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The Muslim Settlement of Late Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine: Comparison with Jewish Settlement Patterns

Seth J. Frantzman, PhD
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Israel

Ruth Kark, PhD
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Israel

Abstract

In the late Ottoman and Mandatory periods, Palestine's rural landscape underwent a great transformation. This study examines how the Muslim population expanded beyond its traditional inhabitation in the highlands and settled the fluid inventory of marginal lands in the coastal plains and unpopulated valleys of Palestine. In settling these marginal landscapes their settlement dovetailed with Jewish settlement patterns. While most studies have emphasized the competitive aspect of this process, examining Zionist and Arab national claims, this research points to a different aspect of this new settlement—mainly how much the Jewish and Muslim settlement patterns mirrored one another and how they were part of similar physical processes and complemented one another. Relying on censuses, aerial photographs, and period maps, as well as other archival sources, this is the first systematic research to examine the full extent of new Muslim settlements in Palestine in the late Ottoman and Mandatory periods, and to draw parallels between this phenomenon and the settlement endeavors of the Zionists.

Processes and Theories

Our study of the changes in human settlement in late Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine examines both the political and the geographical context of these changes and also interrogates the process in light of the wider perspective of human colonization. Changes in marginal landscapes, especially the intercession of government policy, manipulation of the landscape, and natural migration, have been studied elsewhere. For instance, the expansion of the fenland town March and other settlements established in the wake of the draining of the fens in England (Darby, 1940), the establishment of five new towns in the Pontine Marshes in Italy in the wake of the *bonifica integrale*, and changes in settlement in Axarquía



in Spain (Ocana & Moreno, 2008; Russel, 1939). We examine the Jewish settlement in Palestine in the context of this human colonization, rather than colonialism (Aaronsohn, 1996).

On June 19, 1937, a gathering took place at a Bedouin tent a few kilometers west of the Jordan River in the Baysan valley of Palestine. In attendance were British Mandate Assistant District Commissioner for Safed Lewis Y. Andrews and Hana Effendi Boulos, the Arab District officer of Baysan (*Palestine Post*, 1937a). There were also the sheikhs and members of the Bawati and Bashatiwa Bedouin tribes, as well as Jews from the nearby village of Beit Joseph and from the Upper Galilee kibbutz, Kafr Giladi. As the highest-ranking official, Mr. Andrews approached the tent where a white flag was flying. In a solemn manner he tied a knot in the flag and turned to face the assembled men. The Arabs, Jews, and Englishmen shook hands and revelry soon followed, with shots being fired, target practice, and a feast that included roast lamb. The ceremony marked the finalization of a peace agreement between the Jewish community of Beit Joseph and the neighboring Bedouin tribes, one of whose members, Ahmed Nazzal, had recently been shot by a Jewish guard. According to newspaper accounts, the most interesting aspect of this peace pact was the fact that a plot of land was given to the heirs of Mr. Nazzal by the Jews of Beit Joseph (*Palestine Post*, 1937b).

Neither Beit Joseph nor the village of Bawati had existed 50 years before this meeting took place. Bawati was one of many Arab villages in the Baysan region and elsewhere that were founded between 1871 and 1948. The story of the foundation of Bawati, its settlement, and the processes that led to this event contribute to an understanding of the history of Palestine in the late Ottoman and Mandatory periods. Bawati was not the exception in the valleys of Palestine, but the rule. Changes were taking place, transforming the landscape in dynamic ways. Bedouin tribes were settling in the northern and central areas of Palestine. Seasonal villages were being transformed into permanent settlements. Effendis were settling *fellahin* (farmers) as tenants on their lands. Sultan Abdul Hamid II's vast private estates were being transformed into villages. From the borderlands of the Negev desert in the south to the swamps of the Huleh Valley in the north, a great and fascinating colonization of the landscape was taking place that would see the establishment of some 140 new villages and the movement of their 60,000 inhabitants from their former settled or nomadic life to new lives in new places. Although the number of settlements established was quite large, the total number of inhabitants represented only 5% of the Arab population of Palestine. When the majority of these villages were abandoned and destroyed in the course of the 1948 war, they became names attached to lists, to be catalogued and remembered.

Until now a vast body of research has examined the politics of Mandatory Palestine, Jewish immigration, the Jewish–Arab conflict, nineteenth-century Palestine, and the effect of the 1948 war on Palestine (Khalidi, 1992; Shafir, 1996; Stein, 1984). Studies have delved deeply into Jewish immigration waves, foreign Christian settlements, new Jewish *moshavot* and *kibbutzim*, urban development, town planning, and



Bedouin and Arab village life in Palestine between 1800 and 1948. But to date, there has not been a study that examined completely and systematically the advent of new Muslim villages during the period of 1871–1948 (Barak & Kark, 2006; Grossman & Meir, 1994). This study seeks to examine the establishment of new Muslim agricultural settlements in light of the much better-known phenomenon of Zionist Jewish agricultural settlements in the period. In making this comparison, the extent, importance, and impact of the Muslim settlement of Palestine in the period is revealed.

The history of the time before 1948, especially the period 1880–1948, is dominated by research into Zionism and its opponents. Histories of the Arabs became histories of land struggles, nationalism, rising consciousness, and class conflict (Abdo & Yuval-Davis, 1995; Beinun, 1990; Khalidi, 1992; Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003; Stein, 1984). Through it all, the Arab village became stationary, a thing that was unmoving and unchanging. The notion was that things such as the purchasing of lands by non-Arabs and the eviction of Arab tenants were done to Arab villages, but Arab villages and their inhabitants were not usually portrayed as having an agency or a process. For instance, Ilan Pappé (2006) writes, “legal and coercive measures . . . were used in the process of the one-way transfer of land from Palestinian to Zionist settlers . . . the landscape formed by traditional Palestinian villages comprised [of] open spaces with their natural stone houses” (p. 30). This concept dominates popular conception as well. Using Orientalist language, *The Economist* (2008) described the hill country of the West Bank as “a land whose timeless beauty has survived basically unchanged since biblical times” (p. 56). This conception of the unchanging landscape creates an impression that Arab rural life was frozen in the past, and precludes an understanding of that life that sees it as dynamic, changing, and mobile.

Beginning in 1882, with the first large modern Jewish *Aliyah* (immigration)—there had been smaller ones in 1808 and the 1830s—it is generally understood that the Arab population simply froze in place. But this false sense of a frozen history has not shed light on the processes that did affect the Arab villages of Palestine. These processes were both natural and extraordinary. For instance, in some places, Arab villages expanded through natural growth, and some of their members moved a short distance away to live next to agricultural plots that belonged to the mother village. This is in comparison with Jewish settlements that generally took the form of organized financially backed bureaucratic enterprises aligned with certain nongovernmental groups. In other cases, villagers were recruited by landlords or government officials to colonize new landscapes and stake out claims to new land. The population expansion was both influenced by the government and part of a general trend of expansion due to increased security, population growth, and the opening up of new lands. This was a trend that occurred across the Middle East where government was able to extend its power into marginal lands, so that nomads and other groups who had challenged government authority were unable to harass sedentary populations. This allowed for the rural population to increase the amount of land they influenced and expand into it. After 1948, with the creation of the State of Israel and the



concurrent upheavals of war and population movements, these processes continued in parts of the country, including in the West Bank and the Negev. To a lesser degree, they continued in Galilee and throughout the State of Israel, leading to the growth of villages such as Hamama and Kammana in the Galilee and Ein Rafa near Jerusalem.

This research shows that a significant number of Muslim residents of the areas that became Israel in 1948 were living in newly established settlements. Some of these Muslims were Egyptian and Algerian immigrants who came to Palestine in the first half of the nineteenth century from foreign lands. There were also Algerians, Bosnians, and Circassians, who came in the second half of the nineteenth century, but most were from within the borders of Palestine. Like the Jews who were busy settling the coastal plain and valleys of Palestine, the Muslims were vigorously expanding into this new landscape, recently opened to settlement for a variety of reasons, including the extension of new laws, such as those passed in 1858, and security, primarily that provided by increased government and police presence throughout the country. A more nuanced examination of the events from 1871 to 1948 shows not so much a Muslim populace always on the defensive from Jews attempting to purchase their lands, or at the mercy of absentee landlords, but rather an active Muslim populace, including sedentarized Bedouin, who were busy colonizing new lands and building new villages, much like their Jewish counterparts.

The Geography of Palestine

As elsewhere, the landscape of Palestine played an important role in determining where a settlement arose and the forms of that settlement. Palestine is traditionally divided into four distinct regions: the coastal plain, the central highlands, the Rift Valley, and the Negev Desert. To these must be added two unique areas known as the Shephelah foothills and Jezreel Valley (Orni & Efrat, 1971). Throughout the study, reference will be made to five unique geographic areas: the highlands, the coastal plain, the Rift Valley, the Jezreel Valley, and the Shephelah. These divisions will serve to focus our examination of the distribution of the new settlements.

Sources and Research Methods

Sources

Several important studies have used period maps and census materials to chart the historical processes of rural settlement in Palestine (Grossman, 1992; Hudson, 1969; Siddle, 1970). One of the most important studies to systematically examine the extent of Arab villages in all of Palestine has been Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth and Kamal Abdulfattah's (1977) *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria*, which focused on sixteenth-century Ottoman Palestine, with brief reference to later periods, including the Mandate period. There is a gap of systematic studies that address the extent, village by village, of settlements in Palestine between 1600 and 1948 (Etkes, 2007).



Case studies exist of various regions in Palestine (Ayalon, 2007; Ben-Arieh, 1985, 1994; Ben-Arieh & Golan, 1983). However, there is a complete absence of a systematic work that focuses on the use of period maps and aerial photos to examine *new* Muslim settlements throughout Palestine during the period 1871–1948. David Amiran's and Yehuda Karmon's extensive and pioneering work on the geography and mapping of Palestine serves as a basis for any study of the country in the modern period (Amiran, 1944, 1953, 1956; Brawer, 1990). Ruth Kark's (1983, 1989, 1997) extensive work on land and settlement in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Palestine provides a basis for understanding the various stages of development during the period (Gavish & Kark, 1993; Levin, Kark, & Galilee, 2007).

During the nineteenth century, a number of European travelers attempted to provide maps and travelogues that systematically covered the area that would become Mandatory Palestine (Amiran, 1944; Clermont-Ganneau, 1896; Guerin, 1882; Karmon, 1960; Levin, Kark, & Galilee, 2009; Robinson & Smith, 1841; Schick, 1896; Schumacher, 1888; Van de Velde, 1852). The British Palestine Exploration Fund's (PEF) 1880 map and multivolume *Survey of Western Palestine* was the first modern survey of Palestine, which was done by officers of the Royal Engineers. Its detail provides excellent information on all of the villages of Palestine from the years 1871–1877 and is a starting point for this study (Conder & Kitchener, 1883). The Ottoman population registers (*nüfus*) and yearbooks (*salname*) provide some information on the population of rural Arab villages from the 1870s to 1912 (i.e., Kaza Nablus, 1905).

The next important data for rural settlement in Palestine come from maps made by the British army in 1917 and 1918 during the World War I conquest of the country. When accompanied by German, British, and Australian World War I aerial photos, they provide data on the entire country. With the addition of the British census of 1922, a full set of statistics, visual and quantitative, is achieved for the early years of the Mandate (Barron, 1923). These sources provide the most important resources for examining new villages that appeared between 1871 and 1917.

The 1931 census and the British *Survey of Palestine* 1:20,000 series maps, along with the 1944–1945 Royal Air Force aerial survey of Palestine and the 1948 Shai (Intelligence and Information Service of the Jewish Haganah [prestate paramilitary]) sponsored aerial photos, provide complete maps and figures for the last half of the Mandate (Mills, 1931; Palestine Government, 1945). The British *Village Statistics*, which provide population estimates and lists of agriculture to be taxed, may be less accurate but nevertheless provide a picture of the rural Arab villages of Mandatory Palestine (Government, 1933, 1945b). These sources provide the most compelling evidence for the creation and growth of new villages during the Mandate. The Israel State Archives (ISA) includes extensive information on the background to village surveys and censuses, court cases, land purchases, and the existence of schools and mosques throughout Palestine.

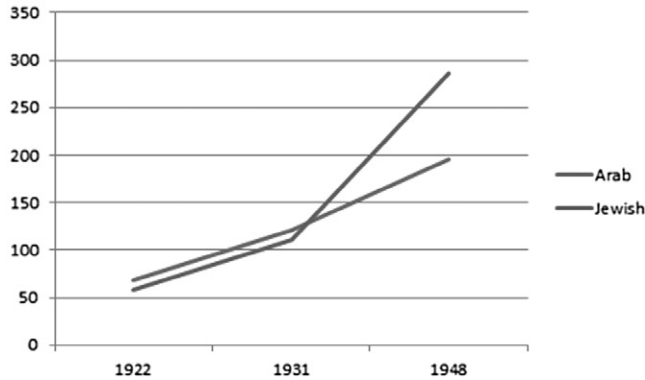


Figure 1: Number of new Jewish and Muslim settlements 1922–1948.

Research Methods

The research is primarily quantitative. By using the 1945 subdistrict boundaries of the British Mandate, the study initially worked backwards. This is because it is assumed that there were more Arab and Jewish villages in 1945 than in 1871. Geographic Information System (GIS) software was used to reconstruct and map the data mined from the numerous maps and censuses available. This presented a visualized map of the geographic extent of the new Muslim and Jewish villages that appeared between 1871 and 1948. This aided greatly in drawing conclusions regarding the different geographic areas of Palestine and their effect on the creation and spatial distribution of new villages. Mapping the entire area of Palestine using GIS for this phenomenon, when combined with archival work and other analysis provides a full picture (Fig. 1).

The PEF Survey of Palestine, 1871–1877

The British PEF's survey of Palestine and its accompanying maps and memoirs are widely regarded as accurate and comprehensive, providing a complete picture of the country and its settled areas. A recent GIS-based assessment of its cartographic accuracy points to an extraordinary accomplishment (Levin et al., 2009). Numerous scholars have used it as a benchmark for comparison in terms of settlement patterns. It has been used as a point of comparison by numerous researchers (Grossman, 1992; Hütteroth & Abdulfattah, 1977). The PEF was founded in 1865, under the supervision of George Grove, a biblical-archeologist and Renaissance man (Conder & Kitchener, 1883). The survey was completed over a period of six years.

Our study relies on the PEF map as a base map; it marks a turning point in the survey of Palestine and provides a complete cross-section of the country under discussion. Because the Jewish First Aliyah began after the map was completed, it provides clear evidence of the situation of the Muslim and Jewish population on the



eve of the great settlement changes the country underwent after 1880. The accompanying *Memoirs* are also of great help to the researcher because they provide very valuable additional evidence about many of the locations, which were ruins and upon which new settlements were created. Palestine had thousands of ruins, many of which were historical settlements that had existed in previous periods. We examined a total of 120 of these ruins that were revived by the Arab population for use as new settlements. This is one reason the 1880 cross-section is so essential for understanding the previous change in Palestine's settlement landscape; it reveals the degree to which the Arab population was concentrated in the highlands and the Jewish population in several large towns.

The Late Ottoman Period

Fluid Inventory of Land

During the late Ottoman period, numerous groups attempted to acquire land in Palestine. At this time, the low-lying country consisted of a fluid inventory of state land that changed hands and, because of new land laws, migration, European influence, and technological progress, was available for purchase and development (Kark, 1984a, 1984d). Interested parties included churches, especially the Greek Orthodox and Catholics, wealthy Arab landowners—commonly referred to as *effendis*, the Ottoman Sultan, Jewish immigrants, Germans, and Arab internal migrants. Some Muslim immigrants and land purchasers came from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and as far away as Bosnia and Algeria. Most of these groups set their sights on the Coastal plain and large valleys, which remained relatively lightly populated and consisted of marginal lands. As will be shown and detailed later, this represented a type of human colonization of this marginal landscape that would have important repercussions for the political future of the area. The last 40 years of Ottoman rule witnessed a revolution in state and bureaucratic power, combined with the extension of new technologies like the railroad, which were revolutionary changes and had an immediate and long-term effect on the country. The partial retreat of the nomadic Bedouin, which paralleled these processes of settlement, was also connected with the changes in the Ottoman regime beginning in the nineteenth century (Goadby & Doukhan, 1935; Islamoglu, 2000; Kark, 1984b, 1984c; Rogan, 1999). The extension of new laws, such as the 1858 Land Law, and the personal involvement of the Ottoman Sultan in settling outsiders in marginal lands were important changes in Ottoman policy that affected Palestine. This section traces several important processes that affected the lands of Palestine and helped facilitate the creation of a new settlement map.

The first policy that led to change was the private acquisition of large swathes of state land by Sultan Abdülhamid II (ruled 1876–1909) and by absentee landowners (*effendis*) from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East. During the ensuing land privatization process, they brought tenants to cultivate their newly acquired lands. This was a result of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, which precisely



defined landholdings and categories, abolished the system of tax farming, and consolidated and restored the state's rights to state land. After the law was issued, almost all the land in Palestine, apart from private property in the towns, was defined as state land of different categories (Fischel & Kark, 2008; Goadby & Doukhan, 1935; Islamoglu, 2000; Kark, 2004; Kark & Frantzman, 2010).

Abdul Hamid II accumulated some 832,222 metric *dunams* (1 dunam = 1,000 square meters), or around 3% of the total area of what later became "Mandatory Palestine," as privately owned land (Terzi, 2000). Much of this land was viewed as of marginal economic value, and some of it was used as grazing area by Bedouin tribes. This was true around Baysan, the Sharon plain, Jericho, and on the borders of the Negev (ISA, 1907). He enacted a policy of settling non-Bedouin on some of the private lands he acquired, such as at Farwana in the Baysan valley, at Caesarea (founded 1878) on the coast, and at Kaufakha and Muharraqa on the borders of the Negev. In total, eight new villages were founded on his lands by the time the British conquered Palestine. Eventually, 18 new Muslim settlements would arise on lands the Sultan had once owned. The sultan's reason for acquiring the land was economic (Fischel & Kark, 2008, p. 47; Kushner, 1990). The local Arab workers whom he settled on his land were ill-treated and heavily taxed once they had converted the land to profitable agricultural use (Kana'ana & al-Madani, n.d.). The sultan took a close personal interest in aiding Muslim refugees in the empire, and he sought to settle them on his lands, not only to increase their worth but also because he assumed the refugees would be beholden to him and loyally extend the influence of law and order, especially in regard to rolling back the areas of Bedouin control (Fischel & Kark, 2008, p. 160; Karpas, 2001; Yilmaz, 2000). Abdul Hamid II's policy began a trend of converting desert and deserted lands to new agricultural uses, which continued after his abdication. His lands reverted to the Ottoman state after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 (CZA 2, 1922; Trad, 1933). In addition, his foundation of Beersheba and the border post Auja al Hafir extended government influence to the Negev.

As was the case with the sultan's lands, the lands purchased by the effendis and foreigners were not equally distributed but were concentrated in the low-lying and "marginal" regions of Palestine. These included the Negev and various swampland and deserted landscapes in the plains and valleys from the Huleh to the Sharon and the Jordan valley (Kark, 1984d). According to various works by Kark, Grossman, Aaronsohn, and Ben-Artzi, ownership by effendis facilitated the purchase of part of this land by Jewish immigrants from Europe for settlement in nucleated villages. Thus, over 52 estate buildings became the initial core of the new Jewish agricultural settlement in Palestine. At least 15 became the initial core of German Christian settlement or religious activity (Ben-Artzi, Kark, & Aaronsohn, 1988). Several new Muslim temporary settlements were established on the lands of effendis, but only five of them remained by the 1922 census; the rest were unstable settlements.

We can see the process that affected the fluid inventory of lands in places like the Jezreel valley. In 1872 a Greek-Orthodox family named Sursuq from Lebanon had



acquired a large valley (230,000 dunams, out of about half a million dunams of land the family accumulated in Palestine by 1914), known in Arabic as Marj Ibn Amir, that stretches almost from the Bay of Haifa to the Baysan valley (Ruppin, 1929). The Lebanese owners founded several tenant villages in which they settled Arabs who agreed to labor on their lands. They also planned to build a new railway there for exporting grain. In 1910, this huge tract of land was purchased from the Sursuqs by Jews and later became part of the lands of the Jewish settlements of Merhavia (founded 1911), Balfouria (founded 1919–1922), and Tel Adash (1913).

Some scholars have focused on these types of events to prove the thesis that the Jewish immigrants to Palestine purchased land upon which Arabs already resided; and this led to their dispossession. A large amount of research has examined this question of the struggle over the land and the phenomenon of landless Arabs. Our study shows that a feature of the empty fluid inventory of land that was overlooked was the degree to which Arabs developed *new* settlements in the period, alongside, and sometimes in symbiotic relationships, with the Jewish immigrants.

Immigration

The late Ottoman period was one that saw the arrival of various waves of immigrants. These immigrants came from diverse lands; many were influential in founding and settling new villages and hamlets that they carved out of the rural low-lying areas of Palestine. Two waves of Jewish immigrants arrived in the period, predominantly from Eastern Europe. The First Aliyah lasted from 1882 to 1903 and brought around 25,000 Jews to the country. The majority of the Jews immigrated to the existing towns, but they also formed the first proto-Zionist *moshavot* (agricultural settlements) at Petah Tikva in the center of the country (1878), and Rosh Pinna in the Galilee (1878), both of which were founded by local Jews at first, and later joined by Jews from Europe, and Zichron Yaacov, south of Haifa (1882). Between 1904 and 1914 a second Aliyah of around 40,000 Jews arrived. This Aliyah was particularly robust in setting up new agricultural settlements, such as the kibbutz of Degania near the Sea of Galilee (1910), and founding new towns, such as Tel Aviv (1909). In 1918, Arthur Ruppin estimated that 7,499 Jews were living in 43 agricultural settlements (see Fig. 1) (Barron, 1923; Ruppin, 1918).

During the late Ottoman period there was a wave of German Christian settlers called Templers that arrived and built seven communities, four of them rural agricultural villages, in Palestine. The Germans and other Europeans, including the Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, founded numerous other agricultural enterprises in the period. Some of the infrastructure and technology they brought helped to encourage the settlement—by Muslims and others—of certain areas. Ruppin (1918) also writes that “the influence of the Palestinian [meaning German Templers] agricultural colonies has been far greater than the number of their inhabitants would lead one to suppose” (p. 26).



In the period under consideration, two waves of Algerian Muslim immigrants, followers of anti-French rebel leader Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, arrived in 1883–1900 and 1900–1920 (Abassi, 2003). Several other contingents had arrived before 1880. These Algerian immigrants had begun coming to Palestine in the 1830s, when Abd al-Qadir was first exiled, and continued to come throughout the century. The PEF survey located only four Algerian villages: Deishum, Kafr Sabt, Mazar (Madhar), and Olam, as some of the previously established ones were deserted by 1870. Six other small Algerian villages and hamlets were founded around 1880 and after in the Galilee. The Algerians amassed a great deal of property, at least 84,000 dunams, under Abd al-Qadir and his descendants. Some of this property would eventually be sold to Jewish settlers, transforming “most of the eastern Lower Galilee, into a large, contiguous Jewish territory that included a number of Jewish settlements” (Grossman, 1992).

Between 1864 and 1866, the number of Circassian refugees pouring into the Ottoman Empire, many of them as slaves, numbered as many as a million (Grossman, 1992). One of their new settlements in Palestine established before 1894 was later known as *Kh Al Sarkas* (ruin of the Circassians) or Al-Ghaba after it was deserted in the 1930s (Lewis, 1987). A 1944 aerial photo by the British shows a village, but it is not clear if it is in ruins or if there are people at the site (MSAPA, 1944). Avneri (1984) notes that it was originally settled after 1878 and that “few remained” after dying out because of the malaria. In 1911, the village had a protracted dispute with the newly established Jewish moshava Hadera (founded 1890) over some land between the two that the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) had acquired (Avneri, 1984). The Circassians built two new settlements in the Galilee: the first at Kfar Kama before 1880 and the second at Rihaniya shortly after. Many others settled in the Golan Heights and Trans-Jordan (modern-day Jordan). In addition, there were Bosnian Muslim refugees whom the Sultan Abdul Hamid II settled in Palestine at his estate at Caesarea between 1878 and 1884.

The immigrants who arrived in the Ottoman period irreversibly changed the landscape. A total of 43 Jewish agricultural settlements were established by 1914 (kibbutzim, moshavot, and other settlements) (Ruppin, 1918), and an additional 15 rural Jewish settlements were established by 1922 (Barron, 1922). As many as 15,694 Jews were residing in these settlements in 1922 (Barron, 1922). Jews generally purchased land communally with financial backing from their extensive diaspora. The purchasers targeted lands that were sparsely populated but looked like they could be developed agriculturally. As such, almost all their large purchases were confined to the lowlands of Palestine. By 1914 Jews owned some 437,000 dunams of land throughout Palestine (Katz, 2005), 54,000 dunams of which was devoted to agriculture (Ruppin, 1918, p. 31). By 1922 that had increased to between 493,361 and 693,361 dunams (Katz, 2005). As will be seen, this resulted in a pattern of new settlements that paralleled the new Muslim settlements of the period.



Peoples for a Land: Jewish and Muslim Settlements of the Marginal Landscapes to 1922

This Jewish settlement in Palestine, which resembled a large “N” zigzagging from the north to the south of the country, had much in common with the new lands settled by Muslims between 1871 and 1922 (see Fig. 2). The land area that came under the administrative control of the new Muslim settlements by 1922 was approximately 342,627 dunams, which was less than the 500,000 dunams purchased by Jews in the same period. In total the two groups together had acquired less than 4% of the land area of Palestine. The lands were in similar regions. The Jewish tracts usually were contiguous with one another, whereas the new Arab and Muslim lands tended to be more isolated (except in Shephelah and Baysan, where they were contiguous), although in many cases they were near each other. The total Jewish population has been estimated as 84,660 in 1914 (with 11,660 in rural settlements) and stood at 83,794 in 1922 (Barron, 1922). By contrast, there were 725,000 Arabs in Palestine in 1922 with 11,700 in newly settled villages.

When placed side by side the extent to which the Jews and Muslims were settling similar regions in the same period becomes clear (Carmel, 1990). Several authors have explored the degree to which the new Jewish settlements and their Arab neighbors had conflicts over the land, but scholars have accepted the notion that the conflicts were between an existing group and new immigrants rather than seeing the complexity of the new settlement patterns (Forman & Kedar, 2007; Mandel, 1980). The number of 58 new Jewish settlements (Barron, 1922), 50 of which were communal agricultural settlements, is strikingly similar to the 69 Arab villages and hamlets established in a similar period. Taking this into account, it becomes clear that the Arab settlement was not a mere trickle, even if it was primarily a spontaneous process. The fact that so much money and resources were invested in the creation of Jewish settlements that appeared between 1871 and 1922, and so much historical writing has described how they laid the foundation for the Jewish State, established in 1948, puts into perspective the Arab and Muslim investment, which has hitherto gone unnoticed by scholars. It also shows the degree to which this was a Palestinian Arab national accomplishment, albeit one never acknowledged at that time or since. Like the Jewish investment in “redeeming the land” there was a similar Arab accomplishment in this direction; and in both cases, the initial settlements laid the foundations for greater expansion of the population during the Mandate. The most striking difference between the two groups was that the Jewish effort was underpinned by a strong ideology, Zionism, which emphasized the importance of Jewish agricultural development. Toward that end, Zionist land purchases were undertaken in an organized manner under the auspices of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), Palestine Land Development Company, or ICA. The expansion of the Arab community was never motivated by an ideology, although in the later years of the Mandate, Arab Palestinian politics was dominated by efforts to support “landless” Arabs against the perceived

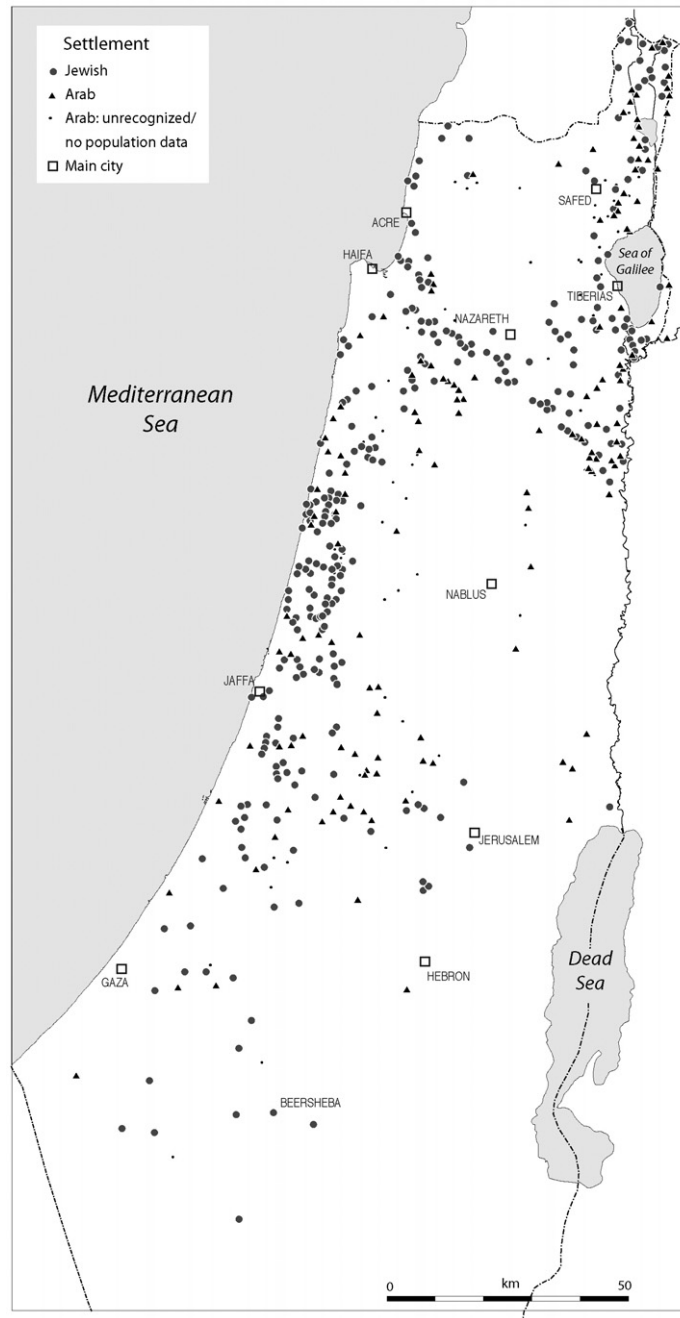


Figure 2: Map of new Arab and Jewish settlements, 1945.



threat of Zionist land purchases. In both cases, it was a broad settlement of new lands and a deep one that involved large numbers of people and industrious efforts to wrench settlements back from ruin and establish them in the face of inhospitable conditions, such as swamps and nomadic raids.

The Arab Muslim settlement of new villages in the late Ottoman period and the degree to which it was mirrored by a Jewish settlement of similar areas begs the following question: to what degree did one settlement project influence the other? In only two cases, the Arab villages that were established were founded very close to Jewish settlements. At Tuleil in Galilee, and Wadi Hunein, near Ramla, the Jewish land purchase and settlement took place in 1883, prior to the Arab settlement, which occurred several years later (Pappe, 2006; Starkmeth, 1910).

New Land Settlement in the Mandate Period

Processes and Patterns

About 230 new Jewish settlements were created during the Mandate, as opposed to around 100 new Muslim settlements. One hundred and sixty thousand Jews were living in their new villages by 1947, while only 70,000 Arabs were living in their new villages. These differences are in stark contrast to the late Ottoman period, where the rate of development and populations found in the new settlements were quite similar. One aspect that remained the same during the Mandate was the pattern of settlement.

Certain processes marked the Mandate era as more different from the Ottoman one. First, the power of the governing institutions grew exponentially. The population of Palestine burgeoned and new infrastructure, such as airports and harbors, was laid down. Jewish immigration increased greatly; roughly 359,000 Jews arrived in the country between 1919 and 1945. The Bedouin, located in the central and northern areas of the country, almost completely ceased to be nomadic. These great changes overshadowed the continuing expansion of the settlement patterns of the Muslim community. As will be seen, during the Mandate the establishment of new Muslim settlements increasingly took place in areas affected by Jewish settlement.

Jewish Land Purchases in Mandate: Patterns

During the Mandate period, the JNF and other Jewish land purchasers sought to extend the holdings they had acquired during the Ottoman period. The JNF began its activities in the Jezreel Valley, purchasing some 73,600 dunams in the years 1921–1923. On the coastal plain, at Wadi Hawarith (Emeq Hefer), the JNF noted that “the area represents the choicest lands in the plantation area, vast plains . . . abundant water” (ISA, 1937; Katz, 2005). Eventually a total of 33,500 dunams would be purchased from the Tayan Arab family, on which some 19 new settlements were established (Kark, 1978). The JNF also began in this period to concentrate its purchases in the Baysan Valley, with a total of 26,000 dunams by 1935 (Katz, 2005).



In the Huleh Valley, the JNF did not make any purchases until after 1935. By 1930, Jews owned a total of 1,007,000–1,200,000 dunams of land in Palestine. Some 450,000 had been purchased from foreign landowners, 680,000 from local effendis, and 75,000 from small holders or Arab peasants (Cohen, 2008; Katz, 2005). Katz also noted that the JNF owned a total of 288,605 dunams of this land in 1931. By 1936, there were 199 Jewish settlements throughout the country.

Patterns of Jewish land purchases affected where new Muslim settlements were located during the Mandate. In the Baysan Valley, around Jericho, and in the Shephelah, the Muslims settled areas in the early Mandate prior to Jews purchasing much of the land.

Jewish Ownership and Arab Settlement

There were a variety of ways that Jewish land purchases affected the patterns of new Muslim settlement (Smilansky, 1930). Fifty-two of new Muslim settlements were located near Jewish settlements that were established in the same period. In many cases, Jewish settlements were established after new Arab settlements, such as was the case in the Baysan area, or at Nuqeib (Kolodny, 2008; Sawaed, 1992).

Some of the new Muslim villages became property of Jewish organizations such as the JNF when Arab landowners sold to Jewish purchasers (Katz, 2005). This would eventually be particularly true of such Arab settlements at Qira wa Qamun, Kherbat Sarkas, Ghazawiya, Jisr al Majami, Nuqeib, Samra (25% Jewish in 1944), Jahula (41% Jewish in 1944), Tuleil (80% Jewish in 1944), and Kherbat Butaymat (66% Jewish in 1944) (Government, 1945a). In the Baysan subdistrict, more than a third of the land (7,625 out of 18,408 dunams) associated with villages such as Ghazawiyya would eventually be owned by the JNF in 1945 (Frantzman, 2010; ISA 2, n.d.; Weitz & Lifshitz, 1946).

In many cases, the village boundaries of new Muslim settlements were affected by Jewish land purchases. In some cases, Arab villages that had been settled in the Ottoman period declined in population to such an extent that the entire village's previous boundaries became part of a new Jewish settlement. This was the case at Dalhamiya, Kherbat Sarkas, and Jisr al Majami. In other cases, the Jewish settlements carved out boundaries within existing villages. The basis for the changes in the political landscape was the fact that most Arab village boundaries did not correspond to the ownership of the local Arab community, whereas the boundaries of most Jewish settlements mirrored the land holdings of Jewish purchasing organizations (Abramson, 1933). This confusing problem, from a political and geographical perspective, resulted from political, fiscal, and bureaucratic logic determined by the Mandate's Land Settlement Department and Department of Revenue. Both wanted settlements to contain neatly defined financial ownership blocks, and village financial units to have either a Jewish or an Arab *mukhtar* (village headman), responsible for the village (Frantzman & Kark, 2011).



Settling the Swamps: Arab and Jewish Dimensions

The landscape of Ottoman Palestine was dotted with numerous swamps and wetlands. Several were infamous and substantial. The Huleh swamp, a veritable sea of reeds, was impassable to such a degree that the PEF did not even map it. The great Kabara swamps on the coastal plain were equally vexing to travelers (al-Boustany, 1925). The swamplands were home to heterogeneous Arab tribes, generally referred to as *Ghawarina* (from the Arabic *ghor*, i.e., “people of the low area”), some of whom traced their ancestors to Egypt (Agmon, 1987; Rapoport, 2010). They proved remarkably resilient in the face of malaria. On the margins of the swamps were nomadic Bedouin who often wintered near the swamps and remained more distant from them during the malaria season (ISA 1, n.d.).

A recent publication has argued that the draining of the swamps was a Zionist colonial project that attempted to colonize or “heal” the land by ruining the indigenous swamps (Sufian, 2007), an anachronistic inference. What Sufian and others fail to mention is the degree to which draining the swamps was a project also undertaken by the Ottomans, Arab effendis, and local settlers including Arabs and others, which led to the creation of several new Arab villages.

The history of the Huleh Valley and the environmental changes that took place there are a central part of the history of Zionism (Biger, 1994; Karmon, 1956; Sufian, 2007; Zitrin, 1987). The Huleh *Ghawarina* (part swamp dwellers), who altogether numbered around 3,000 individuals in 1906, engaged in very limited draining of the swamp and in the slashing and burning of its papyrus reeds (Agmon, 1987; Tamimi & Bahjat, 1916). In 1877, the Ottoman administration began to examine the Huleh swamps, and in 1901, a concession was given to the Jewish settlement of Yesud Ha-Ma’alah to drain them (Agmon, 1987). The concession went through several stages, passing into the hands of Arabs and Jews, until finally in the 1930s some 1,500 of the *Ghawarina* were given 15,000 dunams of the 52,000 dunam swamp to live on (CZA 1, n.d.; Gavish & Kark, 1993; MSAPA, 1945). The final long-term result, by the end of the British Mandate, was that the tribe settled permanently in 14 villages and built houses of stone and metal in the much altered landscape. In a place the PEF described as “a dense mass of reeds . . . quite impenetrable, except for a short distance then only by Arabs and buffaloes,” new Muslim villages arose (Conder & Kitchener, 1883). In one village named Zawiya, in 1931 the mandatory census takers found 141 houses and 590 residents. By 1945, there were an estimated 760 people in the village (Government, 1945a). Six Jewish settlements were constructed in the area north of the Huleh concession, in many cases alongside newly established *Ghawarina* villages.

Between the years of 1871 and 1922, the land settled amounted to 360,431 dunams in the new Arab villages, with an additional 185,000 dunams by 1945. According to the same estimate, using settlements identified by this research, there were 66,940 (6.5% of the Muslim population of Palestine) Muslim residents in 230 hamlets and villages that had been established between 1871 and 1945. Around a



dozen of the villages were established by people who came from outside Palestine (Egyptians, Bosnians, Algerians, Circassians, Iranians, and Shiites from Lebanon). Some 25% of the villages were settled by sedenterizing the Bedouin, mainly in Northern Palestine, while an additional 25% were settled by Arabs from highland villages who moved down to the coastal plain because of population pressures in their mother village. Another 39 villages were constructed on lands belonging to the sultan or absentee effendi landlords. Just over half the new villages were constructed on ruins of old settlements, illustrating the degree to which the expansion of Muslim rural settlement in the Ottoman and British periods represented a return to areas that had been settled in prior eras.

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