

# A Discursive Archaeology of Social and Economic Developments in a Palestinian Village on the West Bank

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Developments in the British period (1917–1948)

Structured and structuring emigration under the Mandate

Developments since 1948

The influence of education

This paper seeks to present a study of local structures through which global circumstances are negotiated. I have argued elsewhere (Kaim 1997, 1998, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005) 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 structure is connected to circumstance. The presentation is heavily ethnographic rather than theoretical. However, it follows the theoretical points outlined elsewhere (Kaim 1997, 1998, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2014). It also builds on and extends the discussion of antecedent developments set out in Kaim (2005). As in that earlier study this article is concerned with the village of Tustas (not the village's real name), which is a Palestinian village on the West Bank, situated in the Judean hills overlooking the Palestinian plain. It is a mixed Christian and Muslim village with a total population of approximately 1,000, about two thirds of which is Christian and one third Muslim. In particular I look at the effects of developments since the period of the British Mandate in Palestine as indicative of the interaction between local and global forces, structures and circumstances.

## Developments in the British period (1917–1948)

When the British introduced a comprehensive system of land registration, ownership, and

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taxation in the Mandatory period a major transformation to individual holdings occurred. The British surveyed the land in 1935 for taxation purposes, leaving the previous Ottoman divisions unaltered. However, they numbered all the holdings and determined the cultivator of each. They also made taxes on the registered land payable in money. This combination of systematic registration, the investment of ownership in individuals, and the requirement that those individuals pay their taxes in currency dramatically spurred change to a money economy. Production for money in order to pay taxes became a dominant consideration. This in turn further accentuated a process of emphasising the household (headed by the title-holder) as a productive unit.

These changes to the existing cultural specifications, brought about by the application of British cultural logics of ownership and government, created a new pressure on the land. The economy went from one based on production of a system-defined sufficiency, to one based on the production of surplus saleable to pay taxes. The village moved from being a sufficiency economy to become a surplus economy. At the same time inheritance caused the size of holdings to decrease, compounding the problem. In addition, in order to sell the surplus being produced the village had to be connected to a market. Such a connection was made, also by the British. They built roads to the village, allowing its inhabitants easily to *sell* their produce in *regional* markets. Thus, Tustasis began to market produce in Lod, having been provided with the need (for money) and the opportunity (to get to market).

Engagement with the market, however, makes certain minimal demands on productive organisation in a system based on the household. Internal community relations must permit the household to accumulate produce or else the amounts required for external exchange will never be realised (Sahlins 1972 : 224). This, in turn, entails greater productive separation of households than is found in the domestic mode of production. More productive households cannot subsidise the less productive without diminishing their own surplus. If such internal levelling is encouraged external trade relations will not be sustained. Such levelling did not occur in Tustas. The villagers embraced the money economy and its demands on the relations of production, as is evinced by emigration which took place under the British. That emigration was undertaken to secure paid employment on the plain, but such employment itself increased the productive separation of households by making them increasingly self-sufficient.

Movement from barter to money-based exchange also was crucial in improving Tustasis' material life. Money entered the village as remittances from those who went to work on the Palestinian plain, as well as from the sale of produce at markets. Before villagers were employed as workers in factories, in the police, the post, the port, and even in plantations, money was rarely seen in the village itself. As one informant, Abu Subhi of dār Abu Mahmūd, related: "before people started going outside to work money was virtually unknown. It was hard to get. People here didn't use it because they didn't have any. When necessary, they exchanged goods." This system of barter was widespread and lasted into the early British period, during which time the villagers still, "took eggs and olive oil to the shops [in the village] and exchanged them for cotton thread and cucumbers." With the creation of jobs under the British, "the people got work and money and began to buy, not exchange, goods." The spread of money also meant that necessities and luxury goods could be bought at markets outside the village. Elders take a degree of satisfaction in relating how until the 1920s there were no standing beds in the village, or that when people went to conduct business in town they would commonly walk barefoot and only on reaching their destination put on any shoes that they might have, in order to preserve them. The people's diet also changed and improved. Whereas before the staple was olives money allowed villagers to buy tomatoes, rice, and potatoes which had been rare or unknown beforehand. This in turn, improving the health of the people, further stimulated population growth. Not surprisingly then, the older generation, both those who themselves went to work on the plain and those who remained in the village, agreed that remittances to the village from the plain substantially improved the life of the people: the people were (and see themselves as having been) lifted out of hunger and poverty.

The improvement of diet in conjunction with the intensification of labour through population increase meant that the village kept growing. Although expansion of the village in the 1890s had increased its area by fifty per cent the greatest movement occurred after the establishment of British power. There was a wholesale dispersal of the village population. In the 1930s the Christian Ghazāl clan moved north into the area allocated to them as a clan during the division of village lands. The Christian Faras clan and the Muslims moved to their respective quarters en masse in the same period, so that the residential pattern of the village took on its current distribution into an area for the Ghazāl, another for the Faras and a third for the Muslims. These large-scale movements were stimulated by severe overcrowding.

The privatising influence of production centred on the household in articulation with the money economy is further illustrated by a tendency to build separate houses for each household. This has continued to the present day. Dwellings built in the expansion from the 1890s to the 1940s were for individual households and were houses not compounds. However, their internal configuration was similar to divisions within the old *dār* (household) enclosures. In the compound each *usra* (immediate family) had two adjoining square multi-function rooms. These two rooms combined the functions of kitchen, dining-room, bedroom, bathroom, storage room, and even stable, though animals were separated from people.

There is a much greater functional specialisation of rooms in houses built since the 1950s. These houses have as many rooms as the owner can afford. The proportions of the rooms and their size and layout are idiosyncratic. The common pattern, however, is to have separate kitchen, dining-room, parlour, sitting room, bathroom, bedrooms, and storage areas. This specialisation is much as is found in contemporary Western houses and indicates a similar privatisation of space as has occurred in the West since the Industrial Revolution. This specialisation and the building of separate houses of nuclear families distinguishes neither the religious communities nor individual households or *‘ā’ilas* (extended families, the constituent families of a *hamūla* (clan)) in the village. The important distinction is between the old village, demarcated by the existence of old *dār* enclosures, and the almost suburban residential pattern of the more recently populated areas.

This tendency to build separate houses for nuclear families, and an accompanying tendency to build separate bedrooms for the members of those families, reflects and is related to the movement of the locus of economic life and the alteration of the connection of family relationship to access to resources. From the late 1890s and through the Mandate the primary productive unit was the household. As productive units households require an internal pooling of resources and labour. While not absolutely necessary multi-functional rooms reflect this cultural logic of co-operation. Since the end of the Mandate, and especially since the Israeli period (1967–present), the household has become a unit of consumption dependent on productive forces and relations centred outside it. The privatisation of space in the rooms of houses built in this period reflects the privatisation of labour inherent in the logic of economic organisation based on individual wage labour. Thus, it is not surprising that houses built in the period from the 1890s to the 1940s do not have the specialisation of room function as do those of the period since the 1950s. The crisis of conjunction in

Tustas can be thought of as a moment of the 'suburbanisation' of Seccombe (1987) and the 'urban penetration' of Lawless (1987). Beyond this, the generalised occurrence of these tendencies in both communities is a further indication that such objective developments by themselves will not explain the bifurcated developments of Bourdieu's (1977 ; 1990) orthodoxy and heterodoxy so powerful here.

### **Structured and structuring emigration<sup>1</sup> under the Mandate**

Emigration was the most powerful expression of the dispositions and logics engendered by the economic changes we have discussed. It is a phenomenon of the twentieth century, not occurring on a large scale until after the First World War. Under the Mandate a capitalist sector developed in the economy of Palestine and caused significant structural economic changes<sup>2</sup>. I have already referred to the introduction of a money economy and modern tax structure and the resultant shift of productive focus from subsistence to surplus. Under these conditions most peasants ceased to be able to reproduce themselves economically without obtaining access to more land or by finding off-farm work to supplement their agricultural income.

Related to these other structural economic changes, and influential in its own right, was the conversion of labour into a commodity. In Tustas, it was nearly impossible to obtain access to more productive land, and many were led to seek employment in the towns and cities and to send their daughters out to domestic service. Thus, emigration began, but not out of Palestine. Rather it was emigration to the cities of the Palestinian plain. Such movement to the plain was the most immediately beneficial means open to these people to improve the surplus productivity of their labour : by working for wages money income could be increased dramatically and immediately. By the mid-1920s a large number of villagers had gone to Jaffa which was Tustas' main destination. A smaller group went to Lod. Only a few individuals went to other places in Palestine such as Haifa, Jerusalem, or Ramle.

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1 For our purposes emigration refers to leaving the village or historic Palestine (being that area under British Mandate from 1922 to 1948, exclusive of trans-Jordan) in order to settle or work for extended periods elsewhere. It excludes the few cases of families moving to other villages because of disputes within Tustas or because of religious conversions.

2 For discussion of this see Graham-Brown 1982 ; Asad 1975 ; Abed 1988 ; and Owen 1981.

Once in Jaffa varied types of work were taken up. The most common source of employment was the port with its strong demand for wharf labourers and night watchmen. Post offices and banks also employed significant numbers of Tustas' emigrants as night watchmen. The next largest group was those who worked in the police. Smaller numbers went to work in factories and workshops. Females also emigrated with poorer families sending their daughters to work as domestic servants in the houses of very rich, well-to-do Arab families in Jaffa, and of foreigners, particularly the British and Germans. These girls performed general housework, ironing, cleaning, acting as governesses, working in the kitchen, and serving food. There is no such large-scale employment of women outside the village today<sup>3</sup>.

Emigration in this period was undertaken by Muslims and Christians alike without aban-

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3 Attitudes concerning the employment of women in private homes far from their immediate families were more permissive in this period than is the case today. "The people did not get angry if a girl worked outside. It was accepted. Everyone was working. All our girls were working outside" : "the needy put their girls out to work : those who were not needy would feed them without doing so, but they were few. There was not enough to eat and people were hungry. What else could they do? Today no girls work outside. All of them live with their families."

This acceptance and the incidence of females working outside the home contrasts with the situation today, as is mentioned in the second quotation above. Only six women currently work outside the village on a regular basis. Five of these were unmarried when I carried out my field work. The married woman was a teacher, as was her husband. Of the five unmarried females three were sisters and worked in offices in Ramallah, the fourth who was unrelated also worked in an office there, and the fifth was employed as a teacher in the village when I arrived, but later went to work in a foreign school in West Jerusalem. Apart from this last one, all of these young women resided in the village and returned to it each afternoon. All were Christian. No Muslim women worked outside the village on a regular basis. The earlier acceptance of females working outside of the village has been reduced as the standard of living has risen without the employment of females on a large scale. The household has had its productive function reduced since the time that young women's employment was common. Additionally, the threat of hunger has receded. The two are related. The supersession of agriculture as the main source of subsistence and the rise of wage labour as the main source of income have reduced the socially perceived 'need' for women to work outside the home. As has been noted elsewhere in the Levant, traditionally peasant women had to work in the fields to ensure subsistence. As their extra-domiciliary labour has ceased to be necessary to ensure that subsistence it has often been dispensed with. In this peasants have emulated what they felt to be the desirable behaviour of the city. Traditionally, middle class urban women did not work outside the house, though this itself has changed since the 1960s.

doning land in the village. Even those who otherwise were living mainly in the cities came back “in the time of the olives. They harvested the olives, pressed the oil out, and returned to their work in the cities.” Their property in the village remained their own. The need to maintain the land and its cultivation constrained the numbers emigrating to the plain and meant that the majority of villagers remained in Tustas. Generally a man emigrating to the plain would need one or two sons to remain in the village to tend land there. If he had more than this some sons also could go off to the city without ill effect on his property.

It is obvious that agriculture had not been superseded, and that in spite of the productive crisis it still provided at least some subsistence needs. The fact that village produce was marketed in this period further illustrates this point. However, the emigration of an adult male (the usual emigrant of that time) to the plain took one of the most productive members of the household out of agriculture<sup>4</sup>. So, while agriculture had not been superseded, the preparedness of the inhabitants to emigrate indicates that its relative importance had declined. Agricultural production fell therefore, though money income from work on the plain more than offset this decline.

This initial phase lasted until 1947/8 when increasing civil disturbance and, finally, the creation of the State of Israel and the accompanying exodus of Palestinians caused almost all of the villagers to return, accompanied by a large number of refugees originating from elsewhere. Once emigration recommenced it differed significantly from that under the Mandate.

## Developments since 1948

The productive crisis continued after the establishment of Israel in 1948. Indeed, it was compounded by the loss of the Palestinian plain. The establishment of Israel cut communications and movement between the West Bank and the plain. In the exodus of Palestinians from the areas under Israeli control all those from Tustas who had been outside the village returned to it, except for one man who remained behind. This placed enormous strain

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4 The emigration of female villagers further reduced the labour force available for agriculture. Those involved, however, were young girls, whose agricultural role was limited to picking olives from the ground during harvest. This labour was an important aspect of quality control, but was limited to a few weeks per year. The monetary return on labour in the cities would have more than compensated for this slight drop in agricultural labour.

on the village and its productive capacity. There were food shortages and hardship in the village because “its lands were not sufficient for the inhabitants.” There was also pressure on housing. This was made worse by the arrival of refugees who were not from the village at all. According to a Muslim of the Waẓir clan who was about twenty-five years old then, “there were people everywhere : under the olive trees, in the caves, in the open fields. Wherever there was space. The place was full of people. Merely finding enough food to eat was difficult.”

The position of refugees originating from the plain was made more difficult because they lacked kin connections in the locality. Even though the development of the household as the basic unit of production had entailed a separation of that unit from others and the development of a logic of individualism, in extreme circumstances appeals could be made to one's kin for assistance. The refugees could not make appeals in this way and it is not surprising to learn that they had problems elsewhere too. Generally on the West Bank where the refugees of 1948 settled into established villages social tensions rose (Graham-Brown 1984b). The new inhabitants usually had no access to land (having neither title nor previous kin connection to it) and their status as landless people tended to be low in the eyes of the prior inhabitants. Traditionally, land had been a basis of power and influence. Also, although emigration had been embraced as a way of increasing household income, agriculture had not been superseded entirely. In the hardship of the 1948 exodus claims to land became more important rather than less. The influx of refugees put additional pressure on existing land and resources, while claims to land provided a chance (however small) to grow some food. Tustas was not subject to these pressures over the longer term, however, as the refugees stayed only a short time : most had left within three years. Because of the rugged terrain agriculture has always been difficult there. Better opportunities presented themselves elsewhere, both to the refugees and to Tustasis themselves.

The very rapidity with which both refugees *and villagers* left Tustas indicates the stress that people were under at this time. There was a mass exodus from 1949, particularly of youths (*shabāb*) ranging in age from their early twenties to their mid-thirties. Emigration thus removed members of the most productive age group.

Emigration after 1948 was different from that under the Mandate, however. The establishment of Israel in 1948 is a critical juncture in Palestinian history generally. Its effect on voluntary emigration (as distinct from the flight of refugees) has also been profound.

Firstly, the establishment of Israel and the events surrounding it meant simply that it was no longer possible for the majority of villagers to work on the Palestinian plain. Emigration changed from being intra- to inter-national. Additionally, wider developments in areas as diverse as the Middle East and the Americas caused the characteristics of the typical emigrant and the work undertaken to change.

Almost immediately after the return, in 1948, of those who had gone to the plain, Tustasis began to go to Amman in Jordan in search of employment. However, they also ranged more widely. During the 1950s they started to go to the countries of the Persian Gulf (particularly Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain), the United States, and South America<sup>5</sup>. This continued until the 1970s. As the period progressed the proportion of people going to Latin America decreased and increasing numbers went to work in the Gulf States. The restrictions placed by many of those states on the admission of foreign workers during the 1980s meant that over that decade decreasing numbers were able to go there. (Following the Gulf War of 1991 it became impossible.) More generally, economic downturn and a generally tight labour market internationally have drastically reduced the numbers going to either Latin America or the United States. Very few opportunities for emigration remain and even university graduates are forced to work as un- or semi-skilled labourers in Israel.

### **The influence of education**

Very quickly educational background became important in influencing the flow of emigrants. Skilled and educated workers generally went to the area around the Persian Gulf. Those without educational or occupational qualifications went to Latin and North America.

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5 In the 1950s, of those who went to the Americas, the overwhelming majority went to South America, particularly Venezuela and Brazil. At present, however, those living in the USA outnumber those in Latin America. This results from secondary emigration from Latin America and the Arab countries. Those who went to Latin America in the 1950s were the less well educated. During the latter part of that decade the more educated began to go to the Gulf States; this continued until restrictions were introduced by those States. The bulk of the emigration to the USA took place in the 1960s and 1970s. No-one from Tustas went to Africa or to non-Arab countries in Asia. Very few went to Europe, though some went there to further their education. Half a dozen went to Greece, and a similar number went to the former Soviet Union on scholarships from that country. Only two have gone to France, completing those who have gone to Europe.

Strong situational factors generated a large emigration. From the 1950s to the 1970s the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia experienced rapid economic expansion, fuelled by the oil boom, but without sufficient trained manpower to fill their needs (Graham-Brown 1984 : 35). Trained Palestinians were unable to find sufficient work in their host countries or on the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip and so a large movement of Palestinians to the Persian Gulf took place. According to the International Labour Organisation between 1975 and 1979 there was a yearly net outflow of 20,000 people from the occupied territories, two-thirds of whom came from the West Bank (in Said et al. 1988 : 283). Between 1968 and 1975 approximately 9,000 people left the West Bank annually. This emigration mainly comprised professional and educated people and was in the main directed to the Gulf. Of the 70,000 Palestinians with university degrees not more than ten per cent work in the occupied territories. This emigration of the educated was encouraged by Israeli policies. Emigration from Tustas has followed these general patterns.

In addition to influencing emigration flows and the types of work taken up by emigrants the new importance of education has influenced the development of general notions of what 'success' is. It is, for most Tustasis, the achievement of material prosperity and high-status (preferably white-collar) work. All emigrants in the British period took blue-collar jobs requiring little formal education. After 1948 the type and status of employment taken up and the remuneration received came to be closely related to education. Consequently, 'success' too is now closely related to education, and is seen by Tustasis to be so related. Until the 1991 Gulf War the Persian Gulf was generally equated with 'success', with those (mainly educated<sup>6</sup>) Palestinians working there able to make good money.

Tustasis, as with Palestinians more widely, are conscious of the influence of education in this. They attribute the success of villagers who emigrated to the Gulf states and Jordan to the high level of education common among Palestinians generally and among Tustasi emigrants to the Gulf in particular. The people of Tustas, like their compatriots elsewhere, are conscious that Palestinians' status as the most highly educated group among the Arabs allowed them to take advantage of the need for skilled labour. In contrast to Palestinians' education "there was no education [ *ilm* : lit. : knowledge] in the Gulf States. They were camel-herders and fishermen. They also used to fish for pearls in the sea. Because of this we were able not only to establish ourselves in private business, but also became in-

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6 It should be noted that the division into the categories of 'educated' and 'not educated' are not mine but are used by the people themselves.

fluent as civil servants.”

Whereas before those who were educated had little difficulty in finding appropriate employment overseas this is no longer the case. Restrictions enacted by receiving countries have changed the prospects of all the educated, whether educated domestically or overseas. As a middle-aged Protestant of the Ghazāl said to Shafiq (one of five brothers, two of whom have been educated abroad, one in the former Soviet Union, the other in Greece), “all of you are stuck here, even those who went abroad to study at university. Today people may go abroad for an education but they *work* here,” [original emphasis]. With more bitterness Abu Fathi asked rhetorically, “where might one work today? Kuwait no longer admits anyone. Saudi Arabia does not accept anyone at the moment. They take care of their own citizens. It is very difficult now. People still try to go to Amman, but we are not accepted even there anymore. They all tell us to go back to where we came from.”

The extent of the decline is obvious when we consider that in the period from 1973 to 1982 an average of 17 per 1,000 inhabitants of the territories emigrated to the Gulf states, but that by 1985 this had fallen to 3 per 1,000 (Farsoun and Landis 1990 : 24). Not surprisingly there has been a steady decline in remittances also, having a serious impact on local life.

These reductions mean that whereas until the 1980s very few of the educated remained in the village (and those who did found employment as teachers in the schools) today, few leave and university graduates are forced to work as un- or semi-skilled labourers in Israel. All those graduating in the five or so years leading up to my field work and since then have been forced to work locally only. Thus Talib, a Christian speaking of his nephew (who was present at the time), illustrated the problems facing the younger generation by saying,

for example ‘Azmi graduated from university, he is educated. In the Gulf he could work for a university but here he has to go to Israel and work as a common labourer. Nothing else is available to us. Our intelligent young men can work in Israel’s plantations and factories as common labourers, but they cannot be anything better. But we need money and so are forced to accept such work.

This reduction of the economic rewards to be gained from education has not dampened

enthusiasm for the education of the young, however. Education is still seen as a way of improving the life and position of the individual and of promoting the development of society. Even though direct experience would indicate that few material benefits presently accrue to those who have taken the trouble to gain a university education, in the face of the unsettled circumstances in which these people live they see the possession of education as maybe, in the future, benefiting those who have it, as circumstances change. In the words of Abu Talib (no relation to the Talib mentioned above), himself an educated, urbane, and unemployed man,

I want my children to be educated. When a man is educated his knowledge is his weapon. His education will allow him to find work. He will have a job! It is not certain that circumstances will remain as they are now. They will change after a year, or two, or three. Education is preferable, naturally.

Education is thus to be valued as a thing in itself: as a weapon. It does not matter if one does not get a job immediately, since if one is educated one will get one eventually. Education is, therefore, still to be valued as an investment for the future, which remains unknown. It is precisely because the future is unpredictable that education retains its potential value.

This positive valuation of education stems from the belief that, finally, it ensures the prosperity of whoever has it. It provides the *individual* with the wherewithal to obtain success *independently* and is the individual's *best hope* for security and prosperity. This valuation is thus subversive to kin control over the individual's life, a control more likely to constrain the individual's eventual success than enhance it. Education has been demanded by the historical circumstances obtaining in the countries receiving Palestinian emigrants. Tustasis wishing to maximise their own economic chances (given their own historical conditions of productive crisis) through emigration responded to that circumstance and the educated prospered and were 'successful'. This action was part of the alteration and ultimate transformation of the social structures, logics, and dispositions of Tustasis. That transformation is a movement from collectivity to individualism. Emigration thus has been simultaneously a symptom and a cause of the villagers' deepening articulation with the wider economy and their increasing individualism. Close to three fifths of those identified as 'villagers' live abroad and only about two fifths live within the confines of Tustas<sup>7</sup>. The phenomenon is clearly extensive. But its nature is also important. Because the articulation is based on in-

dividual wage labour it increases dispositions to individualism. The proletarianisation of the occupied territories since 1967 has further accentuated these developments and trends.

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7 I took these data from the last comprehensive survey of Tustas, which was conducted by Bir Zeit University in 1982. (The last census of the West Bank took place in 1967 making this survey the most useful figures available.) The survey found that at that time there were 1,030 people resident in the village and possessing identification cards permitting residence on the West Bank. A total of 1,500 male members of the families resident in the village were recorded as living abroad. Thus close to three fifths of those identified as villagers live abroad and only about two fifths live in Tustas. Incidentally, this level of emigration far exceeds the rate of about ten per cent I estimate for the British period by looking at the genealogies that I recorded.

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