

History of Palestinian Libraries and Archives Under Israeli Occupation (1948-1993)

By Anan Hamad

This article will discuss the history of Palestinian libraries under Israel from the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 until 1993, the date the Palestinian territories were returned to the Palestinian National Authority. However, for essential background we begin with a brief sketch of the development of Palestinian libraries from the Ottoman era through the period of the British occupation of Palestinian lands.

Historical Background

Historically, Palestine has been a part of the Arab and Islamic civilization in which libraries held a prominent place. While some studies indicate an absence of a specific date marking the beginning of libraries in Palestine, other studies confirm that the library as a phenomenon crystalized during the Arab Islamic conquest. The phenomenon continued to expand along with interest in education and the book, which the poet Mutanabbi (915-965 CE) called the best company of all time.

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Keywords: Banned books, censorship, cultural genocide, cultural heritage, destruction, history, Israeli occupation, looting, Nakba, National Library of Israel, Palestinian libraries, settler colonialism, special collections, Zionism.

Historical and cultural studies indicate that for Palestine, like the rest of the Levant, the period since the beginning of Ottoman rule has been a time of accelerating change under the impact of colonial penetration. This has taken the form of economic and political domination and marginalization. From a historical perspective, we see the Ottoman Empire's attempt at reforming education anywhere it ruled, including Palestine. In 1856, it decreed an extension of compulsory education. Subsequently, state schools began to spread in Palestine, followed by an increase in student numbers in all Palestinian cities. Archeological institutes were established along with a number of affiliated libraries, and newspapers began to spread after 1908. Cultural exchanges between Palestine and Europe began to increase, aided by the graduation of a growing number of Palestinian Arabs from European institutions.

Meanwhile, dozens of libraries in Palestine were established, one of which is Al-Ahmadiyya Library, which was established 1781 CE (1196 AH¹) in Al-Jazzar Mosque in Acre on the Palestinian seacoast. Another was the Library of the Grand Mosque of Jaffa in 1812 CE (1227 AH). Most noteworthy was the Khaldiyyeh Library in Jerusalem, which was established in 1900 CE. Other libraries were also established in the city of Gaza and other Palestinian cities. It is important to note that at the end of the Ottoman era, the foreign libraries established by missionaries in Palestine helped to introduce organizational principles in office work. However, these European libraries remained monopolized by Europeans and orientalists and, thus, had a limited and weak impact among Palestinians.

In 1917 Palestine came under British occupation, which immediately transferred the education of the Jewish community in Palestine to a Jewish agency, keeping the Arab education under British control. Ultimately, this helped Israel occupy 78% of the historic area of Palestine. It became clear during the British occupation period that resources for formal library education, especially school libraries, were limited. In the 1920s, dozens of Palestinian schools remained without libraries. The types of books found in libraries were suitable for teachers rather than students, and the number of books was also inadequate. Moreover, British occupation authorities did not allocate rooms for school libraries.

It is noteworthy that, during the occupation from 1917 to 1948, Arab Palestinians were banned from public libraries by the British

¹ "AH" is an abbreviation for "Anno Hegirae"—or the Year of the Hegira, the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, from Mecca to Medina. According to the Western dating system that was in 622 CE.

occupation government or by the local municipalities. This made it clear that British policies were aimed at keeping the Palestinian people ignorant to facilitate occupation of their land and obliterate their identity.

However, this did not prevent private Palestinian Arab libraries from emerging in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth, Acre, and other cities where knowledge was advanced in comparison to other locations. This was accompanied by the establishment of special libraries for some departments of the British Authorities: for example, the Library of the Department of Statistics, the Library of the High Court, and the Library of the Department of Agriculture. Most important was the establishment of the library of the Palestinian Museum of Antiquities in 1935. That library contained seventeen thousand books in various languages and specialized in history and archeology. Its most important holdings are the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have an exceptional historical and archeological value.

1948: The Palestinian Nakba and the Great Book Robbery

In 1948, with the declaration of the state of Israel, over 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their land, abandoning all their possessions. This period is called the “Nakba,” or “Catastrophe” by Palestinians, for it had catastrophic effects on Palestinian society on multiple levels. The uprooting of the Palestinians was not limited to displacement and physical removal from their land, but also included uprooting their civilization and culture. This was done to support the Zionist myth of cultural freedom and to deny Palestinians any cultural or spiritual connection to their land, in keeping with the saying “a land without a people for a people without a land.”

Although Zionism adopted the myth of an uninhabited land as its symbol, it did not deny the existence of the native people, but rather ignored them and gave them no consideration. Representing the land as empty in the deepest sense, that is, empty of civilization, Zionism worked to obliterate and plunder any cultural heritage that contradicted that lie. Zionism did not take upon itself the burden that the white man professed to carry on his shoulders. It did not “prepare” the Palestinians, but uprooted them and seized control of their property, simply because it viewed itself as more able and efficient to preserve Palestinian land and all its property. Zionism promoted itself as an enlightened movement that recognized the value of civilization and science, and thus gave itself the legitimacy and right to steal private Palestinian libraries, including the libraries of Khalil Sakakini,²

² Alternate spellings in English are “Assakakini” and “al-Sakakini.”

Nasser Nashashibi, and other intellectuals and wealthy Palestinians in the neighborhoods of Talbieh, Bekaa, and Qatmun.

The establishment of Zionist control over the land and property was accompanied by the theft of a large number of Palestinian books from private and public libraries alike. According to a doctoral thesis by the Israeli scholar Gish Amit, more than 30,000 books and manuscripts were stolen from West Jerusalem alone. Amit confirmed what dozens and hundreds of Palestinians since the 1948 Palestinian Nakba said about the theft and looting of tens of thousands of unique and valuable Palestinian books from Palestinian homes. This looting and robbery were carried out under the protection of Jewish guerrillas and the Israeli army, and with the surveillance and assistance of the National Library of Israel. The importance of Dr. Amit's thesis is that it is the first study to examine the process of what can be called the Nakba of the Palestinian Libraries. It also sheds light on an important stage in history for the creation of Israel's National Library, which was established on the ruins of the Palestinian intellectual heritage, proving that Zionism is an integral part of the system of colonial settlement and the system of hegemony, eradication, and exile, which has been, and continues to be used to silence Palestinians historically, socially, culturally, and politically (Amit, 2014).

In the first months the theft of books was simply unsystematic looting. Afterwards, it was organized at the hand of the Custodian of Absentee Property according to Absentee Property Law through which the theft of all Palestinian property was regulated. The law legitimized the theft and looting of books in this case. The newspaper *Ha'aretz* reveals that evidence of this process can be found in the first Israeli government's decisions from the cabinet meeting held in December 1948. The then Minister of the Interior, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, announced: "Recently a committee from the university [Hebrew University] was organized, and it goes about after the army and gathers up books from the houses." Months later, a report from the university library noted, "There was a proposal that called upon the university's library to remove the books from neighborhoods that were occupied, where they are in an unsafe state, and to place them under its protection" (Aderet, 2012). As the fighting raged, Israeli soldiers and librarians were busy collecting tens of thousands of books from Palestinian homes in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, and elsewhere.

Palestinians who fled their land with the Declaration of the State of Israel 65 years ago had to leave all their possessions, including their libraries and books, which they never saw afterwards. In May 1948, attorney Omar Salih Barghouthi was forced to flee his office on Jaffa Street and his home in the Qatmun neighborhood of Jerusalem, where he had collected some 256 books. For years, Barghouthi's family searched

for their library, all too certain that it was locked in one of the Israeli National Library cellars. Palestinian poet Khalil Sakakini (1878-1953), who had taken refuge in Cairo, expressed the same concern:

Farewell, my library! Goodbye, my books! I know not what has become of you after we left: Were you looted? Burnt? Have you been ceremonially transferred to a private or public library? Did you end up on the shelves of grocery stores with your pages used to wrap onions? (Amit, 2008).

The books were initially placed in the Institute of Oriental Sciences of the Hebrew University and were assigned a purely Orientalist role: they were used to study the Arab and Palestinian society. In a September 1948 document titled "Processing of the Arab Books from the Occupied Territories," Eliyahu Strauss (later, Eliyahu Ashtor), director of the Department of Oriental Studies, wrote about the significance of these books to the University's establishment: "The number of books that were brought to the library in this manner is greater than the number of Arab books that were collected by us during all the years the institution has been in existence. We were given the opportunity to expand our collection substantially." He also stated that the transfer of these books would expand the possibilities of research and should not be compromised in any way, particularly because the center surpassed any similar Arab center in the region (Aderet, 2012; Amit, 2011).

Ultimately, tens of thousands of Palestinian works, religious books, notes, textbooks and poetry books were stored under the heading "abandoned property." Gish Amit has noted, "What I found out was that around 30,000 books were taken from Palestinians, mostly from private homes....They took every book that was found, then they started to catalogue. The whole process took something like 10 to 15 years." In the first stage, before the 1960s, the books had a serial number, under which the owner's name was recorded in English according to specific abbreviations. Uri Palit, a book expert who participated in the process in the department of Oriental studies at the Israeli library, said, "We wrote the name of the owner in pencil on the books ... because we wanted to return it someday when there is peace.... It was not a secret." (Hussein, 2013). Later, however, the stickers were removed, and the books were categorized and cataloged again. The initials "AP", which means "abandoned property" were used to replace the owners' names. Regarding this process, Benny Brunner—the Israeli director of the documentary film *The Great Book Robbery* that deals with these events—has observed, "They simply deleted the relationship between the book and the place it came from" (Aderet, 2012).

Many of these books can still be found in Israel's National Library. According to the recent report in *Ha'aretz*,

In the storage center of the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, there is a collection of some 8,000 books labeled "AP." Officially these initials stand for Abandoned Property. But the library staff likes to joke that AP stands for *apotropos*, the Hebrew word for "custodian" as in, "the custodian of absentee property," who is in charge of these books. (Aderet, 2012).

These include books previously owned by Nashashibi and Sakakini. On one of the books found on the shelves of the library appears the phrase "To Nasser Eddin [Nashashibi], the promising writer." Also, the books of Palestinian writer and educator Khalil Sakakini, who fled under bombardment from his home in the Qatmun neighborhood, are still on the university shelves, and his signature is still visible in black ink on some of these books to this day. Written on the back of one of these books is the phrase "Sari Sakakini, Jerusalem, 1940" (Aderet, 2012).

When asked by *Ha'aretz* about the possibility of returning these books to their owners, handing them over to the Palestinian Authority, or to a university in the Palestinian territories, the officials of the absentees' property office and the Finance Ministry did not answer the question. In response to a question as to the reason why these libraries were not returned to their owners, the Israeli Justice Ministry told Agence France Presse that the task of presenting the evidence of ownership belongs to the original owner of the book, otherwise it will remain "abandoned property." In line with that, Rasha Barghouthi said that the National Library of Israel had never contacted her and confirmed that she had no illusions about this matter, for she resides in the Palestinian territories and needs special permission to go to Jerusalem. She added, "I don't believe they would do anything to help me." Another question that remains unresolved is what happened to the thousands of other books that "fell" into the hands of the Israeli army but are not already a part of the library's records. Other unclassified documents indicate that some of these books were auctioned, and some may have been buried in the University archives or destroyed (Aderet, 2012; Hussein, 2013).

There are conflicting views of the significance of the appropriation of Palestinian books. Gish Amit has stated, "At the National Library they believed and still believe that what is at issue is the act of saving a culture, which but for its [the library's] intervention a large part of it, if not all, would have been lost for good, stolen by private dealers or missing." On the other hand, the Palestinians consider this, in reality, a cultural theft that was an integral part of the Nakba that resulted from war. As one of the people in Brunner's film said: "This is an unbelievable treachery—the people of Israel are

stealing books from abandoned Palestinian homes and placing them in their national library.”

Amit believes that these two positions can be reconciled: “This is a story of looting that took place alongside an act of preservation. It is looting that is at the same time a protective act. They are not mutually exclusive.” *Ha'aretz* points out that this complexity was embodied in a memorandum submitted by the National Library in March 1949: “Although saving the books was done ... to save spiritual property from loss and destruction, we did not conceal from the relevant authorities our hope that a way could be found to transfer the books, in part, and perhaps in large part, to the university’s possession when the time came” (Aderet, 2012).

But as Amit notes, “The worst thing is the library’s refusal to acknowledge the injustice that was done to the Palestinians. When I talked to the librarians there, they kept telling me that this was an act of rescue, even today. This I cannot accept.” It is something he describes as “colonial attitudes” (Hussein, 2013). Aside from that, as Amit also observes, the very fact that the books were collected clearly contradicts Zionism’s denial of the presence and existence of Palestinians born in the country (Aderet, 2012).

Palestinian Libraries: 1967 - 1983

During this period the Israeli forces occupied the rest of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation forces completed what they began in 1948, especially in the cultural domain, starting with Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem has long been a place of pilgrimage to all who sought it. Its sanctity gave it prestige, and in all souls it inspired love that attracted masses from every corner of the earth and united people—kings and paupers alike. They were all drawn to the city despite differences of religion or geography, seeking to visit or reside close to this holy and blessed place. The city of Jerusalem was considered by all to be the first city of knowledge in Palestine, whether for its scholars, or its role in science, or its abundant libraries.

Jerusalem’s libraries and bookshelves were abundant, with more than sixty public and private libraries whose shelves contained books and rare publications that one is hard-pressed to find in other countries. Among the libraries that existed in Jerusalem before 1967 were Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa Library, Al-Khalidiya Library, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khalidi Library, Al-Alama Library, Khalil Al-Khalidi Library, Ahmed Sameh Al-Khalidi Library, Hassan Al-Turgoman Library, Al-Budeiri Library, Abi Al-Saud Library (Mohammad Taher) Al-Khatib Library, Al-Fatihani Library, Al-Lahham Library, Hassan Al-Husseini Library, Ishaq Mousi Al-Husseini Library,

Nashashibi Library, Khalil Baidas Library, Honorary Books Library, Hebron Library, Al-Tameem Library, Al Qutaina Library, Abdullah Mukhlis Library, Al Jar Allah Library, School Authority Library, Arab College Library, Bukhariy'a Corner (Nukshbandi) Library, Ashrafieh Royal School Library, Ameeniya School Library, and Nazareth Corner Library (see Appendix).

When the Israeli forces occupied the city of Jerusalem in 1967, Jerusalem's private and public libraries had more than 100,000 books and more than half a million documents, manuscripts and records. Since that forced occupation, the city has been subjected to extremely dangerous measures with the main objective of Judaizing Jerusalem on the one hand and eliminating its heritage on the other hand.

Professor Ishaq al-Budeiri (al-Budeiri, 2000, p. 8) summarizes the overall manifestations of these violations regarding books and libraries:

1. The confiscation, immediately after the occupation, of all books and periodicals of Jerusalem's Public Library. The Israeli authority transferred the ownership and management from the Arab Jerusalem Municipality to the so-called unified Jerusalem municipality. They simultaneously banned and transferred the confiscated books and periodicals to an unknown place, in addition to limiting the type of books and periodicals allowed to enter the library.
2. The banning of importation, distribution, and circulation of many books in Jerusalem's libraries and markets. The ban was not confined to political books and books on Palestine or Palestinian issues; it also extended to some books of history, translations, and literature, especially poetry.
3. A strict control, imposed by Israeli authorities, over the printing and publication of Arabic books in Jerusalem. Military orders were issued that required the Israeli Military Censor to inspect any published work and to give publication permission. This led to a notable and significant decline of Jerusalem's authoring and publishing movement.
4. The prevention of East Jerusalem (Arab Jerusalem) libraries from acquiring and circulating what West Jerusalem libraries acquired or circulated. For example, books published by the Institute for Palestine Studies and the Palestinian Research Center were found in the libraries of Israeli universities and institutes but were banned in the libraries of Arab Jerusalem.
5. The closure of many cultural institutions in Arab Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation authorities closed the Arab Studies Society for four years and confiscated its books and documents, seriously damaging the library and its archives. Also, the Writers Union and many other cultural institutions were closed.

6. The strict control of newspapers and periodicals issued in Jerusalem on the grounds of maintaining the security of the state. The occupying authorities obliged all newspapers and magazines to send all material to the military censor. The Jerusalem newspapers suffered a great deal from these procedures, for the resulting edits and deletions sometimes amounted to half the size of the newspaper.
7. The seizure of documents, papers, and records of the Sharia Court in Jerusalem. This court contains documents and information of great importance because they concern the lives of Muslims in Jerusalem since 1517 CE.
8. The enforcement of arrest and deportation policies, imposition of house arrest, and prevention of travel for dozens of writers, researchers, writers, and intellectuals of the people of Jerusalem, especially those who had been active in defending the Arabism of Jerusalem.
9. Jerusalem's closure, the denial of entry to the city, and the isolation it had from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This denied university professors, researchers, and students access to the city's research centers and libraries and prevented them from taking advantage of its books and resources.

Mr. Kamel Asali (*Libraries in Palestine* (2016), vol. 11, pp. 296-297) cites the following Israeli violations against books and libraries in the city of Jerusalem:

1. Some libraries were partially or completely destroyed by military operations. One of these was the library of Abdullah Mukhles, who hid it in the Qirban monastery in Jerusalem. The library was destroyed when the Israelis bombed the monastery, and it was lost under the rubble. The Israeli soldiers are said to have stolen and looted many of the books before the bombing.
2. Libraries were banned from acquiring and circulating many books. From 1967 until the beginning of 1985, 5,410 books were banned. Many of these dealt with Islam, Arab issues, and the Palestinian cause. The effect was to sever the connection between the Palestinian Arab citizen and Palestinian heritage and history.
3. Due to severe restrictions on publishing, the number of publishing houses in the West Bank decreased from 23 to four, three of which were in Jerusalem.
4. The Israelis prevented the establishment of new public libraries in Jerusalem.

Ali Touqan (Director of the Library of the Municipality of Nablus and the General Assembly of the Palestinian Library and Information Society) who has researched offenses against books and libraries in Palestine, says that, following the occupation of the West Bank

and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the Israeli occupation authorities imposed strict restrictions on cultural and intellectual life in Palestine. They controlled the personal possessions of arriving and departing individuals, especially books, confiscated under the pretext of security. These restrictions played a central role in hindering the growth of public and school libraries, which were forcefully compelled to withdraw forbidden books from their shelves and hand them over to the military administration. All this created a great void in cultural life and contributed to its isolation from the outside world. Between 1967 and 1990, 6,500 books were confiscated from Palestinian citizens. These originally belonged to the Public Library of Nablus. Touqan tried to review some of the forbidden books and found that the reasons for confiscation were flimsy, such as the use of the word “Palestine” on a map instead of “Israel,” or a phrase in poetry or a novel referring to actions supporting the Palestinian people (Touqan, 2000).

Israel’s Policy Against Culture in Palestine from 1967 to 1993

Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, newspapers and magazines reported the withdrawal of books from libraries by the censoring authorities. In addition, banning concerts for well-known singers such as Mustafa Kurd became common. Lists, published by the Israeli Education Department, of banned and withdrawn books continuously came across the desks of school principals. Not tens, but hundreds of books were withdrawn from school and public libraries. Not only the Israeli Education officers, but also officers stationed at bridge crossings confiscated books discovered to be brought by Palestinians returning to the West Bank from the Arab world. The bridge police confiscated whatever they deemed necessary under the pretext of security—Israeli state security, that is. This also depended on the list of banned books the officer had and his mood; most of the time, the books were sold to Israeli universities.

After Israel occupied the remaining Palestinian territories (Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza Strip) in 1967, it imposed restrictions and prohibitions on cultural and educational life in the occupied territories. In 1992, Article 19, a human rights organization based in the British capital, stated that the Palestinian media and the cultural and educational institutes in the occupied territories were subject to Israeli restrictions. According to the report prepared by the organization, the occupation authorities had banned approximately 4,000 books since 1967. A third of these banned books were works of folklore and children’s stories. They also included the book *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe, the Arabic translation of the book *The Battle for Peace* by the Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, and novels

by the Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz and the Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani (Essoulami, 1992, pp. 26-32).

The report, called *Cry for Change* noted that the most dramatic censorship and persecution measures were directed at the Palestinian media in the territories occupied in 1967. These measures required the daily submission of drafts of news articles to the Israeli censor, as well as daily permits for printing and distribution. The report described the repression, persecution and methods of censorship and prevention of Palestinian freedom of expression by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1990 and noted that censorship of Palestinian newspapers was the worst during the Gulf War (Essoulami, 1992, pp. 3-15).

Also, censorship was imposed on books from Arab countries to Palestine, so that no books dealing with the Palestinian issue or the Zionist movement and Israel were allowed to enter the occupied Palestinian territories. For many years this led to the isolation of Palestinian writers, prohibiting them from keeping up with works published in Arab countries.

In addition to preventing Arab newspapers and magazines from being distributed in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and even in the parts of Palestine occupied in 1948, the Israelis stationed a sergeant to read articles to be published in newspapers and magazines in Jerusalem for distribution in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The material was sent to the sergeant who prohibited what he saw as a threat to the Israeli state, all of which had a clear impact on press freedoms and literary writing. Rather, matters went beyond censoring articles or studies and sometimes reached the point of closing the newspaper or magazine for months or arresting the authors.

Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip have had a bitter experience with Israeli Military Censorship, the prevention of the circulation of books, the confiscation of newspapers and magazines, the removal of many collections, and the prevention of publication, which continued until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

When the Zionist occupation forces invaded Lebanon in 1982, their first act when they occupied Beirut was to attack the PLO Research Center and seize its library and all the documents and the central archive in it. In a recent interview, Faisal Hourani recalled the “thirty-five military trucks ready to transport the assets of the Center loaded by Israeli soldiers” and that four of the six floors belonging to the Center had been stripped of their content (*Romman Magazine*, 2017). If any of the contents of the two remaining floors survived the looting, it was because the Israeli looters received an order to withdraw from the Center. It was comprehensive looting by the

occupation soldiers to empty the Palestinian present (or the future, equally) of its history, to remove it from Palestinian land—just as they tried to rob it of its humanity during the Nakba.

It is estimated that—excluding magazines and periodicals—about twenty thousand volumes, including fifteen thousand in English, were plundered. The Israeli occupation then put these materials in the Hebrew University Department of Palestinian Studies. After the exchange of prisoners between the Palestinian resistance and the Israelis in 1985, Israel returned most of the books and other materials, but only after filming them.

It should be noted that, despite all these Israeli practices against books and libraries, many libraries were established in the 1980s and early 1990s in the city of Jerusalem or its suburbs. The most famous of these libraries are:

1. Library of the Arab Studies Association established 1980.
2. Library of Islamic Heritage Revival Section established 1983.
3. Al-Quds University Library established 1984. It includes the College of Da'wah and Religion Principles Library, the Library of the College of Science and Technology, the College of Mixed Arts Library.
4. Early Childhood Resource Center Library established 1985.
5. Palestinian Center for Nonviolence Studies established 1985.
6. Library of the Center for Islamic Research established 1986.
7. Jerusalem Research Center Library established 1986.
8. Library of the Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs established 1987.
9. Library of the Center for Women Studies established 1989.
10. Library of the Center for Developmental Action established 1989.
11. Panorama Palestinian Center for Alternative Information Circulation established 1992.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that Palestinian cultural life before the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories was at a level competitive with many countries in the region, though it was not very advanced. For many years Palestine was the destination for many men of science from different countries of the world and did not lack theaters, cinemas, and both public and private libraries. After the occupation of Palestine by the Israeli gangs, the stage of persecution, theft, and plundering of Palestinian cultural property began. Then during the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel confiscated and regulated hundreds of public libraries and thousands of private

libraries. At that time, the Arab minority did not possess its own public libraries.

The later history of Palestinian libraries and cultural resources is beyond the scope of this article. However, we can briefly note that there have been both positive and negative developments since 1994. On one hand, dozens of new and modern libraries have been created and launched, while scores of Palestinian schools and universities and both partisan and nonpartisan newspapers have been established. On the other, during the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005 CE) Israel employed systemic policies to keep the Palestinian people in the dark. These policies included the destruction of more than ten schools along with their libraries. And since then, there have also been the harmful effects of the Wall on Palestinian education, economics, and socio-cultural life in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Thus, it is clear the Palestinian territories will not witness notable and qualitative improvement in library construction and development anytime soon. This will require a formal and nationally embraced Arab effort to limit the Wall's apartheid effect and its impact on culture and education in the Palestinian territories.

Some of the Most Important Libraries in Jerusalem Since the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Al-Aqsa Mosque Library

This library is considered one of the most important libraries in Jerusalem due to its scientific and religious status, presence in the Mosque's Square, and its unique holdings and the number of books and manuscripts in it, which were collected as gifts from senior scholars, rulers, and politicians, who at one point or another came to or ruled Palestine. This library contained many seminal works in history, literature and interpretation, jurisprudence, logic, and Arab sciences, in addition to many writings of scholars who worked in the mosque. Al-Aqsa was also a meeting place for many Muslim scholars and students from all over the world, reaching up to 360 teachers by the end of the fifth century AH or eleventh century CE (Arif, 1951, p. 33).

But the turning point in al-Aqsa especially began in 1187 CE when Salah Uddin Ayyubi liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders and placed in the vaults of al-Aqsa many copies of the Qur'an and numerous books brought from Damascus. All the rulers, governors, and ruling officials who came after Salah Uddin followed suit and



Figure 1. Al-Aqsa Mosque Library, 1936.



Figure 2. The entrance to the Khattani library, which belongs to the library of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.



Figure 3. One of the halls of Al-Aqsa Library, which contains books of literature and poetry. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.

supplied al-Aqsa's shelves with seminal books and manuscripts. Among them were Sultan Abu Saeed Usman bin Abi Yusuf al-Marini, Sultan of Morocco, al-Azhar Jumqaq, al-Ashraf Anial, al-Ashraf Barasbay, al-Daher Khashaqdam, Sultan Suleiman al-Qanuni, the Ottoman minister Sanan Pasha, the Ottoman warlord Anwar Pasha, and others (Asalī, 1981, p. 79).

After that came the disastrous Balfour Declaration of 1917, which announced British support for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. This declaration made the Palestinians feel an imminent danger to their homeland and led to the establishment of the Supreme Islamic Council in 1921. One of the decisions of the council included the creation in 1922 of al-Aqsa Library to preserve the holdings of documents, manuscripts, and rare books that existed in al-Aqsa Mosque.

According to professor Arif al-Arif, the total holdings of the library in 1927 reached about 1,800 books and manuscripts. Then, around 1929 AD, the building was transferred to the Islamic Museum, and it remained closed for about five decades. Many of the books in this building were in a tattered state, and the situation was dark until 1976 when the the Department of Islamic Endowments in Jerusalem decided to revive the library. In 1976, the department reopened the library under the name of the al-Aqsa Mosque Library. The number of its holdings reached 14,000 volumes and books. Many scholars and writers gifted al-Aqsa library with books and manuscripts. Among them, Sheikh Khalil al-Khalidi donated his personal collection, which contained 3,480 books and 500 hundred manuscripts, to al-Aqsa Library. Also donated was the library of Sheikh Sabri Abdeen, the collections of many Egyptian scientists such as Ahmed Zaki and Mahmoud Timor, Syrian scientists such as Rafiq al-Azm, and from Iraq the scientist Rashid Aali al-Kilani and the poet al-Rasafi (Arif, 1986, p. 449). By then, al-Aqsa Library had become a scientific and research beacon for many researchers

and students from inside and outside Jerusalem.

Al-Aqsa library now has about 140,000 books in various disciplines and sciences and is divided into two sections. The first section is the Khattani library, which is located below al-Aqsa Mosque, and which extends outside the mosque on the south side. It was built by Salah Uddin al-Ayyubi to close off the Prophet's Door³ and obstruct danger



Figure 4. The entrance to al-Aqsa Mosque Library. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.



Figure 5. The Palestinian section of al-Aqsa Mosque Library. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.

³ The Prophet's Door is the Arabic name for David's Gate, one of

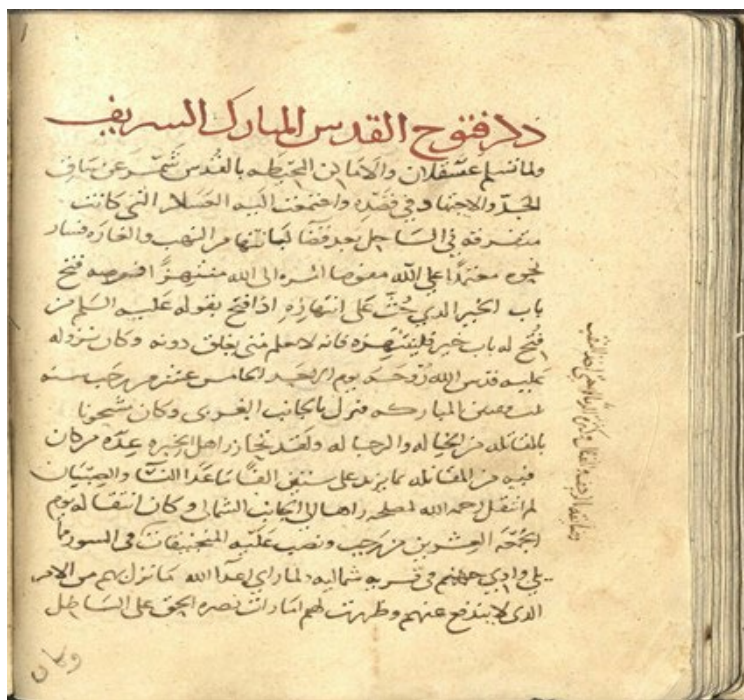


Figure 6. One of the manuscripts located in al-Aqsa Mosque Library.

from the Crusaders. The al-Khattani library started out as a Sharia school and was called “Khattani” after Abdullah al-Khattani, one of the most distinguished men known to this school. The library continued to play an important role in educational life until the end of the Ottoman rule, when laxity and neglect turned it into storage for lamps and lanterns that illuminated al-Aqsa Mosque, including the second section, which was located next to the Islamic Museum. Matters remained as such until 2013 when it was decided to keep the Khattani library solely as a religious law and Arabic language collection because the place was narrow and did not have the capacity to acquire additional books. After that, they moved the books from al-Khattaniya to specialized areas and corners of the ancient majestic library, al-Aqsa Mosque’s Library, and reordered them.

The Hebron Library

The Hebron Library of Sheikh Mu’ti al-Khalili, the mufti of al-Shaa-fa’i in Jerusalem and one of the scholars of the al-Aqsa Mosque. The library was established in 1725 and contained an estimated 7,000 volumes and 450 manuscripts. It was considered to be the first public library erected by Jerusalem residents, and it served all scholars in various areas of science and knowledge. Following al-Khalili’s death, the library was transferred to his family. After the 1967 war, the doors of the library were found destroyed. An inventory of its holdings revealed that the Israeli occupation army had looted many of its manuscripts. The remaining 360 Arabic manuscripts were transferred to the library of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Dar Al-Khalidiya

Dar Al-Khalidiya, or the Khalidiya Public Library, is considered one of the most important libraries in Jerusalem. It is located at Bab al-Silasirah, at a school known as Baraka Khan. The number of books in the Khalidiya library reached about 4,000 volumes in 1917, a third of which were rare manuscripts and precious publications imported by some orientalists. In 1936 the size of the library’s collection reached



Figure 7. The Khalidiya Library opening, 1900; Appearing right to left: Haj Raghīb al-Khalī, sheikh Tahir al-Jaza’iri (al-Dimashqi), sheikh Mousa Shafiq al-Khalī, sheikh Khalil al-Khalī, sheikh Mohammed al-Habbal (al-Bairuti).

Old Jerusalem’s seven gates.

7,000 books and manuscripts. When Arif al-Aref visited it in 1945, he said that it contained 12,000 items, 5,000 of which were manuscripts (Arif, 1986, p. 170). After the Nakba of 1948, the collection of the library began to circulate and scatter until only 5,980 books remained, according to the 1973 census. Of these, 4,412 were in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, and 1,568 were in English and French (Palestinian Encyclopedia, 2016, Section II, p. 305). Even today the Library of Khalidiyah contains several rare manuscripts, including works from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, CE.

The Honorary Book House

The Honorary Book House, which contains the Al-Fakhry Library, was established by Judge Fakhruddin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Fadlullah, in the year 730 AH / 1267 CE. It is located in the courtyard of the Haram al-Šharif in Jerusalem, adjacent to the Moroccan Mosque. At its height, the size of its collection reached about ten thousand volumes. The library came under the jurisdiction of Abu al-Saud family, who distributed the holdings among members of the family, leading to the loss of a large portion of the collection (Tals, 2016, p. 238).

Abdullah Mukhlas Library

Abdullah Mukhlas Library, known as the Treasury of Abdullah Bekul Mukhlas, contains 3,000 volumes, of which 120 are manuscripts. This library is located in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, where Mukhlas was a scholar of history and archeology. After living in Acre for a long time, he was appointed Director General of the Endowments in Jerusalem and his library was transferred from Acre to Jerusalem. In 1948, the library was transferred to Qirban. Monastery by the occupation forces (Awdat, 1992, p. 627).

The Al-Qutaina Library

The Al-Qutaina Library, or the Hanbali Library, belonged to the only Hanbali family whose descent is attributed to Mughir al-Din al-Hanbali, author of *The History of Jerusalem and Hebron* (c. 1495 CE). At one time, the number of its holdings was 4,000 volumes, including precious manuscripts in mathematics, astronomy, and astrology. The library was located in the Khan al-Zayt market and was then transferred to a house in al-Qutaina in Bab al-Amoud. There it remained until the early 20th century. After 1948 its holdings were distributed when Israel occupied Palestine (Tarrazi, 1947, p. 293).

The Library of Sheikh Hussam Jarallah

The library of Sheikh Hussam Jarallah, which included nearly 2,000 books and manuscripts in the Islamic and Arabic sciences, including

a manuscript of the Qur'an bound with the skin of a gazelle. All of the books and manuscripts in the library were stolen in 1948 by the Israeli occupation forces.

Ishaq Mousa al-Husseini Library

Ishaq Mousa al-Husseini Library was located in the house of the noted writer and teacher Ishaq Mousa al-Husseini (1904-1990), west of Jerusalem. The number of its holdings reached about 4,000 books and manuscripts, but it was burned during the events of 1948. After that date Ishaq al-Husseini re-established a new library in Cairo whose holdings reached around 5,000 volumes. The Jordan University acquired 1,500 of these books and transferred around 2,000 volumes to Jerusalem's Center of Islamic Studies. The remaining 1,500 books were left in Cairo (Palestinian Library, 2016, Section II, C3, p. 288).

The Fahmi Al-Ansari Library

The Fahmi Al-Ansari library, founded in 1956, was collected by the historian Fahmi Al-Ansari during his trips to many countries (Saleh, 2010, p. 314). As of 2010, Al-Ansari Library contained about 204 rare manuscripts, the most important of which are *Mufteen Occasions* and the *Ben Jibril bin Abdullab bin Bakhsbioa*—one of the rarest manuscripts in the world, and *The Three Epistles*, written sometime in the tenth or 11th centuries CE, by the Ikhwan Assafa (Brethren of Purity).⁴

The Library of Marwan al-Asali

The library of Marwan al-Asali was composed of 4,500 volumes, in addition to about 500 manuscripts collected by Dr. Ishaq Musa al-Husseini. The collection, covering various subjects, was purchased by Hebron University. Currently, it is housed in the Faculty of Arts for Girls in Jerusalem.

Al-Budeiri Library

Al-Budeiri Library originated in the library of Sheikh Muhammad bin Badir al-Qudsi, one of the great scholars of Jerusalem who was descended from the ancient family of al-Budeiri. The library of Sheikh Muhammad bin Badir al-Qudsi was distributed among members of the family after his death in 1805. One section became the private collection of Muhammad al-Budeiri. This library is located in the corner of the corner opposite the Al-Manqiyā School in Bab

⁴ The Ikhwan Assafa, or “Brethren of Purity” were authors of one of the most complete Medieval encyclopedias of sciences. The encyclopedia is a collection of epistles (Baffioni, 2016).

Al-Nazer and is known as Dar Al-Budeiri. The library contains about a thousand manuscripts on Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic religion, history, and science and was photocopied by the Documentation and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan (Asali, 1983, p. 291).

The Library of Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Lahham

This library is located in the Silwan neighborhood and has a total of 4,000 books and volumes.

The Hasan al-Turgoman Library

Founded by Hassan al-Turjuman, this library contains about 3,000 volumes, including 900 ancient manuscripts (Palestinian Library, 2016, vol. 3, p. 306).

The Arif Al-Aref Library

The Arif Al-Aref Library was founded by the Palestinian journalist, author, historian, and politician Arif Al-Aref (1891-1973). After his death the library's holdings were transferred to the Arab Institute in Abu Dis in 1979. The library contained 1,141 books in Arabic and 541 in other languages (Tarrazi, 1947, p. 293).

The Is'af Nashashibi Library

The Is'af Nashashibi library contains many precious books and manuscripts. Most of its holdings were stolen in 1948, leaving only what the Nashashibi ambulance gave to the Arab Academy in Damascus. These materials included manuscripts, which were the most important part of the collection, including *Kitab al-uns al-jalil bi-tarikh al-Quds wa-al-Khalil*, a history of Jerusalem and Hebron by Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad Ulaymī (1456-ca. 1521).

The Library of Ibn Qazi Al-Sult

The library of Ibn Qazi Al-Sult, Sheikh Yahya Sharaf al-Din bin Muhammad, is located in front of al-Aqsa Mosque. This library contains many famous books on religion, Christianity, and the Holy Land. This library is of a religious nature.

The Franciscan Library

The Franciscan Library, located in the Christian Quarter in Old Jerusalem was created with the establishment of the Latin Monastery in 1561. This library began with the books that monks brought with them when they joined the monastery. The library has a collection of about 42,000 books in various languages. It contains a collection of rare manuscripts and documents relating to the Holy Land, and many scholars consider it to be among the most important libraries



Figure 8. A recent photo of the Franciscan Library in Jerusalem. Photo by Anan Hamaad, 2019.



Figure 9. Manuscript Hall, Franciscan Library in Jerusalem. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2019.



Figure 10. The entrance of Jerusalem's Franciscan Library. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2019.

containing historical documents in the Holy Land. It includes a group of firmans (decrees) issued by the rulers of the Mamluks and the Ottomans, regulating the relationship between the rulers and the monks. The firmans are divided into two groups: the first group is related to the monks and their relationship with the Mamluk authority from the time of Babyars al-Bandakari until the Qansuh Ghuri era. The second group is Turkish, and includes the Ottoman era (Asalī, 1983, p. 59).

Deir Al-Rum

The Orthodox Patriarchate Library—Deir Al-Rum—is in the Christian Quarter near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It was founded in 451 CE. The library is a collection of other libraries, such as the library of the Monastery of St. Saba, the Library of the Monastery of the Crucifixion, and the Holy Sepulcher Collection. These libraries were consolidated in 1865. The Orthodox Patriarchate Library is considered one of the wealthiest libraries in terms of the value of its manuscript collections, which number approximately 2,400 in several

languages. The Greek collection consists of 1,800 manuscripts dating between the fifth and eighteenth centuries, CE. The most important of these are historic documents dating back to the era of the Prophet (PBUH) and following rulers. No one is permitted to access these manuscripts except by special permission of the Patriarch or his aides (Palestinian Library, 2016, Section II, sentence 3, p. 307).

Monastery of St. Jacob

The Library of the Armenian Monastery (Monastery of St. Jacob) was built in 1165 CE. The monastery contains some of the most ancient Armenian documents in the world, including some which date back to the first Christian centuries. In 1929 it contained more than sixty thousand volumes and about 3,700 documents and manuscripts. The library's holdings include a number of documents of kings and Ottoman rulers, which summarize Armenian rights to holy places and religious property and a number of decrees issued by the Muslim rulers of the Armenian community (Asali, 1983, p. 65).

Monastery of St. Marks

The Monastery of St. Marks is located in the Al-Sharaf neighborhood between the Armenian and Jewish neighborhoods. The library of this monastery is one of the oldest libraries in the city of Jerusalem. It contains many manuscripts and documents and was compiled and indexed in 1925 by Bishop Syriac Gabriel Antoine, who pointed out that the oldest Islamic documents date back to 825 AH / 1421 CE and the most recent was published in 1306 AH / 1888 CE. St. Mark's is a library of Arabic and Turkish language materials. Count Philippe de Tarrazi said that this monastery contained about 362 manuscripts on parchment (Tarrazi, 1947, p. 478).

Library of the Latin Patriarchate

The Library of the Latin Patriarchate was established in 1884 to serve the priests inside the monastery only. It is located inside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem near the New Gate. It contains approximately 43,000 volumes (al-Hout, p. 63).

There are many other libraries that belong to churches and monasteries, which are also important libraries in the city of Jerusalem, including, but not limited to, the library of St. Ann and the Library of the Roman Catholic Patriarchate, the Library of St. and the Library of the Dominican Monastery.

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