



Ayalon: Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900–1948
 by *Reviewed by Rashid Khalidi*

Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900–1948, by Ami Ayalon. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004. xii + 160 pages. Notes to p. 184. Sources to p. 200. Index to p. 207. \$55.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

Reviewed by Rashid Khalidi

Study of the social and cultural history of Palestine has lagged greatly behind that of political history (although the latter has not always been an enormously rich field either, impoverished by the nationalist polemics that have often characterized it). Although the focus on the political is typical of modern Arab history, it has a special additional reason in the case of Palestine, namely the intense conflict that enveloped the country throughout the twentieth century. Recently, more attention has been paid to the modern social history of Palestine, by such scholars as Beshara Doumani, Annalies Moors, May Seikaly, Salim Tamari, Judith Tucker, Mahmoud Yazbek, and others.

Ami Ayalon's book is a welcome addition to this new focus on Palestinian social history and fills a large gap in the literature on education, literacy, and publishing in Palestine before 1948. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is the first work to attempt to cover this important topic in depth. It does so in a thorough, conscientious manner, giving the reader a comprehensive picture of the role played by education, literacy, and the press in the development of Palestinian society. The portrait painted by Ayalon is of a society in the throes of rapid and profound change in this regard. This evolution was represented by the shift from the generation that grew up at the end of the nineteenth century, and that was overwhelmingly illiterate, to another just before 1948, nearly half of whose members of school age (44.5 percent) were in school, with even higher proportions in cities and towns, among males, and among Christians (although overall literacy among Palestinian Arabs in 1948 was still probably under 30 percent). Ayalon shows the impact of this rapid change, referring extensively and appropriately to the literature (mainly dealing with European cases) that pioneered the study of the impact of reading and literacy on society.

The structure of the book is straightforward and logical, the progression of topics is smooth, and the text reads easily. Beyond depending on a vast range of printed and archival sources, Ayalon laudably engaged in extensive interviews, which prove to be a rich source of otherwise unavailable data on the topics he considers. He begins the book, appropriately, with a discussion of literacy and education, a topic that is crucial to what follows in the book

and to understanding the development of Palestinian society during the first half of the twentieth century. This is followed by an examination of the texts, both imported and produced in Palestine, including books and newspapers, which were available to readers, and then of how these texts were disseminated and accessed, publicly and privately.

Although well produced and edited, and remarkably free of minor flaws (there are a couple: the singular of *qurush* [pp. 90, 92] is *qirsh*), there are a number of places where the author's judgment can be questioned, most relating to the late Ottoman era. He asserts for example that at the end of the Ottoman period, Arab societies were "living through one of the less productive eras in their cultural history" (p. 1). This may have been true. But this was the period of a shift over from manuscript to printed texts, and while historians have amply documented the extraordinary effervescence in the latter, the pre-print cultural production of Palestine and other parts of the Arab world contained in manuscript sources has not been carefully examined, let alone assessed. Ayalon's judgment about the progress of modern education at the end of the Ottoman era is perhaps unduly harsh: he describes it as beginning "hesitantly" (p. 3). But studies such as those of Ben Fortna and Selçuk Aksin Somel would support the argument that progress over slightly more than half a century until 1918 was quite rapid indeed, given the very low starting point, and given the impressive number of schools that existed when the Ottoman era ended. Ayalon suggests that urban public services before 1918 "were of a very basic nature" (p. 5), though new research, such as that of Abigail Jacobson and Vincent Lemire, both of which deal with Jerusalem during this period, would suggest at least a more nuanced view. Furthermore, Ayalon probably lays too much stress on the role of Western missionaries in the Arab *nahda*, or cultural revival, of the nineteenth century (p. 6) and pays perhaps too little attention to the indigenous efforts of Arab and Ottoman thinkers and writers. There is a slight lack of clarity in Ayalon's enumeration of students in school in Palestine at the end of the Ottoman era: he says that in 1914 the number of students in state and private schools (including foreign schools but excluding *kuttabs*) was 15,000–20,000 (p. 22), while a table gives the total as over 20,000, not including the 3,000–4,000 students in missionary schools, leaving a total of about 24,000 (p. 24).

Ayalon suggests that writers in the Palestinian press were "most often" Greek-Orthodox Christians (p. 61), which, while perhaps true in the Ottoman period and certainly the case regarding the owners and editors of several leading papers, was probably not true overall. Finally, Ayalon argues that two of the most prominent questions yet to be addressed in light of his conclusions are how government, meaning the British Mandate authorities, used printing and publication, and how they affected relations between government and the governed (p. 160). Important though these matters are, at least as important would be ascertaining how printing and publication affected relations within Palestinian society, between classes, generations, and political groups. (As I suggest in my most recent book, this is an area that requires much more attention from scholars.)

In the end, all of these are essentially minor quibbles, of little significance in light of the

valuable data and the intelligent presentation that this book provides to the reader. Reading *Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900–1948* is essential reading for all those who would understand Arab Palestine, both before it was struck by what Ayalon calls “the 1948 calamity” and afterwards. One might have wished that the book had better reflected the degree to which all of what the author describes became a lost world after 1948, and why, but this book nevertheless constitutes a monument to that lost world and a dependable guide to the new world that was to come for the newly dispersed Palestinians, who came to rely heavily on their acquisitions in the field of reading and literacy—with the political consequences that flowed from it—that this book so thoroughly and perceptively details.

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Rosenfeld: Confronting the Occupation: Work, Education, and Political Activism of Palestinian Families in a Refugee Camp
by *Reviewed by Islah Jad*

Confronting the Occupation: Work, Education, and Political Activism of Palestinian Families in a Refugee Camp, by Maya Rosenfeld. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004. xvi + 318 pages. Notes to p. 345. Bibliography to p. 365. Index to p. 376. \$22.95 paper.

Reviewed by Islah Jad

Confronting the Occupation by Maya Rosenfeld studies the usually under-researched community of Palestinians living in refugee camps. Rosenfeld takes as a case study the Dahaysha refugee camp situated on the outskirts of Bethlehem in the West Bank and looks at three central macrosocial spheres that affect people's daily lives: wage labor, education, and political organization in their systemic and historic contexts.

Rosenfeld examines Palestinian laborers' access to labor markets, particularly the segregated, restricted opening of the Israeli labor market to Palestinian female and male day laborers after the 1967 war, in the context of Israeli efforts to contain the development of the Palestinian industry, agriculture, and public service sectors. She also looks at the education of refugee descendents in Dahaysha and its connection to upward mobility, particularly within the context of the regional political economy of labor migration to the Gulf. Rosenfeld finally examines the power relations within which political resistance to the occupation materialized and which gave concrete meaning to the importance of political organization. According to the author "work, education and politics were studied as channels or avenues of social transformation" (p. 15).

This book is important in demystifying many Israeli myths about Palestinians and their society. Some of these myths are related, for example, to the essentializing of Palestinian societies as built on kin ties represented by the historical continuity of the hamula as a patrilineage in which women are subjugated and oppressed. (See, for example, Abner Cohen, *Arab Border-Villages in Israel* [University of Manchester Press, 1965] or Henry Rosenfeld, "From Peasantry to Wage Labor and Residual Peasantry: The Transformation of an Arab Village" in *Process and Patter in Culture*, ed. Robert Manners [Aldine, 1968].) Thus, the occupation's effects on the structure of the hamula and family ties were underestimated and the role of the Palestinian peasants and refugees in shaping their own lives was denied. Rosenfeld, on the contrary, meticulously and thoughtfully deconstructs this myth by looking into the economic and social origins of specific modes of a familial organization to analyze

the "mechanisms and power relations that sustain them . . . and not by classifying familial division of labor and roles according to one or another function that can be attributed to them a posteriori" (p. 81). She also gives voice and agency to Palestinian refugee families and their members, particularly women, in resisting the occupation and sometimes, through education and political activism, shifting its effect on them.

Another myth addressed by this book is the "modernizing" effect of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian women through the opening up of the Israeli labor market, supposedly enabling them to escape the cultural impediments represented by costumes and "tradition." (See, for example, Moshe Semyonov, "Trends in Labor Market Participation and Gender: Linked Occupational Differentiation" in *Women and the Israeli Occupation*, ed. Tamar Mayer [Routledge, 1994].) Rosenfeld shows with unambiguous clarity the small percentage of women, in her sample, who worked in the Israeli market (4 percent) and shows that "the participation of women in waged employment was not contingent upon any cultural factor" (p. 57). She asserts that "whatever tradition-grounded objection women may have encountered on their path to work, they ultimately overcame it by sheer necessity" (p. 56). Indeed, Rosenfeld notes "a considerable participation by women of the intermediate generation in the Dahayshan labor force, implying that home-related tasks, including the rearing of young children, did not bar women from wage labor" (p. 63). One of the important and rather surprising findings, one that undermines regularly low estimates of women's participation in the labor force, is the high rate of women's participation in the Dahayshan labor force (up to 37 percent of the adult female population) (p. 77). It is noteworthy that Rosenfeld reverses some fundamental findings in the Arab world that consistently pointed to a negative correlation between high fertility and women's participation in the labor force (see, for example, Henry Azzam, Julinda Abu Nasr, and I. Lorfin, "An Overview of Arab Women in Population, Employment, and Economic Development" in *Women, Employment, and Development in the Arab World*, ed. Julinda Abu Nasr, Nabil Khoury, and Henry Azzam [Mouton, 1985]), showing that "the highest rate of participation was recorded among aging mothers of seven to nine children" (p. 78).

To underscore the changing nature of the family structure and function in Palestinian refugee camps, Rosenfeld points to an extended family in the camp that is an organized productive unit held together neither by virtue of a well-defined division of labor and roles nor by patriarchal control of resources and property. Rather, it is a joint residence and consumption unit that subsists on the "regular income of one female provider and the extremely irregular incomes of others" (p. 92). However, Rosenfeld insightfully points out that this nontraditional family structure, despite placing a single female provider as the primary family wage earner, does not necessarily disrupt prevailing gender power structures. Given that a "survivalist" and precarious household economy often rules out long-term planning and decision making since wages "are regularly consumed on the spot" (p. 93), this absence of opportunity to convert a woman's income into means that satisfy her personal needs "facilitates the propagation of a male-prioritizing patriarchal tradition, even when the economic foundations for this have ceased to exist" (p. 93). However, Rosenfeld

does shed light on the "erosion of traditional aged-based hierarchy and the redefinition of intergenerational relations" (p. 316) caused by the Israeli imprisonment of large numbers of Palestinian men and boys and the resulting shift in gender roles, with women taking up additional responsibilities, including sustaining networks of prisoners' families.

Applying a theoretical framework stemming from dependency theory, Rosenfeld shows how means for social mobility as education attainment "bore little weight for the employment opportunities of young Dheishehians who did not migrate" (p. 67). Thus, she illustrates the de-developing effects of the Israeli policies and control over Palestinian society and economy.

While for the most part Rosenfeld treats the history of the Zionist project in Palestine and the resulting conflict critically, some minor points call for greater sensitivity: For example, two Palestinian villages destroyed by Israeli forces (Dayr Yasin and Malha) are described in a passive form as having "ceased to exist in the aftermath of the 1948 war" (p. 44), and Neve Ya'acov and Gilo, Jewish settlements built on Arab land in Jerusalem, are referred to as "Jewish neighborhoods" (p. 44).

Still, *Confronting the Occupation* is a valuable text, providing a solid understanding of the occupation's effects on Palestinian refugee families as well as the internal gender power relations in a continually changing context. It is an important addition to the understanding and analysis of Israeli occupation policies as well as the persistent and stubborn resistance of Palestinian refugees. Islah Jad is an assistant professor at Birzeit University in gender studies and cultural studies and an activist in the Palestinian women's movement.

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Farsakh: Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel: Labour, Land, and Occupation
by *Reviewed by Adam Hanieh*

Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel: Labour, Land, and Occupation, by Leila Farsakh. New York: Routledge, 2005. xxii + 204 pages. Appendix to p. 222. Notes to p. 237. Bibliography to p. 256. Index to p. 264. \$65.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Adam Hanieh

Economic writing on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs) frequently points to the historical dependence of Palestinians on the Israeli labor market. It is widely acknowledged that this structural reliance bears partial responsibility for the current deterioration in Palestinian economic livelihood. The complicated system of Israeli-imposed movement restrictions witnessed during the al-Aqsa intifada—and for which the groundwork was laid from 1988 onward—has eliminated almost all work opportunities, led to exceedingly high unemployment, and contributed to the unprecedented poverty now seen in the region.

These observations are commonplace but rarely go beyond a simple statement of fact. Largely absent from the literature is an analysis of the role of WBGs labor in the evolution of Israeli capitalism. Moreover, few writers have explored this relationship through the imperatives of land control and the exclusionary demographic policies that underpin the project of Israeli occupation. Now, however, Leila Farsakh provides a powerful contribution to our understanding of these issues. She begins by outlining the theoretical weaknesses of dominant rational choice approaches that view labor migration as an individual choice driven by wage differentials between different geographical spaces. In contrast, she argues that such approaches do not explain the specific character of labor migration: Who is seeking work, where do they come from, and in what sectors do they find work? Most important, rational choice approaches do not explain the structural reasons that underpin uneven spatial development. In the Palestinian case, these models fail to conceptualize the transfers of labor that have contributed to the pattern of dependency established over decades between the WBGs and the Israeli economy.

Farsakh demonstrates that Palestinian WBGs labor in Israel generally came from rural areas and refugee camps. From 1967 to 1993, this labor was circular, with workers commuting daily to jobs inside Israel and returning to their residences at night. Following the Oslo accords, the ability of Palestinians to work inside Israel was curtailed and the employment destination shifted toward Israeli settlements in the WBGs. While Palestinian labor has been a minor component of the overall Israeli workforce, it has been highly

concentrated in the Israeli construction sector, the destination of over 50 percent of all WBGS workers inside Israel since 1975 (p. 87). The low and relatively constant cost of Palestinian labor, maintained through state policies that discriminate against the Palestinian worker, has provided an important source of capital accumulation in the Israeli construction industry (p. 131).

Access to the Israeli labor market led to significant changes within the Palestinian social structure. The Palestinian labor force was transformed from a largely agricultural society into a wage-earning population (p. 89), reinforcing a structural dependency on the Israeli economy. This transformation was compounded through state policies (regulated through Israeli military orders) that restricted Palestinian use of land, denied access to external markets, and retarded the domestic accumulation of capital.

Farsakh takes these characteristics of Palestinian labor migration and constructs a sophisticated interpretation based upon the territorial priorities of Israeli settlement policy. She emphasizes that the nature of Palestinian labor flow is centrally shaped by Israeli strategic designs over land. Since the beginning of the occupation in 1967, Israel has sought to control the maximum amount of land with the minimum number of Palestinians. The WBGS has undergone a territorial integration into Israel, while, simultaneously, Palestinian society has been structurally separated from the Israeli polity.

She adopts the term “bantustanization” to describe this Israeli strategy in the WBGS (p. 165). Palestinian movement and livelihood increasingly are circumscribed into closed zones that lack any effective contiguity. In these circumstances, the Palestinian economy remains dependent on Israeli labor markets, and there is no possibility for a viable Palestinian state to emerge.

There are two aspects to this process of “bantustanization” that Farsakh unfortunately does not address. First, while her analysis focuses upon Palestinian labor, the dialectic of territorial integration/societal separation cannot be isolated from its effects upon Palestinian capital. The nature of domestic Palestinian capital accumulation—largely reliant on privileged relationships with Israeli and foreign monopolies—has important implications for Palestinian class formation in the WBGS. This is critical to understanding the nature of the political agreements that Farsakh so ably deconstructs throughout the book.

Second, Farsakh’s conclusion that Israeli strategy in the WBGS has led to the creation of a “labor reserve economy” (p. 161) implicitly raises the question of where the Israeli economy is heading and its future relationship with neighboring countries. The industrial zones in Jordan and Egypt—established with the involvement of Israeli capital as a requirement of preferential trade agreements with the United States—are largely run on cheaper, non-Palestinian labor. What is the future of Palestinian labor given these broader regional arrangements? This is a complex and open question deserving of further consideration.

Leila Farsakh has provided a valuable and thought-provoking contribution to the literature on the political economy of the WBGs. Her work moves far beyond a simple empirical analysis and is underpinned by a powerful methodological approach to understanding the factors shaping Palestinian economic development. It is richly deserving of a wide audience.

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