

Between memory and resistance, an identity shaped by space: The case of the Naqab Arab Bedouins¹

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ABSTRACT

Based on interviews of Arab-Bedouin informants from the Naqab, including Arab-Bedouin men of the 1948 generation and their children, from recognized and unrecognized villages, the paper examines the effect of space on identity construction. It considers how forcible spatial change since the events of 1948 has structured the Arab-Bedouin identity, and how attachment to their original lands serves as the basis of construction of their displaced identity, building feelings of conscious and physical alienation from the new space, which becomes an arena of resistance and protest. Whether relocated to recognized or unrecognized settlements, the Naqab Arab Bedouins have attempted to build an exile identity among family members by constructing a collective communal memory about their “magnificent” past, as well as internalizing a lack of belonging and feelings of uprootedness from the place they live in today. Their aim is to protest and oppose their present situation and express their continuous aspiration to return to their previous way of life, on their original lands. The reality of their transitory and unstable existence helps them to construct these feelings and reinforces their demand for the longed-for return. As such, their exile from their former space has not remained a mere memory for the generation of 1948, but instead has been transformed into an exile identity among the second and third generation. It now seems that the fourth generation is also characterized by this transient mentality, which cries out from the misery of their current living conditions. All this shapes the Arab-Bedouin struggle for their lands, for their future and for the future of their children.

Introduction

Today’s Arab Bedouins² choose to define themselves as “expellees,” giving expression to a sense of lives lived in a new space and not on their own land. This term is heard repeatedly in both recognized and unrecognized Arab-Bedouin villages in Israel, regardless of the conditions under which the residents live.

The relocation of the Arab Bedouins from their previous space reshaped their identity into one centered on a lack, into an identity of expellees and strangers living outside their native space. Over the years, the Arab Bedouins have developed practices that return them to their original space, reviving it through the search for relics of the life from which they were removed. As such, their old space has become a basis for memory, while their new space has become an arena for resistance, expressing their protest and rejection of their present lifestyle, which has been forced upon them and which they adamantly refuse to accept.

This article seeks to examine the impact of this spatial shift on shaping the identity of the Naqab Arab-Bedouins. I address the implications of their relocation from their ancestral lands to their new space, the construction of their identity as expellees from their homelands, and the conversion of their original space into a basis for memory, as well as their new home into an arena of resistance and protest.

This article presents part of the extensive research I conducted for my master's thesis, and is based on interviews with Arab Bedouins from the Naqab who lived through the events of 1948. These people experienced the spatial transition and the change of sovereignty in 1948, and live with the consequences and implications of these shifts to this day.

Historical background

The impact of the 1948 war on the lives of the Arab Bedouins is most starkly characterized by the decrease in numbers and dramatic changes they experienced as a result of the conflict. In 1947, the Arab-Bedouin population was estimated at 50,000–70,000 people, most of whom belonged to the three biggest Naqab confederations: Al-Tayaha (27,609), Al-'Azazma (16,505) and Al-Traben (33,064) (Ashkenazi, 1957; Ben-David, 1986; Morris, 1997). The Arab Bedouins constituted only a small percentage of the Arab population of Mandatory Palestine, and were concentrated mostly in the Naqab.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 fundamentally changed their reality, most notably on the demographic plane. Their population shrank from 70,000 people from seven confederations³ and around 100 different tribes to one seventh of this number—a mere 10,000 people from 17 tribes, chiefly the Al-Tayaha tribe. Most of the others were either expelled by the Israeli authorities or fled to Egypt, Jordan and the West Bank, assured that they could return after the conflict stabilized (Ashkenazi, 1957; Ben-David, 1986; Morris, 1997).

Another change that occurred was the establishment of the military regime, which was part of the new state's policy toward its non-Jewish population and mainly involved confining the Arab Bedouins to an area termed as the *Ezor Siyag* (Restricted Area), under military rule. This refers to a tract of barren land located north and east of Beer Sheva, where some 11,000 people were forcibly relocated by

the military by 1966 (Ben-David, 1986; Yiftachel, 1999a, 1999b). The transfer of Arab Bedouin tribes to the Restricted Area, without this area being divided up in organized fashion, led to the creation of a large number of tribes and partial tribes that lacked a “tribal territory,” as opposed to those who originally lived in the Restricted Area on their own lands. It should be understood that land constitutes the basis for social stratification in Arab-Bedouin society, representing the primary source of power and prestige. As a result, two levels of status were created—those with land and those without—and this impacted the internal political dynamics of the tribes (Ben-David, 1986; Yiftachel, 1999a, 1999b).

In this article, I discuss the impact on the Arab Bedouins of the loss of their lands, which represented their source of livelihood and the only way of life they had known for generations. Concurrently, I address how the Arab Bedouins have shaped their present identity and future aspirations in the shadow of this loss.

The Arab Bedouins and space in academic discourse

The connection between the Arab Bedouins and space has been examined in a paternalistic, detached, establishment-type discourse, classifying the Arab Bedouins under social-cultural categories that cut them off from the historical discourse and the human and political environment that surrounds them. This has been done by portraying them as wanderers who are not permanently attached to any space.

The understanding of the Arab-Bedouin connection to space has evolved over time, from the early school which perceived a lack of any connection to the land, to the study of the transition to permanent settlements as part of an imposed process of modernization, and to the examination of the identity-roots relationship between the Arab Bedouins and space by a new school which criticizes the earlier scholarship. My research belongs to the latter school.

The nomadism discourse

Many scholars (Ashkenazi, 1957; Bar-Zvi and Ben-David, 1978; Ben-David, 1972, 1986; Clinton, 1974; Epstein, 1933; Marx, 1956, 1961, 1967) who researched Arab-Bedouin society during the early years of the State of Israel focused on Arab-Bedouin nomadism as the defining characteristic of their lifestyle. These scholars helped construct an image of rootless wanderers, part of a culture frozen in time and space that embodied anti-modernism. They emphasized their functioning as a society run according to rigid internal laws that maintained its homogeneity. These tribal laws were depicted as unvarying, passed down from generation to generation, and binding on the individual. The social group was seen as a systematic structure

with clear functions, whose existence was self-sufficient, and which was dependent on the external geological environment.

The maintenance of internal social cohesion was the first priority, and therefore ties of kinship constituted the central component in family continuity and the upholding of the group structure over the generations. The individual was portrayed as passive in the face of established and unchallengeable behavioral norms, his main function being to maintain group continuity. Homogeny and uniformity characterized the descriptions of individuals, who were classified according to age and in a utilitarian manner with a view to the perpetuation of the entire system.

Additionally, the internal descriptions of Arab-Bedouin society were collective, quantitative and graphic, anchoring the people and their behavioral patterns according to precise parameters used to examine Arab-Bedouin behavioral models in general. These depictions isolated Arab-Bedouin society as frozen in time and detached from contact with other cultures, such as the Israeli and Arab-Palestinian societies in Israel.

With the end of the military rule over the Arab Bedouins and the establishment of permanent settlements by the state in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a different scholarly discourse developed. This school supported their transfer from a nomadic to a modern lifestyle, as embodied by the state-built permanent settlements.

The modernity discourse

Tal-Alsabaa', the first Arab-Bedouin town, was established in 1967, and was followed by six other towns: Rahat, Kseife, Ar'ara ba-Naqab, Shgeeb A-Salam, Hura and Laqiya. All of them were planned in a distinctly urban style (Ben-David, 1995). Following their transfer to the permanent settlements, the modernization of the Arab Bedouins was evaluated on a scale created by representatives of the "advanced" and "modern" West, in the guise of the State of Israel. The Arab Bedouins were categorically positioned on the low end of the scale, gradually moving up toward its Western, civilized end through the adoption of technological innovations and improved living conditions characteristic of a Western lifestyle.

This gradual shift offered a broad platform for many scholars (e.g., Dinero, 1997; Meir, 1986, 1987, 1990a, 1990b; Soen and Samuel, 1987) who examined the process of "urbanization" of the "traditional" Arab Bedouins. They maintained that their transition from a nomadic lifestyle to permanent dwellings in towns built by the state signified an improved standard of living, according to the sociodemographic parameters of modern life, such as construction, consumption, migration, urbanization, education and increased income. Other indicators used to evaluate progress from a Western point of view were reproductive habits and shrinking family size (Bar, 1985, 1988; Bar-Zvi, 1991; Ben-David, 1976, 1996a, 1996b; Dinero, 1997; Kagan, 2001; Meir, 1993, 1999; Meir and Ben-David, 1989).

This school saw these as indicators of the impact of the transition to town life on behavioral patterns and as signifying the adoption of Western values, such as independence, empowerment and self-determination, and therefore indicating the decline of the collective tribal structure in the face of growing individual power (Soen and Samuel, 1987; Stern and Gradus, 1979). In addition, it was claimed that the participation of girls in education was an important indicator of shifting social and cultural norms, which elevated the status of the Arab-Bedouin woman from a prolific producer in the nomadic society to a consumer in an urban society (Meir, 1986). The home contents and new type of dwelling planned in the Western style, which signified their new social status and their integration into the new urban lifestyle, were also examined in this fashion (Jakubowska, 1992).

As such, these scholars claimed that the transition from nomadic life to modern life, through relocation to permanent settlements, was a desirable, logical, correct, positive and natural process. Through it, the Arab Bedouins moved from a traditional, unchanging and homogeneous lifestyle and culture to a Western lifestyle, which was perceived as more beneficial for them. In doing so, these scholars isolated the Arab Bedouins from the human environment that surrounded them and analyzed their way of life based on cultural characteristics only. These scholars also contributed to the construction of the view of the Arab Bedouins as wanderers, cut off from civilization and waiting for the state to rescue them through its permanent settlements.

The critical discourse

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new wave of scholarly research emerged that examined the representation of Israel's Arab Bedouins in a critical fashion. This critical discourse suggests that the distinct classification of the Arab Bedouins under nomadism and modernity was motivated by the goal of presenting the Naqab as a desolate wasteland which the nomadic Arab Bedouins clung to in a state of rootless chaos. Furthermore, by categorizing them as nomads who are invisible in the eyes of the law, the state becomes entitled to register their lands as its own and prevent title claims to the contrary, while giving the Arab Bedouins the status of portable objects that the state may freely move around. As a result, the state's position in its dispute with the Arab Bedouins is justified in ethical terms. The state's interests gathered great momentum thanks to the portrayal of the Arab Bedouins as anti-modern and anti-civilization, and as proponents of unlawful chaos—casting them in the role of the primitive, disordered “them,” as opposed to the Jewish-Zionist Western “us.”

The new discourse criticizes this self-interested construction for incorrectly identifying the social and cultural needs of the Naqab Arab Bedouins, and thereby contributing to their degradation (Bailey, 2000; Falah, 1989; Shamir, 1996; Yiftachel, 1999a, 1999b, 2002; Yiftachel and Kedar, 2000). This school claims that

the relocation and resettlement of the Arab Bedouins was motivated by the Zionist agenda to Judaize the Naqab, and was part of a government strategy to control the Arab Bedouins by severing their connection to their lands by transferring them to new locations. The relocation was made “so easy” due to their vagrant image—after all, they still lived in tents and hadn’t even learned to build real houses.

Furthermore, the critical discourse emphasizes the state’s failures in planning the Arab-Bedouin towns, despite claiming they were successful. It lists problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime, social tensions and limited opportunities for social mobility and development. It also points to severe overcrowding and lack of economic infrastructure, which has led the settlements to deteriorate into slums, segregated from Jewish towns. It paints a bleak picture where only about 45% of the population live in permanent settlements and the remaining 65% live in settlements unrecognized by the state, lacking any economic, social or other infrastructure whatsoever (Lithwick, 2002; Nathanson et al., 1999; see also reports produced by organizations such as the Arab Association for Human Rights, 2004; Physicians for Human Rights [Almi, 2003]; Shatil, the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages, 2003).

My research is part of this critical discourse, but goes a step further by examining the historical context of the Arab Bedouins in the Naqab and the impact of the spatial shift on the shaping of their reality. This is expressed through a sense of exile, which they have developed while living just a few kilometers away from their former lands.

The study

Research population

This research was conducted among Arab-Bedouin interviewees from the Naqab, chiefly men who lived through the events of 1948 and their children, as well as one Arab-Bedouin woman. They were largely landholders before 1948, though some of the men were landless. Today, some of them live in recognized settlements and some in unrecognized settlements.⁴

Methodology

The questions which my research raised led me to delve deeper into the surrounding Arab-Bedouin space in order to get a clearer picture of the historic experience of the events of 1948. This space primarily involves the transplanted generation who experienced the events of 1948 firsthand, and who can provide information from

their memories of life on their original lands before their enforced exodus to the space that they currently occupy.

In the course of my research, I conducted in-depth interviews with older Arab Bedouins who experienced life prior to 1948, and they were the central focus of my work. During the interviews, other family members, usually the children of the interviewees, joined in and offered their points of view.

I initiated the interviews and conducted them in the homes of the interviewees, as arranged by my father, who set up the meetings and even accompanied me. The informants generally met with us at the men's meeting place, known as the *sheeg*, which is a half-built room outside the main family home where the men usually get together and receive guests. The interviews were mostly run by my father, who would usually begin by presenting general information about the goals of the research. He explained that the interviews would focus on the old way of life, the informants' life stories from that time until the present day, the impact of the old lifestyle on them and their children today, and the role it plays in shaping their aspirations and hopes for the future.

Additionally, I conducted participant observation at two main locations: I initiated visits at a variety of Arab-Bedouin living situations in the Naqab, including both recognized and unrecognized villages, as well as meetings at specific Arab-Bedouin forums in Beer Sheva. Furthermore, throughout the research period I conducted impromptu, informal conversations with Arab-Bedouin men and women whom I encountered in various contexts—university students, teachers from the school in Rahat that I attended, friends, social activists from Arab-Bedouin organizations in the Naqab and groups of women, young and old, whom I encountered through my work as the coordinator of an Arab-Bedouin women's empowerment program for Shatil in Beer Sheva and in Arab-Bedouin towns.

This approach helped me to gather a great deal of information in an informal fashion. These three methods came together through the research process as a source of information about the character and characteristics of Arab-Bedouin society. These methods allowed me to penetrate deeply into the world of the Arab Bedouins in an attempt to understand the factors that shape their lives, their connection to the past, their present lives and implications for the future.

Findings

The relocation of the Arab Bedouins from their previous space reshaped their identity into one centered on a lack, into an identity of expellees and strangers living outside their native space. Over the years, the Arab Bedouins have developed practices that return them to their original space, reviving it through the search for relics of the life from which they were removed. As such, their old space has become a basis for memory, while their new space has become an arena for

resistance, expressing their protest and rejection of their present lifestyle, which has been forced upon them and which they adamantly refuse to accept.

The next section begins with a presentation of the memory of the Arab-Bedouin place in the Naqab, as seen through the eyes of the informants. Thereafter, I will focus on how this remembered space has been constructed and the purpose it serves. Subsequently, I will describe the new space as an arena for resistance and protest, by focusing on the Arab Bedouins' conscious cultivation of a sense of estrangement from the space which they are now forced to occupy.

The construction of spatial memory

Morphy (1995) notes that the memory of a bountiful land in the minds of people who once lived there renders it a source of reference for feelings in the conceptual life, so that the land itself constitutes a part of their memories. This connects them with their former land on both the personal and social levels, with ties of blood and origin to their ancestors that lived there. Therefore, the individual will speak of the land in the context of their blood ties, referring to themselves as "entitled" to be there and as its direct owners (Morphy, 1995).

The Arab-Bedouin memory is based on belonging, tradition, history and practices—a connection to the tribal lands on which they dwelled throughout their lives and which was their source of livelihood over the years. It follows that their profound identity-based memories will focus on the fundamental tribal source represented by the land, the lives they lived upon it in the past, and its significance and meaning for them before they were forced to leave it. In this way, the Arab-Bedouin spatial memory is rooted in the specific tract of land from which they were uprooted and for which they continue to yearn. As the writer Anton Shammas notes, the Palestinian dream is the home on the other side of the border: "A person usually lives in a particular place, while among the Palestinians the place lives in the person" (cited in Rubinstein, 1990:14).

Scholars have noted that the Palestinians have not let go of their roots, and that they perceive their lost homeland in the most direct, tangible and simple terms: a field, an olive tree, a balcony, a well. The traditional, localized sense of belonging that was the main source of their strength, as far as they were concerned, is represented by a deep attachment to their homes and villages, and is even embodied by it. They reinforce this through the documentation of their lives in their destroyed villages and lost lands, not just as it was in the past, but also as it is today, placing an emphasis on dispossession and displacement (Hirsch, 1995; Slymowics, 1998).

The Arab-Bedouin memory is the personal narrative of individuals who preserve their past by remembering their way of life on their former land, focusing on the personal and emotional impact of the loss of the land. It is by nature an autobiographical account of events that they personally experienced in the past, and

the individual plays a significant role in its understanding (Brewer, 1988; Halbwachs, 1992; Rubin, 1996; Robinson, 1988). As Al-Sane'a, one of my interviewees, puts it: "El-Shariya, that's our land, it was an inheritance, it wasn't bought, we were landowners, it was ours... it was ours...."

As such, the Arab-Bedouin memory is individual to those who bear it and collective on the tribal level. As Halbwachs (1992) points out, the individual's memory is a part of the collective memory, since the collective memory relies on the individuals as a group of co-rememberers. They come together to form the collective thinking of the group. In this way, memory is constructed and the past is created (Halbwachs, 1992).

The Arab-Bedouin spatial memory is collective; the entire tribal kinship group participates in its handing down. Each tribe is careful to claim "our land" from which they were displaced and to focus their memories on their particular experiences and their life in the shadow of its loss. Abu Siam puts it well: "Everyone had their own piece of land and would live on it. We had land and our place was called Al-Stariya."

Shryock (1997) claims that tribal memory is handed down within the tribe from generation to generation, and in this way tribal history is drawn from earlier sources, whose narrators pass along what they received from their forefathers. This tribal-genealogical information shapes the past and present at once, and represents a way of passing on and talking about history (Shryock, 1997). In this case, it is also defined by the tribal border, and, as such, each tribe possesses its own history and truth. To take his words a step further, the Arab-Bedouin memory is composed of a collective autobiography, which is remembered on a tribal level and includes personal memories.

Its personal style entails emotional partiality and sentimental imagery, as Al-'Uqbi notes: "*Benhen lilwatan*—We yearn for our land, so that [our children] will know it and will know their past and their origin." With firsthand testimony, the subjects who remember it are those who played an active part in it, and it is considered the personal property of the one who experienced it. It is very precious to them and is more often recounted than other events. It generally deals with an atypical event that is recounted over and again, and thus withstands the test of time, especially if it was a traumatic or unpleasant event (Larsen, Thompson and Hansen, 1996; Lowenthal, 1985). A., the son of Abu Siam, expresses this very well: "This history also includes how my father suffered"; i.e., his memories include the displacement from their land and the suffering he experienced with this displacement, which prevented them from living the life that they had always known.

Additionally, the Arab-Bedouin memory is carried and transmitted by individuals who experienced the events of the past and who serve as agents of memory and as witness-bearers of a past existence. Through their memories and their lives, they form the link to a life that is no more. Besides being the documenters and narrators, they are the ones who pass the memory on to the next

generation, so that they can become secondary agents of memory and can continue the job of memorializing what happened to their fathers. This is true especially in light of the fear that the demise of the fathers will cause the history and traditions they remember to disappear (Barclay, 1988; Ben-Ze'ev, 2005; Dajani, 2002; Espaniolý, 2002; Halbwachs, 1992; Rabinowitz and Abu Baker, 2002; Rubin, 1996).

The Arab-Bedouin spatial memory is also characterized by an oral-narrative component that is remembered as words and sometimes stories of the smallest things that express an immediate emotional-intimate connection (Rubin, 1996). As Abu Siam says:

We were from Al-Stariya, there were the tribes of Abu Siam, the Abu Hatab tribe, the Abu Sabiah tribe, Abu Magireb, and there were another 4–5 tribes... we lived there.... In 1948 I was about 15 years old. I was aware and mature. I know exactly how the problem started, with the expulsion and all those things....

It is the oral narrative which, according to Slymovics (1998), embodies the words of the forefathers, their family stories and legends, and is based on historical experiences that are literary and folkloristic, and which revive the past and uncover its symbolism through the spoken word. Due to the internal diversity and contrast of the multitude of Palestinian political and historical experiences, this comes together to create different narratives that are expressed in the nature of the memory carried in the present (Nassar, 2003).

At the same time, the Arab-Bedouin memory is shaped and crystallized by events that influence it and guide its direction. The memory begins with the establishment of the State of Israel and the impact of this event on their lives, as Al-'Azazma says:

Right after the occupation, in the 1950s, the 1950s... one day Abu Dahud [a representative of the Israeli military government] came to us and said that there will be a drill and you need to leave... and when we left, they did not let us return.... Since then we haven't returned and everything has changed....

In this sense, the state's policies and military operations have had a direct, and perhaps acute, impact on shaping and forming the memory of place. As Lavie (1990) maintains in her study of the Arab Bedouins in Sinai, in contrast to the romantic image of the Arab Bedouins living in total harmony with nature, a relic of a biblical lifestyle, their identity has been developing and shaped in the shadow of the changing governments, which have had a deep political, economic and social impact on their daily lives.

As such, with the establishment of the state, the concept of time in the Arab-Bedouin memory changed from abstract to concrete and became of prime significance in the construction of their personal and collective awareness. Until that date, time was perceived as circular, ongoing and continuous. After 1948, they began to perceive time in an entirely different manner: the past now meant the era before the establishment of the state for those who experienced it, as opposed to the transitory present, which is the new life of displacement from their land and from their previous existence. The future signifies the return to the life of the past and the resumption of the lifestyle that was lost. As Al-'Ukbi states: "And I saw that as long as Israel exists, we would not be able to return, it would be difficult to return, but we never stopped dreaming and hoping that we must return to our lands. Now we are refugees in our homeland...."

Space as a basis for memory

The remembered space has been constructed by the transplanted generation, who experienced the uprooting personally. In order to make the original space into a place of memory for them and to stake their claim to it, the Arab Bedouins make use of spontaneous and informal practices, which over the years have become family institutions, as a way of preserving and passing on an awareness of the past to the new generation. They do this primarily through visits to their former lands, which symbolize for them, above all, the life of the past.

They usually make these visits in the springtime, on special occasions and on Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, which in their minds represents the date of their displacement:

We visit our place, our houses are still there, and our graves are there. It's an outing, in order to get to know the area where we lived. We have a picnic there and our parents show us how they lived. They explain to us how to find the place and show us: we lived here, the well was here, here we would sit at night, here we would do our laundry, here we would cook... memories, how we would dance the *Al-Dhahiya*, the times when we stayed up until morning and the night would be lit by the full moon, and we would play the lost bone [a children's game]... (Abu-Shareb).

The visits are an attempt to reconstruct their former day-to-day lives by recounting their daily routines on their land. The visits include detailed descriptions of their way of life on the land, commemorating their former lifestyle for the sake of their children, demonstrating the importance of the story of the past for them:

Every year we go there to visit my grandfather's house there, the old houses there. Every year in the springtime we take the children and tell them the memories, sometimes we have a barbecue and sit down on our land. We explain that this is *diarna* [our land and our home]. Here we were born and here we lived on this land, here we planted lentils and here wheat, and here we made a *sadeh* [an earthen dam to catch the rain water] with a *jerafa* [backplow] pulled by a camel, and here we worked on the road. That's how I explain it to my children (Al-'Azazma).

Halbwachs (1992) notes that a conversation about the remembered past is conducted in the social circle that owns that past, so the descriptions generally revolve around ordinary daily life by explaining and showing what was where: the field was here, the well was there, here we would sit at night, there we raised our livestock, here we grazed them. In this way, reconstruction of the past through its remembrance is carried out by locating remnants which bear perpetual historical witness (Lowenthal, 1985). As Al-'Uqbi says:

Our land is in Al-Araqib, the Al-'Uqbi people say, we always visit it: we take our children with us... we visit in the springtime, on special occasions, during the holidays... we take the children and explain to them... this is A's land, and that is B's land. *Benhen lelwatan* – we yearn for our land – so that they will know it.... When we visit it, we say to the children, we lived here and there... this is our land, so that they will get to know it....

Additionally, the family members make efforts to preserve “proof” of their ownership of their lands, and they took care to show me old land registry documents which they say prove their presence on their lands. They also keep maps and aerial photographs from the British Mandate era: “In my papers it says exactly what were the northern borders of A's and B's land, as well as C and D from the south... I have it all organized...” (Abu-Shareb).

The goal of perpetuating the spatial memory

These commemorative practices serve to preserve the past among Arab-Bedouin families in the Naqab. Relics are used to illustrate the memories, creating what Zerubavel (1995) calls an “archive of the present,” as it is perceived and constructed among them; in fact, the land itself serves as relic, as “eternal realms of memory” (Nora, 1989). The need for these “realms of memory” and the preoccupation with them is connected to the sense of loss (Nora, 1989).

The creation of these realms of memory reconstructs the history of the Naqab Arab Bedouins and gives it prime ideological significance for the children, who

receive a sense of direct connection as secondary landowners. The creation of secondary agents of memory has become a ultimate goal of the generation of survivors, who seek to inform their children of what belongs to them:

When I die the children will know what they have, they are taking note. What is registered under their name is not enough, they need to see it with their eyes as well... that will give them continuity to prove their ownership of the land, no more and no less. I take them to show them where I was born, where I would drink water, where I lived my life. I pass on this information so that they will know why we are not getting our due, and why we are still here without the right to our land. I want them to know that we have been denied our right. They shouldn't forget where they came from, they need to know that they were not born in Tel Sheva, we are not from *habalad* – this land. *Asalna* – our origin – and *Amlakna* – our property, are in a different place and the government is withholding it from us (Abu-Rqaeiq).

In other words, by informing the next generation of exactly where their land is located, they aim to enable them to prove their ownership of it in the future, as well as to keep the hope that they will one day return alive:

The papers are title deeds... because this is our land that we planted... our land is empty today, and we have proof that it is our land that we own. It is marked. This is my ownership, so one of these days, when perhaps I will die and their mother, too, this is what they will have left. They need to tell their children that there is land, and I have documents and photocopies. I photocopied those documents a few times and arranged them in my folder. I put all my papers away, in order (Abu-Shareb).

The revival of the memory of the past in spatial terms, according to Fenster (2004), creates a sense of ownership that connects people to their land by marking the territory through daily actions and through the investment of emotional significance. In this way, space is owned in a practical, worldly, intimate, personal and daily way (Fenster, 2004). Massey (1995) upholds this theory by presenting the relationship between a home and a place in the context of territorial ownership based around a geographical location, by means of mutual identification between the land and the people who are connected to and identified with it. It follows that a sense of exclusive ownership of a place, and the connection between the place and the people, are bound together in the physical and natural environment (Massey, 1995).

In this way, the Arab Bedouins are reviving their past by nurturing their connection to place and rendering it an emotional and physical space, towards which they have developed a sense of ownership through a realm of memory that prevents

them from forgetting. The importance of this is expressed especially in regard to the children, who are the second and third generation since the displacement, who did not live through 1948 and who have never known the significance of life on their own land. In order to inculcate within them the implications of the exodus from the lands of their forefathers, the parents make a practice of telling them of the past in an idyllic fashion and visiting those places in order to enable them to feel it in a physical sense and to develop a sense of emotional ownership: "They visit the land.... They feel the land, they kiss it. They feel and sense the land so much and become attached to it..." (Abu-Shareb).

This is done both among those who live in recognized settlements and those who live in unrecognized settlements, with the goal of imbuing their current situation with a sense of transience. The difference between them is that, in the recognized settlements, the cultivating of the past aims to diminish the attachment that the younger generation feel toward their present surroundings for reasons of convenience. They aim to implant a memory of the past within them and thereby transmit a sense that their current living situation is not ideal for them, that the option of the past is better, and that they should aspire to return to it: "So that they won't forget that they weren't born in Tel-Sheva, our origins are not on this land..." (Abu-Rqaeiq). Memory is constructed as part of the daily routine, which could otherwise lend itself to complacency and forgetting: "We're living here on lease and that's it..." (Abu-Shareb). Also: "...but he knows, he knows that this is not his, this area is not his. This is what we feel... I have no peace of mind here..." (Abu-Jarabe'a).

In the unrecognized settlements, the children are born into a different, harsher reality, which intensifies the thirst for a better life. The return to their lands, which signifies an escape to a better reality and a way out of their present situation, is part of their day-to-day identity due to the transience that already characterizes their lifestyle. Redefining the past as an ideal for their children's future is perceived as a way to bring the memory of the land alive in their hearts (Issa, 1997). The visits turn back the clock as the parents return to the life of the past, reconstructing the pieces of information about their previous existence. The land represents for them the remnant of the space of the past, in which they search for relics of their lives there years ago, as a living memento of a life that is very real to them.

In addition, the construction of their identity based on the land is connected to continuity, which begins with an unknown, eternal point in time and contrasts their present transient existence. As such, the space represents the past, which is retold by those who lived before the displacement, the generation of 1948 who experienced it. They emphasize the disruption of this continuity in the present day, resulting in the current lifestyle of transience. This is viewed as something that is going to change in the future, through the act of connecting the past with the future, to ensure the resumption of the continuity that was disrupted.

Therefore, in order to symbolically revive the past and the remnants of that life, they try to preserve that which they recognize from the earlier life:

We took the children there because we want our children to live in hope; we took our children there so that they would know that they had a *balad* – a homeland! The goal is that they should know their history, that they had land, that they should know where they came from, the place, because everyone needs to know these things (Abu-Shareb).

The conceptualization of the past by concretizing the place has been the subject of a great deal of research with regard to the Palestinians. It has been said that the picture of a Palestinian pointing his finger at evidence of a Palestinian presence at the sites of former homes and lands, at the site of villages where his parents lived, moves the idea of Palestine from the realm of the abstract to the actual by arousing feelings towards the place and a better understanding of the life of the past. An encounter with the remnants perpetuates the past in the present era, besides the fact that memories of events convince those who visit that these memories belong to them (Ben-Ze'ev, 2005; Halbwachs, 1992; Slymovics, 1998). As Abu-Shareb puts it:

When we go there, we are bringing its stones, and bringing its sand.... It is important to me that even the smallest boy will know, will know that we had land, when we take him to the land, his mother tells him—this was your land! Once it was ours and we were expelled from it and the place where we live now is not our land, rather this is our land. We are connected to this land.

Another reason for visiting the old village is to explain the situation which the Arab Bedouins of the Naqab find themselves in today. An understanding of Arab-Bedouin history flows from a statutory ownership of the land, imparted through the construction of a sense of ownership and pride in self and one's status, as expressed through the words of A. Abu Siam, the son of one of the interviewees:

This is not the first time that he has told us the history, he tells us this all the time. Why do you think that I know it by heart? Because he tells it to us at every opportunity in order to explain to us why we have problems today in Laqiya, why we have no land, why we live today on the land of others. We cannot move forward, and so it hurts. The problem of the land according to the story and the way they were expelled from the land, and how they lived after that. Today we have a problem; families around us have land, so why do we have no land? Why do we have no land?

Space as an arena of resistance

The displacement from their homes, land and birthplace is still being experienced by the Arab Bedouins today, in that they choose to refer to themselves as “expellees.” This term is heard over and over in both recognized and unrecognized Arab-Bedouin villages in Israel, regardless of the conditions under which the residents live. From their point of view, the loss is both mental and physical, personal and collective, and has changed their world forever. This loss means a transient life in their present space and a sharp drop in status from being landowners to landless, as expressed by Al-’Uqbi: “We are considered expellees, landless, we have no land here.” This lack is expressed by their estrangement from their present space, even though their current location is just a few kilometers from their former land, as N. Al-’Uqbi, a relative from the same tribe, explained: “We are strangers in our homeland.”

The Arab Bedouins’ sense of estrangement towards the place they live in today is the main way they resist and protest their present situation. They live an existence of exiles, characterized by transience and instability, with about half of the Arab-Bedouin population living in unrecognized settlements and the other half living involuntarily and dissatisfied in the recognized settlements. These circumstances make it “easier” for them to really live the emotional and physical connection to the past of life on the lost land, and the “utopian” and “idyllic” way of life that represents.

This sense of *urba*—exile—which they experience is multi-faceted. On the one hand, they live in the same geographic area, not far from their original lands; on the other hand, they feel a sense of exile due to its loss. Their original lands represent for them their utopian past, which is connected to the future through memories that are characterized by perfection, peace and the hope for a better life through the return to their land and to “themselves.” As such, the Arab Bedouins of the Naqab are living in exile no less than people who were left outside of the borders of the State of Israel as a result of its establishment. Their physical presence within the borders of the state certainly does not reflect their inclusion in it, since the new borders of the Israeli space have defined them as strangers. As they themselves say: “We are strangers in our homeland, the big homeland. It affects everyone and we can’t do much about it.... But there is something that is connected to me personally, to myself. And that which is connected to me personally, to myself, we lost by force, and we want to go back to it” (Al-’Uqbi).

As such, the uniqueness of the Arab-Bedouin exile is expressed also through their relations with the new government that brought about this situation. The moment that Israel took control, the borders were reshaped, and they took the Arab Bedouins out of their natural setting in order to redefine the space to suit their needs. This impacted the Arab Bedouins’ physical, social, economic and political situation, creating a sense of physical and emotional alienation among them.

This sense of exile is expressed on two main planes: the physical plane, in that they are removed from the land, which is the focal point of the life they yearn for and idealize, and the emotional plane, through feelings of estrangement and a sense of incompleteness, an absence of rootedness and belonging. This physical and emotional exile is expressed in practice through the construction of a memory around the focal point—the native lands from which they were uprooted.

Expressions of resistance

Wedeen explains that a protest constructed on the cognitive plane may not be externally apparent, but this does not mean that it doesn't exist. The use of particular language and words is a clear indication of resistance against a power, and the style of speech and the words chosen reveal its existence (Wedeen, 1998).

Speech is a primary way that the Arab Bedouins express their resistance to their present situation. They use it to protest the circumstances of their life, as shown by the words of Al-'Uqbi:

Zionism does not look at us as citizens or as holders of rights; rather it is busy with settlers and new arrivals and Jewish immigrants. Instead of our being a burden on the state and its economy, each family could be productive if they could get a plot on their original land in order to farm, since most Bedouins are farmers. This is what we want.... The Zionists—every dunam of land for the immigrants that will come.... The Bedouins—land and water. It's the height of racism.... Our land could wait 100–150 years for the Jews who *might* come... it's discrimination.... They look at the Arab citizen one way and the Jewish citizen another way... it's not the same.... The Jews want to keep their national lands away from the non-Jewish citizen.... Give it to the camel owner, the goat owner, the she-camel owner so they will live and improve their economic situation, so they will have dignity and a good standard of living.... We are right, there is no democracy and no nothing.... The Jewish people don't know the truth.

The Arab-Bedouins view the state as an entity which is working against them, as a deeply embittered Abu-Shareb says: "The state has raped our lands and has taken our most precious possession.... Today we are a tribe against the state...." As such, the powers that be hold the advantage in this struggle, in which the Arab Bedouins view themselves on a tribal basis. As a powerless tribe, they have little chance of overcoming the state: "We lived on the tribal level, we could fight with the wind and fight with the sun. Now we are fighting against another way of life, different, with different people. Our nature is different, they are different" (Al-'Azazma).

From their point of view, the state is making use of their tribal identity in order to disconnect them from their native lands and cut off their roots in it. As Abu-Shareb says:

If it was listed on our identity papers, "Al-Jamama," they could not expel us. Why? Because then we would be on the land that we owned.... We all have listed on our identity papers: "Al-Atawana Tribe." Why? For them [the state] you have nothing, you are with the tribe and belong to the tribe, you have no land of your own, so that you won't be able to prove that you live in a particular place and that this is our place. And so we are wanderers with the tribe.

The implication is that their exclusion by the state has been accomplished not just by taking them away from their original land and transferring them elsewhere, but also through an attempt to disconnect them from their land and to claim that they are rootless and basically from nowhere by officially classifying them according to tribe.

Another expression of resistance is their nurturing of the vision of return to their lands as such a significant part of their present reality. They invest great effort in building a tangible and inviolable connection with the past, as Al-'Uqbi expresses best: "We have never stopped dreaming or hoping that we will go back to our lands." In this way, cultivating the vision of return is the Arab-Bedouin's primary goal in preserving the memory, aiming to inculcate the children with the goal of returning to the place that the parents left. The strong faith that ultimately they will succeed in returning, one way or another, allows them to impart to their children the vision of return in an emotional and physical fashion, and to implant a strong sense of connection in them.

In this sense, the past for them is not just a living memory; it is their one and only hope for leaving their present situation and having a better life. For them, the return to their land and all that this symbolizes is perceived as a realistic vision, and their hope of realizing it is integral to the reality of their circumstances under Israeli control. As Al-'Uqbi says: "We must return at any price, we must return to our homes, especially those of us who agreed to be citizens of the State of Israel. We accepted this on the condition that we would live on our land, in our homes."

The return to their land constitutes an integral part of their future existence, and it shapes their aspirations and guides them with real direction. According to them, their vision will be realized in no uncertain terms, regardless of the government. For them, the return is the most real thing, the focal point of their tribal connection and identity on their tribal land, to which they remain connected no matter who runs the country. Abu-Shareb expresses this as follows: "If we get our rights in the Israeli era, that will be good. If not, we'll get it later."

Their other primary expression of resistance and protest of their present situation and their holding onto the past for the sake of a future hope is the

cultivation of an exile identity in their current setting and the conscious reinforcement of the sense of alienation and estrangement which they feel towards their current location, be it in recognized or unrecognized settlements. This was best expressed by Al-'Uqbi:

This land is owned by the state, not by us. We were not born here, we are connected to our land. We won't live here, we don't belong to Hura, even if we live here 100 or 1,000 years we will not give up our lands. We will stay connected to our lands and we won't live here. We are not connected to this area, I know that it is not my land. I feel that it is not mine. I don't sow it or anything. It is forbidden to sow this land here.

This is evident through their failure to develop their present location:

My connection to the land of my father is stronger than my connection to the place where I was born, since I know that it is not mine. And so I don't build as I should, and I don't make more effort to improve my standard of living, I don't even try, since this is temporary.... Even when they [relatives] visit from Jordan, we go to see our land (Al-'Azazma).

As such, the families express as much resistance as they can, by whatever means available to them. As Al-'Uqbi puts it: "Even if they move me to Hura and allow me to build, I will not build there. We don't want to move to Hura, we want to move to our land, we want a village on the land itself." Their total disinterest in investing in their present location, not even to temporarily improve their standard of living, is expressed by their lack of desire and absolute refusal to build in a place not their own, to the point that they are not even willing to lay down flooring, so as not to give any sort of permanence to their presence. Al-'Uqbi expresses this well:

My father would sit and drink coffee and we would talk. I would urge him, let's lay down a floor in this room. He would say, "no, we don't want to build on other people's land." This isn't our land, and we don't want it. We have no connection to this land, we can't stay here on other people's land. This land is not ours. We didn't buy it. We want our land, which we lived on for hundreds of years, generation upon generation; our fathers, grandfathers, and grandfathers' grandfathers lived on it for hundreds of years.

As far as the Arab Bedouins are concerned, the construction of the return mentality demands every effort to prevent the past from being forgotten, in order to perpetuate their efforts to return in the future to the only place they call home. In the meantime, the transplanted generation uses every available means to reconstruct the

past by building positive images of life on their own land, in order to create an enduring, constant sense of unbreakable connection to it among their children.

The Arab-Bedouin memory is perpetuated through the emotional connection which keeps the place alive in their awareness, an existence that is supported on the physical level through visits and the documentation of that past. Thus, the memory, which comes into existence and is shaped by the need for a history of the present, turns the timeless continuity of the past into a reality in today's transient era (Warner, 2002).

Conclusion: "Between here and there"—On the significance of home

Scholars have explored the deep contrast between "roots" and "routes." "Roots" symbolize belonging and a deep connection to native lands, while transitory "routes" symbolize a fleeting journey, without any real effort to settle down and with the hope of return to the former home never abandoned. In this sense, the land of the fathers of exiled peoples represents for them the ideal home and the only place that they and their descendants ultimately want to reach (Clifford, 1994; Levy, 2000).

The Naqab Arab Bedouins do not feel any less of a sense of exile than those who crossed the state borders. Their displacement from their land with the establishment of the state in 1948 turned their world upside down and snatched away their essential identity, which had been shaped up until that moment by the lands of their forefathers that they inhabited for generations. Despite their relocation just a few kilometers from their former lands, in the same geographic area, the state-induced change of space has excluded them and made them strangers in their homes.

The Arab-Bedouin exile identity is expressed through a constructed sense of alienation toward the place in which they are currently compelled to live, which coexists with a cultivated sense of emotional and physical belonging to their tribal lands, which they consider their real home. This is made especially clear by the constructed distinction between their present location—"here," and their former land—"there." This distinction succinctly summarizes the ideological symbolism of the lost land, as opposed to the transient exile in which they find themselves today.

From the Arab Bedouins' point of view, the former land symbolizes their roots, which the state refuses to recognize. Their land is the origin of their tribe and the essence of their existence, where they hope to live out the ideal, utopian life in the home that has been denied to them. That space represents their past, their land, their human, social and class dignity, as well as their traditional connection to a place where they can live their lives according to their customs, unfettered and unhindered. This was the place where their personal and collective-tribal self-determination was clear and absolute. Furthermore, it is the place which they themselves and other tribes recognize as their rightful location, the place of origin to which they have historically belonged.

On the other hand, their lives in their present location, which they call “here,” represents temporality, transience and instability, an interminable present which will eventually come to an end, allowing them to step back into the cycle of timeless continuity. The present symbolizes a life with no foreseeable future, fraught by restrictions on mobility and personal and social development, contrasting starkly to what they were formerly accustomed to. This is epitomized by their having been denied the opportunity to work the land and to be sustained by its produce, or to live on their tribal lands as they did in the past. Additionally, they lack the stability that comes from lives spent travelling along a familiar and well travelled path. This sense is palpable even among the second generation, as is explained by A., the son of Abu Siam: “We live here just like we are living in a refugee camp, we are displaced, we are not permitted to build or expand, we have no space, we are living on top of each other.”

According to Abu-Jarabe’a: “All these places that you call Bedouin towns are all refugee camps, they [the authorities] did not get any Bedouins involved in planning them.” The dominant feeling towards their current location is estrangement and impermanence. These themes are used to illustrate a situation where, despite being citizens of the state, they feel a lack of wholeheartedness in their state-run existence, and where they persistently long for their former land.

They also express a reluctance to live on the land of others, i.e., land that historically was owned by other tribes. This is especially true of those who live in temporary settlements. Add to this their inability to determine their own future, since in their perception the future is connected to a past that has been uprooted and that they are powerless to return to, and so the future is also seen as lacking. As such, the disinterest in settling in their current location, even if just to temporarily improve their lot, shows their adamant refusal to build in a place that is not their own, to the point where they are unwilling to give any sort of permanence to their residence there. Their current place of residence is seen as a transitory setting they are forced to inhabit for the time being. This is contrasted to their homes on their lost land, which symbolize their roots and the continuity of kinship ties.

In this sense, they consider themselves to have only one home—their former land. No other space could possibly take its place for them, regardless of the living conditions in which they find themselves. Hammond (2004) asserts that a person can have more than one home at the same time—the original home of the past, as well as the home that provides them with their current economic, social and political needs. Yet, the Arab Bedouins express their deep and direct connection to one and only one home, and that is the place where they always lived—their tribal lands to which they yearn to return.

Their identity as strangers and outsiders is reinforced by those practices that revive the past life of their former land, including visits to the land, the recounting of the past way of life, and the preservation of the documents that they feel prove their ownership of their lands. The goal is to transmit a clear message to their children that they have a better alternative, which they must aspire to and aim for in all they

do. They also root their identity in the place from which they were uprooted and stubbornly refuse to accept life in a space other than their own.

The reality of their transitory and unstable existence actually helps them to construct these feelings and reinforces their demand for the longed-for return. As such, their exile from their former space has not remained a mere memory for the generation of 1948; instead, it has been transformed into an exile identity among the second and third generation. It now seems that the fourth generation is also characterized by this transient mentality, which cries out from the misery of their current living conditions. All this shapes the Arab-Bedouin struggle for their lands, for their future and for the future of their children.

NOTES

¹ Another version of this paper will be published in H. Yacobi and T. Fenster (Eds.) (Forthcoming), *Remembering, Forgetting and the Construction of Space*. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute.

² The nominal category of "Arab Bedouins" relates to their definition as part of Arab-Palestinian society in Israel.

³ A confederation is a broader unit of Arab-Bedouin social identification which includes a number of tribes. In Arabic it is known as *Kabail* (Ashkenazi, 1957).

⁴ The research population consisted of 17 Arab-Bedouin informants from the Naqab. The interviewees came from eight families, seven of which were landowners prior to 1948 and one family that owned no land at that time. Currently, five of the families live in recognized settlements, two live in unrecognized settlements and one lives in an unrecognized neighborhood of a recognized settlement.

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