of other afflictions: illness, bad luck, sinfulness, and even the evil eye. If the Mar Elyas chain ever had the same specific function of curing insanity which Canaan attributes to the chain at 'Khadr, that function had subsequently become more generalized as bringing "good fortune." While the 'Khadr chain may be "linked" to the one at Mar Elyas because Mar Elyas is dedicated both to St. George and to Elijah (icons of St. George and Elijah flank the iconostasis), this was never proffered as an explanation. People stressed only the efficacy of the chains; what they had in common was that each served to turn bad fortune to good.

The links between the chain and the saint's day, the saint and even the place had begun to seem rather tenuous as several constellations of conflicting interpretations floated around the crowded interior of the small chapel. The priests and monks were involved through their ceremonies in linking a small chapel within a nearly empty monastery into a network of religious institutions and practices they believed to be both universal and eternal. The offices of the day preceding the saint's day, like the liturgies on the saint's day itself, affirmed the association of the Prophet Elijah with the sacred history of the Church, thereby legitimating the officiants' presence and the existence of the small outpost of orthodoxy in the eyes of God and of the worldwide Greek Orthodox community. The chain stood for them as both a relic and an emblem of the monastery's place in the general Orthodox struggle to survive and overcome disbelief and unbelievers. To the monk with whom I spoke the spectacle of the local population binding itself within the church was an emblem of his and his colleagues' mission to promote amongst the general population the same obedience to God and his agents as bound them to their service.

In Hadweh's interpretation, Elyas did not have the "transparency" attributed to him by the priest. For Hadweh, the saint was a power in himself rather than an agent of God or a transmission line to him.[22] In his view, one does not rally around Elyas in order to display one's allegiance to the god of Elyas but because the prophet protects those who are devoted to him against whatever forces threaten them, be those religious or secular. Those threatening forces were described as having operated in the past under the banners of Judaism and Islam. However, at the time of my research they were not seen as mobilized along denominational lines; instead, they were seen as forces threatening the quality of the everyday lives of the local population. The chain signified the persecutions suffered by Elyas's community at the hands of its enemies and asserted that the Prophet Elyas would overcome those who oppressed his dependents. At no point in 1984 was it articulated that Elyas would protect

local Palestinians against the forces of a Jewish state.

Hadweh's description of the icon as a portrayal of the prophet in ancient times destroying the Jewish and Muslim enemies of the Christians asserted a communalist reading of antagonism and identity in accordance with the traditions Hadweh had imbibed during his upbringing within a Christian community and his education in a Christian (Lutheran) school. Nonetheless, Palestinian Orthodox communities in the latter half of the twentieth century had come to see the interests of the Greeks of the Orthodox Church as inimical to their own, in part because of the legacy of antagonism to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate granted them by the Arab Orthodox Movement.[23] Hadweh's description of the contemporary Christian community excluded the priesthood from that community, and defined the Greek Christians as enemies of the community Elyas protects. For Hadweh, the priests who claimed to be the servants of the prophet and of his God were, in fact, the enemies of those who appeal to the saint for protection. Hadweh and I discussed a Greek Orthodox man who, thirty years earlier, had come to Jerusalem from Athens on pilgrimage and settled there to work for the Church. The previous evening this resident pilgrim had told me that "religion is more important than the land; I do not care for Palestine, I am a resident of the holy land." Hadweh's response to this statement was:

> People like this are a problem. The Greek Church - like the Muslim Brotherhood - insists on considering everything in terms of religion. Palestinian Christians are allowed no place in the Church. The condition of being a [Palestinian] priest is that one must marry so that one cannot move up the hierarchy.[24] It feels like a foreign occupation. A couple of years ago the scouts here beat up a priest.

Hadweh's identification of himself as a "Palestinian Christian" rather than as an Orthodox

Christian, indicated a formulation of identity tying him more closely to other Christians (regardless of denomination) among whom he lived than to co-religionists who were not Palestinian. After recounting the Orthodox Patriarchate's rules excluding Orthodox Christians from significant participation in the church, he discussed how the interests of the "foreign" churches prevented local Christians from asserting their identities as Christians. The firman of the Status Quo[25] was seen by Hadweh and other indigenous Christians with whom I spoke as a denial to them of Christian - as opposed to Greek, Armenian, Latin, etc. - identity. Hadweh told me:

> The most evil thing here is that we do not have one Christmas. All over the world Christmas is the twenty fifth except here - it is a shame for the Palestinians. We have tried to fight it by making the feast on one day, but they would not agree because of the question of who would go into the church first.

The communalism evident in Hadweh's description of the icon of Elijah and the prophets of Baal shadowed an imagined community bringing together all Christians living in his homeland in opposition to Jews and Muslims, but that sensed community was not acknowledged by the church to which he owed formal allegiance. Furthermore, the activities of the foreigners who controlled that church served not only to deny fellow Orthodox Palestinians full membership of the church but also forbad expression of the wider Christian community to which Hadweh saw himself belonging. Thus, for Hadweh, there was a substantial conflict between his religion, which provided him with supernatural protectors and granted him an identity as part of a particular people (Christian Palestinians) living in a particular land (Palestine), and that of the priests and monks dominating that religion's institutions, who saw him, his people and his people's lives as largely extraneous to their interests as Greeks in a Greek Orthodox holy land. His participation in a festival on the

territory and under the legislation of the Greek Orthodox clergy therefore brought him onto contested ground. This contest was manifest in a discourse which both stressed his identity as a Christian dependent on the succor of Christian saints and distinguished between his Palestinian Christianity and the Greek Christianity of the monks.

Hadweh was not, however, influenced to abandon his religious beliefs or to withdraw from the festivities. The religion and the feast of Mar Elyas were important to him. He wore a cross around his neck which hung prominently outside his shirt and over his boyscout scarf. He frequently went to church and prayed to its tutelary saints and he attended the feast with his fellow boy scouts - many of whom were Catholic. He aimed to protect the festivities from those who might, in the name of politics, deny his people the practice of their religion: "We watch out for trouble; some nationalists may try to disrupt things because they say there is no place for celebration under occupation." On the one hand, Hadweh believed church leaders failed to represent Christian Palestinians by refusing to recognize any aspect of their experiences which could not be interpreted in terms of the interests of their church. On the other hand, he believed that nationalists would disallow the full expression of local Christian identities by proscribing religious ceremonies and insisting that all manifestations must be explicitly and exclusively nationalist.[26] Hadweh's identity as a Christian and a Palestinian located him, then, between mutually exclusive discourses on identity; that of the foreign church which, in providing a religion, denied national identity, and that of the nationalists who, in working to realize a political identity, were believed to allow no room for the expression of religious identity.

For those, both Christian and Muslim, who linked the Mar Elyas chain with the chain at the monastery of 'Khadr and thus indirectly with St. George, the association of the miraculous chain, the feast, the monastery, the Prophet Elyas and the Greek Orthodox church appeared

largely contingent. Stories told by Christian and Muslims attending the feast suggested that at Mar Elyas it was the wonder-working artifact which was important. There was no discussion of why the chain was empowered or whose power it mediated; pilgrims simply referred to the chain as a source of health, good luck, sanity and freedom from the evil eye. The people who ritualistically handled the chain were at the monastery not because the day was holy to Elyas or because the day was holy at all. Rather, the chain was used throughout the year whenever there was access to it. The feast day was special because on that day the site specific festivities ensured that the church, usually locked because of the absence of a resident monk, was open.

Many persons, in fact, claimed that they came to the feast to be with their neighbors rather than to revere the chain or Elyas. Such assertions suggested that to some even the devotions to the chain were a consequence rather than a cause of the gathering. These were reiterated in the fields outside the church where people's attentions flowed from group to group instead of beingchannelled, as they were by the dynamics inside the chapel, towards the miraculous or the sacred. In the crowded olive groves outside the monastery the strands of motives and meanings were woven into a tapestry of a multi-denominational community united by its perception of itself as a community with shared traditions and practices. A Muslim who had accompanied a Syrian Orthodox young woman to Mar Elyas told me that "the religious difference doesn't matter; we all come. It is for friendship and community as much as for religion." Persons circulated from small group to small group, sharing food, drink and gossip. Some of these people told me they did not go in the church at all but simply came on his day, as they always had, to be with their neighbors. One man said "we all come to be together around the saint's place."

There was considerable heterogeneity within this apparent unity: some attended the site just

to picnic, others to take a blessing from the chain, others (Muslim and Christian) to redeem promises and ask blessings of St. George and of the Prophet Elyas, and some to visit, and sacrifice to, the prophet. Each person's attested motives, and the identities that devolved from those motives, shifted as the person moved from context to context. Hadweh, who stressed his Christian identity while serving both as guide to a foreign anthropologist within the church and as guardian of the festivities in the company of his fellow scouts, became just another member of the mixed community which constituted itself around the monastery when he joined Muslim friends and neighbors in the small groups scattered around the olive groves.

The festivities at Mar Elyas, then, seemed to serve as a "floating signifier"[27] for the people of the region. Each individual was able to attribute to the place and the gathering meanings personal to them, and yet, because the time and the place served as a place of inscription for so many diverse meanings and motives, the feast constituted a community. People recognized that community at the same time as they recognized the multiplexity of its character; it was, in a very real sense, a concentration of the more dilute community they moved through from day to day. The only people excluded from this sensed community were those who would demand a more rigorous criteria of participation: the priests who saw the celebration as specific to their own particular sect and, hence, as antipathetic to all other religious persuasions (whether those of other Christian communities or of Muslims), and the nationalists who would deny this shared sense of communal identity in calling on a "higher" national identity exclusive of precisely that field of faith and local community which made the people feel at home.

The following day, the saint's day proper, effectively belonged to the church *per se*. There was a strong delegation present from the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, and the only local people were old women, very few accompanied by children, who quietly attended the

liturgy and drifted off after the church ceremony was completed. The Brotherhood, and the liturgy with which it asserted its ecclesiastical identity and fixed the significance of the site in relation to that identity, hegemonized the time and place, and the only Palestinians who participated were those who wished to assert themselves as Greek Orthodox believers dependent on the succor of a liturgy presented before them by a foreign clergy in a language they had never been taught to understand.

Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and the miracle at Bîr es-Sayideh (1983-1987)

The situation in Beit Sahour - a municipality with a mixed Christian-Muslim population - which gave rise to the shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh in the nineteen eighties differed in significant ways from that of Mar Elyas. In some ways the demographic isolation of Mar Elyas from Palestinian communities contributed to this difference at that time. While Bîr es-Sayideh is located immediately below the main marketplace of Beit Sahour, Mar Elyas stood isolated on a promontory above the Judean Desert until the late nineties when the Israeli settlement of Har Homa was built and the "separation wall" began to be erected nearby[28]. Palestinian houses which, in the past, had been located within walking distance of the monastery had been abandoned and for the most part bulldozed over the preceding decade because of road building and plans for the expansion of Israeli settlement in the area. When Palestinians came to Mar Elyas they came from a number of discrete areas of settlement to a holy place *per se* rather than to a holy place at the hub of other non-sacral community defining activities. The identities at play at Mar Elyas tended, therefore, to be explicitly linked to interpretations of the monastery and its contents, even if those interpretations mobilized other elements of the pilgrims' lives only contingently connected to religion and religious artifacts. The sort of secular community observed in the olive fields around the shrine was, in a sense, an accident of proximity. It dissolved with the occasion, perhaps leaving behind a residue of good feeling

towards people of other villages and religious affiliations, but not providing sufficient ground for the building of political identities and programs. The shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh, in contrast, is not only a sign of the sacred but is a marker of sacrality located in the center of a community in which sectarian and national identities are focal concerns. It is the wider field in which a shrine operates which gives the shrine both its character and its significance, and the differences of the fields surrounding Mar Elyas and Bîr es-Sayideh led people to interpret the places and to articulate their identities in relation to those places in very different ways. In presenting a sense of the particular context in which the shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh developed, I elaborate some of the conditions which gave rise to the Beit Sahouran project of rearticulating religion's place in the assertion of communal identity.[29]

In 1983 Christian and Muslim Palestinians who had come to the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem to participate in what they called "the Feast of Bethlehem" spoke to me of repeated sightings over the previous three weeks of the Virgin Mary and two other figures in the shadowed depths of an underground cistern beneath the market square of Beit Sahour. At the time I did not follow up these rumors of a "miracle" and I did not visit the site of this apparition for another five years. Nevertheless, in the interim I learned enough about the local communities and their situation under occupation to make their reception of and response to the alleged intrusion of the sacred into the course of their daily lives seem signally important.

It was difficult to ignore the Palestinian presence at the commemoration of the Nativity of Christ. One of the more exciting aspects of Bethlehem's Christmas Eve ceremonies was the massing of Palestinian scouts in Manger Square to greet the Latin Patriarch on his arrival from Jerusalem to prepare for midnight mass. Scout processions, which despite their military demeanor were grudgingly allowed by the Israeli authorities,[30] were a common sight at Muslim and Christian feast day ceremonies throughout the Occupied Territories before the

Intifada. There tended, however, to be considerable differences between the deportment of Muslim and Christian troops. Muslim scouts marched in black-and-white "Fatah" keffiyas and bore banners on which the nationalist tetrad of green, red, black, and white was conspicuously manifest. Among the Christians, national emblems and colors were conspicuously absent, and the uniforms and banners of Christian scouts served solely to distinguish between the troops' various sectarian identities.

Conversations with scouts and religious functionaries made it clear that it was the churches which restricted the public discourse of the Christian scouts to the celebration of religious identity. Church leaders, at the time exclusively foreign, were afraid of offending the Israeli authorities[31] and loath to allow local Christians to denigrate the importance of the foreign-run churches by publicly asserting that their religious identities were only part of a larger national identity. At the Bethlehem Christmas procession no Muslim troops were allowed to march with the Christians despite the facts that Muslim Bethlehemites also saw Christmas as the "name day" of their city and that local Muslim scout troops annually asked to participate. While the Latin Patriarchate allowed Christian troops from various sectarian groupings (Catholic and non-Catholic alike) to march together, the entire display (the order in which the scouts marched, the insignia of their costumes and the slogans on their banners) were permitted only to make manifest the communal identities distinguishing between the group. Nothing was allowed to suggest that these young men and women shared a political identity with each other and with the excluded Muslims.

There was, however, one exception. The Beit Sahour scout troops, although like the others organized into sectarian groups by the different churches which sponsored them, were uniformly dressed. All wore black-and-white keffiyas and webbed military caps. On their shoulders were patches (attached by snaps or safety pins) on which the scout fleur-de-lis was

figured out in the Palestinian national colors of green, red, black and white. The difference was striking, and one person in the watching crowd remarked: "they must be Muslims from Jerusalem." Others would not allow that - there could not be Muslims marching with the Christians - but were clearly nonplussed by the scouts' overtly political appearance and by the uniformity manifest in all the Beit Sahouri groups. One of the Beit Sahouri scout leaders, seeing me photographing the event, asked me to come to Beit Sahour on the following day (Christmas) to see "the real Christmas celebration."

On Christmas Day the winding streets of the hilly town were crowded with local people and bereft of Israelis or foreigners. The focus of enthusiasm was the scout troops, as it had been the day before, but in Beit Sahour the procession was very different. For one thing, it was much more military; whereas in Bethlehem many of the scouts had seemed to be flirting with the crowd, calling out to friends and family in the audience and showing off with bravura poses and exaggerated baton tosses, in Beit Sahour boys and girls, men and women marched in disciplined formation with their faces set and fixed firmly forward. More significant, however, was the fact that the various attendant Christian troops from Beit Jala, Bethlehem and other towns were joined by a large contingent of Muslim troops, not only from Beit Sahour but also from as far away as Ramallah, Silwan and Jerusalem. Scout uniforms were less flamboyant, and whereas on the previous day the bright insignia of the various sectarian communities had stood out strongly, here all the scouts had covered the badges of their particular troops with the green, red, black and white fleur-de-lis patch previously worn only on the shoulders of the Beit Sahourian contingent.

In Bethlehem the scout troops had been brought together to receive the Patriarch, and when the Patriarch had withdrawn (to meet local dignitaries, including the military governor of the Occupied Territories), the scouts dispersed. In Beit Sahour, by contrast, the Christmas parade

from the Greek Orthodox church through the town to the community hall in the basement of the Latin Church was merely the ceremonial facet of what was a larger, and distinctly extra-ecclesiastic, project. In this instance religion provided the occasion rather than the reason for a public manifestation exceeding - in duration, rhetoric and purpose - the bounds set by the ceremonial event. After the parade ended the mingled troops gathered for two hours to chant nationalist slogans, to dance with their keffiyas wrapped around their heads and to enthusiastically applaud a succession of speakers (scout and civilian alike) who referred to them variously as "rifles for the pleasure of Abu-Ammar's [Yasser Arafat's] eyes" and "the unarmed army of Palestine" while discussing the complexities of organizing a united Muslim and Christian "Pan-Palestinian Scout Movement" in the face of opposition from church and mosque. The fleur-de-lis scout emblems which I had seen pinned or snapped onto scout uniforms were the markers of this movement, and they were removable precisely because the movement was anathema not only to the Israeli military but also to the religious authorities on which the troops depended both for funding and for legal status.

The central role played by the Beit Sahour scouts in uniting Muslims and Christians within a political organization was explicitly intended to substitute nationalist union for sectarian divisiveness.[32] This was not something exceptional for Beit Sahour. The demography of the town brought Muslims and Christians together in their economic pursuits and the strength of the town's economy (based on small factories producing plastics and various craft goods as well as carrying out piece work on textiles) led local Christians to commit themselves to remaining there rather than emigrating to the Palestinian diaspora as have many Christians from other mixed towns such as Bethlehem and Beit Jala., Beit Sahour is largely a Christian town, although there is some question about the precise proportions of Muslims and Christians in the population. In 1984 Father Pena of the Franciscan Order estimated that eighty three per cent of the town's population was Christian, largely Greek Orthodox but with

substantial numbers of Latin and Greek Catholics and much smaller Lutheran and Syrian Orthodox populations.[33] Christians and Muslims I spoke with in Beit Sahour in 1990 tended to quote much higher figures for the Muslim population - between twenty five and thirty per cent. Pena's interest in Christian communities and his dependence on local parish priests for his information may have caused him to underestimate the number of Muslims in Beit Sahour. On the other hand, the pride of Beit Sahourans in having overcome fragmentation based on religion may have led them to inflate Muslim numbers.[34] Whatever the actual proportions, in 1990 two members out of eight on the municipal committee were Muslim, and people were quick to point out that these were on the committee not as representatives of the Muslim population but as spokespersons for major family groups which happened to be Muslim. The distinction was significant. Beit Sahourans saw themselves as Palestinians who happened to be either Christian or Muslim, rather than as Christians or Muslims who happened to live in Palestine.

An alternative reading of identity, which would define people by religious affiliation was promulgated then (as now), by three significant forces in the Occupied Territories: the Israeli government, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), and the foreign churches. Israeli encouragement of Palestinian sectarianism is not simply an extension of Israel's own imaging of itself as the Jewish nation for the Jewish people; it is perhaps more saliently a continuation of the policy of divide-and-rule it has used against "non-Jewish minorities" in Israel and the Occupied Territories since 1948.[35] The state's covert support of the "Muslim Brothers of Palestine" through the mid-eighties and the free rein it gave the Hamas movement until May 1988 were widely recognized by Palestinians as facets of a general Israeli strategy of dividing Palestinians along sectarian lines so as to undermine the foundations of the nationalist movement.[36]

In the eighties Hamas was opposed to secular Palestinian nationalism and advocated liberating the entirety of Palestine from "Jewish" rule so that it could be set up as a trust (*waqf*) for the Islamic peoples of the world. It built up a strong following in Gaza after the 1982 invasion of Lebanon on the basis of welfare and education projects funded with donations from Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Between 1982 and 1988 Hamas orchestrated a campaign of violence and intimidation against the secularist movements which effectively drove them into hiding in Gaza and severely disrupted their activities on university campuses throughout the Occupied Territories. Even Fatah (the centrist party of the Palestine Liberation Organization led by Yasser Arafat), which had supported Hamas's Gazan campaign against the Communist Party and the Popular and Democratic Fronts, suffered the onslaughts of the movement just prior to the outbreak of the Intifada.[37] Hamas's hostility was, however, directed only against nationalists (who it termed "communists" or "secularists") and not against Palestinian communities it was able to accommodate within its religious purview. Palestinian Christians were not attacked as Christians *per se* insofar as they would have a protected status within an Islamic state as "People of the Book." Israeli attempts to isolate Christian Palestinians by leading them to think that the Muslims, led by Hamas, were turning against them were, as of January 1990, easily recognized. Christians in Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jerusalem spoke of Israelis who "dress up as Hamas" to daub anti-Christian graffiti on West Bank walls. A 1989 "Hamas" communique condemning "the wealthy Christians of Beit Sahour" for having "drunk and danced with the Israelis since the beginning of the Intifada" was identified by Beit Sahourans as an Israeli forgery.

In large part, the churches of Israel and the Occupied Territories defined the land and its peoples in terms having more in common with the vocabulary of the Islamic fundamentalists than with that of Palestinians engaged in struggling for self determination. Just as Hamas argued that Palestine is holy ground for Muslims and should be kept in perpetuity as an

Islamic trust, so the foreign-dominated churches defined Palestine as the "Holy Land" and treated it as a repository of sanctity for the edification of priests and pilgrims. Since the sixteenth century, when Patriarch Germanos expelled local Christian clergy from the Greek Orthodox Church and transformed the parochial churches into monastic holy places for the Greeks,[38] the Latin and Orthodox churches had been for the most part indifferent to the condition and fate of local Christians. In the past, when foreign churches needed "bargaining chips" in diplomatic struggles for hegemony over the holy places, they would 'buy" local Christians into their folds with offers of housing, employment and the like. This was especially true after Ali Pasha opened Palestine to increased western intervention and the western nations, for secular as well as religious reasons, engaged in well-funded programs to court disaffected Greek Orthodox Palestinians into the Protestant, Latin and Russian Orthodox churches.[39]

The establishment of the State of Israel and the consolidation of the Occupied Territories (wherein lie most of the sites revered by foreign pilgrims) under its control changed the nature of the struggles. Subsequently the churches found that the best way to maintain and expand their property holdings, gain residence permits for monks, nuns and clergy, and facilitate the flow of pilgrims was to nurture good relations with the state. That meant, even more than before, ignoring the plight of Christian Palestinians.[40] One Orthodox man in Beit Sahour, where over eighty percent of the Christian population is Greek Orthodox, told me, "We have two imperialisms here - the Zionists and the Greeks...They [the Greeks] are more interested in religion than in us."

While the Israeli state, Hamas and the dominant Christian churches strove to impose religious boundaries on a land populated by peoples of different religious affiliations, Beit Sahourans attested commitment to the idea of unifying different religious communities within the

borders of a single secular state. This was evidenced both in interviews and in their establishment of non-sectarian organizations such as the Pan-Palestinian Scout Movement and the popular committees.[41] One Beit Sahouran Christian told me, "We are ready in our own state to live as Christians, Muslims and Jews in one nation" and this was echoed in numerous other statements such as that of a Muslim who said, "We hope for liberation with one community with many religions. God is for one, the nation for all. Zionists changed Palestinian Jews to Israelis." In this rhetoric religious identity is subsumed under national identity. In an interesting temporal reversal of the segmentary system of establishing common identity by tracing genealogies back to an apical ancestor, the nationalist rhetoric posits a common identity by projecting forward to a future moment in which all persons - be they Christian, Muslim or Jew - will share citizenship in a common secular state. The only persons excluded from this process are those who see their national identity as devolving from their communalist identity and thus refuse to allow that their religious identity will be subsumed within an overarching secular national identity. Thus Zionists, who see national and religious identity as inextricably linked, are future foreigners and present day enemies. At the time of my research for this paper the Beit Sahour municipality and political activists within the town had established, and were maintaining, strong links with "non-Zionist" Israeli communists and peace activists.

The sectarian tendency to define public space and public identities in religious terms was rejected in Beit Sahour. Traditionally mixed Palestinian towns were cognitively divided into the "quarters" in which the various religious communities in large part resided. This nomenclature was an inheritance of the Ottoman millet system wherein the various non-Muslim religious communities within the *dar al Islam* (realm of Islam) were granted relative autonomy by the state. Members of those communities would tend to cluster around the residences of the religious leader the Ottoman authorities recognized for each -

As long as they paid their taxes, the minorities, Christians and Jews, were left to administer their own internal affairs within the framework of Islamic law which gave them the status of *ahl al-dhimma* [protected peoples]. Their religious affairs [which included laws pertaining to marriage, property and the like] were regulated by their respective heads of communities.[42]

Other "quarters" might take their names not from the religions of their predominant populations but from markets or other important public sites which "centered" a sector of the town. The sectarianism fostered by the Ottoman millet system provided each religious community with a space in which to operate in relative autonomy and insisted, by strictly defining the way the dhimmi (protected religious minorities) could dress and deport themselves in all contexts, that sectarian identity always be emphasized. Most aspects of public life were enunciated within the terms of sectarian identity and few, if any, alternative contexts were available in which to articulate other identities which might allow for collaboration and identification with persons from outside one's own millet .[43] Even in the market place, where exchange between contiguous communities was a necessity, roles and interaction were choreographed by sectarian identities so that exchanges of goods and services could occur without separate identities being merged.

The Beit Sahouran project of rearticulating the religious and the secular worked by expanding the "neutral" space of the market [44] so that that space came to provide not only for economic necessities but also for new modalities of identity. The collapse of Ottoman rule had rendered the apparatus of the millet system largely extraneous, and although the nomenclature, and some of the processes of governance, were maintained by subsequent governments (British Mandate, Jordanian and Israeli) processes of economic modernization and demographic

expansion led persons of various denominations to settle in, and overrun the boundaries of, areas traditionally populated by other groups[45] so that older designations became demographically inaccurate. In the face of the atavism of the old quarter nomenclature the Beit Sahour municipality, in a spirit of nationalist reinvention, renamed sectors of the town in the 1980s not in terms of religious denominations or economic functions but rather as memorials to significant moments of Palestinian national resistance to Israel, particularly those related to the 1982 Lebanese-Israeli War. The highest section of town was designated Shqeef Castle (the site of an important battle in Lebanon) while two other sectors of the town were named after the most important Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Tal el-Za'tar and Shateela.[46]

Religious difference, which was no longer inscribed on the landscape, was also not a factor determining the character of interaction between individuals in public spheres. The following quotations are drawn from interviews with Beit Sahour residents (both Christian and Muslim):

> We do not remember we are from different religions unless somebody from outside reminds us...we are Christians and Muslims in spirit and in our hearts, but in public we are Palestinian.
> It is you outside who try to make a difference between the Christians and the Muslims. We are a people; we all go to each other's feasts, we visit with each other, we live the same life. We are one people.
> My relation with my god is in my heart and my house; it does not concern the public. In the street I am Issa.

These assertions, like numerous others recorded in interviews, signal an awareness of

contextual identities and suggest that the program of constructing a national identity, to which all of the Beit Sahourans I interviewed[47] showed a commitment, was precisely one of redefining the contexts in which sectarian identities were manifested. This redefinition created a new public domain in which non-religious, nationalist identities were evidenced.

The repudiation of "public" markers of religious identity in these quotations does not signal a renunciation of religion itself; it is instead symptomatic of a re-articulation of the place of religion in the formulation of identity. From the evidence I was able to gather in visits to their houses, Beit Sahourans remained committed to the "faiths of their fathers." The interiors of the houses in which I listened to the most virulent rejections of sectarianism were dense with signs of religiosity; pictures of the Virgin Mary (in both Christian and Muslim houses) or of Mecca (in Muslim houses) were hung next to photographs of family members and members of neighbors' families who had been jailed or killed by the Israelis. A three foot high statue of the Virgin Mary graced a corner of the living room of one house belonging to an organizer of local committees and a self-avowed secular nationalist. I was unable to uncover evidence of any increase in the extremely rare occurrence of "mixed" (Muslim-Christian) marriages in the town. Unlike Ramallah, where the incidence of such marriages was perceived as having increased over the past decade,[48], in Beit Sahour I was told that mixed marriages occur only when a Beit Sahouran emigrates and becomes involved with a member of another community "outside." This suggests that religion and sectarian traditions retained hegemony over areas of life such as faith, worship, and marriage and that they there determined the appropriate practices and ceremonials. Thus, many of the aspects of communal identity fostered by the millet system were retained within the domains of home, family and kinship.[49] What had changed was that another domain had opened up and had come to be seen as constituting another - supplementary yet subsuming - field of identity.

Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin, following Ardener, discuss the way that the perception of some "novelty" in a community's experience can impel it to "pick up behind it a new trajectory to replace or modify the old."[50] Beit Sahour has a long history of Muslim-Christian interaction and there are traditions recounted which trace that admixture back to the town's mythical foundations. Therefore, it was easy for Beit Sahourans to rearticulate their past in the light of the imagining of the present community brought about by the Israeli occupation.[51] The new form of "imagined community" constituted in the context of occupation was, however, substantially different from the identities which had preceded it. In the past Muslims and Christians had worked together but had seen themselves as Muslims and Christians who happened to be involved in economic exchanges rather than as Palestinians who happened to be Muslim or Christian. The new identity - "we are Palestinians first, then Muslims or Christians" - came not from a market situation which brought them into contact with each other, but from a situation of confrontation which forced them to recognize that "outside" their realm of cooperation was an antagonist equally threatening to all Beit Sahourans, regardless of their religious affiliations.

In the light of the struggle against this antagonist, certain elements of the town's past were rendered significant, and were memorialized in the production of a "new" history. Townspersons told me of Muslims and Christians marching together to Nebi Musa[52] and of Baathist, Nasserite and Communist demonstrations against the Jordanian occupation. In addition, they spoke of the long history of support for the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" and the "Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine" during the period of Israeli occupation. What is significant in these histories was not that Beit Sahour had a tradition of resistance to various occupiers. What is significant is the avoidance of the fractiousness of that resistance. Instead of allegiances to different factions of the struggles, the parties were able to create a united front against the "outside" so that the entirety of the

community could be constituted as an "us" which had always resisted the incursions of "foreign" rule.

The Israeli occupation provided a space for identification that differed from that provided by other occupiers, all of which - as Muslim or Christian or regimes supporting feudal or capitalist property owners - presented opportunities for identification and collaboration to factions of the Beit Sahour population. The Israeli forces, which viewed "Arabs" as enemies and saw "Arab" capitalist successes as a strengthening of "Arab" power, demonstrated to Christians and Muslims (both employers and workers) that "there is another who is enemy to us both."[53] The portrait of a young man, Basem Rishmawi, was hung on the walls of many houses in Beit Sahour and his name was often mentioned in conversations. On the evening of 11 April 1981, Rishmawi disappeared while returning home from his fiancee's house. A week later Israeli soldiers returned his,severely mutilated body, his wrists cut from having been bound with wire. They claimed that he had been killed when a bomb he had been making exploded prematurely. No one believed the story and word spread through the town that he had been kidnapped, tortured and finally killed either by settlers or the army. Many residents considered Rishmawi's death to have been arbitrary. They believed any Beit Sahouran could expect a similar fate at the hands of the occupation's agents: "It could have happened to anybody, and by chance the victim was Basem."

Subsequent experiences strengthened that assumption. In 1989 Edmond Ghanem was killed while walking down the main street of the town when a soldier dropped a stone on him from a third floor guardpost in the municipality building. The "tax raids" of 1989, described by the Al-Haq (Law in the Service of Man) organization as constituting "a sustained campaign of aggression against the town's residents under the guise of compliance with the law"[54] exposed behind the mask of occupiers' law the face of a conquering army engaged in pillage. Soldiers

broke into the houses of relatively well to do Sahouri residents, many not those of the shop keepers accused of withholding taxes as a political protest, and stripped them of all objects of value. These were later auctioned in Tel Aviv (the auction was reportedly televised) to "recover" the unpaid taxes although no one had the sums thus "recouped" deducted from their tax bills. One Beit Sahouran told me amidst the detritus of a neighbor's house which that morning had been "searched": "This is plunder, looting; it's indiscriminate....All they want is money from us." It appeared to the residents themselves that they were all equivalent in the eyes of the occupying forces: "We see that one day it is one person and the next day another. The following day it may be us, so we say *hellas* (enough) and begin to work to stop it." The existence of the entire community and the lives of all its members were seen as being at risk, and in that context the differences between individuals, families, religious communities and political affiliations became insignificant:

> If I want to throw a stone I will not call to my neighbor to say 'become a Muslim and then we will throw stones together.' We forget our religion; we forget our political groups. The bullets do not differentiate between Christian and Muslim, P.L.O., D.F.L.P., etc.

At issue here was not the continuance of public cooperation in economic projects which had been a central feature of Beit Sahouran life in the past, but the question of the survival in Beit Sahour of any form of Palestinian community at all. The "space" of cooperation was thus transformed and extended, and in that space - which was now that in which Beit Sahourans faced an "Other" across a boundary which had come to mark the difference between "the community" and "the foreigners" intent on destroying it - Beit Sahouran Muslims and Christians became "Palestinians" mobilized in a struggle for survival against "Israelis." It was, therefore, the antagonist which provided the "novelty" discussed by Chapman,

McDonald and Tonkin[55] and which delineated the "boundary" Barth[56] saw as constituting the ethnic group. Beit Sahourans "invented" an identity which encompassed all aspects of their lives in the face of an antagonist they saw as threatening those lives in all their diversities. As a result, a political project of resistance was elaborated which went beyond the quotidian sectarian coexistence which had characterized inter-communal interaction in the past. The antagonism to the community perceived by Beit Sahourans in the policies and practices of the Israeli state and the settlers it defended had led them to reify the inter-communal cooperation which had marked their everyday life. The diffuse sense of community Beit Sahourans had shared in the past - a loose sense of the communal not unlike that described above as having taken place among Palestinian participants at the feast of Mar Elyas - coagulated, under the mobilizing threat of state antagonism, into an "identity" which penetrated, constituted and united self, community and nation.[57] This fixing of identity transformed the elements of everyday community life into emblems of a communal self *per se* and as such all these elements - regardless of whether they were originally Christian or Muslim, sacred or secular - came to signify "Palestinian life." Politicization was fundamental to the constitution of this new, subsuming, identity; the "Palestinian" entity took form as something which had to be protected and people envisaged in its survival or destruction not only the fate of the "imagined community" of Palestine but also their own.

Beit Sahouran's recognition that Israeli occupation threatened the community as a whole led them to redefine the resources of the community so that these could be mobilized against that occupation. The resources of religion, so often used (by themselves as well as by others) to divide Palestinians in the past, were appropriated and marshalled in the defence of local and national aspirations. In 1989 many Beit Sahourans sent out printed Christmas cards to churches and embassies throughout Israel and the Occupied Territories that played off the bucolic and auspicious image of Christ's nativity against the darkness of the contemporary

situation. On one side of the card was written "Christmas 1989 in the Third Year of the Intifada" and on the other, beneath a drawing of a group of armed Israeli soldiers massed in a grotto in which an empty cradle lay overturned beside the prone body of a masked Palestinian, was written "Silent Night, Holy Night, All is Dark, All is Sad" and signed "From the City of Peace we Palestinians wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Like both the municipality-organized "Day of Prayer for Peace" in November 1989, which brought together Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders as well as Israeli peace groups and foreign diplomats, and the address by South African bishop Desmond Tutu to a similar audience at Shepherd's Field Church on Christmas Eve of that year, these cards manifested a public face which Beit Sahourans turn to the "outside." In such instances the community presented itself as united in a sort of "Popular Front" so as to garner support from the world outside the community. Such demonstrations may, of course, only have been organized for the delectation of outsiders and might not be indicative of any changes to internal perceptions of the lineaments of Sahouri identity. As such these would be border phenomena meant to mask to external eyes the fact that the internal community was still riven by sectarian and other divides.

"Palestinian Traditions" and the Shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh (1990)

More interesting, and in the long run perhaps more significant, were transformations effected within the ways Beit Sahourans interpreted the elements of their everyday lives. In January 1990 I was told by a Muslim schoolteacher that "we must nationalize our beliefs, should rebuild our customs so they reflect our national life." This "nationalization" of religion and custom involved a substantial redefinition of the field of religious belief and practice. Such a redefinition was not always fully visible on the ground because religious belief retained its salience in personal and familial identity. However, where in the past communal identity,

fostered and fed (particularly in the cities) by financial support from the churches and the *waqfs*, had provided the core of a person's sense of social self, what was occurring in Beit Sahour and other places in Palestine in the eighties and early nineties was a tendency to subsume that sectarian identity *within* an encompassing nationalist identity. Part of this was a matter of the withdrawal (forced or voluntary) of the support of religious foundations as I have mentioned above and as Dumper elaborates in his studies of the *waqfs* under Israel.[58] More salient was the recognition that, for the first time, the survival of both Muslims and Christians was threatened by a common antagonist.

At this stage I can only point to some symptoms of that change. One, which I witnessed on several occasions between 1984 and 1990 during religious festivities in Jerusalem, was the tendency of Muslim and Christian Palestinians of most denominations[59] to join members of other religious communities in publicly celebrating religious feasts. One Muslim youth, who joined the riotous march of Christians along Christian Quarter Road to the Holy Sepulcher for the Holy Fire ceremony[60] remarked, "This [the time of religious celebrations] is the only time you see the nation of Palestine on its streets; I am here to celebrate with my nation." Such a "national" interpretation of a sectarian celebration differs substantially from interpretations evident at the Mar Elyas feast. At the latter, groups were for the most part constituted around the particular rationales their members had for attending, and whatever sense of "community" came into play was an accidental consequence of the fact that these motivations were focused on the same site. "Community" was never recognized as a significant entity in itself, in large part because no antagonism threatened the whole and caused the participants to recognize their equivalence in the eyes of an enemy.[61] For the Muslim taking part in the Christian Holy Fire ceremony, inter-communal "manifestations" had come to celebrate a national identity within which particular sectarian identities were incorporated. In this discourse the Palestinian "whole" is made up of a collocation of

differences rendered equivalent by the recognition that all are equally threatened by Israeli state policies. In the context of that antagonism the feast is defined as a manifestation of "Palestinian" tradition and the gathering seen as an assertion of the insistence of Palestinians in celebrating that tradition in the face of "foreign" forces which would deny Palestinians the right to define themselves as members of a national community with a rich heritage of traditions.

Religious difference was not, however, elided by a nationalism insisting on full identification by all members of the nation. Difference was maintained, and, while persons of different affiliations would take part in each other's celebrations, they would not participate in the liturgies or rituals of other sects when those conflicted with the articles or practices of faith of their own communities. A shift in context led, in other words, to a redefinition of identity What would be interpreted as national and inclusive in a space read as "public" would be seen as religious and exclusive when participants were, to use the Althusserian term, "interpellated" into subject positions emphasizing their identities as members of a specific religious community[62]. Thus, while Muslims would participate in public aspects of Christian ceremonies such as the procession down the Mount of Olives on Latin Palm Sunday or the Holy Fire ceremony during Orthodox Holy Week, they would not take part in the liturgical celebrations of the Crucifixion or Resurrection within the churches. Christian Palestinians, joining Muslims on the Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount) to celebrate the birth of the Prophet Mohammed or the occasion of Mohammed's Ascent to Heaven, would, analogously, absent themselves when the Muslims prayed.[63] Palestinians who saw themselves as active members of religious communities maintained the tenets of those communities in situations marked as religious. Distinct religious identities and practices, rather than being homogenized as equivalent forms of "Palestinian culture" were instead given supplementary meaning by the national discourse. They came to be seen not only as signifying the particular ways of life

of sectarian communities, but also as bearing witness to one of the many facets of the way of life of the Palestinian nation. In such politicized instances, as in many others witnessed during fieldwork, identities were neither exclusively sectarian nor exclusively national but were both sectarian and national.

Another symptom of this change, in which transformations in the field of identity are actually monumentalized on the landscape, is the aforementioned shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh. In 1990 I was taken to an underground cistern in the center of Beit Sahour which had been the site of the visitation by the Virgin Mary. In 1974 the Beit Sahour municipality built a shrine over the cistern expressly for the use of both Muslims and Christians of all denominations. The exterior appeared distinctly modern, and, aside from the cross surmounting it, the shrine bore less resemblance to a church than it did to a traditional Islamic *makÿm* (a building with a domed chamber characterizing a Muslim shrine). Inside, the walls were covered with icons and paintings of Christian subjects given by worshipers[64] but, profusely and randomly scattered among these, were a significant number of gifts, paintings and pictures which, in their avoidance of pictorial representation, appeared to be Muslim. The cross and the predominance of a Christian tone was not surprising. The site was, after all, dedicated to a figure highly revered in Christian worship (although also venerated in Islam). What seemed more important than a more thoroughgoing syncretism was the fact that objects clearly originating from devotees of other religions - which would be rigorously excluded in a church or mosque owned and operated by the religious institutions - appeared here, and that no one visiting the shrine (and there was a constant flow of local people passing through it) seemed offended by evident signs that a community wider than that of their own religious community used the place.

I was told by both the shrine's caretaker and the Greek Catholic priest who accompanied me

on one visit to the site that religious practices at the shrine reflected this heterogeneity. As the shrine belonged to the municipality, representatives of all local religious communities were able to book time in it. Since the stories surrounding the Nativity of Jesus are celebrated by Muslims and Christians throughout the Bethlehem region as founding myths of the local communities, Muslims and Christians alike gathered at the shrine to celebrate their traditions in a place where the sacred had interacted with their locality. Sometimes these were shared celebrations, nominally organized according to the calendar of one of the religious communities (such as the Orthodox Ascension of the Virgin celebrated on the 15th of August), while at other times local Christian and Muslim officiants carried out ceremonies specific to their congregations. Moreover, as with the blessings available to all at Mar Elyas, water from the cistern in the back of the shrine was taken by both Muslim and Christian Beit Sahourans as a sacred substance for healing, blessing and good luck. I asked the caretaker why the Marian shrine was owned by the municipality and not, as one would expect, by one of the Christian churches. He indignantly replied, "We are here Muslim and Christian, and there are two Christian groups. The municipality builds for all the people, and the people all own and use the well. *Hellas*."

This statement confirms (as does the shrine's existence) that a new "space" had been constituted between the communalist domain of faith and family and the boundary marking the separation of the residents of Beit Sahour from "outsiders" perceived as working to destroy them. The fact that this new discursive space was, in most instances, articulated in terms merging the national and the local (people here identified themselves not only as Sahouris but also as members of a larger Palestinian community stretching far beyond the municipal limits) points to the role of the enemy in constituting identity. Israeli soldiers and settlers, the most salient symptoms of occupation to the people of Beit Sahour, see and treat Beit Sahourans as "Arabs" in line with their own constitutive logic of antagonism and

identity.[65] Beit Sahourans, well aware that what they define as a war waged against their town is simultaneously being waged against other communities throughout Israel and the Occupied Territories and further afield into the Palestinian diaspora, were here able to imagine a "nation in waiting" constituted of other individuals and communities "like" themselves in facing the same enemy. This similitude is not, however, imagined as literal; Beit Sahour residents do not imagine that all Palestinian communities have the same demographic mix as their own and realize that many of the identifications and strategies of resistance they developed are particular to the contingencies of their situation. The equivalence that led them to identify themselves as Palestinians is rendered in the same discursive space as the perception of similitude which impelled them to identify themselves as "the same" as other Beit Sahourans who, despite being Muslim or Christian, had been forced to engage collectively in a struggle for survival against an external antagonist .

Tamari has argued that a central weakness of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Arab Nationalist movements in Greater Syria (the area which is now Lebanon, Syria, Israel and the Occupied Territories) was their failure to develop a popular culture in which images of secular identity could be celebrated.[66] In the absence of such a domain for the recognition of trans-sectarian identities, the identities fore-grounded in periods of political struggle can only be those that arise from realms of personal and familial life and these, in a context like that of the Middle East in which religious confession plays such a central role, are almost exclusively sectarian. Antagonists, at such times, need only to exploit the differences between confessional groups in order to fragment and disperse the forces they oppose.[67] One of the most telling strengths of Israel, a national community constituted out of a wide diversity of potentially conflicting communities,[68] has been its success in programmatically constructing precisely such a domain of popular national identity[69] which, by overarching and subsuming the multiple sectarian identities of its Jewish population, holds the nation together in times of

stress.

I have argued that the shrine of Bîr es-Sayideh must be seen as a manifestation of a similar program, elaborated by a mixed Palestinian community, of creating public spaces in which residents of Beit Sahour recognized and celebrated a binding image of a trans-communal identity. I have focussed on the shrine in part because it was one of many salient manifestations of Beit Sahour's "national" program. Contemporary inquiry into the social significance of holy places connects with the work of Durkheim, Halbwachs and Hertz [70] elucidating the dialectical process through which social groups reify their sensed community in monuments and markers on the landscape they occupy and in turn recognize the spirit and power of that community when looking upon those edifices. In contrasting the interpretations imposed by Palestinian communities on Mar Elyas and Bîr es-Sayideh, I have shown how the multivocality of a holy place in the interpretations of the diverse communities which approach it can become "fixed" in periods of intense social conflict by the recognition of the members of those various communities of an external antagonism which endangers the survival of all of them. At such times, a shrine like that of Bîr es-Sayideh not only reifies the new sense of community constituted through antagonism but also stands as a sign of the power of that new "national" identity to impose its vision of community on the social and political landscape.

Post Oslo De-Nationalization (1993-2007)

The original of the paper rendered above was written in 1991 while the Madrid Negotiations were going and before they were supplanted by the 1993 Oslo Accords. Today, in the wake of radical closure, extensive expansion of Israeli settlements, the *al-Aqsa* Intifada, the death of Arafat, the erection of "the Wall," and Hamas's success in parliamentary elections, the

situation in Gaza and the West Bank is desperate, and the celebratory tone of the above peon

to secular nationalism sounds hopelessly utopic. I cannot deal with the panoply of issues

these events and developments throw up, but I will attempt - in focussing on post-Oslo

developments around the two shrines treated in the paper - to suggest some of the ways in

which projects of cross-communal solidarity were undermined and to indicate, despite this,

the continuing significance of the images of identity generated by such shared sites as Mar

Elyas and Bîr es-Sayideh.

Mar Elyas After Oslo

Between the early seventies and 1991 the Palestinian population of the West Bank had been

offered relatively unimpeded access to Israel via its "general exit permit" policy. While this

was only extended to Gazans in the eighties, and restrictions on political activists and other

"security risks" began to be applied during the first Intifada, the "open borders" policy served

both to strengthen links between Palestinians "inside" Israel and those in the Occupied

Territories as well as to make residents of the Territories increasingly dependent on work in

neighboring Israel.[71] In 1991, as the Gulf War loomed, this policy was replaced by a pass card

system substantially restricting movement across the "Green Line" (the 1949 Armistice Line)

and plunging the West Bank and Gaza into an economic crisis which has continued to worsen

until now. Amira Hass, who has chronicled the development and effects of Israel's closure

policies since their beginning, notes that:

> ...in March 1993 the entire municipality of East Jerusalem, which Israel
>
> greatly expanded and annexed in 1967, was incorporated de facto into the
>
> no-entry Israeli territory. Ever since that time, the Palestinian cultural,
>
> religious, institutional, economic and commercial capital has been

encircled, with ever-expanding bureaucratic measures and regulations
forbidding or 'thinning' Palestinian entry into the city. At first, only men
under forty needed permits, then women as well, and finally everybody of
all ages required them.[72]

Mar Elyas, which lies between Jerusalem's Old City and the Bethlehem District, was from
then on located on the Israeli side of the border.

In 1994 I spent the summer in Beit Sahour and attended the two days of the Feast of the
Prophet Elijah at Mar Elyas (1-2 August). Many Sahouris planned to visit the monastery and
word circulated beforehand that the Israeli military, in acknowledgement of the feast, had
agreed to move the checkpoint so as to allow access to the people of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour
and Beit Jala. Despite this, on the feastday the checkpoint remained in place and buses hired
by townspeoples for the event (cars were not allowed through the checkpoint) were stopped
and their passengers' ID cards checked by soldiers.[73] The soldiers allowed Christians through
but turned Muslims back saying, "What does this feast have to do with you?" On the second
day of the feast the Beit Jala scouts, intent on attending to fulfil their traditional role of
assisting at the festival, were detained at the checkpoint for two hours and only allowed
through after I - a foreigner - engaged in a twenty minute argument with the officer in charge
about the illegality of his action (as we subsequently passed through the checkpoint we were
individually photographed by another soldier).

During the difficult years of the first Intifada, when the dictum "no celebration under
occupation" had been in force, few if any local people visited the monastery. Consequently,
in 1994 they were very excited about seeing the monastery and participating in the festivities
for the first time since 1986. When, however, they disembarked in front of the monastery,

they found that the extensive olive groves which had surrounded the ancient building had been dug up in the course of the government's building of the "Za'tara Bypass Road" (a "settler road" between Jerusalem and Tequ'a neither passing through nor allowing access to or from Palestinian towns or villages). Whatever remained of the fields formerly used for picnics had been fenced off. All that was left of the previously extensive monastic grounds was the small paved parvis in front of the monastery entrance. Debate still rages as to whether the notoriously corrupt patriarch of the Orthodox Church, well known for selling land to Israel, had sold the lands or whether Israel had confiscated them, but regardless, the effect was that there was no place for people to gather except inside the church itself.

The interior of the church had been extensively refurbished by the patriarchate and new frescoes brightened the walls and the ceilings. Inside there were substantial crowds of people made up of visitors from the Palestinian diaspora who came back to a site they remembered from childhood, of local Orthodox and Catholic Christians from Jerusalem and Bethlehem districts, of substantial numbers of Russian Orthodox who had emigrated from Russia to Israel as Jews (but who were in fact committed Christians), and of course members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher. There were no Muslims, and while some said this was because they had been refused access by the soldiers, others claimed that Muslims were no longer interested in the place because they were being called on to "hate the Cross" by non-local Hamas activists. While Russian and other foreign Christians perched around the inside of the church through the extensive liturgies, often protecting candles they had lit and mounted on the floor, visits by Christian Palestinians were short. Local Palestinians would enter and, seeing that they had no access to the chain,[74] would pray and light candles at the iconostasis before leaving. They would either stand in the dusty parvis waiting for the liturgy to end and the chain to become accessible or to remount their hired buses and return home. For Christian Palestinians, local or diasporic, the experience was a great disappointment and

the feeling was that their festival had been appropriated. The community whose space had been violated was here, however, distinctly imagined as that of Palestinian Christians; Muslims were seen as having withdrawn into "their" own spaces.

Over the following years permission to cross the checkpoint to access the monastery became harder and harder to gain. Interest in the feast diminished, with Catholic and Orthodox churchgoers respectively celebrating the feast of the Prophet Elijah in their own churches according to their own calendars. Before the first intifada and in the brief interregnum between the signing of the Oslo Accords and the imposition of closure on the Bethlehem District the traditional Easter meeting at *Mar Elyas* had been thronged by excited crowds from the Bethlehem District who came to view the "Holy Fire" (*Sabta Nur*) brought from the *Anastasis* or Holy Sepulcher on the Saturday of Easter Week. By 1998, however, the Beit Sahouri delegation allowed through the checkpoint consisted of two Orthodox priests, the chairman and secretary of the Orthodox Society and a driver. In 2002, with the new Har Homa settlement increasingly crowding the monastery and "the Wall" sealing in the towns of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala,[75] it became impossible to access Mar Elyas for all but the most "connected." While the liturgies of 1-2 August continued to be held in the monastery, they had become "in church" functions in all senses of the word.

In the summer of 2007, I spent an hour and a half being cleared through the "security fence" at the Bethlehem checkpoint and from there walked a mile up the road to Mar Elyas. The monastery now had a resident monk and was open year round to greet the tour buses that would disgorge Western tourists and the occasional "Jewish" Christians who would visit the church and dine in either of the two restaurants (one indoor and one outside) which had been built on the property. The chain was still there and the monk told me that the Israeli tour guides talk all the tourists into using it. He says that the "local Arabs go crazy for it" but that

he rarely sees them since "those people can't get to the place anymore."

Bir es-Sayideh (1993-2007)

During the summer of 1994, while talking with my landlady and her husband's mother - both Latin Sahouris - I was surprised to learn from the former that *Bir es-Sayideh* was not owned by the Municipality but was owned and operated by the Greek Orthodox Church. The original version of *Nationalizing the Sacred* had been published a mere nine months earlier and I was horrified to discover - so soon after announcing the presence of the "Municipal Shrine" to the anthropological world - that I had apparently collected incorrect data and misrepresented the place and the people.

Fortunately for my self-esteem and reputation, and interestingly for the topic here discussed, the mother-in-law quickly retorted that the other woman was wrong, that the shrine was municipal property and that, while the caretaker was "borrowed" from the Orthodox Church, the site was owned by the town and used by members of all its resident communities. At the time I analyzed this disagreement as a matter of professional position and of age. While the daughter-in-law was a middle-aged university lecturer, her mother in law was an elderly (and devout) housewife. The daughter-in-law was more involved with the academic community of Bethlehem University than with the local Beit Sahouri townsfolk, and was, furthermore, not likely to visit miraculous shrines in search of cures or blessings.

Over my next couple of visits to the town I frequently visited *Bir es-Sayideh*. It was as often closed as open, but when it was open it was clean and full of gifts given by local people (most often young or elderly women) who would, after saying prayers at the altar, turn to the back where the same old man I first saw there would give them water from the cistern. The town

appeared to have more urgent things to do than worry about *Bir es-Sayideh*, but there was nothing to notify me that the shrine was anything other than one of a number of "quilting points" (*points de capiton*)[76] where the religiously diverse citizenry of Beit Sahour manifested, and to some degree celebrated, their situational consanguinity.

However, two incidents in the spring of 1998 indicated to me that a "tearing" had taken place. The nephew of one of my chief informants - the Muslim schoolteacher who had told me in 1990 that "We must nationalize our beliefs, ... rebuild our customs so they reflect our national life," told me in my informant's unresponsive presence that the land where *Bir es-Sayideh* stood had been

> confiscated from my family and taken by the community only to, after a
> while, be handed over to the church. The Muslims, who respect Mary,
> worshiped that place as well, and we were happy to share it with the
> Christians as long as they didn't put a cross on top of it - they did.

In another interview a couple of weeks later, a wealthy Orthodox businessman, who had returned to Beit Sahour in 1991 after being deported from Kuwait in the wake of the First Gulf War, spoke of his newly acquired chairmanship of the *Bir es-Sayideh Committee*. He planned to buy the market and clear it, creating a park which would surround an enlarged shrine opening in time for *Bethlehem 2000*. For him, the shrine was distinctly Christian (although Orthodox, he had photos of his meeting with the Pope on the walls of his office) and there was no room for Muslim participation in his plans: "The Muslims want to be represented but it is inconceivable, unacceptable, that we be concerned with the issues of the mosque."[77] He was adamant that Christians in Palestine were being peripheralized in the new political order and had to unite as Christians to struggle against Muslim domination:

> We are becoming a minority; things are getting worse between us. We
>
> cannot sustain each other....As Christians we must be one hand. I am
>
> first Christian, then Palestinian [and] I support Christians wherever they
>
> are persecuted.

This Sahouri "returnee" brought back with him images of persecution in Kuwait ("no crosses allowed on the top of churches...Christians afraid of saying they are Christians") and projected these onto his perceptions of inter-communal relations in Beit Sahour,[78] As an antidote to what he perceived as Muslim antagonism, he proposed the construction of a shared *Christian* shrine over *Bir es-Sayideh* which would provide a locus of identity and unite local Christians as "one hand" raised in opposition to the *new* enemy, the Muslims.

Ironically, just as the Orthodox chair of the *Bir es-Sayideh Committee* was launching grandiose plans for a site of Palestinian Christian solidarity, the new priest of the town's Catholic church, a Jordanian national who held a PhD. in theology from a prestigious American university, was telling me that:

> I won't give masses in *Bir es-Sayideh*, even though I have the right to,
>
> because it smacks of superstition. I've told the people that if they want
>
> to pray there, they can go and do so, but they don't need a priest.

The priest's "textualist" hostility to folk religion, perhaps symptomatic of a swing towards a fundamentalist literalism affecting mainstream Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities not only in Palestine but also throughout the contemporary world, defined the parameters of an "imagined community" of proper Catholics, and in that imagining there was no room for

the rank superstition promoted by shrines such as *Bir es-Sayideh* or the nearby *Milk Grotto.*[79] Catholics were in no way prevented from going to the shrine. However, once attendance had been publicly marked as something disreputable and peasant-like, it was far less likely that they would talk about doing so other than amongst close friends and family.

In the summer of 2007 I interviewed numerous Sahouris, Muslim and Christian, about *Bir es-Sayideh* and spent a considerable time in the cool depths of the shrine. School children of all affiliations came in to light candles and pray for success in their examinations (it was impossible for them to draw water from the spring because the cistern had been drained for relining). A number of adults - all women - similarly approached the altar and the cistern with gifts of oil and candles and with prayers they would not discuss. I discovered a complex web of inter-communal interactions focused on *Bir es-Sayideh* and the local mosque. Members of a Muslim family cleaned the Christian shrine because it had reportedly terminated a run of still-born children in the family decades ago. Similarly, a Christian woman and her children cleaned the town mosque in exchange for a similar granting of fertility.

Despite this continued intercommunal involvement of commoners with the shrine, people in authority in the town - whether in the Municipal Building, the Orthodox or Catholic churches, or the mosque - would reply to my queries about its ownership with a generic answer best expressed by the following: "The Greek Church owns absolutely everything. They always have owned everything and they don't (and never have) shared anything with anyone." The Municipality had recently printed and was distributing to all who visited glossy A4 booklets with elaborate plans drawn up by an Italian architect for the church compound which would be built over the relined cistern. This, the booklet claimed, would draw Christians from all over the world to Beit Sahour. The town market, which would be displaced by the complex, was to be moved to the outskirts of town.

Waymarks: in place of a conclusion

The destruction of Muslim-Christian conviviality around *Mar Elyas* can be directly linked to Israeli actions.[80] The state's acquisition of the monastic grounds and its sealing off of the site from its chief catchment areas were, like the subsequent erection of the wall between the Bethlehem District and *Mar Elyas,* manifestations of its perduring will to disempower, to divide, to exclude, and to cast out Palestinians.[81] What has led to the partial destruction of sharing and mixing (and its future completion) around *Bir es-Sayideh* seems more complex. Here a congeries of local decisions, redefinitions, actions and importations interacted within the wider contexts of occupation, of thwarted governance and of growing sectarianisms, to ensure that what had been celebrated as a site of revolutionary sharing is uprooted from all but covert memory and remobilized towards ends radically different from those envisaged earlier. Nonetheless, what has happened at *Bir es-Sayideh* and within Beit Sahour is, like what has occurred at *Mar Elyas,* a matter of dividing communities and erecting exclusive barriers across spaces which had previously been perceived as common.

To return once again to the phrase of my late friend Yusuf Qassas (the previously mentioned Muslim schoolteacher), Beit Sahour in its revolutionary phase had striven to rebuild its customs "to reflect its national life." Such a project necessitated a vision of a national public and a public space shared by it. As Benedict Anderson argued in his seminal book,[82] there was no need for people imagining the nation to know everyone in it. It sufficed that they could imagine an extensive community of people who were "like themselves" in sharing conditions of life, experiences of antagonism and aspirations to overcome the latter. Beit Sahour in the period leading up to, and extending through, the first Intifada served for Sahouris as a microcosm of the larger Palestinian nation, and the defensive barriers the

townspeople threw up around themselves to keep the Israeli soldiers and settlers out were at the same time both delineations of an "us" residing together behind them as well as prefigurations of the protective borders of a future sovereign state. *Bir es-Sayideh,* in fact and in rhetoric, was a condensation of that sense of a Palestinian public and its place which not only served a unified and multi-sectarian community but also brought into protective relation with that community a sacred and succouring figure -- the Virgin Mary -- revered by nearly everyone in the town, Muslim and Christian alike.

The contemporary situation also brings cultural practices into alignment with forms of communal life, but today that life has ceased to be national for many and has become instead either communalistic or, in many cases, familial as the fragments of community pull back into the folds of those they feel they can trust. The brief period of apparent opportunity following   the Oslo Accords - one of seemingly unrestrained building and investment literally blown away in 2000 by the Israeli military's response to the outbreak of the *Al Aqsa* Intifada - served to dissolve much of what had remained of the solidarity characteristic of the early days of the first Intifada.[83] Various communities of the town, anticipating the exploitation of Palestinian "others," consolidated themselves defensively behind sectarian or familial lines. In this atmosphere of mutual distrust, exacerbated by Israeli interventions and P.N.A. misgovernance, communal spaces - traditionally at risk of falling into desuetude because no one "owned" them[84] - once again lost their significance as markers of shared identity and were forgotten by some and claimed exclusively by others. For example, in the statements of the chairman of the *Bir es-Sayideh* Committee regarding the town's planning agenda, the shrine not only becomes the exclusive property of Beit Sahour's Christians but does so via the eradication of the market, one of the town's central meeting sites. Simultaneously the "ideal" Catholic community withdraws from shared sites and celebrations into the sanctity of its own spaces whilse the Muslims, resentful of the seeming "Christian"

agenda behind Municipal activities, retract into "Muslim" spaces to fulminate over lost rights and sites. Stalwart supporters of the nationalist vision, largely leftist activists operating in internationally supported NGOs, continue to assert national unity but they do so in particular contexts and to select audiences. As a recent correspondent asserted:

> The leftists responsible for the national unity in Beit Sahour in the first place still think it exists. If you listen to them speaking, they will recall, *verbatim*, all the same statements from your text -- 'we are all Palestinian first and Christian second' etc. The primary difference however is that, in the past, they would have said this in front of a crowd at Christmas or something -- and maybe earned a cheer. Today, they only really say it to visitors because everyone else is so uncertain about the future that the statement would be laughed at.

What one sees, in engaging with and observing a particular place or population over an extended period of time, is that things are paradoxically both both determined and unfixed. In the case of Beit Sahour an earlier "community despite difference" and "solidarity in resistance" have for the most part dissolved into parochial antagonisms and desperate anomie. This dissolution has been brought about by the corrosive influences of indirect occupation, of corruption, and of the absence of representation in any unifying political *fora*. What the Wall makes evident, however, as it gathers behind itself the fertile valleys and water sources of Beit Sahour and neighboring towns and villages while enclaving those communities away from Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine is that the antagonism that provoked the solidarity that made Beit Sahour such a powerful icon in the first Intifada is still very much present. Political analysis should be able to make evident to Sahouris and other Palestinians that what divides them into passionately opposed camps and gated communities

are the social, economic, and political effects of living under a state which wants their collective disappearance. Such analysis, however, is undermined by the palpability of images of being somehow robbed, threatened, or dishonored by neighboring groups[85], especially in a situation where the immediate presence of the national enemy has withdrawn from everyday view, leaving only the neighbors to blame for the degradation of one's quality of life.

In such situations it seems vital that counter-images be promulgated, allowing for and prompting the imagining of forms of community other than those alienated and isolate forms characteristic of the present. Utopian images of fantasized futures are not effective if they fail to draw upon historical experiences; images of an ideal future, lacking the freight of some form of memory -- whether positive or negative -- float free of the world and of the emotions they should instil. I would here cite, as an alternative formulation of mobilizing images, Walter Benjamin's "chips of Messianic time"[86] and refer to his conception of moments of history, buried in the detritus of subsequent events, which can be recuperated to show ways in which the present might be seen and experienced differently[87]. The "local Arabs" who still, despite everything, "go crazy" for the Mar Elyas chain when they can access it are, like the women and children - Latin, Orthodox, and Muslim - who quietly continue to believe that there is something at *Bir es-Sayideh* which cares for them, keeping alive a memory of another way of viewing the relation of place to identity, community and power. It is important for Palestinians, as well as for others in the Middle East and further afield, to work not only to keep that memory alive but also to understand the close interweaving of dependency, neighborliness, and other reliance it expresses. Such places -- and the ways of being they body forth -- need memorialisation so that the present can be revealed as only one of a number of possibilities of imagining community emerging from the past. Beit Sahourans, remembering these, may re-member themselves as a community, shaping themselves once again into one hand raised against the tyranny of the present.

[1] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, 1985, pp. 93-148.

[2] This article builds on a paper published in *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1993. The material of that first essay is augmented by field data gathered in subsequent visits to the West Bank in 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003 and 2007.

[3] Louis Dumont, in an important article setting out the genealogies of nationalism and communalism, defines the latter as "that ideology which emphasizes as the social, political, and economic unit the group of adherents of each religion, and emphasizes the distinction, even the antagonism, between such groups." L. Dumont, "Nationalism and Communalism," in his *Religion/Politics and History in India*, The Hague: Mouton, 1970, pp. 89-110, at 89.

[4] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1991, pp. 5-7.

[5] Jeremy MacClancy revisited the shrine of St. Besse in 1994 and considered the timeliness of Hertz's work. See J. MacClancy, "The Construction of Anthropological Genealogies: Robert Hertz, Victor Turner and the Study of Pilgrimage," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford,* 1994, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 31-40.

[6] R. Hertz, "Saint Besse: A Study of an Alpine Cult," in S. Wilson (ed.) *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1983, pp. 55-100.

[7] F. Barth, "Introduction," in id. (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Culture Difference*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969, pp. 9-38, at 17.

[8] T.N. Madan, "Two Faces of Bengali Ethnicity: Muslim Bengali or Bengali Musli," in *Developing Economies*, 1972, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 74-85; P. Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees,* Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981; B. Kapferer, *Legends of People/Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1988; M. Chapman, M. McDonald, et al., "Introduction: History and Social Anthropology," in E. Tonkin, M. McDonald, and M. Chapman (eds) *History and Ethnicity,* London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 168-82; A. Gingrich, "Conceptualising Identities: Anthropological Alternatives to Essentialising Difference and Moralising about Othering" in G. Baumann and A. Gingrich, (eds) *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach*, London: Berghahn. 2005, pp. 3-17.

[9] According to Laclau & Mouffe, "in the case of antagonism ... the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself. ... (it is because a peasant cannot be a peasant that an antagonism exists with the landowner who is expelling him from his land). Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence for myself" Laclau & Mouffe, *supra* n. 1, at p. 125.

[10] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1940, pp. 184-91; also G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: the Religion of the Dinka,* Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1961.

[11] Evans-Pritchard, ibid., p.186.

[12] Evans-Pritchard, ibid., p.189.

[13] G. Lienhardt, *supra* n. 10 at p. 95.

[14] Ibid., at pp. 72 and 164-5.

[15] See C. Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1988; J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art,* Harvard: Harvard U. Press, 1988.

[16] T. Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine,* London: Luzac and Co. 1927, p. vi.

[17] August 2 by the Julian calendar, which continues to be used in the Holy Land because of the *status quo* (see *supra* n.12); the feast is celebrated elsewhere on the 20th of July.

[18] Although the saint's day in the Greek calendar is nominally on one day, it stretches over two days because of the saint-specific vespers of the preceding day and the saint-specific liturgy of the saint's day itself. The popular ceremonies, with some variations which will be described below, cover these two days but tend to concentrate on the day before the feast. This description is based on my observations of 1-2 August 1984.

[19] The Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, the ruling body of the Greek Orthodox Church in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and the Sinai, has been until recently made up exclusively of Greek and Cypriot monks who reside in the Patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem. It has full control over the activities of the church in the region which include not only liturgical and pastoral activities but also maintenance of the considerable properties it owns.

[20] There is no sign in the Bible, Old Testament or New, of Elyas (the Prophet Elijah) having been enchained. The use of "Elyas " for "Elijah " is interesting as a moment in the diacritical process whereby Christians mark themselves off as other than Jews; "Elyas " is the New Testament form of "Elijah" and yet it is used by both priests and lay-persons to refer to biblical events prior to the period rendered by the New Testament.

[21] Canaan, *supra* n. 16, at pp. 79-80.

[22] A young Syrian Orthodox woman, who had walked from Bethlehem to Mar Elyas (about 5 kilometers) with two co-religionists and a Muslim, told me that she had asked a favor of the saint and had promised to walk from Bethlehem to Mar Elyas and back in return. I asked, "You have walked here to ask a favor of God?" and she rapidly and firmly corrected me, saying "No, of St Elyas." Canaan, discussing Palestinian Muslims, confirms this: "According

to Palestinian Arabic belief, God is the Almighty One. ... But the saints are preferred. They are easier of access and stand nearer to men as they all were once human beings. At the same time they know human needs, ailments and weaknesses very well. Therefore the belief in them and the fear of them has spread so widely among the Palestinians that gradually they have taken the place of God " Canaan , *supra* n. 16, at p.132. Tamari, in a recent article on Canaan, refers to this supplanting of the divine function by the local saints as a "dethronement of God." S. Tamari, "Lepers, Lunatics and Saints: The Nativist Ethnography of Tawfiq Canaan and his Circle," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, vol. 20, 2004, pp. 24-43, at 36.

[23] One of the consequences of the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox church's attempts to extend its influence in Ottoman Palestine was its systematic fomentation of dissatisfaction within Greek Orthodox Palestinian communities about the Greek church's failure to provide locals with pastoral or social services. D. Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. This led to the lay creation of the Arab Orthodox Movement, an organization dedicated to wresting control of the church and its substantial properties from what it termed a "foreign" priesthood. After the Russian church's intervention was abruptly ended by the revolution, the Movement was strongly supported by the British mandate government. S.A. Bertram and J.W.A. Young, *The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Government of Palestine to Inquire and Report Upon Certain Controversies Between the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Arab Orthodox Community,* London: Humphrey Milford, 1926. After the British withdrawal of 1948, the Movement was supported by the Jordanian government which appropriated the West Bank and Jerusalem. J. Hilal, "West Bank and Gaza Strip Social Formation under Jordanian and Egyptian rule (1948-1967)," in G. Bowman (ed.) *Israel-Palestine: Fields for Identity.* Special Issue of the *Review of Middle East Studies*. London: Scorpion, 1992, pp. 33-73.

After the Israeli government took control of the West Bank in 1967, the Israeli state came to work closely with the Greek church. A. Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean.* London: Frank Cass, 1987. This was in attempt to subvert the Greek government's opposition to the Israeli occupation. As a result, the Movement became in large part quiescent since the church-state alliance made it evident to many Arab Orthodox activists that any gains that might be made by the Christian Palestinians would only be made after the Israeli occupation was ended (interview with Arab Orthodox Movement member, Bethlehem, March 1987). Nonetheless, one of the outstanding legacies of the Movement is the awareness among Christian Palestinians that the interests of the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox church are foreign and antagonistic to their own. The subsequent reported sale of Mar Elyas lands to the Israeli state, as well as countless parallel cases, has only served to strengthen the antagonism between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and Palestinians of all communities.

[24] Official Patriarchate policy at the time was that one had to be a Greek or Cypriot national to be a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher (soon after it became evident, as American and Australian monks began to appear in the monasteries, that this had changed, but what remained constant was that no Palestinians were allowed entry). Christian Palestinian men are allowed to become priests in the church but are forced, as a precondition of ordination, to marry. This precludes them from becoming monks and thereby makes it impossible for them to join the Brotherhood. This policy was overturned by the British during the Mandate Period and, as a consequence, two Palestinians were forced upon the Brotherhood. By 1984 they had long since died of old age. By then Israeli support of the church had ensured that the old exclusionary policy had been reinstated and no Palestinians had joined the Brotherhood to replace them.

[25] The status quo agreements, finalized by an Ottoman firman, legislate over the conflicting claims of the various churches to rights and privileges within the holy places. The firman,

adopted in turn by the British, the Jordanians and the Israelis, establishes the reigning government as perpetuator of the status quo as it was fixed in 1852. It is generally held by the ruling powers that withdrawal by the government from its role could lead to an open-ended struggle between the churches over which would control the shrines.

[26] Tamari points out that the Palestinian left, which then dominated political activism along the Ramallah-Jerusalem-Bethlehem axis, maintained until the early 1990s "a venerable tradition of divorcing the political from the cultural and social spheres." S. Tamari, "Left in Limbo: Leninist Heritage and Islamist Challenge," in *Middle East Report,* vol. 22, no. 6, 1992, pp. 16-22, at 17-18; see also L. Lybarger, *Identity and Religion in Palestine: The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories*, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 2007, pp. 27-72.

This meant that political activists defined domains in which public expressions of identity were made (such as religious festivals) in purely political (i.e. national) terms. Whether or not this was actually the case, what is significant is that it was defined as such in Halweh's discourse.

[27] The term "floating signifier" is drawn from Lévi-Strauss' introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss C. Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987, p. 63. It was proposed by Jacques Derrida as an alternative to the classical idea of an essence held to stand at the center of any discursive structure constituting and determining the signification enabled by that structure. Derrida provides several examples of such "transcendental signifiers" from the history of Western metaphysics such as "eidos, arche, telos, en-ergeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject), aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness or conscience, God, man, and so forth" J. Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in R. Macksey and E. Donato (eds) *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1972, pp. 247-65, at 249. Derrida contends that

Saussure's insight that all signs take on signification through opposition to other signs in a diacritical system invalidates the idea of extra-linguistic essences standing outside of semantic structures and giving rise to those structures. The constitution of all meaning within language undermines all assertions of referentiality; things "outside " language only come to have significance in language. Since there is no meaning outside of language which language serves simply to elaborate and describe, all definitions of a field of discourse are effectively "unfixed " and "up for grabs": "[t]he absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely " J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul., 1978, p.280. By extension, we can understand that "objects" of/in discourse, such as the festivities at Mar Elyas, are constituted in the way people talk about them and through the meanings they attribute to them. Unless the process of interpretation is stabilized or hegemonized by an uncontestable act of power, the "object " itself "floats," taking on a number of meanings from the ways it is read by the people who engage it.

[28] In 1997 construction of the Israeli settlement of Har Homa began on nearby Jebel Abu-Ghneim. Monastery lands were either purchased or expropriated at this time for the settlement and the network of roads connecting Jerusalem with Har Homa and settlements further to the south. 2002 saw the inauguration of the construction of the "security Fence" (*a.k.a. ʺ*The Apartheid Wall"), now a six meter high barrier cutting Palestinians off from Jerusalem and, of course, from Mr Elyas. The monastery's isolation from Palestinian populations is now effectively complete. *See* G. Bowman "About a Wall," *Social Analysis*, 2004, vol. 48**,** no. 1, pp. 149-55. and "Israel's Wall and the Logic of Encystation: Sovereign Exception or Wild Sovereignty?" *Focaal - European Journal of Anthropology. L.*, 2007, pp. 127-36.

[29] Primary research on Beit Sahour took place in January 1990, while the town was under siege by the Israeli Defense Force. This was funded by the Middle East Research Information

Project, and some of this material appeared earlier in G. Bowman, "Religion and Political Identity in Beit Sahour," in *Middle East Report*, 1990, vol. 20, nos. 3-4, pp. 50-53.

[30] The Scouts, insofar as they were under the patronage of Christian and Muslim religious institutions, were not subject to the draconian laws against "gathering" imposed on secular organizations by the Israeli military authorities. As a result, the scout activities, when not constrained by the religious authorities, became the *loci* of guarded public displays of nationalist identities.

[31] In 1987 Michel Sabbah, a Palestinian from Nazareth, was appointed as Latin Patriarch because, lay persons and priests said, the Catholic church had decided in the face of growing antipathy to the church by Catholic Palestinians to make a significant concession to local Christians. On the outbreak of the Intifada Sabbah announced that he was cancelling the Christmas Eve procession in Manger Square and restricting the ceremony to the midnight mass, out of sympathy with the Palestinian people. In response, Israeli officials warned that if the procession was not held as usual "it might result in the erosion of some of the rights of the Roman Catholics in the Holy Land " (*Jerusalem Post,* 24 Dec.1987). *Al-Tali'a*, a Palestinian weekly, reported in the same week that Shimon Peres had contacted the Vatican and threatened that the Israeli government would stop carrying out its obligations as the ruling authority in the holy land in maintaining the Status Quo agreement. In consequence, Sabbah withdrew his threat.

[32] Between 1983 and 1987 the "Pan-Palestinian Scout Movement" expanded considerably. In March 1987 it was working in close collusion with Mubarak Awad's "Center for Non-Violence" in organizing a West Bank boycott of Israeli goods (a forerunner of Intifada strategies of non-cooperation and resistance). In January 1990 I asked about the scouts and was told by a young Beit Sahouri, "The scouts have closed up their buildings....they made the connections, and will open again when they are needed." After Oslo scout groups reformed, but interviews suggest that their focus had shifted not only to providing young men and

women with "positive" activities but also to the assertion of communalist identities. Jennifer Dueck has been engaging in research on scout movements in Mandate Lebanon which demonstrates substantial and intriguing differences in the exportation of Baden-Powell's model to colonial and post-colonial situations. J. Dueck, "Arab Jamborees: Religious Identity and the Scout Movement under the French Mandate," unpublished conference paper from *Communities, Creeds and Cultures in Arab Lands under French Colonial Rule at the Middle East Studies Association Conference*, Boston, 18-21 Nov. 2006. *See also*, E. Boehmer, "Introduction," in id. (ed.) *Robert Baden-Powell's Scouting for Boys,* Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2004, pp. xi-xxxix.

[33] G. Pena, *Christian Presence in the Holy Land,* Jerusalem: Christian Information Center, 1984.

[34] Pena estimated that in 1984 Beit Sahur had a population of 8,900 of which 7,400 were Christian (6,000 Greek Orthodox, 670 Latin Catholics, 500 Greek Catholics, 200 Lutherans and 30 Syrian Orthodox). Post-Oslo censuses by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics collected but did not publicize figures on religious affiliation. In 2006 the town population was assessed at 15,388 (http://atlas.pcbs.gov.ps/, accessed 31 July 2008). At present the Beit Sahour Municipality claims the town's population is 80% Christian and 20% Muslim (http://www.beitsahourmunicipality.com/english/historic.htm, accessed 31/7/2008) while the Alternative Tourism Group, in accord with a logic like that of Beit Sahour in past times, assesses the ration as 75/25 (http://www.atg.ps, accessed 31 July 2008).

[35] I. Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority*, Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1980; S. Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation in Recent Palestinian History," in R. Owen (ed.) *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London: Macmillan, 1982, pp. 177-202.

[36] Y. Litani, "Militant Islam in the West Bank and Gaza," *New Outlook*, 1989, vols 11-12, pp. 40-42; L. Taraki, "The Islamic Resistance Movement in the Palestinian Uprising," in *Middle*

East Report, 1989, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 30-32, at p. 31; Z. Schiff, and E. Ya'ari., *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising - Israel's Third Front,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990, at pp.233-34; M. Dumper, "Forty years without Slumbering: *waqf* Politics and Administration in the Gaza Strip, 1948-1987," in *Democracy in the Middle East: Proceedings of the 1992 Annual Conference of the British Society for Middle East Studies*, U. of St. Andrews, 1992, pp. 408-27, at pp. 422-23.

[37] The protected status enjoyed by Hamas was reversed in May 1988 when the government outlawed the organization after Hamas activists claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and execution of two Israeli soldiers. The high media profile that Israel had granted the movement in presenting it as a rival to the United Leadership of the Uprising, along with the immunity to prosecution its activists had enjoyed prior to its banning, meant that the Israelis had no trouble pinpointing its leadership when the arrests began; in the last two weeks of May 1988, more than 250 Hamas organizers were jailed. Hamas's situation today, as a "terrorist entity" isolated in Gaza and persecuted in the West Bank by both the PNA and the Israeli state apparatus, reflects a shift in political positioning commensurate with the contemporary hegemonic positioning of religious discourses in nationalist movements. *See* Lybarger, *supra* n. 25, pp.1-26 and *passim.*

[38] S.A Bertram and J.W.A. Young, *The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Government of Palestine to Inquire and Report Upon Certain Controversies Between the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Arab Orthodox Community.* London: Humphrey Milford, 1926, pp. 34-78.

[39] A.L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine 1800-1901,* Oxford: Oxford U. Press,1961; D. Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; N. Horner, *A Guide to Christian Churches in the Middle East: Present Day Christianity in the Middle East and North Africa*, Elkhart,

Indiana: Mission Focus, 1989; A. Scholch, "Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century (1831-1917 AD)," in K.J. Asali (ed.) *Jerusalem in History,* London: Scorpion, 1989, pp. 228-48.

[40] There appears to be a close correlation between properties maintained for the delectation of pilgrims and lack of interest in the local peoples. The Greek Catholic and Anglican churches had few holy land monuments to maintain for foreign visitors and strongly supported their Palestinian congregations under the Bishoprics of Lutfi Lahan (Lebanese) and Samir Kafity (Syrian). The Lutheran Church, which divides its powers in the holy land between three delegations (German, American and Palestinian), supports Christian Palestinians unless such support interferes with the privileges of its foreign members. In 1985 the Lutherans shut down the "Austro-Hungarian Hospice" which had served since 1948 as the only hospital in Jerusalem's Old City, in order to refit it as a hotel for well-off Lutheran pilgrims.

[41] The latter provided models for Intifada organization to communities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. J. Hiltermann, *Behind the Intifada: Labor and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories*, Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1991.

[42] Asali, *supra* n. 39, at p. 206; *see also*, K. Abu-Jaber, "The Millet System in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," in *The Muslim World*, 1967, vol. 57, no.3, pp. 213-23; A. Cohen and B. Lewis, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century,* Princeton: Princeton U. Press.1978.

[43] For twentieth century examples, *see* S. Joseph, "Muslim-Christian Conflict in Lebanon: A Perspective on the Evolution of Sectarianism," in id. and B. Pillsbury (eds) *Muslim-Christian Conflicts: Economic, Political and Social Origins,* Boulder: Westview Press, 1978, pp. 63-97; J. Webber, "Religions in the Holy Land: Conflicts of Interpretation," in *Anthropology Today,* 1985, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 3-10; G. Bowman, "Unholy Struggle on Holy Ground: Conflict and its Interpretation," in *Anthropology Today*, 1986, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 4-7.

[44] *See* M. Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam*, London: Croom Helm, 1982, pp. 173-77.

[45] An exception is the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem's Old City which, because of a state-organized program of "development" carried out since the 1970s, is now almost exclusively inhabited by Jews.

[46] Shqeef is Beaufort Castle in South Lebanon. *Fateh* held it from 1970 until 1982, even during the Israeli invasion of 1978. Tell al-Za'ter resisted a several month siege by Maronite militia in early 1976 (personal communication from Rosemary Sayigh). Shateela is, of course, one of the two sites of the notorious Sabra and Shateela massacre.

[47] As a foreign anthropologist engaged in research during a national liberation struggle, I created a particular context for persons I interviewed. They were keen to present an impression of unity to one they rightly assumed would present Beit Sahour to the world outside. As subsequent research has shown, Sahouri secular nationalism was a project rather than a fully realized identity. G. Bowman, "The Two Deaths of Basem Rishmawi: Identity Constructions and Reconstructions in a Muslim-Christian Palestinian Community," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power,* vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 1-35. reprinted with some revisions in 2006 as "A Death Revisited: Solidarity and Dissonance in a Muslim-Christian Palestinian Community," in U. Makdisi and P. Silverstein (eds) *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 2001, pp. 27-49.

and id., "A Death Revisited: Solidarity and Dissonance in a Muslim-Christian Palestinian Community," in U. Makdisi & P. Silverstein (eds) *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 2006, pp. 27-49. The sub-title of Glenn Robinson's study of Palestine in the period of the first Intifada, which includes a substantial chapter on Beit Sahour, sums up the situation succinctly. G. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution.* Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1997.

[48] Interview with Ramallah resident, April 1990.

[49] Compare with Tone Bringa's study of social relations in a mixed Catholic-Muslim Bosnian village in the period leading up to the Yugoslav Wars of Secession (T. Bringa, *Being Muslim*

the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[50] M. Chapman, M. McDonald, et al., "Introduction: History and Social Anthropology," in E. Tonkin, M. McDonald, and M. Chapman (eds), *History and Ethnicity,* London: Routledge, 1989, pp.168-82.

[51] G. Bowman, "Religion and Political Identity in Beit Sahour," *Middle East Report*, 1990, vol. 20, nos. 3-4, pp. 50-53, at pp. 51-52.

[52] Nebi Musa is an Islamic shrine in the Jordan Valley which became the focus of Islamic dissatisfaction with British rule. *See* R. Friedland and R.D. Hecht, The Pilgrimage to Nebi Musa and the Origins of Palestinian Nationalism," in F. Bryan, Le Beau and M. Mor (eds) *Pilgrims and Travellers to the Holy Land,* Omaha, Nebraska: Creighton U. Press, 1996, pp. 89-118.

 I visited Nebi Musa in 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2007, observing its development, respectively, from a *waqf*-run drug rehabilitation center (under Israeli occupation), to a religious site strongly marked with PNA nationalism (Jericho and Nebi Musa were the first territories put under PNA jurisdiction after Oslo), to a site of Islamic pilgrimage and festival. Today it is still, visited by local Christians but this is less formalized than it was during the mid-1990s hey-day of Palestinian nationalism when bus trips were scheduled from Christian schools to the shrine.

[53] Yehoshua Porath, who wrote a meticulous study of Palestinian mobilization leading up to the 1936 Revolt (Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement 1929-1939: From Riots to Rebellion*, London: Frank Cass, 1977), was quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* of 12 March 1988 as saying of the Intifada that, "This is the first time that there has been a popular action, covering all social strata and groups".

[54] Al-Haq, *"Illegality of Israeli Tax Raids in Beit Sahour: Information Update*," Ramallah: Al-Haq (Law in the Service of Man), 1989, p. 1.

[55] M. Chapman, M. McDonald, *supra* n. 50, at pp. 168-82.

[56] F. Barth, "Introduction," in id. (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Culture Difference*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969, pp. 9-38.

[57] The closest thing I saw to this at Mar Elyas occurred on the first day of the feast when Israeli police, claiming that the dealers were not properly licensed, began to break up a market in children's toys which had formed along the edge of the road. Only then did people speak of themselves as Palestinians and of their traditional practices, there threatened by the incursion of representatives of the Israeli state, as manifestations of a Palestinian national identity. When the police withdrew, the formulation of identity in "Palestinian" terms ceased.

[58] M. Dumper, *"Muslim Institutions and the Israeli State: Muslim Religious Endowments (waqfs) in Israel and the Occupied Territories, 1948-1987*," Ph.D. Dissertation, U. of Exeter, 1991; id., "Forty years without Slumbering," *supra* n. 36, pp. 408-27.

[59] Among the Christian exceptions were some Armenians - both Orthodox and Uniate - who saw themselves as Armenian nationals rather than as Armenian Palestinians, and Protestants of fundamentalist and millenarian groups which defined the future in chiliastic rather than nationalist terms. Fundamentalist Muslims were also, as Lustick asserts, unlikely to wish to pollute their God-given identities at a time when all hope was resting on divine intervention. Lustick , *supra* n. 30, at p. 431 and Lybarger, *supra* n. 25. Furthermore, people still substantially patronized by the religious institutions were not likely to see their interests served by violating the terms of that support.

[60] The Holy Fire ceremony is an Orthodox ritual recorded as occurring as early as 870 AD (F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: the Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times,* Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1985, pp. 261-7; R. Hecht, "The Construction and Management of Sacred Time and Space: *Sabta Nur* in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher," in R. Friedland, and D. Boden (eds) *Now Here: Space, Time and Modernity*, Berkeley: U. of California Press., 1995, pp. 181-235.

It takes place in the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem at approximately 13:00 on Holy Saturday and is alleged to signal the passage of Christ from hell to heaven. For Christians it stands as a sign that Christ's resurrection is promised on the following day. Interviews with attending Muslims revealed that it was also interpreted, by them and by participating Christian Palestinian youths, as an opportunity for Jerusalem Palestinians to welcome their foreign guests to their city. Massive crowds of local Christians and foreign pilgrims collect for the ceremony with occasionally disastrous consequences. A. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine in Connection with their History,* London: John Murray., 1889, pp. 464-9; *see also* G. Williams, *The Holy City: Historical, Topographical and Antiquarian Notices of Jerusalem,* London: John W. Parker, 1849, pp. 533-5, and E. Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, pp.185-93).

[61] The telling exception is referred to *supra* in n. 26.

[62] Louis Althusser argues that identity arises through the "interpellation" of the self into the discourses of others (of parents, of peers, of lovers, of the state, of advertising and so on) through a process of acknowledging one's self as the subject of those discourses' address (see L. Althusser, " Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays.* London, Verso. 1971. Pp. 121-173.

[63] Analogously I recently observed at the shared Orthodox shrine of *Sveti Bogoroditsa Prechista* outside of Kicevo in Macedonia that although in approaching icons Muslim visitors appear to follow the same practices of approach and deportment as do Christians, they hold back from Christian groups while moving through the church, thus masking small but significant differences. In approaching icons they do not kiss them, they do not cross themselves, and, in praying, they silently mouth Muslim prayers and hold their hands open and palm up rather than clasped in Christian praying mode. *See* G. Bowman,,"Orthodox-Muslim Interactions at 'Mixed Shrines' in Macedonia" in C. Hann and H. Goltz (eds) *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009,

pp. 163-183 and G. Bowman, G., "Processus identitaires autour de quelques sanctuaires partagés en Palestine et en Macédoine" in D. Albera and M. Couroucli (eds.) *Religions traversées; Lieux saints partagés entre chrétiens, musulmans et juifs en Mediterranée.* Arles, Actes Sud, 2009, pp. 27-52.

[64] Icons, which present well-established representations of religious phenomena in traditionally fixed forms and styles, are signs of Orthodox forms of devotion. Paintings tend to be freer and more realist in their desire to inspire a mental "re-enactment" of the scene portrayed, and are most often Latin and, in this area, Franciscan devotional artefacts. G. Bowman, "Christian Ideology and the Image of a Holy Land: The Place of Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Various Christianities," in J. Eade and M. Sallnow (eds) *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 98-121.

[65] I would argue that the threat of disintegration to Israeli unity which Paine saliently points out in his study of Jewish identity in a national state is held at bay by a general consensus among Israeli Jews that an enemy (the Palestinian entity) - far more threatening than any other community within the nation - exists "outside" the fissile national community. R. Paine, "Israel: Jewish Identity and Competition over 'Tradition,'" in E. Tonkin, M. McDonald and M. Chapman (eds) *History and Ethnicity,* London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 121-36.

[66] Tamari, *supra* n. 25.

[67] Porath points out that the British sowed discord between the various Palestinian groups fighting against them in the Arab Revolt (rural and urban, Christian, Druze and Muslim, radicals and moderates, Husseini and Nashashibi) by emphasizing the antagonism of other factions to the particular interests of each. Porath, *supra* n. 41.

[68] Paine, *supra* n. 64.

[69] D. Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1990, pp.160-233.

[70] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, New York: George Allen and Unwin,1915; M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, New York: Harper and Row, 1980; Hertz, *supra* n. 5.

[71] A. Bornstein, *Crossing the Green Line: Between the West Bank and Israel.* Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, pp. 41-47.

[72] A. Hass, "Israel's Closure Policy: An Ineffective Strategy of Containment and Repression," *J. of Pales. Studies,* 2002*,* vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 5-20, at p. 8.

[73] The identity cards required by the military authorities clearly indicate the religious affiliation of their bearers.

[74] Unlike in the past, the Orthodox clergy took the chain away whilst religious ceremonies were being carried out, and people could only access it when liturgical activities had ceased.

[75] G. Bowman ,"About a Wall," *Social Analysis*, 2004, vol. 48**,** no. 1, pp. 149-55.

[76] See E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics. London: Verso, 1985, pp. 112-113.

[77] The chairman insisted that the *Bir es-Sayideh Committee* had always been exclusively Christian. Although I had earlier interviewed one of the two Muslim members of the original committee, the interviewee insisted that the committee was then, as it always had been (and is today), made up of two Greek Orthodox Palestinians, one Catholic, one Greek Catholic and a Municipal representative who "represents them (the Muslims) even though he is Christian."

[78] *See* G. Bowman, "Migrant Labour: Constructing Homeland in the Exilic Imagination," *Anthropological Theory*, 2002, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 447-68.

[79] It is interesting that the historic antagonism between the Greek Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher and the Palestinian "Arab Orthodox" communities (see above) - manifest recently in Beit Sahour by the building by the Patriarchate of a "Greek" Orthodox church at 'Shepherds' Field" to counter the "Arab" Orthodox church in the town center - allows *Bir es-*

Sayideh to remain an expression of respectable Sahouri Orthodoxy while it is increasingly spurned by Sahouri Catholics, whose relations with their Patriarchate are far less problematic.

[80] In 2003 a Bethlehem woman told me of "gathering before the return of the PNA at Mar Elyas to greet the Holy Fire. Everyone was cheering and dancing and barbecuing, but the soldiers made trouble for scouts attempting to come from Beit Jala and ended up tear-gassing the monastery. I had to gather my children under a fan someone had set up for barbecuing. For three years after my children would cry with fright when I'd mention Mar Elyas."

[81] M. Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: the Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948.* trans. Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2000, pp. 270-306 and *passim.*

[82] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1991.

[83] *See* Bowman, *supra* n. 45.

[84] R. Zreik, "Exit from the Scene: Reflections on the Public Space of the Palestinians in Israel," *Landscape Perspectives on Palestine*" Birzeit U., Birzeit, Palestine, Nov. 1998, pp. 12-15,. Abridged version published in *Al Karmel*, vol. 40, summer 1999, pp. 35-44, at pp. 41-44.

[85] *See* G. Bowman, "Constitutive Violence and the Nationalist Imaginary: the Making of "the People" in Palestine and "Former Yugoslavia," in F. Panizza (ed.) *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, London: Verso, 2005, pp. 118-43, especially pp. 131-41.

[86] W. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Hannah Arendt (ed.) *Illuminations,* trans. Harry Zohn, N.Y.: Schocken, 1969 [orig. 1950], pp. 253-64, at p. 263.

[87] An exemplar of such utopic remembering is A.Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture.* Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1993.

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