

## RECENT BOOKS

### TECHNOLOGY OF OCCUPATION

**The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories**, edited by Adi Ophir, Michal Givoni, and Sari Hanafi. New York: Zone Books, 2009. 641 pages. \$38.95 cloth.

#### *Reviewed by Roger Heacock*

This book is largely the fruit of a research effort sponsored by the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, involving around twenty Israeli and three Palestinian contributors (one a coeditor), and comes highly praised on the jacket by sometime Van Leer visiting professor Ann Stoler.

It looks from the outside at the area of its primary focus, Gaza and the West Bank, at a time when more than ever scholars from within, or wishing to work there, are subject to deportation and denial of the right to enter the outer borders of the country, and not only to cross its internal ones. It is a loose compendium rather than a structured sequence of chapters, many contributions having previously been published in Hebrew or English. Collectively, the authors have set out to examine the Palestinian case in the light of two theoretical paradigms: Carl Schmitt's state of exception and Michel Foucault's biopolitics, by looking at "the relation of the exception that constitutes Palestinians as bare life" (p. 8). What counts here is the structure of occupation, in particular as it presented itself between 2000 and 2007. Now, theory, as noted by Gilles Deleuze, is a "toolbox." But the instruments selected need to be adequate to the task. Schmitt's state of exception applies to politics as a whole, and not to marginalized portions thereof, failing which it loses its deep sense. For its part, biopolitics is not practiced timelessly over a supine and passive body, since

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(*dixit* Hegel) the agency of the slave is central to that of the master. The occupation has historical causes and finalities; the interaction of actors needs to be seized in its multiple dimensions. It is a "beast with two backs" (*Otello*): the Palestinians are not like "a patient etherized upon a table" (T. S. Eliot).

Instead, most contributors view the occupation as *sui generis*, divorced from the past and from the future. They do not choose between such interpretations of the problematic as "Western colonization" of Arab land or a "miraculous process of Jewish redemption." In this way, they feel they can escape the necessity of deciding between contradictory understandings of the causes of the "devastating [present] situation," described as a combination of "a humanitarian crisis, an apartheid state, Islamization, or the fragmentation of Palestinian society" (p. 16). The objective is more dispassionately to explain its structure, its mechanisms, in short, its technology. And indeed, this is what they do, providing the reader with a kind of written and visual scrapbook of occupation, seen mainly from the vantage point of the occupier.

So it is, by way of examples, that Orna Ben-Naftali, Aeyal Gross, and Keren Michaeli revisit and reconfirm the illegality of the occupation; Hilla Dayan shows how this regime both isn't and is apartheid; Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir expound on two types of violence: withheld (the threat) and eruptive (deadly), but without explaining which came first; Eyal Weizman, an architect, describes the technology of what he strangely persists in calling "targeted assassinations" three or four dozen times throughout the essay, despite the lavish demonstration, in Palestine as in Afghanistan, that these killings are in fact anything but. Yehuda Shenhav and Yael Berda, in a comparative essay, liken the regime to Lord Cromer's administration of Egypt. But the intent there was exploitative rather than settler-colonialist. Why not Britain in Rhodesia or France in Algeria? Or perhaps Britain in India, for the West Bank has indeed been Israel's "jewel in the crown" ever since 1967. Leila Farsakh's article, too, suffers from

the volume's unstinting view of the occupation as *sui generis*. West Bank dependence, as local economists have shown, is a striking reality indeed, but no longer primarily on Israel, except as a gatekeeper, a rather benevolent one at that, these days. Dependence is on massive international assistance, accounting by now for three-quarters of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) budget. The role of aid in the case of Gaza is unclear, since no serious study of the tunnel economy has yet come out. Sari Hanafi's thesis regarding closed refugee camps can only be fitted to the Lebanese case. It does in fact not apply to the West Bank (except for Shu'fat in Jerusalem), let alone Gaza. The 1996 and 2005–2006 elections illustrated the camps' openness. And refugees did not cast more votes for Hamas, which did best in Qalqiliya, as compared to other marginalized sectors in the towns and villages. Finally, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency is no longer a passive partner: it is heavily involved in the battle to break the siege on Gaza. Caroline Abu-Sada is right to connect agricultural stagnation to encroaching settlements. But she should have also analyzed the role of the PA itself, which is devoting virtually no funds to developing agriculture. These and other essays have fallen into the trap they set themselves: the restrictive application of Schmitt's state of exception, and the denial of ongoing agency to those under occupation.

The resulting book is an uncomfortable fit. It tries to do too much and too little all at once. Too little, because it severs the occupation from temporality and social depth. Too much, because it aims at bridging the unbridgeable by seeking a collaborative, Israeli-Palestinian formula, which may delight some but whose time, given the severe boycott imposed by Israel on Palestinian research centers and the complicity of the Israeli academy, has not come. The structural problem resides in the fact that the present in question here has already become the past: this is why, rather than the occupation's technology, one yearns for its science. The feeling that this remains possible is nourished by the remarkable, convincing, profound, and economical final chapter by Ronen Shamir, who combines the tools of the anthropologist, the sociologist, and the historian to explain how the current occupation regime is the outcropping of one that goes

back to the creation and consolidation of Israeli society, thus providing a key to this particular dialectic of dispossession, repression, and resistance.