

Appropriation: Zionist Cultural Takeover

One of the gurus of the East Indian subaltern group, Ranajit Guha, in advocating a historiography of the silent and poor that would disentangle it from hegemonic and colonial-leftover-elite-state history, opens one of his essays by stating: “There was one Indian battle that Britain never won. It was a battle for appropriation of the Indian past.”¹ In the case of Palestine, however, with the passage of years, consolidated efforts by Zionist practices, politics, and affiliated scholarship, a national public relations campaign, as well as inadequate responses, have succeeded in appropriating the history and culture of Palestine and the Palestinians, often with collaboration by reputable scholarly establishments in the West.

WHO IS “NATIVE”?

The colonization of Palestine has some parallels to other historical situations such as the conquest of North and South America, Australia, South Africa, or the Indian subcontinent. Some of the colonizing patterns of justification are therefore similar, as are the coping strategies of the oppressed, and the effects of the colonizer’s activities on the minds of both colonized and colonizer. Palestine is special in that, while it collapses and subsumes almost all varieties and layers of colonization, it has some unprecedented peculiarities in terms of cultural and historical assumptions to which it has been victim. In the conquest of America, for example, because the colonizing paradigm had claims of being more advanced or superior, or had other notions of “progress,” it did not intend to absorb native culture and knowledge into its own (although it did so nevertheless without acknowledgement). The intention was at first only to tame, to dispossess, or to exterminate. What the settler society discovered, belatedly, whether among the Romantics in the nineteenth century or environmentalists today, is that some native values related to the treatment of nature are superior in the long term.

In Palestine, there is of course a Zionist posture of superiority and a condescending racist attitude toward the native Palestinians (insistently called “Arabs”). But the Zionists are also stuck in a paradox, for how can they possibly exterminate the local traditions and customs they need and that are so entangled in their own claims of nativity? The life of the Palestinian villages and the manners of the Bedouins, the shepherds, the landscape itself, are the only things that are reminiscent of what was and continues to be presumed “biblical,” as travelers and early Zionists had to admit. For many travelers (see Chapter 11), the strategy was to use the Palestinian people and the land for the purpose of illustration, at the same time to render them invisible as human beings. For the Zionists, this “native land” they want to be theirs, which in fact was not theirs, and their presumed “return” to it, premised on invented connections, led to a process that pretends and behaves as if real past events of history did not really occur while imaginary ones did, at the same time that it had to do what other colonizing projects did and so moved history along.

The appropriation and confiscation with which Israel has plagued Palestine illustrate a set of complexes in the Zionist claim system. They are shown in a range of areas I deal with here and elsewhere in this book—history, religion, landscape, language, heritage, and other aspects. Zionism as a colonial project is impelled by an imperative to disinherit and disperse the Palestinians, and to control those who have not yet been forced to leave. Simultaneously, it wants to make the Palestinians disappear, or be as invisible and as valueless as possible. It robs them of the native status which Zionists see as competing with their assumed entitlement and pretended nativity.

WHAT IS YOURS IS NOW MINE

Appropriation here involves the taking of cultural products, ideas or inventions from others and calling them one’s own. Throughout the history of cultural development, borrowing and exchange were normal and necessary. Often the process was benign, part of the evolution of humanity, essential in periods when inventions and borrowings facilitated life and mobility and opened the world to interconnected growth.

It becomes an unhealthy practice when the taking hides the source or fails to give implicit or explicit credit, when power and self-interest prevent recognition of the other from which one takes—even, often necessarily, to the point of demeaning and demonizing

the source so as to deflect attention from the act. Appropriation in this context is a form of plagiarism or theft applied to ideas, culture, and history. In what Zionism and Israel have done in Palestine and to Palestinians, the appropriative complexes are insidious in their intent and unhealthy in their psychology.

Primarily, Zionist appropriation is inherently marked by ingratitude because the Jewish assumption of native status necessarily implies denying the reality of Palestinian nativity. And it is not the first time this has happened in history. The same kind of disinheriting devaluation of other cultures occurred, for example, in the biblical stories when the Israelites reportedly conquered Canaan or later fought with the Philistines; or when the Romans took over the Etruscan city states in the Italian peninsula; or, more recently, in the Americas as the indigenous First Nations were systematically dispossessed and decimated.

Neither is it the first time that Palestine has been subjected to claims of ownership. The latest pre-Zionist crusading claim came from fundamentalists in Britain and the U.S. during the nineteenth century, typified in the call pronounced at the first public meeting of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1865 by William Thomson, Archbishop of York and the PEF’s first president:

This country of Palestine belongs to *you* and to *me*, it is essentially ours. It was given to the Father of Israel in the words: “Walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee”. *We* mean to walk through Palestine in the length and in the breadth of it, because that land has been given unto us. It is the land from which comes news of our Redemption. It is the land towards which we turn as the fountain of all our hopes; it is the land to which we may look with as true a patriotism as we do to this dear old England, which we love so much. (Cheers).²

The Christian Zionist interest in Palestine needed tools to demonstrate its claim, tools which fixated on “biblical illustration” requiring the Palestinian population to be used as evidence of “biblical life” and, simultaneously, to be invisibilized because their presence contradicts the claim. What characterizes Jewish Zionism, in contrast, is the claim of nativity for itself, an urge that is forced. It hinges on, and tries to concretize, past imaginaries (negated by recent findings), while also relying on the inability of native Palestinians to construct a useful past and to realize the depth

of their culture in the present chaos. By their nature, ungrateful appropriative models are adaptive, in the sense that they change with time, and are ultimately ill-intentioned in their designs and practices. In the decades before 1948, it was not unusual for Zionists to acknowledge native Palestinian culture or to want to emulate it (see Chapter 11). In time, to achieve some consistency, the Zionist system gradually appropriated almost everything that is Palestinian: foods, popular heritage, dress, customs, landscape, architecture, language, religious heritage, and history. Now the Palestinians are left almost completely unacknowledged.

HUNGER FOR FOODS AND ROOTS

Once local dishes are now for everyone. The Japanese eat hamburgers, Canadians eat Chinese dumpling soup and Japanese sushi, British people like Indian curries and Turkish kebabs, modified Italian pizza and pasta are popular in the U.S., and almost everyone now samples humus.

Israelis, however, eat Palestinian and Lebanese food and call it Israeli. They have learned about and gradually taken over local and regional foods and plants as their own. These include the foods that are typical of Greater Syria like falafel, humus, kabab, and shawerma, sweets like baklawa, and local plants and trees—such as olives, figs, and Jaffa oranges. When “Middle Eastern” foods started to become popular in North America and Europe, aggressive sales campaigns declared the dishes to be Israeli national food, in the hunger for such things. Tabouleh, humus, tahinah (pronounced “takhina” by most Israelis), and local flat bread (Arabic “khubez,” called “pita”)—these “Middle Eastern” foods are still presented as national Israeli “home-grown” specialties.³

One can perhaps understand this kind of appropriation. The Israelis, in search of local flavor and in need of eating well too, recognize these foods for their indigenous character and appropriateness to the land, and so take them for their own use. These foods and plants are part of the environment and the region’s character. After all, a high percentage of Israelis are Arab Jews, or Palestinian Arab Israelis who remained after 1948. They have some reason to claim the food as part of their culture, though Israelis of European or U.S. origin are happy to make that claim too. But perhaps a little acknowledgment and humility would be in order.

SNITCHING EMBROIDERY

Presenting Palestinian embroidery and other popular arts as Israeli is just too much. Palestinians are rightly proud of their embroidery. It involves varied, intricate, and colorful needlework—one of the most beautiful in the world. It is an imaginative expression of cultural elements in a hand-crafted art that has been handed down by generations of women in the villages of Palestine. Each village has its unique patterns and colors for dresses as well as items such as cushions and shawls.



Figure 7.1 Palestinian woman's village dress, Ramallah, 1880s

In finely stitched multi-colored threads on hand-loomed cotton or linen, this art reproduces familiar patterns available in nature—cypresses, palms, birds, wheat ears, grapes, stars, landscape features, and geometric shapes. Some artists now create designs that incorporate significant social or cultural events into the more traditional patterns. This art connects people to a long tradition and to the land, out of which its designs grew.

That's why Israelis have not only bought much of the old embroidery but tried to appropriate this art as a national characteristic. A not uncommon sight is an Israeli collector or a North American professional haggling over a few dollars for a dress or other embroidered item that probably took hundreds of work hours by a woman who had hoped to pass the dress on to her daughters. The poverty forced on the people since 1948 has resulted in the sale of household goods, jewelry, embroidered treasures—expressions of a people's history and experience. Now under economic imprisonment and the occupation, an east Jerusalem shop owner can be forced into transactions that will give away original artistry.

An Israeli book on embroidery, *Arabesque: Decorative Needlework from the Holy Land*, starts with “biblical times” and ends with photographs showing Israeli adults and children wearing the embroidered clothing of Palestinian villagers (many from the villages from which Palestinians were forced to flee in 1948). These Israelis have put on an act for the photographs. The book not only takes over a Palestinian art form; it impersonates it. The euphemistic allusion to the “Holy Land” helps to camouflage the real, Palestinian source of this unique form of village art.⁴

For a number of years, the *World Book Encyclopedia* listed under the heading “Clothing” the traditional costume of various countries, mostly the more exotic dresses of Africa and parts of Asia. For “Israel” it showed a woman wearing a traditional Palestinian embroidered dress. Obvious to anyone familiar with Palestinian heritage is that the dress happens to be the traditional attire of women in Bethlehem, for millennia a Palestinian town and until recently mostly Christian. That encyclopedia entry (only recently dropped by the publisher) made Maha Saca furious because in her personal collection at a workshop in Bethlehem she has her grandmother's dress, which looks exactly the same.⁵ Ms Saca has also pointed out in her illustrations how close some of the Palestinian village dresses are to those worn by women several millennia ago.⁶ The dress patterns and colors have evolved

differently in the various parts of Palestine, incorporating particular local meanings and land signifiers.

In Israeli or “international” sources (not to mention some fashion shows) there has been no mention of Palestine and no suggestion of how much embroidery is deeply rooted in ordinary Palestinian farming customs and the life of towns and villages, more than 450 of which were decimated by the Israelis in 1948.⁷ In addition to the villages, the people's natural heritage and their buildings have been confiscated. In human interaction terms, what has been done smacks of something pathological or worse.

And in a few of the villages that were not destroyed, a trend has emerged of using these Palestinian villages as Israeli art colonies, as has happened in the village of 'Ein Houd and in the old city of Yāfa/Jaffa.⁸

APPROPRIATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

When Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in the depth of the Congo jungles, utters the haunted expressions of his possessive mania, “My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river,” he is representing a mind divided within itself between the rapacious greed of colonial exploitative practices and the deceptive idealism of convenient justifying principles. Kurtz is Conrad's image of all that is horrible about such contradictions and the convoluted logic in which humans engage. Most manage to find calming ways to maintain an unexamined conscience, for how else would they be able to live with themselves? Kurtz, to his credit, recognizes the “horror” he has fallen into, from his own perspective. He grapples with his own savagery, the savagery of Western “civilized” conduct that is much worse than any “savagery” in the natives. We are, after all, not just in the world: we are in what we do to each other what the world has done to us and what we have done to the world.

A Jewish-American journalist writing in the food section of *The Jerusalem Post* claims that her “ancestors” enjoyed figs.⁹ Israeli contractors pull out old stones from Palestinian areas to use in their building, or employ Palestinian stonemasons, to lend local authenticity or age to their presence. They live in old (and desirable) “Arab” houses, from which Israel evicted the Palestinian inhabitants in 1948, and don't seem to feel any guilt. Many books on the land written by Israelis or Western Jews have pictures of Palestinian towns and landscapes, without noting of course the implications of who the builders or original inhabitants were. Instead, the animals,

the trees, the plants, the zoos, the terraces are all “biblical.” That applies to all the fauna and flora of Palestine. In one description, flax is made, anachronistically, to date back to “5000 BC in the Land of Israel,” and all the other plants are couched in the context of the biblical “Promised Land.” When there is a need to explain “native” (Palestinian) use of certain plants, the reference is vague and does not mention Palestinians. In pictures where Palestinian houses or Palestinians themselves appear, the invisibility is complete. Among others, a book entitled *Daily Life in Biblical Times* has a cover photo of a Palestinian shepherd with his flock, though the book is careful to void any mention of Palestinians within its covers, even when their customs or foods are described. Instead, the author uses vague allusions to “some present-day societies” and “the locals.”¹⁰

Meanwhile, Israeli colonists on the West Bank continue to attack Palestinian farmers and regularly uproot Palestinian olive trees, while the Israeli army has maintained a similar policy in Gaza. In areas affected by the building of the Separation Wall, the army protects and participates with those engaged in uprooting both people and trees. It is part of a longstanding strategy practiced by Israeli authorities over the past decades: to suffocate Palestinian agriculture and starve it of water, to disrupt the Palestinian social fabric and daily life. Israeli colonists desire to be “native” so much that they take over whatever they want of local resources and land, to which they themselves are not natural. At the same time, they destroy what Palestinians have and how they live—perhaps because they are, unconsciously, reminded that the Palestinians are the owners of real nativity. In an age that is supposedly more enlightened, their excuse for such robbery and cruelty is still that their god gave them the land. This disregard for others is understood from the perspective of a monotheism out of which some of its believers have yet to evolve contemporary notions of justice and ethics in their behaviour toward the Other, whose land and resources they covet. Pretence at originality or greatness has underneath it the pretender’s feeling of inadequacy, a lack of real cultural depth, which is why there is compulsive cruelty, often maliciousness, and a pathological withholding of any acknowledgment. The very elements that Zionists crave to appropriate have their source and reality built into the historic presence and accumulated living of the local Palestinian and regional populations.

An irony arises in the Israeli metaphor of “sabra.” It comes from the Arabic word *ṣabr* (meaning “cactus” and “patience”). Palestinians now associate the prickly pear cactus with their

perseverance against Zionist aggression, and they eat its fruit in summer. Locally born Israelis like to assume the character of this plant, to suggest how they are rough and tough on the outside but sweet on the inside. Tourist promotions also like to describe Israelis as “hospitable,” a quality that (in a sense unfortunately) belongs historically to the Arabs and Palestinians. Cactus fences had been used by Palestinian farmers as plot dividers for decades. Israelis have more recently adopted the practice to “remind” themselves of their “ancestors” and to give their hedges a local flavor they observe but do not understand. However, this cactus plant was imported into the region only in the eighteenth century, having originated in Mexico and been brought over after the colonization of the New World by Europeans.

REGIONAL TAKEOVER

Zionist scholars, along with some Western scholars who still suffer from biblical biases and inventions, tailor regional ancient history to old assumptions and the claim system of specially reconfigured myths. Despite antecedent discoveries (discussed particularly in Chapters 2 and 4), there is still insufficient recognition that the Bible is largely an amalgam of literary and religious production in the region over millennia—exaggerated into believability by centuries of ignorance. Cultural material to support the Bible’s historicity is non-existent compared to the demonstrable material culture of other sources from which much of it was copied or adapted. The antecedents were themselves appropriated, and are now being re-appropriated for political and cultural gains.

The Zionist claim system hangs on certain old religious traditions: the historicity of biblical narratives, profitable privileged notions, the myth of Diaspora, the religious importance of Hebrew, and claims of Judaism as the first monotheism. I show in this book how much such traditions are misguided. However, most scholarship, even when it tries to digest the new findings, still works to maintain the old claim system and its monopolies. The notion of the first monotheism bypasses earlier attempts at “monotheism,” such as in Egypt and Babylon, and neglects recent findings about the continuity between monotheistic beliefs and the preceding polytheism. Primary among the tools in the Zionist claim system are the biblical narratives—stories of an “exodus,” a covenant involving a “Promised Land,” then a “Diaspora,” and now “return,” which have continued to

underlie the entitlement logic of a purportedly secular Zionist movement since its establishment more than 100 years ago.

Many of these stories are themselves appropriations and reconstructions, and they assume ownership of a tradition that only later was associated with what became Judaism after the sixth–fifth century BCE. For example, the exodus narrative (arbitrarily dated to about the fourteenth century BCE), for which there is no historical corroboration, has been shown to be modified and redacted from earlier legendary narratives belonging to other people. In fact, as several scholars have argued, not only was there no such “exodus,” but the Israelites were never in Egypt, the patriarchs are legendary, and there was no conquest of the Promised Land and no great united monarchy of David and Solomon.¹¹ Past ignorance and now circumlocution make it possible to exploit the sacred geography common in the West until the nineteenth century as well as the fundamentalist Christian Zionism that preceded (and in many ways prepared for) the Jewish Zionist movement.

The complexes of appropriation are powerfully ingrained because these old assumed-to-be-historical narratives have come down through monolithic transmission and are invested with monotheistic notions that are very hard to erase from the minds of believers who have relied on them so faithfully and for so long. As a result, when the region is described or illustrated, the catch-all phrase “Bible Lands” is often used. Some, though not all, of these works have clearly Zionist-inspired agendas. When one looks inside such works, there is little if anything material that derives from the Bible itself. All the cultural products referred to are Egyptian or Mesopotamian or Cana’anite. Yet the inclusive tags are “Bible Lands,” “Bible Times,” and “Biblical World,” far more extended than “Holy Land.”¹²

Ancient languages are rife with takeovers. Whereas some ancient cultures are demonized (including the Cana’anite, Philistine, Assyrian, and “Phoenician”), their languages are useful for confiscation. Since “square Hebrew” script is nothing but late square Aramaic, and descended originally from Cana’anite, it becomes easy to try to elide the differences, to exaggerate the importance of Hebrew in ancient times, and to backdate its existence. Hebrew is made to look more ancient than it is because the intention is to make it go back to the times of at least a Moses and then a David (though the historical existence of both figures has been questioned by scholars), which necessitates strategies of circumvention and appropriation. Since square Hebrew (or rather square Aramaic)

cannot go that far back, the need arises to use the terms “Paleo-Hebrew” and “ancient Hebrew.”¹³

Ancient inscriptions classified as “ancient Hebrew,” once examined, show clearly they are not different from “Phoenician.” In fact, they are “Phoenician.” It is an intended confusion of scripts to identify the two. One such inscription is the “Gezer calendar,” which dates to the tenth or eleventh century BCE. Zionist scholars (see the example in note 16), and now some standard encyclopedias (working within Zionist agendas or old assumptions), classify this text as “ancient Hebrew.” Other authorities and any impartial observer would notice that the calendar is written in signs that are “Phoenician,” similar to other inscriptions in the whole region in that period; in this case, the letters show some demonstrable affinities to Moabite (see Chapter 5 and note 9 there). The claims can become ridiculous. As mentioned in Chapter 5, one Jewish writer provides a most ingenious theory of how Yahweh gave the alphabet to his chosen males first, in the process bypassing Ugarit and demeaning the “Phoenicians” as incapable of such an invention. An article on a Philistine inscription appropriates the “enemy” by speaking of “Hebreo-Philistine.”¹⁴

While Arabic is the only surviving, continuous, live regional language, a storehouse and inventory of ancient languages, it is diminished in its importance, as I discuss in Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 10. That applies to how it is made to relate (or not) to ancient languages like Cana’anite/“Phoenician,” Ugaritic, and Aramaic. Instead, scholars attempt to establish less convincing similarities to Hebrew. For example, Ugaritic words from about 3400 years ago, exactly the same as Arabic, are thought of in terms of distant Hebrew cognates (see Chapter 4). Only recently are more scholars realizing that Ugaritic is closer to Arabic than to any other language.

The implications affect the perspectives taken on other regional ancient languages. While impressions and theories about ancient languages were the outcome of old scholarly habits, today they are used to strengthen Zionist claims for links to ancient history. Arabic is underestimated in range and age, whereas Hebrew’s importance is magnified. Hebrew is made to look more ancient than it actually is and to have stronger links to other ancient languages. Assumptions about Hebrew’s importance or its age, however, are a backdating of current feelings or old scholarly assumptions, and could not have been the case in ancient times. To give an unjustified ascendancy to Hebrew, scholars employ two annoying practices: using square Hebrew to transcribe ancient languages and hyphenating languages

(such as “Hebrew-Aramaic”) and always placing “Hebrew” first. (For more on this, see Chapters 1 and 10.)

Such traditional practices are not always unintentional and are often manipulated in the misinformation that accompanies the promotion of political or religious agendas. For example, as noted in Chapter 1, in the case of a special stone plaque erected in 1985 within the premises of the Pater Noster Church on the Mount of Olives, in east Jerusalem, Aramaic and Hebrew are placed next to each other (needlessly so since the languages are available among the older ceramic plaques lining the courtyard). The plaque is placed prominently with the intention of showing that the scripts look the same (see Figure 7.2). The trick is made easier because the original Aramaic text of the Lord’s Prayer, which had been especially carved on the floor of a niche long before, was accidentally sanded down to almost nothing by a worker who had misunderstood instructions. That “square Hebrew” looks similar to square Aramaic has nothing to do with whether Hebrew was ever a spoken language, nor does the same script mean the same sound. Why highlight the similarity in script? Israeli tour guides are eager to point out to visitors: “Look, Hebrew and Aramaic are exactly the same, and so there is no difference if it is said that Christ spoke Aramaic.”

Equally dangerous are other adaptive and appropriative trends. In one recent twist in Israeli and Zionist scholarship, it has become



Figure 7.2 Special plaque, Pater Noster Church, Mount of Olives, Jerusalem

more convincing (given the current consensus that Joshua’s conquest of the “Promised Land” is unhistorical) for some scholars like Jonathan Tubb and Israel Finkelstein to develop further the theory of a “peaceful” religious or ideological transition. They say that there is really no difference between “Israelites” and “Canaanites” (see Chapter 1, note 41; Chapters 6 and 11). In effect, however, such a theory is an adaptation that takes over Cana’nite culture, for which alone is there any material evidence on the ground.

MONEY

Appropriation extends to aspects related to “enemy” languages and empires as well. The name of Israel’s currency, the shekel, is ancient Babylonian, both in terms of etymology and the invention of currency. Recent dictionaries and encyclopedias, however, reflecting Zionist influence, are either misleading or contradictory about its origin. *Merriam-Webster* identifies the shekel only with Hebrew and the State of Israel, as does the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The older *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933), the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (1973), and even the older *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971 edition), give the correct origin as Babylonian, and tell us that it became a common currency in the region. But a more recent edition of the *Concise Oxford* has the word “shekel” as “Hebrew.” The 2002 *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* makes it a “unit of weight and silver coin used in ancient Israel,” while *The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (seventh edition, 2004) defines shekel as: “1. The unit of money in Israel 2. an ancient silver coin used by the Jews.”

It is not only that the facts have been changed in making both the word and the currency assume a “Jewish” origin. In the definitions, there is confusion in the use of the different terms “Hebrew” and “Jewish,” making them appear to be the same. In disregarding Babylonian advances, the claim deprives Babylon of the privilege of inventing such financial trappings of civilization. Meanwhile, Babylon is still condemned, via biblical prejudices, as the epitome of “decadence,” and is subjected to contempt for its money practices and supposed profligacy.

TERRACE FARMING

Much myth is circulated about the late second millennium (the “Iron Age”) by Zionists always keen to support legitimizing claims.

One invention concerns the construction of agricultural terraces, or cultivated steps on hills. This ancient feature was developed long before the “Iron Age” by various peoples and used in locations across the East Mediterranean, such as Cyprus, Syria, and Turkey. In Zionist history writing, terraces are said to have been developed by the ancient Israelites. In addition to false credit-taking, this story is an attempt to use the argument of human labor as a justification for the modern colonization of Palestine. A promotional book *The Holy Land: A Unique Perspective* provides the following text in connection with the photograph of a terrace: “Because the Canaanites were largely successful in keeping the Israelites out of the plains and the valleys (see Joshua 17: 16–18; Judges 1: 34), the Israelites had to become economically self-sufficient by mastering terrace agriculture.”¹⁵ Even the redacted biblical accounts thrown in for support actually present a different view: Joshua and company, a preliterate nomadic group if it existed, first defeated the Canaanites in the cultivated plains and then moved on to cultivated towns in the hills. The book of Judges reflects a somewhat different cultural diversity in that period—that is, according to such versions. At any rate, there is no logic that would reconcile a conquest or any other historical periodization with this claim of Israelite invention of terraces.

Contradiction: another appropriator writing about land use in the Iron Age lists several scholars who point out that terraces were invented during the Bronze Age by the “early Phoenicians,” or Canaanites, and “Jebusites,” much earlier than the ancient Israelites given in the biblical accounts. In fact, hill terracing is known to have been used in the whole East Mediterranean region from at least the fourth millennium BCE. One page later, however, this writer states that “terracing in the hill-country has been practiced continuously from its introduction by the Israelites at the beginning of the Iron Age till the present day.”¹⁶ It is left unclear who has continued the practicing, when the Israelites obviously did not remain in the region. Hence one can add the question: who has maintained the terraces and planted over the last three or four thousand years? In fact, there is a Palestinian farmer actually working the terrace in the photograph in *The Holy Land: A Unique Perspective* (Figure 7.3), though the farmer is of course made invisible in the text. The appropriation and confiscation thus works to its own advantage in any way it finds suitable, regardless of any historical considerations or appreciation of or sensitivity to others.

Thus modern labor and ancient labor too are denied, confiscated, even as property and culture are taken.



Figure 7.3 Terraces in Palestine, with invisible Palestinian farmer plowing

As noted in Chapter 3, the official logo of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism shows two men (the spies of the Old Testament) carrying a huge cluster of grapes back from the “Promised Land.” Did not the spies take the grapes from someone else’s vine, probably grown on a Canaanite terrace? One wonders why the ministry is not at all embarrassed to advertise this kind of association. As I explain in Chapter 3, Mark Twain (whose account is often misused in Zionist writing) makes glorious fun of the indoctrinating appeal of sacred geography and in particular the exaggerated image of this bunch of grapes.¹⁷

In a contemporary re-creation of this presumed ancient labor, at Sataf and other locations Israelis are invited to pay a fee to explore the landscape and to farm their own terrace “as their ancestors did before them.” What a way to concretize an ideological invention. Sataf happens to be a deserted Palestinian village, one among the hundreds whose population was evicted in the ethnic cleansing implemented by Zionist forces in 1948.¹⁸ The terraces may be ancient, but the people who really continued to cultivate them until recently were the Palestinian farmers of Sataf—now refugees.

Additionally, the Zionist claim to the land is more easily argued (adapting a common colonizing logic) by neglecting to record that most Palestinians are/were villagers who tilled the land and tended the orchards in Jaffa and Hebron and all over the country, as well as on terraces, long before the Zionist project started. Instead it is customary, in line with the colonizer’s worldview, to say that the Palestinians are “Arabs” and therefore (a) have neglected the

land and left it barren, and (b) should now go to other "Arab" countries or to the Arabian Desert. This strategy of dismissing Palestinian labor is a particular blending of the biblical paradigm with other colonizing justifications: the land-use argument, the savagery or nomadism of the locals, as opposed to the colonizers' self-description of being chosen by a god to improve the land, which leads to all sorts of inventions and credit-taking.

LEGAL ASSUMPTIONS

Appropriators can be brazen in their claims. In Israel, the appropriative-assumptive paradigm is both inventive and contradictory. This applies also to the Israeli legal system, which is eclectic in the sense that it conveniently employs a mix of older pre-1948 and newly enacted laws to serve its purposes. Its legal system gives an impression of democracy and equality at the same time that it institutionalizes discriminatory practices. The very law on who is eligible for citizenship (Jews, automatically) depends on a primary discrimination. Palestinians who were forced to leave or moved for fear of massacres in 1948 are not allowed to claim their properties or return to them because Israel enacted an "Absentee Property Law" in 1950 to disallow that possibility, contrary to the most basic rules of international law. Other than the hundreds of villages vacated or destroyed by the Israelis, there are examples of complete sites that were purged of their Palestinian owners, all personal belongings and family heirlooms confiscated, and their stone houses repopulated with Jews—as in 'Ein Houd or towns like old Jaffa (both now turned into artist colonies) and 'Ein Karem.

On the whole, no trace of guilt exists about such confiscations and the resultant reduction of a whole population to impoverishment. In claiming one's destiny according to the will of a god, one convinces oneself of innocence. Most Israelis seem to enjoy the antiqueness of the stone houses in such villages and cities and are not concerned that these houses and lands were stolen from Palestinians. One sees advertisements in Israeli newspapers for the sale of an "old Arab house." Many have even deluded themselves into thinking these houses are actually theirs as a god-given "heritage," a mode of thinking that elsewhere would be deemed as illegal, racist, and exclusionary. As an example, I think of the many old Palestinian stone houses (including my grandparents' large three-storey house) in West Jerusalem now occupied by Jews without purchase or permission, in addition to the thousands of houses in cities and

villages taken over without shame. Do these Israeli Jews not think that the homes, money, and properties in Europe other Jews left during World War II should be claimed back (as they are) and that Jews must be compensated both for their losses and their suffering? Does the same justice not extend to Palestinian properties and Palestinian suffering?

SELF-APPROPRIATION

By not claiming their ancient heritage, most Palestinians seem unaware they are unintentionally allowing its free appropriation. While some Palestinians continue to use emotional rhetoric and others are now resorting to religious fundamentalism as a reaction, most are unaware of the full implications of their own historical situation. These are symptoms that have developed as a result of the long subjection of a native people to colonization, and in reaction to an endless oppression. One marvels that native identity can still persist in some form under such obfuscation and contradiction.

In the Palestinian context, it is ironic that appropriation is not limited to the Israeli colonizers and their attempts to control the land and to seek false nativity. The colonized, from whom everything has been expropriated and who have been massively deprived of opportunities, sometimes turn against themselves. In acts of powerlessness, they sometimes only take from each other in return. This phenomenon would seem to be a human tendency that appears among those who seek some kind of sense of accomplishment in an environment where action for innovation and development is stifled. Likewise with projects and academic programs in such an environment, the generation of ideas is depressed but there is still a hunger by some to accomplish something meaningful. This may lead them to claim the ideas of others as their own. Under conditions of turmoil, dispersal and lack of security, the eventual outcome is an unfortunate diminishment of initiative and cooperation. The lack of appreciation for initiative becomes a disincentive to those able to offer what could be beneficial for the community's progress. Eventually, there is a loss in cumulative development, though some individuals will always attempt to initiate whatever potential for progress might be possible.¹⁹

REVERSING APPROPRIATION

Systemic antagonism and ideological invention are part and parcel of the effort by Zionism to establish its own claims as it denies

and undermines the native Palestinian presence. Implicitly and explicitly, the Zionist claim system's practices and laws are intended to exclude, diminish, disinherit, and harm. In any other context, such exclusionary practices enshrined in taught beliefs would be more clearly identified as racist. At the same time, an indigenous Palestinian narrative that might counter the monolithic Zionist construction is still largely unrealized. Partial knowledge, lack of awareness, historical shortening, and other limitations imposed on Palestinians and other people in the region (those who have the real historical connections) have all helped to allow blatant Zionist and Western confiscation of various items, past and recent—from ancient history, religion, languages, place names, and heritage, to foods, arts, currency, and other cultural phenomena. The dominant agenda continues to deny the memory of the Palestinian people and their long, rich history and to erase them from the narrative of the country, forcing political decisions based on myth rather than history.

The continuing denial of Palestinian nativity and Zionist appropriations of ancient history are exhibited in information widely circulated and used for the purposes of indoctrination. While present-day Zionist indoctrination violates all the demonstrable evidence and even past Zionist strategies, it simultaneously entraps Zionist thinking in contradictions that require leaps of faith and various degrees of self-blinding. Further, the effort to keep constructing such arguments requires a constant adaptation in the fabrication. Robert Young writes in *White Mythologies*:

As Cixous suggests, the mode of knowledge as a politics of arrogation pivots at a theoretical level on the dialectic of the same and the other. Such knowledge is always centered in a self even though it is outward looking, searching for power and control of what is other to it. Anthropology has always provided the clearest symptomatic instance, as was foreseen by Rousseau from the outset. History, with a capital H, similarly cannot tolerate otherness or leaves it outside its economy of inclusion. The appropriation of the other as a form of knowledge within a totalizing system can thus be set alongside the history (if not the project) of European imperialism, and the constitution of the other as "other" alongside racism and sexism.²⁰

Zionist ideology, which determines the actions of the Israeli state, is built largely on inventions of memory and of ancient history. It should

be difficult for a conscientious person to accept such inventions in lieu of the buried truths of history. However, the forces built by political systems do not welcome change and work zealously to preserve the continuity of their established power. It threatens such systems when individuals begin to reverse systemic pseudo-knowledge and replace it with more even-handed recognitions that affect the education of generations and public opinion. Acknowledging past abuses, one-sided claims, acts of dispossession, and other historic injustices are all prerequisites for any possible rapprochement and healing to occur. If there is to be any conciliation among peoples, the injustices inherent in the premises of appropriation cannot continue to remove those very aspects that might form possible means of connection. If disinheritance and denial of another's equality and rights remain profitable aspirations, human enmity will thrive and no amount of public relations effort to redescribe acts of dispossession will bring any hoped for peace or reconciliation of antagonisms.

History cannot, through neglect or selective ignorance, or inattention to truthfulness, permit the normalization of the aberrant and the perpetuation of false cultural hegemonies. History must expose the phenomenon that reveres inventions and moulds narratives into self-interested, opportunistic claims. Appropriation of the culture and history of Palestine must be reversed in the interest of a commitment to seek the "truth." It is then that modern access to accurate information might open up possibilities for an innovative space where individuals and societies can produce new understandings.

7. Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: Random House, 1976); Paul Wexler, *The Non-Jewish Origins of Sephardic Jews* (New York: SUNY, 1966). Shlomo Sand's book *The Invention of the Jewish People*, trans. Yael Lotan (London: Verso, 2009) was published in Hebrew as *mattai ve'ekh humtza ha'am hayehudi?* [*When and How the Jewish People Was Invented*] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2008). The main section on Berbers is on pages 199–210; on Hasmonean forced conversion and later centuries, pages 154–81; on the Palestinian fellahin being “the people of the land,” the descendents of the most ancient populations, pages 182–9. A review of the Hebrew edition by Israel Bartal “Inventing an Invention” criticizes Sand's historical method but does not challenge his facts (available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/999386.html>). Another review, by Raymond Deane in *The Electronic Intifada* (October 22, 2009), notes Sand's fears of academic censure since he admits having “waited until he was a full professor” before publishing the book. For more on this topic see Uri Avnery's “On Jewish History: The Lion and the Gazelle,” available at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/avnery04212008.html>
8. Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 28.
9. A report about a DNA study conducted by Dr. Pierre Zalloua, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the AUB Faculty of Medicine, is entitled “Are We Phoenicians After All?” *AUBulletin Today* 6.6 (May 2005). Noteworthy here is the National Geographic genographic project.
10. Whether “Phoenician” is a Greek term or a local one that became more widespread is not as material here as the way it is being employed (see Chapter 1, notes 18–21, and Chapter 5 and note 1 there). A competent discussion of “Phoenicianism” is Asher Kaufman's *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004). There was a strong literary movement in mid-twentieth-century Lebanon and Syria that went back to ancient regional cultures, and in terms of politics the idea of regional unity is represented in such parties as the Syrian Nationalist Party.
11. A source on aspects of national identity is the double issue I edited of the *Palestine-Israel Journal* 8.4/9.1 (2002), particularly Yoav Peled's “Inter-Jewish Challenges to Israeli Identity” and Issam Nassar's “Reflections on the Writing of the History of Palestinian Identity.”
12. See the discussion, mostly interviewing Israeli archaeologists, in Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground*, 249–58. On “national consciousness,” see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
13. Amin Maalouf, *On Identity* (London: Harvell Press, 2000; original French edition, 1996), 17, 81–9, 129.
14. R. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” in Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Identities: Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 318. A well-known discussion of nationalist constructions is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).

CHAPTER 7 : Appropriation

1. Ranajit Guha, “Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography,” *Subaltern Studies VI* (1989), 210.

2. PEF archives, London PEF/1865/2/8, “Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting,” June 22, 1865 (emphasis is in the original).
3. The website of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism offers ample illustration. Among the many books that perpetuate such assumptions about Israeli “national dishes” is Tami Lehman-Wilzig and Miriam Blum's *The Melting Pot: A Quick and Easy Blend of Israeli Cuisine* (Herzlia, Israel: Palphot, n.d.). 10. A critical essay on the subject is Yael Raviv's “National Identity on a Plate,” *Palestine-Israel Journal* 8.4/9.1 (2002), 164–72, which cites promotional Israeli government publications distributed by embassies.
4. Ziva Amir, *Arabesque: Decorative Needlework from the Holy Land* (n.p.: Massada Press, 1977; New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977).
5. “Clothing,” *The World Book Encyclopedia* (2005 edition and previous editions). This encyclopedia has been translated into Arabic, but the Saudi publishers merely changed “Israel” to “Palestine.” The U.S. publisher informed me that the illustration has now been dropped “for cause” from the 2009 edition (personal correspondence, July 9, 2009), and the editors will be reviewing new information. While dropping the illustration is positive, it may be appropriate to retain an illustration and correct the identification.
6. Check Maha Saca's own website: www.palestinianheritagecenter.com. There is striking resemblance between the present Jericho dress and clothing worn by “Semitic” women in an ancient Egyptian wall painting (see the reproduction in Philip K. Hitti, *History of Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine* [London: Macmillan, 1951]). The similarities to ancient dress are noted in a competent Wikipedia article “Palestinian Costumes,” which also has a bibliography including Shelagh Weir's *Palestinian Costume* (London: British Museum, 1989) and Leila el Khalidi's *The Art of Palestinian Embroidery* (London: Saqi, 1999).
7. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006) and Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).
8. On 'Ein Houd, see Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).
9. *The Jerusalem Post Magazine* (October 2, 1998), 27.
10. Chapter 11 gives more examples of invisibility. On “biblical” plants, see David Darom's *Beautiful Plants of the Bible: From the Hyssop to the Mighty Cedar Trees* (Herzlia: Palphot, n.d.), 24, 7. In Oded Borowski's *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), despite the cover photo and descriptions of native foods, any reference to Palestinians is absent (66, 71). The photos in *The Holy Land: A Unique Perspective* (Oxford: Lion, 1993) are unacknowledged for their sources; instead the book overwhelms the reader with biblical quotations and credit-taking. The cover photo of Yoel Elitzur's *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land: Preservation and History* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press and Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2004) is a typical Palestinian olive grove scene.
11. One historical perspective is provided by the Egyptologist Donald B. Redford, who points out the ironies in Canaanite folklore memories being preserved in Greek and Hebrew stories (Sojourn and Exodus), which were “appropriated from the earlier cultures they were copying” (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 422). A good

- summary is given in the entry "Exodus," *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Among the skeptics are Israeli archaeologists like Ze'ev Herzog, who caused uproar by stating that decades of archaeology contradict biblical stories; see "The Bible: No Actual Findings," *Ha'aretz*, weekend magazine, (October 29, 1999), 36–8, and Haim Watzman, "Archaeology vs. the Bible," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 21, 2000), A19–20.
12. Some fairly random examples of such titles: Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006); Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Alan Millard, *Treasures from Bible Times* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1985); and T. C. Mitchell, *The Bible in the British Museum: Interpreting the Evidence* (London: British Museum, 1988). Incidentally, no real "evidence" is exhibited anywhere in the British Museum about "ancient Israel," except for a posted text reportedly written by Jonathan Tubb, who also wrote *Bible Lands* (New York: Knopf, 1991). Many other biblical "atlases" fit into this category. For further discussion see Chapter 1. The U.S. occupation of Iraq has led Israeli reporters to incorporate that country—according to Yigal Schleifer ("Where Judaism Began," *The Jerusalem Report*, June 16, 2003, 38–43), Iraq is where "patriarch Abraham" started out, the place of the Diaspora and the Babylonian Talmud, where a "large Jewish community" lived for 2500 years and left lots of remains.
 13. For more documentation, see the appropriate sections of Chapter 1 and Chapter 10.
 14. Leonard Shlain, *The Goddess Versus the Alphabet: The Conflict between Word and Image* (New York: Viking, 1998), 68–71; Seymour Gitin, Trude Dothan, and Joseph Naveh, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," *Israel Exploration Fund Journal* 47 (1997), 13–14. For additional discussion, see Chapter 1 and Chapter 10.
 15. *The Holy Land: A Unique Perspective*, 153.
 16. Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 15–17. Borowski follows with a long section on the "Gezer" calendar, claiming it to be Israelite and written in Hebrew, though it could only have been written in "Phoenician" (with some features of Moabite writing). On the "Gezer Calendar" as "Phoenician," see Chapter 5 and note 9 there. In particular, H. W. F. Saggs, *Civilization Before Greece and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), states that the calendar is "Phoenician" (83).
 17. Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrim's Progress* (1869), Chapter 46.
 18. More on Sataf is given by Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 232–35, who details the fate of many other villages. Also, check "Sataf" on the internet.
 19. This reverse complex reminds me that several people have since claimed as their own effort the Arab Community Centre of Toronto I founded and directed in the 1970s, as well as a conference, "Landscape Perspectives on Palestine," held in October 1998 at Birzeit University, that I initiated and developed.
 20. Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2004), 35.

CHAPTER 8 : Self-colonization

1. "Yafa" and "Jaffa" are in fact the same. The problem is that in early transcriptions the Germanic "J" (= Y) was used, so the letter started to be pronounced as a "J" in languages such as English. The same applies to other place names and to personal names like Jesus or Joseph. "Joseph" is sometimes used as a male name by Arab Christians, with the intention of distinguishing it from the more obviously Arabic original "Yūsef." Similarly, a Palestinian company uses "Jericho" in Arabic script as the brand name on its water bottles. See Chapter 1 and Chapter 10 for more examples of how transcription errors lead to such name transformations.
2. See my discussion in "Subliminal Filmic Reflections of Ancient Eastern Mediterranean Civilizations," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22.4 (2005), 371–7.
3. Elsewhere, especially in Chapter 6, I provide more detailed answers to Zionist claims: Jews of today have nothing except tradition to relate them to ancient Jews, or Hebrews, or Israelites; in fact, these three terms are unrelated. Ancient Judaism did not have this sense of ethnicity attached to it, and most present Jews are the result of various historical conversions rather than any connection to ancient Jews in the region, or to Israelites. In contrast, many indigenous Palestinians and other people in the region would have been pagan in old times, were converted to one religion or another later, but essentially a large portion of the population remained on the land throughout the ages. I don't limit this statement to Palestine but include the whole region as well, since there is no reason to find much distinction among people in the region except now through the colonially imposed boundaries, nor was (or is) there reason for them not to move from one part of the region to another.
4. Chapter 3 on the invention of sacred places provides more instances of the Zionist exploitation of local traditions. Chapter 2 points out some differences among the three monotheisms in terms of connections to earlier polytheistic gods and beliefs.
5. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1967 [1961]), 119, 123, 125. At one conference I attended, in a paper presented by American Bible Society members the authors prided themselves on making sure the names used in translating the Bible to Senegalese did not remind the converts how close the biblical and qur'anic names are (that, for example, "Joseph" is really "Yūsef" in both texts). This strategy adopted in parts of Africa reminds me of similar Zionist designs and media campaigns. Fanon explains how colonialism "pulls every string shamelessly" to sow divisions and turn Africans against Arabs, Christian converts against Muslims, and blame Arabs for the slave trade to get black people to hate them (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 129).
6. Interestingly, the Palestine Exploration Fund changed its objective to a neutral one in 1978, removing the reference to "biblical illustrations," but it then recanted and reinserted "biblical aspects" in a 1996 re-revision.
7. Chapter 2 shows how the NJB better reflects aspects of the original text.
8. Such views fit nicely into the paradigm of Western civilization I describe in Chapter 1; Albright's 1957 *From Stone Age to Christianity* is quoted extensively in Keith W. Whitelam's study of the biblical industry, *The Invention of Ancient*