

**Global Circumstances and Local Structures:
a Palestinian example of cultural diversity in the face of globalisation**

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Much ink has been spilt and academic and other passions aroused over ‘globalisation’ and its implications for cultural and social ‘diversity’ around the world. A great deal of attention has been given to what are purported to be the determining features of globalisation. Less critical attention has been paid, however, to the other side of the relation, that of the local structures through which such global circumstances are negotiated. I have argued elsewhere (Kaim 1997, 1998, 2003) that if we are to understand the social and cultural implications of the integration of the whole planet into a single global system we must study the local level. This is the level at which action takes place, and it is through action that (social and cultural) structure is connected to (physical, geographical, technological, or other) circumstance. Without understanding this reality between structure and circumstance we cannot understand social and cultural change or continuity, diversity, or convergence.

This paper, then, seeks to present just such a local study. As a local study, however, it does not overlook global forces and their influences; indeed, these are the focus of the study but through the prism of their connection to local structures through action. As a local study it is heavily ethnographic rather than theoretical. However, the following points underlie the ethnography and its presentation. The influence that the *circumstance* of global forces has on action is not direct but is mediated by the *structures* of the local population: cultural and social structures, structures of conception and understanding. It is these structures through which the *significances* of changing circumstances are derived and so influence the types and specific features of the *action* taken.

The following ethnography concerns the village of Tustas (not the village’s real name), which is a Palestinian village on the West Bank, nestled in the Judean hills overlooking the Palestinian plain. It is a mixed Christian and Muslim village with a total resident population of approximately 1,000, about two thirds of which is

Christian and one third Muslim. In particular, I look at the specificities of the collapse of locality as a base for local significance and knowledge, and the actions of the inhabitants as indicative of the active operation of local structures in shaping the connection of the local into the global. For reasons of space I concentrate on education at the expense of other similarly interesting phenomena such as the development of transport infrastructure or the penetration of the mass media into the local society and area.

Education and the collapse of locality

At the beginning of the last century the local area of Tustas, its lands, and the immediately surrounding villages could constitute the inhabitants' world of social and political significance. This is no longer so. The village and its lands have collapsed as a base for knowledge and power. As a result the inhabitants have had to develop new forms of knowledge and identity. The development of formal education¹ has been an important factor influencing the collapse of locality and the new forms of knowledge and identity. As such it provides an important example for ethnographic examination of the response of a local community to forces put in motion by globalisation. My thesis is that the interaction of local structures with circumstances changed by these forces is the locus of local negotiation, and that while local structures are transformed it is not simply in ways determined by global forces, structures, or circumstances, but by the interaction of local structures with the foregoing. As a result diverse responses based on local structures remain possible, indeed, likely. This examination of education and its role in this negotiation in a circumstance of cosmic proportions—the collapse of locality and the change to book learning as authoritative—shows this to be so. This is also the level at which analysis

¹ For our purposes a distinction is made between formal education as that provided by institutionalised structures such as schools and tuition groups, and informal or popular-cum-folk education which may occur in many contexts in which a method or goal of education is not formally set out or regularised. This second term applies to discussion groups, socialisation in the family and so forth. When the term 'education' is used without qualification it refers to formal.

must take place if we are to avoid the danger's of Said's 'homogenising history'.

The dominant modes of knowledge associated with elderly villagers and youth indicate the transformations occurring over the past ninety years. The authoritative referents for these knowledges are different. The elderly rely much more on personal experience or that of their close associates in the locality. As the circumstances and significances to which their knowledge refers are, in the first instance, centred on the village and its environs, I shall term that knowledge 'local.' Youth, especially, deride this local knowledge as personal, unscientific, and the product of illiteracy. Their criteria for authoritative knowledge refer to much wider concerns than those of the village and its inhabitants. Secondary sources are very important, especially to the politically active youth. They desire justification of their knowledge and claims through global, or at least national, relevances. The local knowledge of their elders is irrelevant to their concerns and even inimical to their political goals.

Knowledge has two important facets. One is that any system of knowledge constructs itself as having explanatory force in relation to the events and circumstances with which those who possess it are confronted. The second is the relation of knowledge to power. Knowledge can be used politically, for the realisation of individual or collective goals. Today, locally derived knowledge lacks explanatory force. Economic developments have largely destroyed the local economy, and with it the power of the village notables who earlier controlled local land and labour. Similarly, developments in communications and transport have made irrelevant the traditional boundaries of the village and its area. Ease of transport means that those boundaries are no longer significant *socially* or *economically*. Local knowledge is at a loss to explain or deal with these changes. In conjunction with this the development of formal education, the spread of the mass media, and confrontation with the State of Israel mean that those boundaries are no longer significant *politically* either. In particular, confrontation with Israel requires a national identity to be articulated over local identities as the latter are not sufficiently powerful politically to be of use in that conflict. Thus local knowledge has been stripped of its political power. Locality has been transformed socially, economically, and politically, and with it people's conceptions have been irrevocably changed.

Locally derived knowledge, identities, and classifications are no longer able to generate sufficient understanding, meaning, or politically useful categories for the villagers adequately to characterise, define, and understand their current situation. This does not mean, however, that local structures have simply been overwhelmed by larger forces and changed circumstances. Far from it, they have been of fundamental importance in bringing about these changes in their specificity.

In other circumstances national identity may be constructed out of local identity. However, in Palestine in general and Tustas in particular to be Palestinian requires the negation of the authority of local knowledge, and thus, local identity. Localised power-knowledge will not achieve Palestinian independence. The oral knowledge of the elders cannot sustain *Palestinian* identity, neither can it articulate *Palestinian* political goals. On the other hand, the book-knowledge of the youth can, and in fact does: local activists are all members of national groups and parties, the Palestine People's Party (PPP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Fatah, the Muslim Brothers (MB), and Hamas, and are all literate, educated, and young². Beyond this, acceptance of local knowledge claims would reinforce the status and power of the illiterate or only semi-literate elders (*ikhtiyariya*); for this 'local' reason too, the old local knowledge is not acceptable to the youth. In this context the expression of national identity *in opposition* to local (rather than as resonating with the latter) is paramount. For Christians the PLO and its parties provide a viable, *national* alternative. Among Muslims the MB-Hamas is a similar viable non-local alternative. Current Muslim communal leaders come from the MB-Hamas and the millionaire, none of whom rely on traditional, local bases of power. These developments have affected local attitudes to education at all levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Formal education presents itself as a *non-local knowledge* of considerable explanatory power.

² More generally and dramatically the most important sustained expression of Palestinian political goals and identity of recent times, the two Palestinian intifadas or uprisings, themselves have been largely youth-led and nationally directed movements.

This is the crux of the generational struggle occurring in the village. The knowledge of the old order, and the identities it entails, are no longer relevant for the youth. It is in the process of trying to construct new bases of knowledge, and new or wider identities, that the confessions' (local) dispositions to orthodoxy and heterodoxy (which I have mentioned elsewhere: Kaim 1997) powerfully are manifested.

Educational structures and Israeli occupation

Until recently, the nature of the Israeli state in the occupied territories caused Palestinians living there suffer special educational difficulties. The fundamental problem for Palestinians under Israeli control was lack of control over the education that they received (Graham-Brown 1984: 9). In the schools of the West Bank under occupation, whether state or private, the Jordanian curriculum remained in force, and while it emphasised Arab culture and history in general and the confrontation with Israel, it taught young Palestinians very little about their specific society and nation. Censorship made the teaching of history, geography, and social studies at the secondary level especially difficult (Graham-Brown 1984: 66). The military authorities also intervened in both educational and political issues affecting Palestinian universities using financial pressure, censorship, and the direct harassment of staff and students (Graham-Brown 1984: 92). This led to a severe deterioration, after 1967, of the whole educational and manpower development infrastructure: educational standards declined, the space available to classes was reduced, vocational and technical training stagnated and agricultural manpower training was eliminated (Farsoun and Landis 1990: 26; Fasheh 1984: 301). An extensive de-skilling of Palestinian manpower took place under Israeli control. The education which was received did not reflect the social and national needs of Palestinians. As a result many students and graduates experience difficulty in adapting their skills and training to the social and economic needs and the reality of employment with which they are confronted.

In the past this problem was often resolved (for the individuals concerned) through emigration and the use of their skills in the international labour markets. In

fact, employment in the states of the Persian Gulf was, until the early 1980s, an important factor in shaping Palestinian education in the occupied territories as well as in the diaspora (Graham-Brown 1984: 35). Predisposition to emigration increased in relation to an individual's possession of higher education. Graduates living on the West Bank tended to hold bachelor's degrees and those with higher degrees were in short supply. The average graduate from Bir Zeit University living abroad, for example, had more years of education to his or her credit than his classmates residing on the West Bank (Davies 1979: 71). For two decades formal education could be seen as a passport to a good, well-paid job in the Gulf or elsewhere. This led to a situation in which the relation of what was learned to social conditions in the territories was attenuated. Education came to reflect the requirements of the countries to which the Palestinians emigrated. In this the significance of the local area was almost obliterated and the education demanded did not fit the circumstances of the territories. The problems of this situation were exacerbated by the absence in the territories of a state structure to channel manpower towards particular economic needs (Graham-Brown 1984: 64), at least towards the economic needs of the occupied society. Restrictions on emigration since the early 1980s mean that while education is still generally perceived as a very important asset there is now some uncertainty as to its immediate usefulness. This was the situation I found in Tustas also.

In the absence of a state and so of 'national' institutions (the Palestine National Authority and its Ministry of Education notwithstanding) to plan or co-ordinate efforts to meet social and economic needs universities in the territories have had forced on them the role of addressing those needs. They have become more than educational institutions and are symbols of national *Palestinian* resistance and survival. Reinforcing this, even under occupation universities were *Palestinian* institutions financed independently of the Israelis and so enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy to concentrate on specifically Palestinian cultural and political concerns (Graham-Brown 1984). From this follows the crucial role of the universities, and the people educated in them, in Palestinian national and local politics. This is critical in relation to the MB-Hamas in Tustas. Its activists there are teachers and universities

graduates who have *remained* in the locality. The fact of remaining, in a context in which most such graduates do not, itself gives them special authority in addition to that deriving from their education. It is the authority of those who have put aside the possibility of personal aggrandisement through emigration and have chosen, instead, to make their talents and training available to the community and its goals. The activists' decisions to devote themselves to that community demonstrate their sincerity and help establish their moral claims to leadership in the collectivity. Their university education reinforces that claim through the authority ascribed to those national Palestinian education structures.

A history of formal education in Tustas

Formal education, though implicated in the destruction of the local does have a local history which it is also important to understand. Regular formal education was first introduced by the British. This is a feature of British policy highly valued and deeply respected by the older generations who either benefited from it or saw their children do so. They see education, along with greater employment, as the greatest benefit to everyday life brought by the British. Education is also used (*inter alia*) to differentiate the British and their period from the Turks and theirs. Abu Jihad, who was alive at the end of the Turkish period, reflected a general feeling when he said that, 'Under the Turks there was no education or medicine and the people were left in ignorance. The English were much better: they opened schools and brought free medical services to the people.' The value of this is not doubted by people such as Abu Walid who said, 'The English developed, educated, and civilised the people,' thus tying the introduction of formal education to social improvement of such a radical nature that 'they did things for us that we had not thought of before. Things that were not to be reckoned.' Or, according to Abu Bakr, 'Britain founded schools, very great schools, and the people benefited. I myself benefited. I don't want to say that the people did not benefit.' The Turks, on the other hand, are reviled as having left the people in ignorance: 'The Turks did not do anything nor did they educate anyone. In our village no-one could read and perhaps two people could write their names.' For these individuals, and all the older villagers, literacy is a hallmark of an

educated and modern society.

Given the foregoing it will come as little surprise that the history of education in the village may be described briefly. At the end of the Turkish period there were only religious schools in the village. There was a schoolroom attached to the village's Orthodox church which was poorly equipped and gave religious instruction, occasionally and irregularly supplemented by classes in arithmetic. In 1909, following the conversion of the Ghazal clan to Catholicism, the Catholic Church opened a primary school. It had only three or four classes. The subjects taught were limited to reading and writing, arithmetic, and religious instruction. All were taught by nuns. Shortly after that and before the First World War, Anglican missionaries increased their activity in the area. One female missionary came from Britain to live in the village and as part of her activities conducted some classes in basic reading and writing, in addition to her main focus on Bible study. A school was also opened by Tustasi Muslims which was not rigorously organised either. Pupils were taught only the Qur'an and simple arithmetic. Of these schools only the Catholics retain one in the village today. It has, however, been joined by another religious school established since 1967 by missionaries from the USA-based Church of God. To complete the picture of schooling available at the beginning of the Mandate (1922-1948), a number of villagers did attend schools in the towns of Ramallah and Jerusalem. However, only a handful did so at that time and virtually all came from one Christian family the then patriarch of which had received some education himself and was determined that his sons should also. Out of deference to him that family is now known to the whole village by the nickname of *dar al-mu'allim* (the house of the teacher).

With the advent of the British, regular state-financed schools were introduced to villages such as Tustas which, as a larger village with a number of smaller ones in close proximity, was chosen as the site for just such a school. In contrast to today's strong valuation of modern, organised education, the Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims joined together to oppose the building of such a school in the village. Thus, it came to be built in a neighbouring village which otherwise would have been served from Tustas. That was in 1922. Today, the rejection of that school is widely and roundly criticised as having retarded the development of the village. At that time, a

student wanting to complete even primary education had to go to school outside the village.

Education was also expanded during the Jordanian period with more schools being built in villages according to their size: small villages receiving primary schools, middle-sized ones having lower secondary schools, and larger villages with smaller ones around them receiving full secondary schools. It was during this period that Tustas was chosen as the site for a government school, this time without the village being given the option of accepting it or not. In 1950 a state school was opened to serve Tustas and the surrounding villages. Both Christian and Muslim villagers laboured to build the school which was situated on a piece of common land to the south of the village. Both land and labour were donated in what is promoted as another example of Muslim and Christian co-operation in the village. As student numbers increased it was expanded to take three lower secondary classes, and finally became a complete secondary school. That school was for boys only and opened in 1954. Later a high school for girls was also built.

There are now four schools in the village. Of these two are private and primary, and the other two are state secondary schools. The Tustas Elementary School for Boys and Girls is run by expatriate missionaries from the USA-based evangelical Church of God. It boasts 100 students, one of the American missionaries as headmistress, and seven teachers, of whom one is male and Muslim. The six female teachers at this school are converts to the Church of God. Not all of the children attending are members of that Church, however. Catholic and Orthodox parents send their children arguing that the quality of education that they receive there is higher than that available elsewhere. Many of these parents remain uneasy about the evangelical orientation of the school and are hostile to the idea of their children converting. The other primary school is run by the Catholic Church with a student body of about 140, not all of whom are Catholics and include Muslims from the surrounding villages. It is co-educational. All of its staff are Palestinian, though not necessarily from Tustas or the surrounding area. In fact, it is the case for all staff at all of the schools in Tustas that they are Palestinian except for the American headmistress of the Elementary School. The Catholic school has a priest as

headmaster, and its teaching staff includes two teaching nuns, two male teachers (both of whom are Christians though one is Orthodox), two female Catholic teachers, and one female Muslim teacher. None of the priest or nuns is originally from Tustas. The female Muslim is employed because there are approximately 50 female Muslim pupils in the school. The two state-run schools are headed by Muslims. The boys' school has about 200 pupils the majority of whom are Muslim. It has eight teachers in addition to the headmaster, all of whom are male and Muslim. The girls' school has but 150 pupils with nine teachers and a headmistress. Of these teachers two are male (one of whom is Christian) and seven are female (of whom three are Christian).

Thus, two-fifths of all the pupils in the village currently attend sectarian schools. The influence of the religious orientations of these schools on the education that their students receive is important. The Church of God as a southern USA evangelical Protestant movement has a particular orientation. It constitutes a counter-example to the Orthodox and Catholic churches which claim the majority of villagers as their followers.

Religion and formal education

The Church of God exhibits a particular logic of individualism. This is expressed in its theology of the relationship of the person to God. The logic of this individualism takes the individual as uniquely responsible for his or her relationship to God and personal salvation. Neither the kin group nor an ordained priesthood is able effectively to mediate that relationship or to achieve salvation for the individual. This is quite different from the logic found among the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Muslims. All three have greater senses of community. Among the Orthodox and Catholics this is of course expressed most densely in the celebration of the Eucharist as *Communion*. In this act, the spiritual bond held by members of these two churches to exist between individual Christians and Christ, their Church, and their fellow Christians is expressed in a single mystical union. This accentuates notions of *community* over those of individual relations to God.

Muslims do not have an ordained priesthood. From this we might expect similar notions of relationship to God as we found among the Church of God.

However, Muslims also stress the notion of a community of believers, the *umma*, beyond which are non-Muslim countries and their denizens: the *dar al-Harb* (literally, the Abode of War). In this scheme the *umma* is engaged in constant struggle with *dar al-Harb*. The position of the *umma*, and thus of Islam, is never free of the threat posed by the existence of this Other. This, in turn, serves to emphasise the *umma qua* community.

The Orthodox and Catholic Christians share with the Muslims an emphasis on salvation and relationship to God through a community; these groups also have a different orientation to community in non-religious contexts from that of the Church of God. They stress collective action in society. The Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics see themselves as acting in the processes of the world, and of their communities, in a way that the members of the Church of God do not.

While millenarianism is expressed among Muslims in Tustas it is linked to ideas of (collective) political and religious activism. This is expressed in the central notions of martyrdom (*istishhad*) and holy war (jihad). In the first of these, the individual (*shakhs*) is extinguished for the greater good of the community (*umma*). In the second, the community itself is mobilised as a whole. When the activists of the MB refer to verses from the Qur'an to prophesy the end of Israel it is done in conjunction with concepts of *istishhad* and jihad. That is to say, it is done to mobilise the people for the salvation of the *community*.

Millenarianist expressions are common among members of the Church of God also. However, without a similar emphasis on community their contextual relevance is quite different. Among these evangelical Protestants millenarianism takes on a more quietistic form. Rather than being a force for the mobilisation of the individual for the common good, millenarianism in this Church is used to encourage withdrawal of the spirit from human effort and passivity to the will of God. The missionaries and their followers are concerned to find signs indicating the approach of the Second Coming of Christ. However, this concern does not entail any explicit engagement of the followers in the processes of the world. Signs are adduced to demonstrate the approach of the Return. In its nature, however, the Millennium is not to be affected by human action. It is merely to be anticipated and hoped for. The individual, thus,

does not (and finally cannot) influence it through action. This follows the logic of concern with personal salvation as the Second Coming represents the final resolution of earthly history and the determination of each person's salvation or damnation.

The significance of the intifadas for these groups has thus been different. For the Orthodox, Catholics, and Muslims they have been events in which individual participation was required in order to achieve the common good of liberation from Israel. For the Church of God the unrest was another sign of the approach of the Millennium and confirmation that we are in the Latter Days characterised by 'wars and rumours of wars.' No further worldly action was required as events will unfold according to divine will, as foretold in the Bible.

This brings us to the different emphases in education of the Tustas Elementary School and the others in the village. The important subjects in the Elementary School which define its approach as distinct from the others are religious studies and history. History, as taught there, is *biblical* history. More specifically, it is history taught with reference to the Bible and with emphasis on finding signs of God's will in both ancient and more recent historical events. The history taught in the state schools is *national* history. The history of the Palestinian nation in confrontation with Israel is particularly emphasised.

The establishment of Israel in 1948 is obviously of crucial significance in twentieth century Palestinian history. It is presented to children in the Catholic and State schools as the establishment of a rival nation in Palestine. Teachers try to inculcate ideas of this being a denial of Palestinian national existence and rights. This is further emphasised by teachers outside school, especially by MB activists who are more organised than Christian activists in establishing extra-curricular classes and activities. An example of this is the cultural meeting discussed below, pp. 146-149.

Even among the MB priority is given to the establishment of Israel and its subsequent expansion as a denial of the rights of Palestinians. This constitutes the Israeli regime as unjust in the global discourses of nationalism and human rights. The university-educated teachers in the state school (who dominate the MB-Hamas in the village) became conversant with these discourses while at university. This has affected their presentation of the Palestinian problem to their pupils. The pupils

themselves are aware of concepts such as human rights from the mass media and politics in the village. The teachers' presentations in class reinforce this awareness. Muslim discourses are then used to mobilise the pupils. [i.e., 'modern' and 'traditional' global discourses are used together] Jihad and *istishhad* are constituted as necessary to remove this unjust regime. Chiliastic images bolster this mobilisation by claiming the inevitability of the destruction of Israel. Because of this the individual need not fear the demands of holy war or the personal obliteration of martyrdom, as such personal efforts are assured by, and ensure, the inevitability of the *umma's* triumph. Millenarianism is thus harnessed to the goal of communal action in the world.

Among the evangelical Protestants, a rather different interpretation is made. Most noticeable is that the more committed members (with the teachers being among the most committed) almost completely evade using the term 'Palestine.' Instead, the country is referred to as 'the Holy Land' (*al-Ard al-Muqaddas*), or simply, 'this land' (*hadha al-ard*). The primary significance of the Land for them is not that it is claimed by Palestinians in competition with Israelis (which is the primary significance for other Christians and the Muslims). Rather, it is important as the land in which the history of the Bible was, and its prophecies will be, realised. Events taking place in that Land are therefore interpreted in terms of Biblical references rather than in terms of the national political discourses so important to the Christian activists, or the religio-political discourses important to the Muslims. The establishment of Israel is interpreted, not in terms of imperialist expansion, colonialism, or Jewish nationalism, but in reference to Biblical history and prophecy. In this the re-establishment of Israel is a precursor to the Day of Judgement.

The *intifadas* themselves are seen as further signs pointing to the Millennium. They are taken as an example of the general unrest foretold in the Book of Revelations. The significance of these signs for the evangelical Protestants is not to mobilise the community to action. It is to reinforce the individual's awareness of the Day of Judgement and the need to prepare spiritually for that Day. Thus, historical education ties in with religious instruction. In this way the Church of God is highly individualistic and relatively asocial. Moreover the evangelical Protestants' emphasis

on the religious relevance of events and circumstances reinforces the individualistic tendencies of their beliefs. The emphasis of the Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics on the political relevances of the same events and circumstances both springs from and reinforces their sense of collectivity and of the importance of collective action in society. This emphasis also gives rise to the criticism that the Church of God has Zionist sympathies. Given all of the above it is not surprising that while more than one-third of the student body of the Catholic school is Muslim the missionary school is almost wholly Christian.

Virtually all school-age children in the village attend school. This is associated with two circumstances. Firstly, the provision of a high school in the 1950s meant that it was no longer necessary for children to leave the village in order to complete their education. The cost of education was thus significantly reduced. Secondly, the steadily increasing reliance on wage labour, especially since 1967, has meant that families have less need of their children's labour in the fields. A further factor encouraging participation is the high value placed on education as an avenue to prosperity. Thus, in the space of approximately ninety years Tustas has moved from a near absence of formal education to universal schooling.

Values of Education

Education and advancement

There is a widespread view in this community of education as good and promoting individual and social betterment and change. We saw earlier that the British were praised for their efforts in educating the people and so allowing them to develop and become 'civilised'. As an aid to emigration and high-paying jobs overseas a high positive stress is placed on formal education regardless of current circumstances. Such education is referred to as a 'weapon' which has a long-term value. For these people education has a value independent of fluctuations in the social, economic and political circumstances in which the individual finds himself. It is an investment for the future, and though (indeed, partly because) that future may change, retains its

value.

Similar attitudes have been found to be generalised among Palestinians of all classes, both in the territories and the diaspora. In situations of insecurity education seems more desirable, for example, in the refugee camps, and among the 'steadfast' inhabitants of the territories (Graham-Brown 1984): for those uprooted, displaced, and dispossessed education is a fully portable commodity which cannot be destroyed or confiscated (Davies 1979; Yusuf 1979; Badran; 1980; Hallaj 1980). Because of this Palestinians perceive higher education to be "the means of personal survival and national salvation" (Hallaj 1980: 78). The view of education as a means of social mobility, which Graham-Brown noted as mainly restricted to land-owners, merchants, and urbanites with the poorer sections of rural Palestinian society largely untouched as late as the 1950s, has since suffused the whole population, in spite of the difficulties of university graduates obtaining employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Formal education is not seen only as valuable for the individual, however. It is also ascribed an instrumental role in social development. It is ascribed a role in improving social customs and eliminating or restricting those seen as backward. This view of education as promoting development underlies the praise and gratitude expressed by older villagers for the provision of education by the British, ideas of progress and regret that the rejection of Britain's offer to situate a school in Tustas retarded the village's development. Such valuations allow education to retain a high value even at times when graduates are unemployed or when they are forced to take the same type of work as non-graduates, as is the contemporary case. The development of communications is also implicated in this, with 'Abd adding the subsidiary argument that "now the people see what the city dwellers in Jerusalem and elsewhere do and are influenced by it." Other informants make the same point in different contexts. In this way a young Muslim friend from the Muslim clan dar Ishaq, himself a university graduate, in comparing the pros and cons of life in the village with those of domicile in a city, argued that while in the past the life of rural folk may have been quite miserable today they enjoy better physical conditions without lacking the cultural and educational opportunities of sophisticates in the

cities. In his words, “the city and country folk share one culture.” Analytically, we can see this to be due to the withering of local boundaries into insignificance in the face of communicative and economic transformation and the concurrent spread of literacy, formal education, and the mass media. Fundamentally, education is highly valued, apart from any ‘traditional’ valuations, because in this century the development and drastic improvement of the people’s conditions and standard of living have been associated with more widespread formal education.

This has not been without some cost, of course. A common argument from older informants is expressed by ‘Abd thus, “the young abandoned agriculture because they became educated and thus had wider opportunities.” Importantly, the education that they received rarely suited their return to the land. While the universities have developed rapidly, as noted previously, technical and vocational training largely have been neglected, in part as a result of the Israeli occupation under which there was a lack of local job opportunities and what was available in Israel was largely semi- or unskilled. Another important influence, however, is an overemphasis by Palestinians on high-status occupations and prestigious qualifications (Graham-Brown 1984: 101). This is consistent with valuations of education as a weapon of enduring use in securing the individual’s future in the face of constantly changing circumstances.

It is obvious that education is seen by the villagers very much in terms of improving the position and prospects of individuals, as well as those of their society. While the youth do not emphasise the transformations which have overtaken Palestinian society since the Turkish period they are aware of the high educational profile of the Palestinians³ and see it very much as a tool that will allow them to build a prosperous and democratic nation once a Palestinian state is established, even despite current setbacks suffered from both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Education is thus valued for its projected social value as well as for

³ For a discussion of this and other issues see Nakhleh (1979) and Graham-Brown (1984).

being a feature which differentiates Palestinians from other Arabs⁴. Palestinians' higher levels of education (in addition to the material and other benefits that such education has brought to the individuals, particularly the emigrants, involved) encourage a high demand for the education of subsequent generations.

Tustasis firmly believed that Palestine would be the first democratic Arab state, though their hopes and optimism have been battered by Mr Yasser Arafat's increasingly authoritarian and repressive tendencies and current oppression at the hands of the Sharon government in Israel. Two features were thought to allow Palestinians to develop the democracy absent from all other Arab states. As was just mentioned, the high level of education in the Palestinian population was seen as one. The second was an idea that the circumstances of occupation by Israel and the failure of other Arab countries to achieve any solution or even gains had forced the Palestinians to arrive at a democratic means of managing the various parties and groups found in Palestinian society and to try to unite them in a common effort to solve the problem despite their differing approaches and policies. The PLO was this means. However, the disappointments of the PNA's administration mean that more now look to the Palestinian parliament, as distinct from Mr Arafat's 'government' to provide Palestinians with their democratic politics and to maintain those politics.

The villagers thus have a naïve idea of a modernisation of politics taking place. Whereas in the past people may have competed and divided politically along lines of kinship and patronage, today party ideological considerations are dominant. Even Tustas's Muslims, with their emphasis on the MB and Hamas in opposition to secular nationalism, communism, socialism and so forth follow this trend. This process reflects the movement towards book-learning and away from folk knowledge and personal experience as the basis for political expression. This is part of the change of authority giving greater importance to national structures than to local, as a result of the collapse of the significance of local boundaries. Education is influential

⁴ It should also be noted that while Palestinians generally are one of the most educated of Arab populations real divisions of class and status in that population influence access to education and quality of life, as Graham-Brown's (1984) whole study is concerned to demonstrate.

in this major social change which is nothing less than the transformation of the dominant mode of knowledge. This modernisation of politics is one aspect of that encompassing change⁵.

Changing bases of authoritative knowledge: from local to national

Muslim values of education, and the supersession of locally based power and knowledge, are succinctly expressed in the phenomenon of the ‘cultural meeting’ (*ijtima’ thaqafi*). Through the meeting young Muslim boys (there being no girls or women present, and no similar meeting among the Christians) are socialised to, or educated in, a view of the position of Palestinians in the world, through questions about their history. They are also socialised to their religion through questions about Islam.

The development of the cultural meeting suggests that the Muslim community has recognised a need for a method of inculcation into religious and national identity

⁵ Graham-Brown states that “education has been one of the most enduring sources of social change in Palestinian society both inside and outside the borders of Palestine” (Graham-Brown 1984b: 245). However, she elsewhere argues that the role of education in changing the socio-economic structures of Palestinian society since 1948 is less dramatic than has often been asserted (Graham-Brown 1984: 12). In this argument she proposes that for all the ideological importance attached to education by the Palestinian intelligentsia and nationalist movement it is still locked in patterns created by, and tending to re-create, existing social structures. This applies to administration, curricula, and attitudes as to what education should achieve.

As far as this goes, I can agree. However, the gap between her view that the influence of education has commonly been overestimated, and mine that education is highly influential in perhaps the most important change occurring in Palestinian society is only apparent. Graham-Brown is concerned with struggles *within* a mode of knowledge; I am concerned with transformation *of* the very mode itself. With regard to administration, curricula, and attitudes towards education little change is noticeable. However, I am concerned with change of the dominant mode of knowledge: a movement from locally based structures to integration into wider structures of education and knowledge as part of the economic, social, and political transformation occurring in Tustas and more generally on the West Bank. This transformation is, and is associated with, major social changes, of which the modernisation of politics is but one aspect.

different from what occurs in other structures such as the family, mosque, school, or discussion groups in the various shops, on the streets, and in the guesthouses (maq'ad). Interestingly the cultural meeting, while having the appearance of a local mechanism for inculcation, actually illustrates the *collapse* of local bases of power and knowledge and their *encompassment* by wider structures. It is significant also in that it illustrates the *conjunctive nature* of that encompassment. The wider structures do not simply intrude independently of local actions. As the case of the meeting shows, local actors are conduits for that 'intrusion.' Greater power resides with the wider structures, but the imbalance is not total. The meeting transmits non-local knowledge *tailored to fit local needs*.

The meeting itself typically begins with a reading from the Qur'an. This is followed by a sermon most commonly concerned with the necessity of Muslims following the original precepts and pure forms of their religion very closely. This is delivered by a member of the MB of some standing, often from outside the village. Following this there is a quiz which is the longest part of the meeting and the climax for many of those present. Though the event is attended by small boys, young adolescents, youths, and a few older men, competition in the quiz is limited to small boys between the ages of about five and ten years. In each round two competitors are presented with nine categories from which the leading player is required to choose one. Both then must answer a question on that subject. Another topic is then chosen. The competition proceeds on a 'round-robin' basis until a winner is determined based on the number of correct answers he gave. The topics from which the questions are chosen include religion (Muslim), history (predominantly Palestinian in the twentieth century), science, (logical) puzzles, the Arabic language (in which terms has to be defined), political idioms and three others.

The quiz format is a powerful mode for inculcating defined aspects of knowledge at an early age, and rewarding those successfully exhibiting that knowledge. The cultural meeting is public and one in which all competitors are cheered and applauded on giving correct answers. Of course, finally there is one declared winner who receives the greatest prizes and communal approbation. A hierarchy of merit is also established based on participants' relative 'success' in

correctly answering questions. This encourages competition among the boys to improve their results and overcome their rivals. The excitement of the quiz, the warm atmosphere of the meeting, the public applause and prizes given (mainly packets of sweets) all served to generate enthusiasm in the boys to learn what was required.

A meeting of this type (which in normal circumstances occurs once a month) obviously reinforces the general knowledge that the young boys are meant to be receiving in school, as well as providing them with a view of themselves as Muslims and as Palestinians and their position as such. This is apparent from the questions asked. In one meeting I attended these included, for example, the following.

History: “What was the United Nations’ resolution number 3379?”

[Answer: It said that Zionism is a form of racism (*al-‘unsuriya*).]

Religion: “What are the five duties of every Muslim?”

[Answer: The profession of faith; prayer; fasting; giving alms to the poor; and, the pilgrimage.]

Politics: “What is jihad?” [Answer: Jihad is the struggle to free

Palestine from Zionism and imperialism (*as-Sahyoniya wa al-isti‘mar*).]

It is apparent from these questions (and from the topics available for choice) that a complex mixture of religious and nationalist concepts was being introduced and connections made between them. This fits well with the position of the MB in Palestinian politics at that time, and the status of the Tustasi Muslim Brothers themselves. Given the extraordinary force of nationalism in Palestinian politics it is in the MB’s interest to portray its religious focus as simultaneously nationalist. We have also seen that the MB activists of Tustas are primarily university educated. In specific, they were educated at Bir Zeit University, an important seat and symbol of Palestinian nationalism. Most of these teacher-activists received their university education in the 1970s when Islamism was relatively weak and so politically were influenced by the nationalism of that period in particular. It therefore would be surprising if their current Islamism was not influenced by secular nationalist theories and discourses.

The meeting itself, developed as an activity to reward immersion in desired aspects of knowledge, reflects the Muslim community's emphasis on promoting communal unity. The absence of such an activity among the Christians as a community is interesting given that community's self-characterisation and nature as fragmented (Kaim 1997). By not organising such a meeting the Christians deprive themselves of a mechanism to maintain a coherence of Christian Palestinian traditions and identity.

The development and valuation of formal education has been accompanied by 'book knowledge' taking precedence over knowledge derived from personal experience, families and kin, which are almost archetypal examples of 'local' knowledge. The development of better communications between the village and the wider world has also been accompanied by a movement away from reliance on traditional and often family-based sources of information and knowledge towards the non-traditional and less personal sources of the modern world, and the expansion of formal education was integral to this movement. Also, penetration by the mass media has played a part in this complex transformation. Space limitations mean that I cannot address these issues here, but will illustrate the importance of education in the process.

The Muslim teacher Abu Bakr is an educated, middle-aged man of dar Ishaq who studied, and now teaches, history. He was able to elaborate much more of the history of Palestine and the village than informants older than he. We might otherwise have expected that the ikhtiyariya would be better versed in the particular history of the village and, in fact, on closer examination this is the case. Abu Bakr, with a grasp of the wider history of the area, usually began with facts drawn from that wider stock of knowledge from which he reasoned down to the particular circumstances obtaining, or which he thought to obtain, in the village. Thus, in discussing the particular case of the building of schools in Tustas, he began by enunciating British responsibilities under the system of mandates established by the League of Nations after the First World War. Older (and less well-educated) informants such as Abu Jiryis (a semi-literate Christian of the Faras clan), who lacked such a background in the history of Palestine, began immediately with events in the

village to which they or their relatives had been witness; some mention would be made that the British encouraged education but not that this was a responsibility of the Mandatory Power as charged by the League of Nations.

Someone such as Abu Bakr gives priority to his book-based knowledge and takes pleasure in displaying it. Those less educated tend to defer to people such as he and with great regularity referred me to the renowned literate figures of the village, particularly Abu Bakr and Abu ‘Umar among the Muslims and Abu Walid among the Christians. Because of this immersion in the culture and history to be found in books, the mass of the older people thought that they would be the best people in the village for me to spend time with, get to know, and talk with. University-educated youths differed from this view. They felt that everyone in the village was dominated by traditional ways of thought and folk knowledge which, by their natures, were unscientific and so not worthy of my consideration. Their unworthiness was compounded by their information being oral. This group regularly advised me to abandon seeking the knowledge of such people in favour of a period of library-based research. The whole idea of doing field work, of trying as much as possible to participate in local life and experience local conditions, seemed to them incomprehensible and bizarre. Only by using books and disregarding the unwritten knowledge and the uninformed habits of life of the villagers could I (in their view) hope to complete a “scientific”, and hence valuable, study. Reliance on folk knowledge and my own growing familiarity with local life would render my efforts futile because archival knowledge, by virtue of what was seen as its detachment from personal considerations and by the very fact of its being printed, was to be considered valuable. For the duration of my field work these youths worried that my work would prove to be useless because of my “unscientific” reliance on field observation and local sources and the observation and experience of ‘mistaken’ or ‘prejudiced’ local ways.

Apart from concerning himself with the responsibilities of Britain as a Mandatory Power when discussing schools in Tustas, when Abu Bakr’s attention was drawn to the question of changes in village life due to the development of roads he again responded by expounding a general history of British road building in all of

historic Palestine but not specifically in Tustas itself. For informants such as Abu Bakr to distinguish between knowledge derived from wider as opposed to local or 'traditional' sources may not be possible, let alone productive, because they have so internalised the knowledge that they have received through formal education and the mass media. Such distinction is valuable as an analytical and heuristic device, however, as it serves to indicate that significant changes in the dominant mode of knowledge have occurred in a matter of two or three generations. It is those changes which cause the contrasts between villagers of the generations of the older Abu Jihad of the Wazir lineage and the young Shafiq of the Ghazal and in their reliance respectively on knowledge from direct experience and from secondary sources. It is also such changes which have made the knowledge of the elders of little interest to young people today. Just as the decline in the importance of family and kin units in the economic sphere had important implications for social relations, so the reduced significance of the *knowledge provided by such local units* has similar importance in the areas of education and communications, and in relations of authority and legitimacy.

It was the youth of both communities who expressed doubt and even disdain for the information that I gained from field work in a remote and 'backward' village. They saw Tustasis as ignorant because they did not possess books on the subjects in which I expressed interest or on the history of the village. As with the older villagers, they referred me (when I remained obstinate in my desire to conduct field, as opposed to solidly library, research) to those villagers such as Abu Bakr, who had studied history at university or who were otherwise acquainted with reading and writing (and thus with the extra-village world of knowledge), or Abu Walid, who kept a diary over many years. Contrary to this tendency was a more hierarchical view (more common among the wider community but sometimes expressed by youths, usually those in the earliest years of secondary education) that I should go to the oldest. However, this tendency was always secondary to the 'literate imperative.' Majid, a graduate in journalism who works as a labourer, said to me, even towards the end of my field work, "you will suffer because you are not consulting books. You need to take your information from books and not waste your time here."

In this view, information from books is to be taken seriously but that from experience of local life and conditions, and from the villagers (particularly from the elders who are not usually able to read) is not. The latter is seen as unreliable, distorting and definitely not of scientific or serious academic value, in contrast to the former.

Books and formal education are accepted as preferred methods of acquiring knowledge, not only in the case of research such as I was carrying out, but for the villagers themselves in ordinary contexts such as, for example, the best way to protect fruit from birds. It is interesting that the strongest advocates of this view are the youth (who have universally received at least some high-school level education) and especially those who have been to university. Middle-aged informants, while deferring to the youths' view in this when it is presented, are otherwise less likely to promote book-based knowledge to the exclusion of that of the elders. Because the middle-aged generally have a less extensive formal education than their children, their socialisation was not dominated by formal education to the extent that the youths' has been and they are less radical in their demands for deference to the formal mode. In addition to this, however, the high value placed on education as a tool for individual and social improvement, indeed for the liberation of Palestinians and the eventual establishment of a democratic state, means that in most conflicts between local and non-local knowledge it is the latter which most obviously and immediately receives legitimisation from Palestinian discourses. It is formal education which is argued to have improved and to have the potential to improve Palestinians' circumstances as well as to distinguish them even from other Arabs.

Beyond this, education is seen to be important in understanding the modern world. For Tustasis that world is characterised by rapid change, an idea particularly emphasised by the older generations who have (at least in the case of the oldest informants) witnessed transformation from a pre-industrial to an industrial economy in their lifetimes. In advanced Western countries a similar idea (namely that formal education and not traditional knowledge is the key to understanding of, and improvement in, the modern world) is reasserting itself for similar, though different, reasons. For the villagers of Tustas it is because of developments associated with the

coming of the industrial economy and its technologies, while in the contemporary West the current developments there are described, at least popularly, as the Second Industrial Revolution or entrance to the post-industrial era.

This is basic as to why the traditional knowledge of the elders is little sought or respected in the village. In the circumstances of change to a different mode of knowledge, even traditional farming lore is seen as inferior to acquaintance with fertilisers and modern treatment of crop disease. Moreover, the most significant change with which Palestinians have had to come to terms is the creation, consolidation, and expansion of the State of Israel, apparently with the Arab world unable to check it.

Given that knowledge is tied to power, rejection of the elders' knowledge is a further assurance of their irrelevance. The loss of control of land and labour destroyed the power base of traditional notables. Rejection of the local knowledge on which they relied works against the rise of new notables from the current elders and so completes the transformation from the old order.

However, not only the circumstances of integration into the world economy and system are important influences on the culture of locality. So are local village structures of unity and fragmentation (discussed elsewhere; see Kaim 1997). A strong sense of nationhood and national enterprise, and the creation of a democratic system among Israeli Jews in Israel itself are the reasons given for Israel's success among Christian youths. These represent thoroughly modern political developments and are seen as such by these youth. They also represent the supersession of local forms of knowledge and power by national and global forms. They are national in that they are Israeli and global to the extent that they take global discourses as their referents. To compete with this Palestinians must create institutions and structures with similar national and global orientations. Christian youth are inhibited in doing this on the local level, however. While the young Christian leaders share histories of tertiary education their division into different parties such as the PPP, Fatah, and the DFLP based on ideological considerations hinders co-ordination in a way that the Muslims do not suffer with their unity in one clan and universal adherence to the MB-Hamas. Further, they are generally employed as labourers, unlike the young Muslim leaders

who are teachers in the Muslim-dominated State school. While the Christians have status as university graduates that status is necessarily more restricted than it would be if they were both graduates *and* teachers.

The attitudes of Muslim youth in the village are somewhat different. They most commonly argue that the Israelis have been successful because they have remained true to their religion, have created a *Jewish* (as opposed to a purely national) state, and have been prepared to defend their state with their lives, if necessary.

Emphasis on adherence to religion and the creation of a confessional state of course fits well with the Muslim Brothers' and Hamas' own orientation and political agenda. As noted before, however, the leaders of the MB in Tustas are primarily university-educated men who derive some authority from that education itself. They also derive authority from having been educated at *Bir Zeit University*, a strong *national* symbol. The religious orientation of the MB, with its references to Palestinian nationalism in addition to Islam, is thus also a suitable vehicle for the Muslim youth to move away from the compromised and decreasingly relevant *local* knowledge of the elders to a form with wider referents which, because of that wider orientation, is more suited to modern political competition and struggle. These combine to give the leaders of the MB authority across the whole confession and through areas of religious, political, social, economic, and educational interest.

Thus, the Muslims' transformation has taken an orthodox shape, in contrast to the Christians' heterodoxy. Cleavages restrict the authority of the Christian leadership. Of the five lay teachers at the Catholic school only the Catholic man was educated at university. The two nuns are neither university graduates nor Tustasis. While the Catholic priest completed tertiary studies as a seminary student religious seminaries do not have the same political status as universities. Furthermore, he is not from Tustas. His leadership potential is thus limited. In the Protestant school the logic of individualism of the Church of God has created a disposition to a quietistic millenarianism at odds with political action in the world. This most fundamentally inhibits members of that Church from assuming political leadership in the community. Not only are none of the teachers politically active, *none of the members*

of that congregation are either. A secondary factor constraining the evangelical *teachers* from assuming political leadership is their status as women in this culture. The only male teacher at the school is Muslim, and thus also not suitable for leadership of the Christians.

Even as the significance of locality has collapsed and the younger generations reject the locally-based knowledge of their elders as inferior, irrelevant, and inappropriate to their changed circumstances of life and political struggle, local considerations remain relevant. In the midst of building new authoritative knowledge predicated on the idea of a 'Palestinian nation' local communal dispositions to fragmentation and unity are obvious and powerful.

This is the crux of the matter. While the Christian and Muslim communities are both abandoning local knowledge in the face of global forces that local resources are insufficient to address, the shape of their abandonment and transformation is different and follows deep-seated structural dispositions to heterodoxy and orthodoxy, respectively. We have demonstrated that changed understanding of locality as a base for knowledge reflects, reinforces and contributes to a transformation of local power relations. Concretely, across the generations, rejection of the elders' experience based knowledge in favour of book based knowledge is integral in the developing irrelevance of the elders in local power relations and in preventing the rise of new notables. This is important, also, as the local aspect of the development and mobilisation of a national political discourse. Nevertheless, within that the transformations in the Muslim and Christian communities are different, showing that their pre-existing dispositions to orthodoxy and heterodoxy affect not only the nature and expression of the transformation, but also the transformed state and social conditions. Thus, even at this level cultural diversity is maintained even though the forces confronting the two communities of action and significance are the same and undifferentiated. The reason for this is diversity on the level of *structure* and cultural logics, and so of dispositions, which shape the *action* taken to negotiate the new and common global *circumstances*.

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