



PERFORMING ARTS

Introduction

Performing arts in Palestine - music, dance, drama, and theater (initially story telling) – can be traced back hundreds of years to Arab medieval times and have always been important parts of traditional Palestinian life. Musical, dance and theatrical projects provide unique opportunities for creative expression and have over the years functioned as vehicles for promoting intercultural understanding, as international audiences have enjoyed and been educated by Palestinian musicians and theater and dance groups worldwide. Their performances often not only demonstrate Palestinian plays, traditional and contemporary dance and music, but communicate, at the same time, the Palestinian narrative of the current struggle. By this, Palestinian performing arts have not only facilitated a better relationship between Palestinians and arts and culture but have also created a cultural environment that preserves, maintains and promotes local heritage and creativity as well as national identity. With organizations such as the Palestinian National Theater, Yabous, Al-Kasaba Theater, the Popular Art Center, El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe, Sabreen and so many others the interest of society in arts and culture has increased and activities such as heritage, music and dance festivals have undoubtedly promoted Palestinian-international cultural links.

Music

Dancing and music are integral parts of Palestinian culture. Palestinian music is a sub-genre of Arabic music and while it shares much in common with Arabic music, both structurally and instrumentally, there are musical forms and subject matter that are distinctively Palestinian. After the Palestinian Nakba in 1948 a new generation of Palestinian artists started composing music and writing songs to express their deep devotion to the homeland and their nationalistic dreams and sorrows. Traditional Arab music instruments include the Oud, the Derbakeh, the Rababa, Kanun, Daf, and Kamaja (see box from left to right). In the mid-1990s, the Popular Art Center in Al-Bireh launched the Palestinian Traditional Music and Song Archive, creating a unique collection of music and songs from Palestinian villages, refugee camps, towns and the Galilee.

As with other forms of Palestinian culture, music often reflects Palestinian experience and deals with the love of the land of Palestine, the struggle with Israel, and the longing for peace and justice. Typical examples for patriotic expressions are Biladi, Biladi (My Country, My Country) and Mawtani, Mawtani (My Homeland, My Homeland) which are widely considered as national anthems.

Especially since 1967, music has been used in Palestinian and Arab popular culture to deal with the Palestinian tragedy and struggle; songs – now increasingly sung by Palestinian singers - talk about both the despair of defeat as well as the hope placed in the emerging resistance movement. The musical genre thereby ranges from classical Arabic and traditional Islamic to modern pop and, in recent years, hip hop.¹



¹ With notable groups / performers including Iron Sheik, DAM, MWR, Ramallah Underground, Palestinian Rapperz, and The Philistines. In 2009, a film – “Slingshot Hip Hop” was devoted to this relatively new music scene.

Mawtani, Mawtani1

My homeland
My homeland
Glory and beauty
Sublimity and prettiness
Are in your hills
Life and deliverance
Pleasure and hope
Are in your atmosphere
Will I see you?
Safe and comfortable
Sound and honored
Will I see you?
In your eminence
Reaching the stars
My homeland
My homeland

The youth will not get tired
Their goal is your independence
Or they die
We will drink from death
But we will not be slaves to our enemies
We do not want
An eternal humiliation
Nor a miserable life
We do not want
But we will return
Our great glory
My homeland
My homeland
The sword and the pen
Are our symbols
Not talking nor quarreling
Our glory and covenant
And a duty to fulfill it
Shake us
Our honor
Is an honorable cause
A raised flag
O, your beauty
In your eminence
Victorious over your enemies
My homeland
My homeland

Biladi, Biladi

My country, my country
My country, my land, land of my ancestors
My country, my country
My country, my people, people of perpetuity

With my determination, my fire and the volcano of my revenge
With the longing in my blood for my land and my home
I have climbed the mountains and fought the wars
I have conquered the impossible, and crossed the frontiers

My country, my country
My country, my land, land of my ancestors
My country, my country
My country, my people, people of perpetuity

With the resolve of the winds and the fire of the guns
And the determination of my nation in the land of struggle
Palestine is my home, Palestine is my fire,
Palestine is my revenge and the land of endurance

My country, my country
My country, my land, land of my ancestors
My country, my country
My country, my people, people of perpetuity

By the oath under the shade of the flag
By my land and nation, and the fire of pain
I will live as a fida'i, I will remain a fida'i,
I will end as a fida'i - until my country returns

My country, my country
My country, my land, land of my ancestors
My country, my country
My country, my people, people of perpetuity

The enduring legacy of Jerusalem is a subject that lends itself well to all forms of artistic expression and as strong as the emotions are that Jerusalem conjures in the Arab world, it comes as no surprise that the city has been repeatedly portrayed in song. The city has been aggrandized in the lyrics of nomadic troubadours and modern superstars alike. The following is just a sample of Jerusalem's place in Arabic-language music:

SONGS (LYRICS)

The following singers and their respective song texts are listed in alphabetical order according to the performer's surname.²



BUKHATIR, AHMAD (1975-)

Ahmed Bukhatir was born in Sharjah, UAE, in 1975 where he studied and lived all his life. He graduated in 1999 from Al-Ain University with a BA in Management Information System. He started singing in 1989 and his albums – the first which was released in 2000 - reached a wide audience. Most of his music is influenced by religion and known as nasheed (Islamic-oriented song). His album "Al Quds tunadeena" (2001) was immediately a bestseller in the Gulf countries.

Al-Quds Tunaadinaa (Jerusalem, You Call us)

(Sounds of an ambulance, gunfire, and bombs)

Jerusalem is calling us, Jerusalem is calling us, Jerusalem is calling us

Jerusalem is calling

Jerusalem is calling

Jerusalem is calling us

O House of Sacredness, you are our hope

Jerusalem returns to our people

And we purify your virgin grounds

And we unfurl our banners above you

We unfurl our banners above you

Jerusalem is calling us, Jerusalem is calling us

House of Sacredness, you are our hope

Jerusalem will return to our people

And we purify your virgin grounds

And we unfurl our banners above you

We unfurl our banners above you

Jerusalem is calling us, Jerusalem is calling us

While Palestinians await patiently

God dissipates our woes

Jerusalem will return to us, as our home

Jerusalem returns to us, as our land

While Palestine awaits

² Songs which are not listed here in full because of the non-availability of an appropriate English translation include: Rim Banna's Al-Quds Everlasting (2002), Reem Talhami's Ya Quds (Oh Jerusalem), Al-Quds Lena" (Jerusalem is Ours) by Hakim, Ala Bal al-Quds (Jerusalem on my Mind) by Hani Shaker, and Umm Kulthum's Warda.

God dissipates our woes
 Jerusalem will return to us, as our home
 Jerusalem returns to us, as our land
 The night crept on in its blackest pitch
 But was broken at dawn, with its rays
 Jerusalem, O! (repeated 8 times)
 O House of Sacredness, you are our hope
 [A long wail begins here over the verses of the chorus, intoning:
 "My House (Bayti)! Jerusalem (Qudsu)! Aaahh!]
 Jerusalem will return to our people
 And we purify your virgin grounds
 And we unfurl our banners above you
 We unfurl our banners above you
 Jerusalem is calling us
 Jerusalem is calling us (pause)
 Jerusalem is calling us, Jerusalem is calling us, Jerusalem is calling us
 Jerusalem is calling
 Jerusalem is calling
 Jerusalem is calling us



DIAB, AMR (1961-)

Egyptian singer and composer Amr Diab, born in Port Said in 1961, is one of the most popular contemporary singers in the Middle East. He melds Arabic sounds and music with Western rhythms and instruments, a mix that was dubbed "Mediterranean Music." His prolific recording career took off in the mid 1980s and he set new standards for Arabic sales records. El-Quds De Ardena was hit first in 2001, and the video to the song - filmed inside the Occupied Territories - won the Best Video, Best Clip Production, and Best Clip Director at the Arabic Video Clip Festival in Alexandria that year.

El-Quds De Ardena (Jerusalem is Our Land)

These are our last words
 this Jerusalem is ours
 and this right is ours
 and the right is god's right

and my son that saw his death
 while considering him
 as a thousand martyrs
 i swear i will revenge for him
 and come back to you
 with another son

we must take Jerusalem
 and this a right that doesn't require silence
 and what is the use for the mother
 if you took her son she will die

and my son that saw his death
 while considering him
 as a thousand martyrs
 i swear i will revenge for him
 and come back to you
 with another son
 these are our last words
 this Jerusalem is ours
 and this right is ours
 and the right is god's right



HAFEZ, ABDEL HALIM (1929-1977)

Abdel Halim Hafez was born in Egypt in 1929 and is considered to be one of the musical “giants” of Arabic music (along with Umm Kulthum, Mohammed Abdul Wahab and Farid Al-Attrash). During the 1950s to the 1970s he was at the peak of his fame as an Egyptian singer (and actor), though his music is popular across the Arab world until today. Most of his over 260 songs were love songs, but some had also political connotations. In *Al-Masih* (The Messiah or Christ), sung first in 1967, Hafez “used Christ’s Via Dolorosa as the main allegorical theme of Palestinian suffering...with the lyrics asserting that the son of Jerusalem, like the Messiah, has now been ‘crucified by the same Jews’.”³

Al-Masih (The Christ)

Oh, my words... travel around the world from top to bottom.
And open the eyes of it’s people to what happened on it’s land.
On it’s land, Christ imprinted his footsteps.
On it’s land, Jesus felt his pain.
In Jerusalem, in the trail of pain and in Hebron, the church bells rang.
From the wilderness, the gospel emerged.

How long will justice be lost within you, oh trail of pain?
And how long will the lights of conscience and the stars of peace be extinguished?
And how long will men walk through you, wounded? And how long will they remain screaming?
While Christ follows... Christ follows them on it’s land!

The crown of thorns pierced his brow and the cross, he carried on his shoulders.
Right now, oh Jerusalem, your son is like Christ, a stranger... a stranger (In his own land).
The crown of thorns pierced his brow and the cross he carried on his shoulders.
They betrayed him! These same Jews betrayed him!
Your son, oh Jerusalem, just like Christ, must prevail! On it’s land...



AL-KURD, MUSTAFA (1945-)

Mustafa Al-Kurd was born in 1945 in the Old City of Jerusalem. His music - political songs and Palestinian chansons - is influenced by several musical traditions from classical Arabic ‘oud, Sufi chants and rhythms, Byzantine song, European organ music, and Palestinian folklore. He works as a composer (songs, film music), songwriter, music teacher and producer, and has also set to music the works of renowned Palestinian poets such as Mahmoud Darwish, Rashid Hussein, Tawfiq Zayyad, and Fadwa Tuqan.

After several arrests in 1976, Al-Kurd spent the next nine years in European exile, where he continued to produce, perform and record his music. After returning to Palestine in 1987 (at the beginning of the first Intifada), he wrote songs for his album: *Children of the Intifada*. His hometown Jerusalem inspired him to numerous songs; his most recent CD album *Al-Madah* (2009), from which the following song derives, is dedicated to his native city.

³ Joseph Massad, “Liberating Songs: Palestine put top Music,” *JPS*, XXXII, No. 3 (Spring 2003).

In Love

Obsessed with love,
Obsessed with love for you
Oh Jerusalem, my love is like madness.

I wander in these neighborhoods
Between light and dark
I lose myself in the alleyways
Between the sunlight and shade
I can bear the pain.
Calls to prayer, bells,
Faces of people
I am dreaming.
The luster of stones
The scent of flowers
And sweet lemon blossoms
And in the darkness of wallflowers
I give in
With sensuality and passion.
Sing your melody,
Lovers of Jerusalem.
I am in love.

(from the CD Al-Madah - "The Troubadour" (2009); translated by Anita Khoury-Vitullo)

RAHBANI, ASI AND MANSOUR / FAYROUZ

While there are many Arab poems that have taken the form of popular song, the most famous example is probably Lebanese singer Fayrouz and her legendary 1967 song "The Flower of the Cities," written by the Rahbani brothers (Asi, her husband, and Mansour, her brother-in-law). Another well-known piece written by the Rahbanis and put to music is the pre-1967 song "Old Jerusalem" (see below).

The Flowers of the Cities

For you, city of prayer, I pray
For you beautiful city, flower of cities
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city of prayer, I pray
Our eyes travel to you every day
Moving about the hallways of the temples
Embracing the old churches
Wiping sadness from the mosques
Night of the isra, path of he who ascended heavenward
Our eyes travel to you every day, and I pray
The child and his mother Mary in the cave, two crying faces.



Asi (l.) and Mansour (r.) Rahbani and Fayrouz

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For those made homeless
For the children without houses
For those who defended at the gates and were martyred
Peace itself was martyred in the nation of peace
and Justice fell at the gates
When the city of Jerusalem toppled
Love retreated and in the hearts of the world, war settled
The child and his mother Mary in the cave, two crying faces.

The blinding anger is coming and I am full of faith
The blinding anger is coming and I will bypass the sadness
From every road it is coming, with the awesome steeds it is coming
As the omnipresent face of God it is coming, coming, coming
The gate to our city will not close, for I am going to pray
I will knock on the gates, I will open the gates
And you Jordan River will wash my face with sacred water
And you Jordan River will erase the traces of the barbaric feet
The blinding anger is coming, awesome steeds it is coming
It will defeat the face of oppression
The house is ours, Jerusalem is ours
And with our hands we are going to return the city to its splendor
With our hands peace is coming to Jerusalem.

(featured in the album "Jerusalem in my Heart")

Old Jerusalem

I passed through the streets
The streets of Old Jerusalem
In front of the shops
That remained of Palestine
We talked about what had happened together
And they gave me a vase
They said to me this is a gift
From the "waiting people"

And I walked the streets
The streets of Old Jerusalem
I stood at the doorways
We become companions
And their sad eyes of the city's energy
Take me and move me with the torment of feeling estranged

There was a land and there were hands building beneath the sun and the wind
And there were houses and windows
Blossoming, and there were children with books in their hands
And in one night rage flowed into the houses
And the black hands unhinged the doors
And the houses became ownerless
Between them and their houses barbed-wire fence

And fire and the black hands
I'm screaming in the streets
The streets of Old Jerusalem
Let the songs storm and rumble
O my voice continue to stir up a hurricane with these consciences
Now I know what happened to them
Perhaps my conscience will awaken



EL-SAHER, KAZEM (1961-)

Kazem El-Safer was born in 1961 in Mosul, Iraq. He has established himself as one of the biggest singers in the Arab World, having sold more than 30 million albums since the start of his career. Ranging from romantic ballads to more political works, from pop to Arab classical. His tribute to Jerusalem, Ya Quds, portrays the city as the center of Palestine and an important cite for Muslims.

Ya Quds (O Jerusalem)

Oh Jerusalem city of the heavens
I see you clothed in blood
Darkness surrounds you, my beloved
And you were a fountainhead of light
The wrong sunk its fangs into you
And the truth seeks refuge in the freedom fighter

I am here
The Quranic reciter and the speaker say to her peace upon the Virgin
I am here
And my mosque is my proof and this church is in front of me

Jerusalem is my city
My beloved, my face, my forehead, my sense of honor, my pride
And indeed if you wanted to hear it
Read the Sura of the Night Journey
Praise be to the one who made Mustafa travel that night
To al-Aqsa
That which all around it is blessed
This is the word of God, not my song

God is great
Say God is great
The hand that carried the stones liberation and redemption deserves a kiss
Here is Palestine and this is our Jerusalem
Like the soul more precious than the living



SHAKER, HANI (1952-)

Hani Abdel Aziz Shaker, born in 1952 in Cairo, is a famous Egyptian singer, composer, songwriter and actor. Hani Shaker has around 30 albums in his discography. His songs include traditional Egyptian music as well as modern songs which reflect contemporary society. His patriotic song *Dami Falastini* (2008) is accompanied by a music video in support for the Palestinian people and their suffering. The lyrics were written by the Palestinian poet Rami Al-Yousef, while Shaker composed the music.

Dami Falastini (My Blood is Palestinian)

I come to you with a passion that fills me
I am Egyptian but my blood is Palestinian
And Jerusalem is my life and prayers
And the precious El Aqsa is the light of my life
The determination of your men is the same as your mountains
Oh protector of the crucifix and crescent moon
On this Earth there is none that compare to your beauty
Your high moon calms me
Blood never turns into water
The only solution is nationalism
Oh Palestine you are precious to me
And in your sky I raise my forehead high



AL-ZOGHBI, NAWAL (1972-)

Nawal Al-Zoghbi, born in 1972 in Lebanon, is an Arabic Music Diva singer widely known across the Arab World but also in Europe and North America. She began her professional career in 1991. Besides her very successful commercial Pop music, she is also outspoken from a political standpoint, supporting the Palestinian struggle with songs such as *Ya Quds*.

Ya Quds (O Jerusalem)

O Jerusalem, how I long to pray
Where hope is in your beloved soil
Won't you rise and smash the reigns of tyranny
And return to its people the plundered nation

You're ours, you're ours at dusk and in the morning
You're ours, how do we end the bleeding of the wounds?
You're ours, you're ours O Jerusalem land of generosity

My hand take my hand
Let us write devotion for Jerusalem
Tomorrow there is an appointment for the blood of the martyrs
Our hope remains for us
Or may the heavens hear our sound

VARIOUS SINGERS

Al- Quds Hatirga' Lina (2001) was a massive joint effort, organized by the El-Adl brothers (a major force on the Arab entertainment scene), involving a huge number of Egyptian singers and film stars. The lyrics of the song were written by Medhat El-Adl and the music by Riyad El-Hamshari. Among the main singers, each of whom got a line in classic "We Are the World-style," were Hisham Abbas, Hakim, Huda Sultan, Anoushka, Mona Abdel-Ghani, Huda Ammar, Mohammed Mohie, Alaa Abdel-Khaleq and Talaat Zein.

AL- QUDS HATIRGA' LINA (Jerusalem Will Return to Us)

he was carrying his crayons, he was going to his school
dreaming of his horse, his toys and his plane
and when the treachery was shot, it killed even his innocence
the pure blood was spilt on his notebook
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

a father with his fear reached with his arms
protecting with his own life his child
and when the child's small body twitched
and became in god's hands
the Virgin Mary cried and screamed
she said "oh my child"
the bitter, treachery injustice lived
justice has fallen and disappeared
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

he was a Palestinian child, that's his house
and that's all what he got
that's his history and his forefathers'
and that's his land and sky
here are Gerges and Mohammed, his friends
and the religion is only for god
then the tyrant came and stole their dreams
all there hopes were gone
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

peace with peace and war with war
that's what god and the religion said
and how come a fire is burning our hearts
and we're just keeping quite
O Arabs unite and enough
read Saladdin
he has never let go of his rights
and that was the strongest weapon
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

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Sabra and Shatila and the victims of Al-Aqsa
a thousand sieges
and children prematurely grown up
have sworn to take revenge
the bitter grudge of the bleeding heart
is turning into stones
and little birds are fighting an army
without even having weapons
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

if a tyrant once came and threw you out
of your house
and planted on your land hatred
and with your blood spikes
the fire of his injustice and your wounds
must turn into doom
and you must teach your children
that the revolution is a fight
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

when we reach out for the others
and the answer is fires
then our weapon must be in our hands
so that justice would be served
the whole world listens to our voice
that comes out of the sorrows
whoever dies, another one comes out
and death to the murderer
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us

in order to plant the earth,
Mohamed, and die
tomorrow its rights return to it
damn any silence
your voice when you're dying is high
tomorrow it will turn your torturer
and your enemies into ghosts
all of us say our land
our land.. our blood.. our mother
and even if millions of us died
Jerusalem will return to us
Jerusalem will return to us

MUSIC INSTITUTIONS IN JERUSALEM

The Edward Said National Conservatory of Music

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Jerusalem Center for Arabic Music

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<http://www.mustafaalkurd.com>
Salah Eddin St., (near Palestinian National Theater), PO Box 20334, Jerusalem 91999
(Arabic music ensembles, courses (vocals & instruments), concerts, lectures, library.)

The 'Magnificat' Musical Institute

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1 St. Francis St., New Gate, PO Box 186, Jerusalem 91001
(Music courses for children, classical music performances)

Sabreen Association for Artistic Development

Gen. Dir.: Said Murad
Tel.: 02-5321393/5
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<http://www.sabreen.org>
44 Mt. of Olive Rd. (prev: Isaf Nashashibi St.), Sheikh Jarrah, PO Box 51875, J'lem 91517
(Music production & education; teacher & technical training; community cultural development; sound engineering.)

Al-Uramwi Center for Mashreq Music

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2 Ibn Jubair St., PO Box 54874, Jerusalem
(Cultural Center, production of performing arts; The Jerusalem Festival; cultural & artistic performances, promoting Palestinian groups & ensembles).

Dance

Among Palestinian performing arts, the Dabkeh stands out as an important folk dance that has become a performative means of expressing Palestinian national identity. It has also been incorporated into Palestinian modern expressional dance, most notably by El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe, which was established in 1979 by a few talented and committed artists and has since become the lead Palestinian dance company.⁴ Other famous groups include Sirriyet Ramallah Dance Troupe, which is part of the First Ramallah Group cultural center, and Ibdaa, a Palestinian youth dance troupe from Dheisheh Refugee Camp,⁵ which performs dance pieces telling of the history, struggle and aspiration of Palestinian refugees by intertwining traditional Palestinian dance and theatrical choreography.



Dabke is the main traditional and national dance of Palestine and is often seen in festivals and celebrations (weddings, harvests, etc.). It has various forms, but is most often characterized by energetic, lively dances performed in groups holding hands in a semi-circle or in line formation, who move to music and stomp their feet according to the rhythm. After 1948, the dance has become increasingly politically symbolic, being performed impulsively at national celebrations and political events.



⁴ See <http://www.el-funoun.org>.

⁵ See <http://www.ibdaa194.org/artdance.html>.



The story of the Dabkeh dance goes back to the times when the people of the Levant still lived in houses built from stones, the roofs of which were made out of wood, straw and dirt. To make these strong and compact strong men stomped hard on it in a uniform way. The rhythmic movement was soon accompanied by songs, and eventually, musicians would play for the workers so that the roof was stamped down in a homogeneous way, sealing all the cracks to keep away the rain water. Since then, Dabkeh has remained a symbol of togetherness, identity and regeneration.

Theater

Palestinian theater traces its origins to the storytellers (hakawati), who traveled from village to village to perform a variety of stories with little costumes or requisites. Formal theater began to develop in the 19th Century, and reached its peak in 1948. The subsequent division of Palestinian society made it almost impossible to rebuild the shattered industry. The theater had progressed quite a bit since its beginnings in the area in the mid-19th Century. Haifa and Jerusalem were notable among Palestinian centers of population for their rich offerings. The movement's origins lay in the missionary schools and social organizations - the YMCA, for example - that dotted the fertile Palestinian landscape. During this time, a focus on the arts and collective expression held an important role in the development of Palestinian youth and culture.

The 1948 Nakba delivered a staggering blow to Palestinian society. Despite numerous efforts to bring about a revival of theater in the years that followed, it was largely unsuccessful beyond a few scattered and short-lived troupes working in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jenin, and Bethlehem. The events of 1967 further denigrated the chances of artistic revival. Writers, directors, and actors not only needed considerable resources and dedication to put on even the smallest of productions, they also had to have plenty of courage. Since theater - as it does in all societies - represented a venue for empowerment and dialogue for Palestinians, early efforts at revival were quickly crushed by their new Israeli sovereigns. These attempts at cultural enrichment and resistance proved futile in the face of Israeli persecution, and many of those involved were arrested for their activities. The growth of Pales-

tinian theater, with its themes of nationalism and liberation, was left to languish in the uncertainty of Diaspora. Still, the cooperative approach to presenting social and political issues on the stages of Jerusalem in the 1960s and 1970s proved to be the foundations of modern Palestinian theater, with troupes such as Al-Kasaba, Ballaneen Experimental Theater, and others emerging.



In 1977, the movement finally took a huge step forward with the creation of Al-Hakawati (meaning “storyteller”),⁶ which grew out of the smaller experimental companies that cropped up in the mid-1970s, and further developed into the An-Nuzha Al-Hakawati Theater in 1984. Palestinians had now a dramatic forum for exploring social and political issues. This, however,

induced Israeli authorities to raid, close, and censor the theater on numerous occasions and until this day they break up or ban events there.⁷

Access to a central theater led to myriad troupes forming among the Arab population in Jerusalem, and in 1989, Al-Hakawati became the Palestinian National Theater (PNT), a venue that continues to play host to various theater collectives from the Arab World and beyond.

During the 1980s and 1990s, other groups were founded, such as Sanabel Theater in Jerusalem (1985), Inad Theater in Beit Jala (1987) and the Ashtar for Theatre Production and Training in Jerusalem and Ramallah (1991), which was the first theater in Palestine to also train drama teachers. In 2000, Al-Rowwad Theater followed from Aida Camp to present plays reflecting the situation and sufferings of refugee children as well as to stimulate their creativity and artistic skills.

In 2004, another item was added to the theater scene when Al-Fawanees - the first full-scale musical production to be performed in Palestine – was shown in the Ramallah Cultural Palace.⁸ And since September 2008, The Freedom Theatre in Jenin is running a three-year professional Theater School program in partnership with the Arab American University in Jenin, giving students have the opportunity to develop a professional career in the field of theater and acting.

Plays related to the issue of Jerusalem

The PNT’s play Jerusalem and the Little Prince (2005) lets one experience Jerusalem through the eyes of the little prince, who arrives in the Old City of Jerusalem poor and alone and sets out on a journey through the Old City, where he finds new friends and rich cultures coexisting within its walls. The artists express their love of the Old City with beautifully crafted sets, haunting melodies and colorful characters.

⁶ The main driving force behind this establishment was by Francois Abu Salem.

⁷ So, for example, an event to unveil the official logo for the Al-Quds – Capital of Arab Culture 2009 campaign that was scheduled on 25 March 2008. Invitees found the building locked and surrounded by Israeli police, which also broke up a press conference by the organizers, casting early doubts upon the prospects for a successful year of events in Jerusalem and for the future of cultural activities in general for Arab Jerusalemites.

⁸ Based on Ghassan Kanafani’s novel The Little Lantern and with lyrics by Wasim Kurdi and music by Suhail Khoury.



Duration: 60 minutes
 Text & Songs by: Mahmoud Hadyeh
 Designed & directed by: Abdel Salam Abdo
 Performers & Puppeteers: Abd El Salam Abdo, Mahmoud Hadyeh
 Musicians: Wa'il Abu Saloum & Mohammed Hadeeb
 Music by: Wa'il Abu Saloum
 Lighting & Sound Designers: Imad Samarah and Ramzi Sheikh Qasem

In a folkloric, musical and sarcastic style, Al-Kasaba's The Wall (2004) explores aspects of how the wall affects the Palestinian people from day to day. There are no figures of Israeli soldiers in the play as the aim was to portray the situation of the occupation through the daily lives of the Palestinians. Most of the scenes consists of personal experiences: A man who starts the art of drama to become a hero; a women trying to become a teacher; a women who had opened a boutique; and a man who tries to make a Palestinian superior horse win the race in the U.K... many people with many hopes and wishes come and go like big crowds, but these dreams and hopes are abandoned by the wall.



Director: George Ibrahim
 Featuring: Ahmad Abu Saloum, Dorin Munir, Hussam Abu Eisheh, Imad Farajin, Ismail Dabagh, Manal Awad.
 Music: Jamil Al-Sayih
 Set Designer: Noboro Tsubaki
 Lighting Designer: Muaz Al-Jubah
 Choreographer: Nicholas Ro

Ashtar Theater's Ana Al-Quds (I am Jerusalem) (2009) is a monodrama that addresses the history of the city from its own perspective. It is presented through the spirit and personality of a woman who goes through the phases of her life, that are diversified and full of events and contradictions, through real stories and situations in a critical drama of past and present political events that left their impressions on it. The play addresses stations of the history of Jerusalem throughout the various civilizations that prevailed over it, including the Canaanite, Jebusite, Hebrew, Roman, Arab and Islamic civilizations.



Duration: 60 minutes
 Starring: Iman Aoun
 Dancers: Rasha Jahshan and Mohammad Eid
 Written and Directed by: Nasser Omar
 Light and Sound: Atallah Tarazi
 Light Design: Philip Andreou
 Music: Wisam Qataweh
 Production Management: Ra'ed Al-Eiseh
 Interior Design: Randi Abdeen

Theaters in Jerusalem

Palestinian National Theater (formerly An-Nuzha Al-Hakawati)

Dir.: Jamal Ghosheh
Tel.: 02-6280957
Fax: 02-6276293
E-mail: info@pnt-pal.org
<http://www.pnt-pal.org>
Abu Obeida St., Nuzha Bldg., PO Box 20462, Jerusalem
(Promoting art in general and theater in particular).

QAFILAH Movingstage Theater

Dir.-Gen.: Imad Mitwalli
Tel. & Fax: 02-5810982/0547-265453
E-mail: qafilah@yahoo.com | puppet_qafilah@yahoo.co.uk
<http://www.qafilah.net>
Isa'f Al-Nashashibi St., Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem

Ar-Ruwa Theater

Artistic Dir.: Ismail Dabbagh
Tel.: 0522-279607/02-6285080
Fax: 02-6285080
E-mail: alruwahtheatre@gmail.com
http://www.alruwah_theater.org
Old City, PO Box 54171, Jerusalem

Sanabel Culture & Arts Theatre

Artistic Dir.: Ahmad Abu Saloum
Tel.: 02-6714338/0522-286188
Fax: 02-6730993
E-mail: Sanabeltheatre@yahoo.com
Al-Thori, PO Box 51865, Jerusalem
(Theatre production, drama teaching, puppet production, workshops, community awareness, training drama & puppet theatre & music (Oud) & varieties)

Theater Day Productions (Ayyam Al-Masrah)

Dir.: Jackie Lubeck, Jan Willems, Amer Khalil
Tel.: 02-5854513/0522-750030
Fax: 02-5834233
E-mail: tdp@theatreday.org
<http://www.theatreday.org>
PO Box 18669, Jerusalem 91184

Handcrafts & architecture

Besides literary, visual and performing arts, the multicultural aspects of Palestinian identity are also echoed in Palestinian folk crafts, which, historically, comprised of functional items, i.e., clothing, dishes, and storage containers. The type and design of produced crafts varied from region to region as each Palestinian village had its unique cultural and artistic touch with regard to folk and food.⁹ Traditional Palestinian pottery or cloth articles, in the form of women's dresses, tablecloths, pillow cases, table runners, bed spreads etc., are, for example, hand embroidered cloth materials varying in patterns and colors associated with the particular village or district and its local history.¹⁰

EMBROIDERY AND WEAVING

Traditionally, women gathered in groups, exchanging community news and practicing the art of embroidery (al-tratreez) - be it items for their own family homes or for future dowry. As the struggle of the Palestinians for their individual and collective survival intensified during the Wars of 1948 and 1967, the practice of Palestinian embroidery faded away, not least because it became a luxury which many families could not afford. The art of embroidery reemerged thanks to many NGO initiatives, often based at refugee camps, which taught this craft and encouraged its production, promotion and sale. It is thanks to those NGOs - such as the Ramallah Handicraft Cooperative Society, In'Ash Al-Usra Society, etc. - that the art of Palestinian embroidery has been preserved and is still alive.¹¹



Two main types of embroidery are used in making Palestinian embroidered dresses: tatreez (cross-stitch embroidery) and tahriri (couching-stitch embroidery). However, color combinations of the embroidery and the design and the color of the cloth on which the embroidery is made have specific connotations as to where the article was made or the status of the person wearing it (in the case of women's dresses, called thobes, the status may be a new bride, a pregnant wife, etc.).

The Bethlehem and Jerusalem garments are similar regarding their fabrics, motifs, and couching techniques. The couched motifs, commonly known as watches (sa'aat), are representations of the tree of life. Another distinguishing factor for costumes embroidered in the Bethlehem and Jerusalem areas is the variety of Syrian fabrics that were used to make the thob. Such distinctive, silk-mounted fabrics are striped with yellow, red, or gold. The example pictured here, for instance, shows a Ghabani Thob - a traditional dress from Lifta village in the Jerusalem district.

⁹ While Gaza, for instance, was famous for its glass vases, drinking glasses, and beads for use in silver jewelry, Hebron specialized in clay pottery, often with blue floral designs on white glaze background, and artisans in Jerusalem made glazed tiles with quotes from the Bible or the Qur'an.

¹⁰ Depending on the region in Palestine, the patterns included representations of cypress tree, bunches of grapes, apple tree, cauliflower, cock, pigeon, rainbow, roses, birds, flower pot and extensive other such representations.

¹¹ For further details on Palestinian embroidery see: <http://www.tatreez.net/index.htm>.

PERFORMING ARTS



Another traditional craft is weaving, which, until 1948, was widespread as a typical women's work. Weaving produce from sheep wool included tents, rugs, camel bags, grain sacks, and other household items. Famous textile-producing centers were Majdal (present day's Ashkelon), whose tradition is carried on today by the Atfaluna Crafts organization and the Arts and Crafts Village in Gaza, and the Bedouins of the Negev, who, as a population minority, are vanishing but strive to preserve Bedouin heritage with organizations such as the Negev Bedouin Weaving Project, producing rugs, tapestries, and cushions.¹²

POTTERY AND GLAS MANUFACTURING

The craft of pottery was brought to Jerusalem at the turn of the 20th Century, when the tiles of the Dome of the Rock needed replacing and Ottoman specialists introduced the art to local residents. Palestinian pottery today – tiles, vases, bowls, plates etc. - is well-known for its arabesque patterns, colors and designs and is produced in numerous ceramic factories, though some workshop are still painting their ceramics by hand.

Hebron is known throughout the world for its glass blowers and designers, most famously for the royal blue glass products while many pieces are also available in amber, burgundy, and green colors.

MOTHER OF PEARL AND OLIVE WOOD CARVING

Olive wood carving and mother-of-pearl handcrafting both have their origins with the Franciscan monks, who came to Palestine and taught the crafts to local residents in the 16th and 17th Centuries.

Palestinian olive wood carving is known worldwide for its beauty and elaborate details; while it is often associated with biblical scenes, figures and symbols (Jesus, Maria, Joseph, the Crib, animals, the Cross, etc.), the industry today also produces candle holders, boxes, animals, ornaments, jewelry, and other modern work made by foremost Bethlehem artisans.

The wood used for carving comes from the pruned branches of olive trees and has to go through a 45-day process, including drying and curing, before being used. The skill of handcrafting mother-of-pearl (abalone shells) was brought by Franciscan Monks from Italy in the 17th Century and was soon used to develop religious icons such as rosaries and crucifixes. Mother-of-pearl comes from the internal layer of certain mollusk shells. Supplies were previously imported to Palestine from Saudi Arabia (Red Sea) but today's main imports come from Australia, California, New Zealand and Brazil. The first Palestinian mother-of-pearl artifacts exhibition in the West was in 1852 at the New York World Fair, with works by the Bethlehem brothers Giries and Ibrahim Mansur.¹³ Today, mother-of-Pearl carvings stand alone or are used to complement olivewood carvings.

¹² See www.lakiya.org for details.

¹³ [http://www.palestine-family.net/index.php?nav=6-20 - &cid=498&did=2502&pageflip=1](http://www.palestine-family.net/index.php?nav=6-20-&cid=498&did=2502&pageflip=1).



The logo of Al-Quds – Capital of Arab Culture 2009: The green writing in the center means “Al-Quds” (Jerusalem).

CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy, also known as “beautiful handwriting,” translates from Arabic as the “art of the pen” and “the geometry of the spirit.” Arabic calligraphy is a genuine Arabic and Islamic artistic tradition that links the literary heritage of the Arabic language with the religion of Islam. Islam’s early theocracy chose words (letters) and their shapes and sizes over figural images for religious expression, because it sees in figural arts a possible implication of idolatry. The Qur’an played a major role in the development and evolution of Arabic script and calligraphy as the main source of inspiration. Arabic calligraphy has been used for centuries to decorate architectural buildings, manuscripts, and objects of daily life with the beautified words of God. The main calligraphic styles are diwani, kufi, naskh, rika, taliq and tuluth.

Traditional Arabic calligraphy style has frequently been used in other artworks, such as sculptures and paintings, recognizing the ‘Arabness’ of Palestinian culture and demonstrating the importance of art, language, and culture to Arabs. Particular famous for his art work using calligraphy was Jamal Badran (see for more details the chapter on Sculptures above).

ARCHITECTURE



Isaf Nashashibi building in Sheikh Jar-

The architecture in Jerusalem, even more than in most places, is a centerpiece of the city's makeup and culture. Specifically, the Arab architecture in the Holy City stands out as being the most prominent and of the highest quality from among the three main styles; those being Arab-Muslim, European-Christian, and Jewish. Even the housing designs in the Old City, haphazard as they may seem, illustrate an evolution of Arab building that grew from the rural styles brought to the city from the outlying areas. For a city that has changed hands so many times – and has had numerous influences and changes in direction in terms of its layout and building plans – Jerusalem is a true gem of Arab architecture.

The vast majority Arab buildings in Jerusalem are constructed in the Islamic motif, which allows it to be identified with the buildings in the rest of the Arab world.



Al-Aqsa Mosque



Dome of the Rock

The aesthetics of Jerusalem owe most of their iconic status to the Arab-Muslim tradition, as most of the historic buildings that exist today date from the more than 1300 years that Muslims held the city. Incorporated in the Islamic style are many elements, both secular and religious, from all parts of the Arab world. Among the architectural treasures still extant in Jerusalem are the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

The Dome, according to architectural scholar David Kroyanker, is “the most magnificent and, architecturally speaking, the most important building in Jerusalem.”¹⁴ Indeed, the structures and gates of the Haram Ash-Sharif make up possibly the most stunning compound in any city of the world.

While Islamic-style buildings tend to dominate the landscape of Jerusalem with their beauty and quantity, Arab Christians made their architectural mark on Jerusalem largely through the beautiful homes and villas that can still be found all over the city. While many have avoided destruction over the past century and are still extant, few are currently occupied by Arabs, much less the families who originally built them. Neighborhoods like Talbieh, Katamon, Abu Tor, and Baka'a were entirely Arab – largely made up of well-off Christians and Muslims – before 1948, when their inhabitants became “absentees” who were forced into the Diaspora.¹⁵

¹⁴ David Kroyanker. *Jerusalem Architecture*. Vendome Press, 1994, p. 28.

¹⁵ *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. VIII. No. 1, 2001: Jerusalem, p. 63.



The beautiful homes these refugees had to leave in West Jerusalem were quickly grabbed by the new Israeli sovereigns, who recognized their beauty. The Villa Haroun Ar-Rashid, built by businessman Hanna Ibrahim Bisharat in 1926, remains one of the most admirable homes in Talbieh and was the official residence of Golda Meir from 1948 to 1955. The home is named after a former caliph of Baghdad who was an inspiration for many stories in "One Thousand and One Nights." Levi Eshkol, Ehud Olmert, and Binyamin Netanyahu have all held prominent residences that were Arab properties before 1948.



Though the city has its share of notable buildings projects that dot the cityscape, the architectural achievements of the past that have not survived are numerous. In 2006, construction began on a new bridge leading to the Haram Ash-Sharif through the Mughrabi Gate. In the process, an Umayyad complex was found just a few meters below the surface. It is believed the grounds included five palaces, each covering close to two acres. Courtyards, stoas, and a system of outer walls have also been found underneath the Haram Ash-Sharif. Overall, the Umayyad period is well known for its impressive record of building in Jerusalem, with designs that were innovative, secular, and grand. Archaeological digs have previously found intricate systems of water collection and piping that date back to the Umayyads and other early Arab regimes. Such an illustrious cache of Arab architectural accomplishments makes the current Israeli policies of building restrictions even more suffocating. Not only is new building prohibited for the most part, repairs and renovations are also rarely allowed in the Arab sections of Jerusalem.

The Mughrabi Gate: Excavations (above), the actual gate (below)

Social Customs, Religion & Education

Palestinian culture consists not only of the separate appearances of art and artistic expressions, but also of a special way of life, a distinction that reflects “being Palestinian.” Part of this distinction is manifested in aspects of language, religion, proverbs, and a national past, as well as popular beliefs, customs, the larger Islamic-Arab heritage and its associated cultural values and traditions. Since all these issues represent an important element of the Palestinian national character a brief introduction into folklore, social customs and cultural Traditions should not be missing here.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Palestinian society is an Arab society in which the family is the key social unit that influences all aspects of life. While friendships are highly valued, respect for and loyalty to the family and kin (clan and tribe) as well as the prevailing patriarchal and hierarchal structure are considered imperative and although factors such as media, internet, increased education levels, and the experiences of war, dispossession and displacement have somewhat weakened the traditional strength of extended families, its significance remains important. The family serves not only as the primary source of identity but also as a safety net and the Palestinians’ political experience and dire socioeconomic situation has served to further strengthen family ties. Large families and male offspring are favored over small families and females due to expected economic benefits and care for parents in their advanced age. Women become part of their husband’s family and are responsible typically for the household, children and keeping the family bonds and affinity. However, economic depression, imprisonment or absence of the male household head (due to death or imprisonment), and greater educational opportunities has increased the number of women seeking employment outside the home and their participation in public and cultural life.



Palestinians place a high premium on generosity and hospitality, as does Arab culture in general. Guests - often unannounced - are always received with food, sweets and coffee and visits between family and neighbors are commonplace. While privacy and personal space is a universal and usual attribute in Western society it is not a common concept in Arab society. The approach to time is much less rigid and slower than that in Western cultures, part of which is reflected in the custom to allocate plenty of time for refreshment and small-talk – as a means to establish respect and trust - before attempting to engage in business or serious matters.

Traditional Palestinian Family (1940s)

As is often common in traditional societies, the protection of a family's honor and avoidance of shame are central to all things. Honor is usually reflected in the modesty and chastity of its women, but issues such as land, education, service to the people and the cause of Palestine are also important sources of honor.

While arranged marriages between the families of the potential bride and groom are still common, especially in rural areas, there is an increasing tendency that young men and women are introduced by family, but then spend time getting to know one another, usually in the company of another family member, before deciding whether or not to marry. Others, though a minority, meet and choose their spouse on their own.

The Death of a family member brings together extended kin to share the grief, drink unsweetened coffee and recount the life and qualities of the deceased over a period of three days. Following the funeral, it is customary for Palestinian families to be in mourning for at least 40 days, during which women wear black clothing and men black ties. Some widows or mothers may wear black for as long as a year. Muslim and Christian Palestinians share these traditions.

RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

The Arabic language has enjoyed a long tradition of both secular and religious poetry, beginning in pre-Islamic times. Arabs everywhere take great pride in this tradition and in the Arabic language itself, a pride which is evident in the frequent usage of proverbs in literature, the media and every-day conversation. Arabic is an important language to religion and literature; it is the language of Islam and of the Qur'an.

No city on earth can claim to match the religious significance that Jerusalem holds. Its image as the 'Holy City' has fueled the desire for followers from the three great Abrahamic religions to maintain Jerusalem as a part of their lives. Yet, this distinction has led to a history that is anything but peaceful and harmonious. On the contrary, Jerusalem's place at the center of monotheistic faith has marked it as a place of contention and violence that to this day goes hand in hand with its holy status. The different scenarios advanced over the years for the solution of the Palestine question in general, and the question of Jerusalem in particular, have all recognized the need to treat Jerusalem as a special case, because of this unique character as the centre of the Holy Land and as the site of the Holy Places of the three monotheistic religions throughout history.

The religious claims of the three monotheistic religions to Jerusalem are each unique with their own special attributes which cherish different places in the city. Jerusalem's holiness complicates any attempt to solve the Jerusalem question and is often used or manipulated to attain non-religious goals. Yet, the meaning of religious attachment to the city was and remains a major concern. As well as its Jewish heritage, Jerusalem is a city of Arab Islamic and Christian heritage. Its Islamic identity derives from the fact that it was the site of Prophet Mohammed's Night Journey, Isra' and Mi'raj, upon the winged steed AL-Buraq in the year 620. However the connection between Muslims and the Holy City goes much deeper than that. Jerusalem had played a central role in the lives of Islam's most revered

prophets, and Mohammed had recognized the sanctity of the Holy City before even setting foot in it. Jerusalem served as the qibla - the direction of prayer - for a brief period in the early years of Islam. Many of the earliest foundations of Islam are found here, including the first examples of lavish Islamic architecture. Islam was still in its infancy when the Islamic Empire first made its way into the Holy City, and Jerusalem quickly became a symbol that Islam had arrived as a true success story. Al-Aqsa Mosque is the site of Islam's third holiest shrine. The Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiyah linked his own personal identity with Jerusalem, calling himself caliph of Beit Al-Maqdis. Thus, it is part of the Islamic faith.¹⁶ Its Arab identity was further emphasized with the historic Covenant of the Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab in 638 AD. It is the site of the Holy Sepulcher, the Arab Churches, and of the Mount of Olives. To emphasize this point once more, there has been an uninterrupted Arab presence in the city in terms of population, culture, heritage and monuments.

While the vast majority of the Arab world subscribes to the Islamic faith, Jerusalem has historically been home to a significant population of Christian Arabs. Christian Arab tribes flowed into the city from Syria and Transjordan during the time of the Crusaders' Kingdom and they have remained an important segment of the Jerusalem community well into modern times, with many representing the upper- and middle-classes. Jerusalem remains the holiest city in the world for these Christian Arabs and the 1.5 billion people throughout the world that subscribe to the Christian faith. In the simplest terms, the city is the birthplace of Christianity and marks the site of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Beyond that, though, Jerusalem and nearby Bethlehem together hold the lion's share of significant biblical sites in the world: the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Via Dolorosa, the Church of the Nativity, the Cenacle, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, and the highest concentration of churches in the world can all be found in and around Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's past, present, and ultimately its future are intertwined in the narratives of the three monotheistic faiths. Indeed, their respective stories, characters, and prophecies alternately overlap and clash. Historically, there have been periods where their similarities rather than their differences were embraced: the most vivid examples being the relative revival of Judaism in the city under Muslim rule starting in the 12th century and the traditional closeness of the Christian and Muslim communities, which is best illustrated by the entrusting of the keys and gate-keeping duties of the Holy Sepulcher to a Palestinian Muslim family. Yet the Jerusalem of today is a city that remains divided, and its fate as a cultural center will depend largely on the interactions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

¹⁶ Jerusalem is not mentioned by name in the Qur'an, but described as an inseparable part of the reverential expansive landscape from which prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven; «the farther [mosque] whose surroundings We have blessed» (Sura 17:1). In another situation, Allah refers to Jerusalem as a «village». In the context of reprimanding the Israelites for their «hypocrisy» and «wrong-doing», He says, «Enter this village and eat where you will to your hearts' content»(Sura 2:57). See Harb, Ahmad. "Representations of Jerusalem in the Modern Palestinian Novel," Arab Studies Quarterly (Summer 2004).

EDUCATION

For scholars in the Arab World, Jerusalem has long held a prestigious place in academic discourse. Educational institutions appeared in the city as early as the original conquest by the Islamic Empire, and the Holy City quickly became an important publishing and lecturing center.

The entry of Islam into Jerusalem was quickly followed by a flood of theological and educational momentum. As pious people made pilgrimage to the Holy City, so did scholars come from all corners of the Arab world to the educational institutions that were affiliated with the Mosques of Jerusalem. It became an honor to have one's work published in the city, with manuscripts being produced in the fields of medicine, law, and theology. The scholar Al-Ghazzali is among the most well-known of Islamic intellectuals to have a connection with the Holy City. Having left his life and work in Baghdad and moved to Jerusalem in 1095, he went on to complete and publish his famous "Jerusalem Tract"¹⁷ during his time in the city. Around that same time, Salah Eddin instituted an educational trust under his own name to fund collegiate mosques in Jerusalem. He also established hospitals and communal houses where scholars could stay upon entering the city. Jerusalem's role as a center of new and original thought in the Arab world lasted for centuries, beginning to decline only under Ottoman rule.



Al-Ghazzali



Salah Eddin

As the 20th Century rolled around, the scholastic opportunities for Arabs in Jerusalem saw marked improvement. In 1917, the Teacher Training Academy opened just inside Herod's Gate. Established by the British, but with a staff and faculty that was entirely Arab, the school gained prestige as an institution known for its influential teachers and alumni. The well-known educator and literary figure Khalil Al-Sakakini, for example, was appointed as the first principal, and multiple Hashemite princes were among its first graduates. The student body was exclusively Arab, though this was only de facto, and was made up of the best and brightest from among the Muslim, Christian, and Baha'i communities.

¹⁷ In response to requests from worshipers at Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Ghazzali wrote *Ar-Risala Al-Quds-yyah* ("The Jerusalem Tract"), a concise explanation of Muslim belief.

PERFORMING ARTS



Khalil Al-Sakakini



A.S. Khalidi

The curriculum evolved and the school became the Arab College of Jerusalem after 1926, headed by Ahmad Sameh Al-Khalidi. It retained its status as a center of Arab education and ideas for the next two decades, but it closed in 1948 along with the rest of the institutions in East Jerusalem. A few reopened under the authority of the Jordanians after 1951, but only informal and voluntary operations were available in the interim period. The slow rebuilding of an adequate educational system that was available to Arabs ran into a wall once again with the annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel in 1967. Al-Rashidiya College - an offshoot of the Arab College that became a prestigious school in its own right - provides one example of the educational hardships that came as a result of the new war. When it reopened in January of 1968, Al-Rashidiya found its enrollment to be almost half that of May 1967. The scholarship was noticeably less than before, and tests scores plummeted under the Israeli Arab curriculum. By September of that year enrollment had fallen by about 90 percent, from 800 to 81 in just over a year, and the responsibility of educating Arab children in East Jerusalem increasingly fell to non-governmental arrangements that grew from within the community.¹⁸ Some of these ventures received funding from the Mandatory government in exchange for fulfilling a public function; these included schools run by the Supreme Muslim Council, the Greek and Syrian Orthodox communities, and Arab Christians.

These days, the educational system available to Arab Jerusalemites remains one full of gaps. East Jerusalem schools suffer from a severe shortage of classrooms and a lack of facilities and equipment.¹⁹ The PA created the Ministry of Education in 1994 and assumed responsibility for educating Palestinians, but limited resources led to inadequate or even unavailable educational services. Yet, the challenges have not kept Jerusalemites from becoming one of the most inquisitive and ambitious populations in the Middle East. The literacy rate in East Jerusalem stands

at 92 percent²⁰, on par with the rest of Palestinian society and the highest in the Arab World. Citizens have had to shoulder increasing responsibility in educating themselves and their children but the thirst for knowledge has not ebbed. Still, Israeli attempts to dissuade Arab children from staying and growing in Jerusalem - such as restrictions on residency, building and movement, enrollment in higher education, etc. - and they have been successful in denying fair access to scholastic opportunities. Unfortunately, the notion that schools should be sanctuaries from conflict resides somewhere outside the Israeli-Palestinian reality.



Al-Rashidiya College

¹⁸ Caplan, Gerald. "Arab and Jew in Jerusalem". Harvard University Press, 1980, p. 200.

¹⁹ Madarweh, Iman and Salhout, Jamil. "The Suffering of Children Under Occupation". Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights. 2002.

²⁰ UNDP. Human Development Report 2007/2008".

(Footnotes)

1 Mawtani was written by the Palestinian poet Ibrahim Hafeth Touqan and put to music by Lebanese composer Mohammad Flaifel. Since 1936, it was unofficially the anthem used by Palestinians. The song was used in Iraq 1958-1965 as the national anthem and re-adopted as such after fall of the Saddam Hussein government by the new Iraqi administration in 2004. Biladi - not to be confused with Egypt's national anthem of the same name - was used in 1996 as the national anthem of the State of Palestine in accordance with Article 31 of its 1988 Independence Declaration. It was written by Said Al-Muzayyen (aka Fata Ath-Thawra), and its music was composed by Egypt's Ali Ismael.

The Houses of the Husseinis

As one of the most illustrious families in Jerusalem, the Husseinis alone has been responsible for a bevy of notable buildings in Jerusalem. Under the leadership of Faisal Hussein, the Orient House became recognizable as a national symbol for Palestinians in Jerusalem, but its history in fact goes back much farther. It was built at the turn of the Century, and for most of its existence it has been much more than just a residence. Kaiser Wilhelm and Haile Selassie are counted among the guests it has hosted, as the home quickly became a diplomatic center to represent Arab interests in Jerusalem. Since the establishment of the state of Israel, however, the Orient House has been a target of interference. It has endured repeated closures and reopenings, and today the doors of the Orient House remain closed. Pressure from Palestinian politicians, the Arab World, and the international community have yet to oblige the Israelis to end the embargo on operations in one of the most recognizable and important Arab institutions in Jerusalem.

The Orient House is just one example of the lasting influence that Husseinis buildings have had on the face of Jerusalem. Many of them have evolved into schools and gathering places for Arabs around the city. Notably, the American Colony Hotel was once the residence of Rabbah Daoud Amin Effendi Al-Husseini, who had it built for himself and his four wives. The story of the Dar Al-Tifl orphanage is another fine example: One night in 1948, Hind Hussein saw a group of young children and infants huddled on a corner in the Arab quarter. They turned out to be refugees from Deir Yassin, where Zionist militias had slaughtered their families and then dumped the youngest survivors in the streets of Jerusalem. Within weeks, Hussein had converted her home into an orphanage, which is how it remains today. Dar Al-Tifl has expanded into a school with instruction from kindergarten to 12th grade and additionally provides cultural programs, guest quarters, health care, and a museum.



Orient House



Dar At-Tifl



American Colony