

THE ZIONISM POLICIES OF COLONIAL CONTAINMENT AND CULTURAL IDENTITY DESTRUCTION: THE CASE STUDY OF THE INDEGINOUS PALESTINIANS IN THE OLD CITY OF ACRE

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ABSTRACT

In various contemporary nation-states, national identity is not inclusive of all of the country's citizens and population; rather, it is limited to members of the dominant group. These countries are politically not capable to respond for indigenous-minority group's basic human needs for identity, inclusiveness, and equality, and as a result of that, the ethnocratic regime based on identity containment, ethnical cleansing and spatial domain controlling are the process of having different state structure. Cultural identity and spatial landscape environment of the minorities considered threatening to the dominant majority and as the result of that, indigenous people face various colonial measurements aiming at developing systems of cultural and spatial control and utilizing military force and creating racist and discriminational legal systems to implement the colonial measurements. In this article, the authors examine the role the Israeli colonial system with its Zionism ideology plays to control among indigenous Palestinians in Israel. Because the Jewish-colonial dominant group are unable to meet indigenous Palestinians basis human needs for developing their identity and daily life and such identity considered threatening the colonial groups, the colonial dominant group tending to destruct the minority cultural identity, developing colonial systems of force and control on indigenous people landscape. The paper specifically examines the role of colonial dominant groups' control measurements plays in cultural identity destruction and the colonial control impose on the Palestinian Indigenous people in Israel.

Keywords: Palestinian Indigenous people, de-indigenization, Cultural cleansing, Zionism-colonial ideology, Colonio-gentrification.

INTRODUCTION

Israel was established in 1948 following the Nakbah (catastrophe for the Palestinian Indigenous people), when two-thirds of Palestinians were expelled and became refugees until now. The 160,000 Palestinians who remained in Israel in 1948 (13% of Israel state's population) formed a fragile community which is still recognized by Israel as "enemy affiliated" people. Israel placed the Palestinian Indigenous people under military rule for 18 years (1948-1966), since that time, the minority of the Indigenous people has grown eleven times, reaching 1,757,000 in 2016, or (20.7%) of the people who are living in Israel (CBS: 2015).

The indigenous people have lost more than 70% of the land they owned in 1948 to state confiscations and have remained locked in their small geographical enclaves where they control only less than 2.5% of the state's area (Kedar: 2003).

The Nakbah is the disaster that happened to the Palestinian indigenous people in 1948, after the Zionist-Jewish forces (subsequently Israeli forces) has embarked on a massive operation

of ethnic cleansing that aimed at ridding Palestine of its indigenous population, in order to found on its land a nation-state for the Jews.

The cleansing operations resulted in the expulsion of half the Palestinian population from historic Palestine and 85% of the Palestinians living in what were to become the State of Israel. These Palestinians were turned into refugees who now live in neighboring Arab States, as well as the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, thousands of Palestinians were killed and injured (Abu Sitta: 1999). During and after the war, the Zionist forces proceeded to wipe out entire villages and other sites, obliterating hundreds of Palestinian villages and completely clearing five towns of their Palestinian residents. In the period between November 29, 1947 and July 1949 the Zionist forces used military might to implement the operation to expel Palestinians from their country (Pappe: 2006). As a result, around 770,000 to 780,000 Palestinians were made refugees (Abu Lughod: 1971), who had been inhabitants of 532 towns and villages, and whose land had accounted for 92.6% of the area that became Israel (Abu Sitta: 1999).

The Zionist Ideological context represents the new-western settler colonial movement in Palestine, a founding ideology of Zionism has always been replacing of indigenous Palestinian population by Jews. This is the essence of the “Judaization” process, a process whose ultimate aim is to cleanse the land from its indigenous population and transfer it to Jewish ownership and control. To achieve this aim, a number of “dispossession mechanisms” have been used: Force and violence against the indigenous people, indigenous population transfer and dislocation to areas outside the indigenous boundaries, Indirect transfer through the exertion of pressures that render continued living on the land intolerable, Instituting a set of laws that provide the legal justification for stealing lands from the indigenous owners in favor of Jewish settlements (Yiftachel: 2011).

The actual application of the colonial Zionist ideology that aims to cleanse Palestine of its indigenous inhabitants, in order to replace them with Jewish colonies, under the cover of direct military occupation and control. The Zionist ideological process aiming at dispossessing the Palestinian indigenous people from their land and their cultural attributes. The Nakbah was accompanied by direct efforts to eradicate all the Palestinians features of Palestine, and an operation to erase the Palestinian landscape by altering the cultural, social, and symbolic scenery.

This paper attempts to understand the motives that link to cultural heritage which utilized as a tool to de-indigenizing of the Palestinian indigenous people in Israel and how the colonial ethnical cleansing ideology used as a transformation instrument of the cultural memory of the indigenous Palestinian population.

SUDY PURPOSE

This research explores the challenges facing indigenous Palestinians in Israel of protecting their cultural heritage and landscape which is seized and facing destruction by the colonial majority. The study explores the motives of cultural heritage destruction of the minority indigenous group by the colonial system of the majority. The research also trying to figure out if the Palestinian indigenous people feeling that there is distinctive legal approach that could be described them as indigenous. The study shows further clarity into the characteristics of indigenous Palestinians cultural life and discrimination from the majority.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The Palestinian indigenous people in Israel have been studied by different theorists and researchers. However production of knowledge on the Palestinians was fundamentally connected to the definition giving by the Zionist project to both itself and the other, and to the justification that accompanied it.

Research on the social and political history of the Palestinians in Israel did not address important historical stages in their individual and collective experience. These include, the critical stage of social and political formation that followed the start of the Nakba and the period of military rule (the stage in which the Palestinians were transformed from a majority into a minority in their homeland, and from the ownership into strangers living in it.)

The first comprehensive model that dealt with the questions of immigration, development, land, law, and culture is the model which developed by the Israeli Jewish theorist, Professor Oren Yiftachel. He formulated the model of the ethnocratic regimes. Yiftachel drew on the prime example of Israel/Palestine, placed within a comparative framework of other recent ethnocracies such as Northern Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, Serbia, Croatia, Lebanon, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Yiftachel's work also relates to Israel as a 'settler ethnocracy' which is historically comparable to settler societies such Australia, South Africa and Canada.

An ethnocracy is a type of political regime in which the state apparatus is appropriated by a dominant ethnic group (or groups) to further its interests, power and resources. Ethnocratic regimes typically display a combination of 'thin' democratic facade covering a more profound ethnic structure, in which ethnicity (or race, or religion) - and not citizenship - is the key to securing power and resources. An ethnocratic regime facilitates the ethnicization of the state by the dominant group, through the expansion of control, often through conflict with minorities and neighboring states.

Complete recognition for any minorities such as indigenous people in Palestine means the extension of collective rights to ethnic, religious, and national minorities not only having equal membership in a political community which entails with a combination of public services, legal, political, economic, and cultural rights and capabilities.

Palestinian indigenous people's citizenship in Israel has been structurally constrained by the state's ethnocratic regime and the associated hegemonic and colonizing Judaization project. The Palestinians minority in Israel are hence trapped by the contradictions of the Israeli regime-that is, between the state's self-proclaimed "democracy", and the persisting oppressive and exclusive practices toward the Palestinians minority.

The civil states of the Palestinian indigenous people in Israel conceptualized as being that of ghettoized citizenship, situated within a stratified system of apartheid and their states determined according to their ethnicity, religion and location.

The inability of the Palestinian indigenous people who are living in Israel to develop their formal citizenship into substantive and equal membership seized and stops by the state ethnocratic structure. Judaization-and the associated de-Palestinization-is the result of the Zionist hegemonic project, which dictates the goals, resources, and policies of state institutions and wide-ranging racist attitudes towards the Palestinian minority. Judaization is

the state's main ideology, which overrides its formal commitment to democracy. Despite its gradual waning in recent years in the face of growing globalization, the Judaization ideology is still dominant, and is fueled by the ongoing dialectics of violence between Jews and Palestinians (Yiftachel: 1999).

The ethnocratic regime structurally marginalizes Israel's Palestinian indigenous people in key social and cultural arenas such as; immigration, right to return to their land and destroyed villages and houses, land confiscation, houses demolishing, land ownership, and cultural landscape and space.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing interest in studying indigenous peoples has been reflected in the proliferation of publications in the past decade and a half. Battiste (2002) describes this heightened interest as 'an act of empowerment' by indigenous people that challenges western knowledge. Nakata (2008) attributes the growing international discourse of indigenous people to humanitarian and scientific concerns, suggested that the elevation of indigenous studies and knowledge is driven by 'the academic interrogation of dominant discourse', and recognition and valuing of diversity.

Indigenous peoples and groups are large in number around the World and each group has its culture and identity which their culture and identity are connected to their land and surrounding environment.

Destruction of the land through development or disruptions of sociocultural and socioeconomic environment have direct negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and their rights are intricately tied to the land from which they originate and occupy. (UNCHR: 2001).

“The removal or endangerment of these elements causes harmful effects to their wellness and survival as peoples. The nature of these subsistence cultures and the threats they face through development is the impetus for indigenous peoples asserting their rights to self-determination and collective right to full participation in decision-making regarding any development of these lands and resources (UNCHR: 2001).”

Indigenous peoples, their culture and existence, have been threatened in devastating ways through the abuses and repercussions of colonization. Genocide, ethnocide, racism and a prevalent ignorance by mainstream cultures of colonial powers, have contributed significantly to the destruction of many Indigenous peoples' land, culture and way of life, causing serious threats to survival.

Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury (2006) shows that since the initiation of Israel state, the Palestinians in Israel have been given various names and designations: the Arabs in Israel; the Arabs of 1948; Israeli Arabs; the Palestinians in Israel; etc. These designations are associated with politics and they do not reflect the identity of Palestinians in Israel.

With these different designations, all of participants in this research study indicated that the Palestinian minority in Israel define themselves as “indigenous Palestinians in Israel” and their struggle interests began to shift from emphasizing the of equality within the colonial nature of the Israel-Jewish State to the questions related to the formation of the Palestinian cultural, social, and national identity.

Gurr (1993) argue that the vast majority of states in the international system, democratic and non-democratic, are multi-ethnic (Gurr: 1993). A liberal-democratic multi-ethnic state serves the collective needs of all its citizens regardless of their ethnic affiliation, and citizenship-legally recognized membership in the political structure called a state-is the single criterion for belonging to the state and for granting equal opportunity to all members of the system. Whether a multi-ethnic democratic state should provide group rights above and beyond individual legal equality is an ongoing debate (Gurr and Harff: 1994).

According to Gurr notion, Rouhana and Ghanem (1998) discuss the case of the Palestinian citizens in Israel, and they analyze how the political superstructure and exclusive collective identity of an ethnic state inevitably place an ethno-national minority in a predicament, and on a course toward crisis, in its political, cultural, and existential relationships with the state with their nation, and within their own ethnic community. Rouhana (1997) argues that Israel embodies an ethnic state in theory, ideology, and practice of ethnic exclusivity, in the sense that it is the state of the Jewish people only and not of its Palestinian minority (Rouhana: 1997).

Yiftachel and Yacob (2003) offer a critical analysis of ethnic relations in an Israeli ‘mixed Arab-Jewish city’. With the logics of setting ethno-nationalism and capitalism, the mixed city’ is characterized by unambiguous patterns of segregation between a dominant majority and a subordinate minority, as well as by ethnoclass fragmentation with each group.

“Where the production of contested urban space has been linked to the construction of an exclusionary Israeli-Jewish national identity and the establishment of hierarchical ethnic citizenship, like in many Arab cities, they have been target of a concerted strategy of Judaization, which has formed the city’s central planning goal since the late 1940’s” (Yiftachel and Yacob: 2003)

Falah (1996) examines features of residential segregation in five mixed-Arab-Jewish cities in Israel; the role of ideology and state politics among the charter group-i.e. the Jewish population is considered to be a dominant factor in this social process. He indicates that the mixed cities in Israel have experienced a continuous segregation and hyper segregation and the city provides a special identity where a social apartheid marks the city reality of the mixed cities in Israel and they are divided cities more than being mixed.

Sagy and others (2001) give a theoretical framework concerning cultural patterns labeled individualism and collectivism is probed with regard to two conflicted societies, Israel-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab societies. They found that high schools students from both societies to be more collectivism than individualistic oriented. However, the Palestinians scored higher than the Israeli students on items emphasizing in-group collectivist orientation such as; collective identity, cultural heritage, nationality, land, and country which they belong to.

Suleiman and Beit-Hallahmi (1997) state that social and social-psychological research has continually provided evidence of a significant rise in national consciousness among members of the Palestinian minority in Israel since 1967 (Meari, 1978; Smooha: 1988). They shows how their national identity gains superiority over the traditional identities (e.g., familial and religious). The study shows that cultural identity is a key factor in the participants’ national identity and it shows also that the Zionist movement and Israeli policies towards its Palestinian indigenous people were evaluated negatively. However, political and social

aspects of the national identity were evaluated positively on the national dimension but negatively on the civic dimension.

Saban (2004) studied the legal status of the Palestinian minority in Israel in terms which norms relevant legal norms affecting their reality. He shows that the legal norms in Israel affecting the minority in a negative way and the law give privileges for the dominant Jewish majority. Land confiscation, gentrification against the minorities, displacement is key norms that influence and exploit the minority's advantages. He states that in the land of Palestine-Israel live two peoples who are divided into Arab-Palestinian minority and Jewish majority. The minority community has an identity, with more rooted cultural attributes to the land and their original environment.

Samooha (1980) indicates that Israel is European –settler societies in which the Palestinian indigenous population lost their rights to the territory and the colonial majority still dealing with them as a special type known as a 'disloyal or enemy affiliated' minority. Both groups differ in all important cultural parameters and they have separate ethnic origins, belong to different religions, and are of mutually exclusive nationality and cultural identity.

Yiftachel (1991) analyses the influence of Israel's land-use policies on the political behavior of the region's Palestinian minority. He examined the policies of landownership, Jewish settlement, municipal boundaries, and unauthorized dwelling construction. These policies are shown to pursue the goal of controlling the Palestinian minority through territorial containment.

Shmueli and Khamaisi (2015) focus their book on the Bedouin (Palestinian Indigenous people who are living in the desert of the Negev) in Israel. They reveal the complexity interactions between states and indigenous people, regarding issues of justice, forms of urbanization and the land claims. The government policy of Judaization of the Negev is to attract Jews to the region where the Bedouin are living at the same time, the policy aim at displacing and concentrating the indigenous people in a specific zone out of their land and environment. For Jews, policies include individual farms in the Negev which usually managed by a single Jewish farmer spread over a large area and the policy gives the Jews different packages of incentives to live in the Negev.

SUMMARY

Despite too many scholarly works and achievements have been written by historians and political scientists on the negative effects of colonialism and much research on colonialism has focused on political, economic, spatial planning issues linked to the Jewish-dominant majority and the Indigenous Palestinian minority in Israel, less attention has been paid to the effect of colonialism-Zionism on the indigenous people's history, cultural heritage and their past, particularly the manner in which Indigenous peoples have been alienated from their heritage. Destruction of cultural and cultural heritage, overtaking historical buildings and archaeological sites, land confiscation policies, disruptions of their natural landscape have direct negative impacts on the Palestinians indigenous people development and these policies and measurements restricting progress of the indigenous people's life. The Palestinians resist and defend their right to survive and enjoy the human being rights and they recognize that human rights are intricately tied to their culture, heritage, social, environment and land from which they originate and inhabit. This paper aiming at adding a scholarly paper to the literature stream and it links the colonial polices of Israel to the destruction and overtake of

cultural and cultural heritage, natural landscape (land) of the Palestinian Indigenous minority. How is the cultural (national) identity-bound character of colonial policies directing to displace the indigenous people from their environment and land and overtaking and seizing their cultural and heritage properties?

METHODOLOGY

Indigenous researchers argue the focus should be on working with indigenous people who hold the knowledge and expertise of their circumstances past, present, and on positive change (Smith: 1999; Sherwood: 2010). A key question for Davey and Day (2008) was finding a method that enabled indigenous voices to emerge. They found it was a constant struggle and although they would argue their research practices were not oppressive it did not mean fundamental asymmetries were eliminated. Ongoing dialogue about intentions, values and assumptions throughout the research process seems essential in any collaborative or partnership arrangement.

Collaborative and participatory action approach has utilized in this paper, whereby the research participants work alongside the researchers to determine the purpose and outcomes of the research. This approach can be applied to all research activities irrespective of the methodology but is more likely to be found in in-depth, detailed studies of place and of individual narratives or stories. The common attributes of collaborative and participatory approaches are describes as a community-based analysis of social problems and an orientation towards community action (Henry et al: 2004).

Two methods have been used in this paper. First; the conservational method aligns with an indigenous worldview that honors orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition. Story is a relations process that is accompanied by particular protocol consistent with tribal or indigenous group knowledge identified as guiding the research (Kovach: 2009).

The conservational method is a qualitative research method and its tools are interviews and focus groups. However when used in an indigenous framework, a conversational method invokes several distinctive characteristics such as; it is linked to a particular indigenous people epistemology or knowledge and situated within an indigenous paradigm, it is relational, it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim, it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and or place, it involves an informality and flexibility, it is collaborative and dialogic and it is reflexive.

Second; text analysis and case study are systematic qualitative methods that the researchers utilized in an attempt to analyze how heritage destruction of the indigenous people used as a colonial tool to control the indigenous people in Israel. These qualitative tools aims at developing qualitative procedures (inductive category development, summarizing, context analysis, deductive category application) which are methodological controlled. Those procedures allow a connection to the analysis steps with meaningful results.

Sampling and participants

Criterion sampling was used. Interview participants were selected with the goals of seeking a participant sample from the Palestinian Indigenous people living in Israel. The study asking for specific insight into indigenous Palestinians experiences as a particular group which is the

focus of this study. Prospective participants were recruited through a letter of invitation was circulated by email and skype contact to a number of cultural and political activists of the Palestinian indigenous people. In the research design, the goal was to have four to six participants in the study. However, the response was double and in the spirit of inclusivity participants who wished to participate were involved. Ten academic, legal activists participated in this study. Content analysis for the majority of the academic scholarly works on the Arabs living in Israel was studied and analyzed. Case studies have been chosen in coordination and cooperation with the Palestinian Indigenous minority living in Israel. These case studies show how the colonial majority abusing cultural heritage of the minority as an instrument to exile the indigenous people from their homeland.

Ethical guidelines

Ethical guidelines are taken into consideration in conducting this research paper to provide frameworks that ensure appropriate consideration is given to ensure this occurs throughout the research process. A number of core values characterize good practice in social sciences, including respect for subjects or participants; voluntary participation; informed consent; and ensuring privacy and confidentiality. According to Blagg (2011) fundamental protocols pertain to any research in the indigenous domain- cultural sensitivity, willingness to partner and to involve communities in both processes and outcomes, and that indigenous people see some benefits from the research. The researchers aim at ensuring that the overall design of the study is transparent and entail the accurate use of information and data, with underpinning principles identified in the European Code of Ethics for conducting research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study on the Palestinian Indigenous people in Israel elaborates and posed three main research questions: a) How do indigenous Palestinians understand their cultural heritage aspects of their identity; b) how do indigenous Palestinians incorporate cultural heritage identity into their political and social struggle, and c) What are the challenges that indigenous Palestinians face in protecting their cultural identity within the Israeli colonial regime.

THE OLD CITY OF ACRE: CASE STUDY

Acre is located in the Northern part of the coastal valley known Acre Valley. Acre has beautiful seashore, which is the northernmost adorned with the soft, fine sand from the Nile Estuary. Old Acre, which is situated on a peninsula, is one of the few cities along the shores of the Mediterranean whose surrounding walls have remained intact, aside from two openings that now provide access to motor vehicles. Old Acre is a multifaceted city and it is built in layers that have been almost perfectly. Acre is a historic walled port-city with continuous settlement from the Phoenician period. The present city is characteristic of a fortified town dating from the Ottoman 18th and 19th centuries, with typical urban components such as the citadel, mosques, khans and baths. The remains of the Crusader town, dating from 1104 to 1291, lie almost intact, both above and below today's street level, providing an exceptional picture of the layout and structures of the capital of the medieval Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem (UNESCO: 2013)



Source: The New Atlas of Israel-The National Atlas (2011).

The World Heritage Committee inscribed “The Old City of Acre” on the World Heritage List under criteria (ii), (iii), and (v):

Criterion (ii): Acre is an exceptional historic town in that it preserves the substantial remains of its medieval Crusader buildings beneath the existing Moslem fortified town dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Criterion (iii): The remains of the Crusader town of Acre, both above and below the present-day street level, provide an exceptional picture of the layout and structures of the capital of the medieval Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Criterion (v): Present-day Acre is an important example of an Ottoman walled town, with typical urban components such as the citadel, mosques, khans, and baths well preserved, partly built on top of the underlying Crusader structures (UNESCO: 2013).



Aerial view of the Old City of Acre shows its harbor, the ancient walls and the Al-Jazzir Mosque.

Source: Photo by Itamar Grinberg, 2015



Acre sea wall

Source: Photo by Itamar Grinberg, 2015.



The Jezzar Pasha Mosque

Source: Photo by Itamar Grinberg, 2015.



Port of Acre

Source: Photo by Itamar Grinberg, 2015.

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 46,300 citizens in Acre. Acre's population is mixed with Jews and Palestinian Indigenous people. The Palestinians are Muslims and Christians and represent 32.9% of the city's population.

However, and according to the Israeli Central Office of Statistics, 95% of the residents in the Old City are Palestinians (CBS: 2015).

Selection criteria for Acre as case study

The academic discourse of gentrification and segregation take different factors; such as class dispute, gender equality, racial conflict, and poverty, however, in Israel gentrification, segregation and displacement can be understood from colonial and ethnical cleansing perspective where the indigenous minority trapped within an ethnocratic state. The Israeli five mixed cities consider the model of the Israeli colonial policies which reveal clear process of segregation, containment, exclusion and power relations.

There are number of studies which studied three cities of the five which include; Lud, Ramle, Yaffa, however, little work has been done regarding Haifa and Akko (Acre). As a result of 1948 war, thousands of Jewish immigrants from Europe settled in the City old Acre, changing Acre's demographic by creating a solid Jewish majority. A large proportion of the Palestinian population who displaced from the nearby-destroyed villages was resettled in the old city adding new Palestinian inhabitants with those people who remained in the city in which they formed the majority of the population. Currently the old city of Acre represents the only mixed-city with Palestinian majority.

Acre is the only mixed-city which faces systematic exile and colonial displacement to the Palestinian Indigenous population. Israeli authorities utilize colonial gentrification policies aiming at displacing Acre's indigenous Palestinians under the cover of tourism development of the Old city. Acre is a model in which it represents a comprehensive cultural spatial and social fabric of the Palestinian Indigenous people within a mixed-divided city.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Since the establishment of Israel, the Palestinian indigenous people was subject to different colonial measurements which still covered and supported by Israeli colonial rules, laws, and military orders. The Palestinian Indigenous people were subject to isolation, marginalization, judaization, gentrification, displacement, expropriation, and expulsion. The Palestinians were subject to uprooted from their cultural identity environment and to Israel's ethnic strategies and policies of control, which prevented them from living a normal life and they always treated by the Israeli colonial institutions as enemies.

From the beginning of Nakba to the present day, in a different ways, the Palestinians indigenous people in Israel have found themselves living on the margins of Israel as ethnocratic state and a state for Jewish people not for all its citizens. This paper claims that the way in which the Palestinian indigenous minority and the Jewish dominant majority have no to choice rather than to live together, however, both groups also choose to struggle with each other on land. This struggle introduced in different policy and political measurements on the ground. In the mixed-divided cities such as; Old city of Acre, the colonial and ethnical cleansing policy reflects the national- Jewish ideology. This paper examines the majority practices of purification of cultural heritage urban space and spatial of the old city of Acre.

Purification of spatial cultural fabric and social context

The Palestinian indigenous people in Acre can be characterized as cultural and heritage preserved area with social ghetto. This ghetto is restrained by political, cultural, economic

domination by the majority colonial ideology. The Palestinian indigenous people in Israel are officially part of the society, yet structurally they are isolated into ghettos debilitated by domination, exclusion, and disempowerment. Space purification examines the significance of Jewishness as a powerful ideology for the emergence of purified community in Israel where Palestinians represents a thread of losing this dominance on space and land.

An interview with Palestinian advocate living in Acre, he states that:

“...The government encourages and support Jewish settlers who immigrate from Europe and Russia to Acre; city mayor who believes that the way to cope with hardship and poverty is to exchange the poor Indigenous populations with “strong dominant populations”, and who have no qualms about using racist incitement to further their purposes; and finally, the mainstream gentrifiers, who seek nothing but to advance their businesses and “urban development.” Acre finds itself at the forefront of this conflict.

In July 2011, the military *Yeshiva* (Jewish Foundation) celebrated the getting hold of historic buildings in Acre. Silvan Shalom, Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, sent the *yeshiva* his blessings and Shalom said:

“The establishment of the *yeshiva* in the city helps in strengthening the drive for the Judaization of the Galilee and Acre and there is nothing to be a shamed of in saying this. We want Jews to come and live in the Galilee and in Acre, and you are helping the government realize the vision that the Jewish believe in.”

Minister Shalom has clearly and formally announced that the Palestinian Indigenous people who are representing the majority in the Galilee and the old city of Acre are a danger, and in order to cope with it, it is necessary to allocate the necessary resources to replace Palestinians and instead to settle Jews in the city. It is clear that de-indigenization of the old city of Acre was a reflection of an official policy to impose a Jewish character, while at the same time weakening the social capital of the Indigenous people.

The category “internally displaced Indigenous people in Israel” represents the Palestinians who were driven out from their homes by the Jewish forces prior to the establishment of Israel, or by institutions under the authority of the State of Israel following the State’s establishment, and who remained within the borders of the State of Israel. Those displaced communities are still prevented from returning to their homes which were confiscated according to the Israeli colonial policies and led to expel the majority of the Palestinians from their home during the 1948. Despite they are still living nearby their homes; the Israeli law categorizes them as “present absentees”.

In Acre, there is a group of displaced population who took refuge to Acre from the nearby destroyed, confiscated, and ethnically cleaned villages. Some of those people are from Acre itself.

Another Israeli Jewish and human rights defender states that:

“... when Zionist military forces attacked the city of Acre and displaced its people in 1948, there remained a number of its residents who had been forced and displaced from their homes but they found refuge in the same city in the Old city of Acre living with their extended families and relatives. Their new resettled status and relatives houses designated as “Absentee Property” and those people who were resettled in the Old city of Acre became “protected residents” which means that the ownership of the property belongs to the government (expropriation and they do not have the ownership of land),

however, the Palestinians allowed to stay at their expropriated homes at the same time they must pay annual reduced rent.”

In 1967 the Israeli government established the Old Acre Development Company and its main objective is to transform the Old City of Acre into a tourist cultural heritage destination. The idea is to transfer the Indigenous Palestinians historical fabric into “an open heritage Museum”. The company aimed at emptying the old city of its indigenous people inhabitants in order to turn houses into hotels, restaurants, arts museums and galleries but they need it as a tourist city without its original inhabitants.

The company justifies their gentrification policy by claiming that the Palestinian inhabitants living in poverty and most of them do not have the capacity to follow the regulations of historic rehabilitation which must matching a special tourism plans and standards. The indigenous people become an obstacle on the path of transforming the old city into a tourist city. An indigenous interviewee said:

“... The deliberate neglect of the old city and its infrastructure and the obligation and restrictions on building restoration and renovations were intended to make the lives of the inhabitants of the old city impossible. The Company for the Development of Old Acre tried to push the Palestinian inhabitants to leave Acre. Till the moment, Acre suffers from poverty and hardship, and from a systematic policy of discrimination and expulsion.”

According to the Israeli Statistics Bureau (2015), Acre suffers from a high unemployment rate and half of those who are employed barely earn the minimum wage. The Jewish-fundamentalists groups acting in an organized manner to conquer the city and to evacuate it from the Palestinian “protected residents” forgotten the fact that Palestinians lived in Acre before 1948.

A social activist, who is struggling against the expulsion of the indigenous people, explains the process and the policy pattern that the dominant Jewish majority utilizing to push Palestinians out of the city. She said:

“...the basic pattern begins with purchasing properties and organized Jewish-religious activity and aggressive actions against the Palestinians. These activities usually get support from the government with massive government aid. The settlers start a campaign for the strengthening of the “Jewish character” of the city and with a series of provocations against the Palestinian inhabitants. Their campaigns for “strengthening Jewish identity” time and again leads to a gradual escalation in relations with the Palestinian inhabitants, each clash serves as a pretext for expanding the settlements and obtaining additional property.”

The Israeli colonial measurements against Acre Palestinian indigenous people represent the action plan of the Zionism theory of substitution of the Palestinians by Jewish immigrants. The main aid for implementing this long-term action plan is the Israeli Military rules which authorized Israel’s military commanders to proclaim Arab areas and neighborhoods as closed zones in accordance with Article 125 of the Emergency Regulations. The Israeli authorities took other steps to preclude the return of the (Internally displaced persons), such as demolishing houses, expelling Palestinians to neighboring countries, expulsion of the indigenous people to nearby towns and settling and substitution the indigenous people by Jewish immigrants in the homes of the Palestinian refugees.

Separation and Discrimination

Under the military government from 1948 until 1966, which meant that the Palestinian indigenous people who moved from their houses in Acre and other Palestinian villages and towns due to the war could not return to their properties, they were isolated from the Palestinian population in other parts of Israel, and they needed special permits to leave their designated sections of the Restricted Areas to access jobs, education, health care, markets, and so forth. The restrictions imposed by the Israeli government represented a form of forced separation and isolation.

Prior to 1948 (establishment of Israel) the population of Acre numbered some 15,000, only a few hundred of whom were Jews. Most of the inhabitants lived in the old city, and a minority lived in the new Arab city established outside the walls (Modern Acre). In the course of 1948 war most of the Palestinian inhabitants of the city were expelled; at the war's end some 3,000 Palestinians crowded into the old city. New Jewish immigrants conquered the city, and by the 1960s the Palestinians population represents about 30% of the inhabitants (Schechla: 2001). An interviewee who works as advocate and lawyer said:

“The Palestinian inhabitants of Acre lost most of their property. In the old city the Custodian of Absentee Property holds approximately 85% of the houses; 10% are in the hands of Muslim and Christian religious institutions, and only 5% are in the hands of private property owners. The Custodian of Absentee Property transferred Palestinian houses – the houses that belong to refugees to the government housing company. Hence, the Palestinian inhabitants of the old city do not own their houses; they rent them from the government company and live under its constant supervision.”

Fundamentalist Jewish religious-military group has been established in the city of Acre. *Yeshiva* group members believe in ethnic cleansing and God has endorsed the land of Palestinians to the Jewish people. The *yeshiva* initiated in 2003 with 200 members who combine military service with religious Jewish study and who wander around the Palestinian houses with their weapons. They describe Acre as a Jewish city and it must preserve its Jewish identity. One of the indigenous inhabitants said:

“.. Palestinian residents of Acre usually informed by the armed Jewish settlers to get out of the city and those settlers practicing fear pressure on the indigenous people in the everyday life. The religious youth movement affirms that their strategy to do whatever possible to ensure the Judaization of the city. They strengthen the civil military guide for the city and create the “Jewish Route” in the old city of Acre-a guided tour of the old city which completely ignores its Palestinian, Islamic and Christian history, and instead offers a purified Jewish version.”

There are different occasions where the Jewish aggression against the Palestinian Indigenous people has been exploded in Acre. Jewish settlers and fundamentalists were incited against the Palestinians. In October 2003 and in May 2014 and during the Jewish holy occasions, hundreds of fundamentalists attacks the Palestinian houses and shouted “Death to Arabs..Death to Palestinians”. Palestinian apartments were attacked, some of which were set afire, and the inhabitants were forced to flee their homes under the threads of burning. The Israeli government has succeeded to expel families who were evacuated under risk of death.

A social Palestinian activist from Acre describes the Government discrimination against the indigenous people:

“The temporary evacuation of the Palestinians families became an actual eviction. The Palestinian families who were expelled and tried to return to their homes were met with a wall of resistance. The police refused to guarantee their safety if they returned, while the municipality reneged on its responsibility and offered the families to leave the neighborhood for alternative housing.”

Colonial Gentrification

As a settler colonial movement in Palestine, a foundation tenet of Zionism has always been supplanting of the indigenous Palestinians by Jews. This is the essence of the “Judaization” process, a process whose ultimate aim is to cleanse the land from its indigenous people and transfer the land to Jewish ownership and control. To achieve this goal, a number of policies have been utilized as follows: transfer and dislocate the indigenous people by direct force to leave their areas, spatial environment, social fabric, and cultural context; indirect transfer through the exertion of pressure that render continued living on the land intolerable and one can call it as colonial-gentrification; and erecting a realm of walls, check points, gates, military zones, watch towers to expand control over land in anticipation of future Jewish settlement. (Amara: 2011)

According to the Jewish dominant majority’s colonial ideological context, the old city of Acre is undergoing a process of gentrification that is changing its character. Acre mayor openly promotes the process and he believes that the solution to the hardship of the poor lies in getting rid of the Palestinian indigenous people and replacing them by a “strong Jewish population.” He is investing in developing a boardwalk in old Acre and in attracting investors to develop Acre’s tourist potential. At the same time, the Acre municipality investing in building new pure-Jewish neighborhoods and private houses in what called modern Acre. These houses built with massive state aid and the government justifies spending public fund investment in Acre in order to “strengthen the city with a high quality population.”

While the modern city of Acre receives a huge public fund to establish pure Jewish luxury neighborhoods, the old city of Acre, where the majority of the indigenous people live, the public housing company which rents the property of the 1948 Palestinian refugees to Palestinian residents, is furthering the process of dispossession. The company approaches the residents, many of whom suffer from economic hardship, demanding that they arrange their status and make back payments which, according to the company, they owe retroactively from 1948. If they cannot, they lose their rights and their apartments are taken from them. Another method is to initiate a renovation of the old houses, “an exacting historical restoration,” at great expense-and then to send the bill to the residents, who of course are unable to pay it. In this way, initiatives to save the old city from deterioration and to renovate the buildings can turn into a curse for the inhabitants.

In other cases, Palestinian home owners, who do not live in houses owned by the Public Company (The company owned stock of houses which were dispossessed by the Government under the Absentee Property law) rental apartments system, are required to prove, after 60 years, that they were living in their houses in Acre on May 15, 1948 (the establishing date of Israel) and if they can’t, they are designated refugees subject to the Absentee Property Law of 1950-and their houses can be confiscated by the Company.

The previous State's policies explain how the dominant Jewish majority reflecting the nationalist-ideology into practical mechanisms represented by ethnical cleansing-dispossession and colonial-gentrification which work in parallel hand in the old city of Acre. Acre Company for the Development of Old City, governmental company, is implementing the goal of Judaization of the old city. They are announcing tenders to purchase the Palestinian 'Absentees' properties that the Palestinian indigenous people who are living in these houses-of whom it is estimated that around 42% live on social security payments- have virtually no chance of winning or gaining any of these tenders. In the meanwhile the majority of these houses in the old city have been handed over to a Jewish Foundations.

An interviewee mentioned that:

"... These Jewish foundations usually make adaptive reuse for these buildings which were owned by the indigenous people and they conducting an adaptive-reuse of these buildings to be used as entertainment, housing, and youth organizations which are designated only for Jewish dominant groups... The municipality publicly declares that the purpose of taking over these buildings is to foster Jewish settlement."

There is no comparison between the renovated houses that became owned by the Development Company and the houses and the Palestinian houses in the same neighborhood. Renovation and Restoration public fund is only designated for development of the Jewish new inhabitants 'settlers'.

Many of the indigenous Palestinians' properties, including houses of historical value, have been transferred from the government hand, Old City Development Company, to the Jewish investors and Jewish private ownership.

a Palestinian activist states that:

"...In response to the protest of Palestinian residents of Acre against the Old City Development Company that the company puts up for sale important pieces of real estate in the old city without notifying them of the tenders, the CEO of the company claimed that there was no need to give priority to Acre residents in the company's public biddings. But when asked about the transfer of real estate in the city to Jewish organizations close to the government, the CEO revealed the following procedure: In the past we transferred properties to the Jewish Agency, which is exempt from the obligation to offer houses in open public biddings, and the Jewish Agency passed on the properties to, among others, an organization like *Ayalim* (youth fundamentalists Jewish organization)."

Acre: an open museum without its indigenous people

The Development Company of the Old city of Acre is adopting the concept of Acre as an open museum but without its indigenous people as many as it is possible to introduce the indigenous people as if they were remnants of an ancient era. The development targets and in favor of the benefit of the dominant strong majority and toward the benefit of future Jewish settlers, real estate investors, and tourists and not directing to the inhabitants living in the city, Jews and Arabs, but toward the benefit of future settlers, real estate investors and tourists.

The Israeli newspaper, Ma'ariv, reports on the plan to re-adapt the Old City of Acre into a "living and open museum:

“The mayor is promoting the establishment of an artists’ quarter on the Acre seashore and another plan aimed at turning the old city into a tourist site geared toward “strong population”.

Thus, the activities of the Company for the Development of Old Acre guided toward attracting “strong dominant population” and investors. The famous Israeli fish restaurant in Acre is owned by a Jewish investor and he has privileged to buy a number of the Palestinians historical houses from the Development Company and the Institution that maintains the ‘Absentee property’. These houses belong to the Palestinian refugees and the Palestinians who are unable to pay the bill of renovation and restoration. He managed to adapt them into boutique hotels. The fish restaurant describes his purchase:

“...I approached the Company for the Development of Old Acre and the CEO recommended that me to have a look from inside two buildings which are located near to my restaurant... I saw it and I felt elated...something inside me told me that this was the place that I am looking for. We agreed to take over two buildings ...we agree on long-term lease for 99 years... I managed to renovate and adapt them into a boutique hotel.”

The development approach undermines the local community and it has negative consequences. Amidst the hardship patterns of the indigenous people, the gentrification process develops and the indigenous people being target for displace. Secondary psychological impacts may arise as a result of displacement; the increased prices for the new types of public services, loss of social cohesion from the socially disparate to rich ghettos and discrimination against the indigenous people are key dynamics to increase the expulsion and Judaization process of the Old City of Acre. A city planner from Acre pointed out:

“The evacuation and uprooting of inhabitants for the purpose of developing tourist sites, the rise in the prices of land, food and fuel for the local population; many of the facilities that serve the tourists, such as golf courses and luxury hotels, are inaccessible to the local population, often out of bounds for the local community”

Khan Al-Umdan Caravansari Khan Al Umdan is located in the heart of the Old city of Acre and it is one of the best preserved khans since the Ottoman period. The huge colonnaded courtyard was constructed during the Ottoman period as trade stations along the Silk Road. Despite the Old city of Acre has been designated as a UNESCO World heritage site, the unique example of caravansaries has not been conserved or protected by the municipality and almost kept close to visitors.

The Development Company invited for investors to own and to develop the Islamic eighteenth-century Khan into a luxury hotel. The Development Company leased Khan Al Umdan to a Jewish investor from England in order to adapt it into a hotel. The Development Company also announced to sell Khan Al Shuna, another Khan in the Old City aiming at recruiting investment to adapt it into hotel. The Palestinians who are living around the two Khans have fear about their instable living status.

One of the interviewee said:

“Our fear, that such development will strip the Khans of their historic character, as well as denying an important open space to the largely Palestinian residents of the old city. The plans come in the context of the wider gentrification of Acre, a process which has led to Israeli luxury tourism businesses squeezing the Palestinian community out of their neighborhoods.”

The local community fears consist of: the expulsion of the indigenous people by the Government under the Absentee property law, development financial burden, cancelling the lease for those who are classified as refugees and above all of that, the fear of losing the social, cultural identity, and historic fabric of their lives.

Neighborhoods and streets re-naming

Streets and neighborhoods names in Acre are one of the significant cultural and heritage markers of the relationship between the indigenous people and their environment. As many studies show that the name of place as a form of symbolic-cultural capital and represents the social capital of the indigenous people and they serve to present historical events, narratives of their people and reflect a society's common cultural space. Ideological changes in society and colonial conquests may result in changes of the streets names as a tool for changing the character of public space and transforming it to detach the spiritual and cultural linkage between the place and its indigenous people.

In Acre there is a struggle between the colonial regime and the indigenous people for the meaning of space in the Old City, which is represented by the governmental Development Company and the local Palestinian population. The municipality claims that any post-colonial state (and in the case of Israel, it is a colonial state), commemoration through the use of street names served as a key element of nation-building and state formation aiming at consolidating the nationalist Jewish state. In Acre, decisions on the specific names had been made by the municipality's street-naming committee and all the process excluded any consultation with the Indigenous people who are represent the majority of Old city population.

The indigenous people maintain the historical and traditional names of the streets and public spaces within the Old City fabric and to some extent, the indigenous people tend to remove the new names as a form of spatial resistance against the municipality practices aiming at imposing a symbolic control on the cultural physical space of the old city of Acre. The newly established State of Israel wished to secure its dominance in the areas that were conquered during the war [Naqba for Palestinians-the establishment of Israel] , especially in cities that were formerly predominantly Arab [Palestinians]. One of the chosen methods was renaming streets, changing the Arab [Palestinians] names to ones that related to the State of Israel, Jewish history or the Zionist movement (Azaryahu: 2004).

The names given illustrate an attempt to connect Acre with Judaism and Jewish history. Two major streets in the Old City were given names with strong Zionist characters: *Haganah*, which was one of the main illegal militias during the British mandate of Palestine and its members were fundamentalist activists who practiced terror and ethnic cleansing against the indigenous people, and *Haim Weizman*, A Zionist leader and the first president of the State of Israel. During the summer of 2009, the Old City harbor was renamed after *Zeev Fried*, one of the founders of the Israeli military navy. The three names reflecting attempts to Judaize the space of the Old City and to defeat the cultural identity of the indigenous people.

An interviewee of the Old city inhabitants said:

“Historic and heritage names should not be removed and replaced by nationalist Jewish characters. These names are part of the indigenous people cultural heritage and renaming is a process to destroy the collective memory of the indigenous people.”

Another interviewee added:

“We [the indigenous people] are familiar with the traditional names and renaming the places considers an incompatible policy with Acre’s spiritual and cultural identity of the indigenous people...the municipality can rename all the public spaces but the people of the old city are not going to recognize these new names...who can accept the imposed names which represent the executioner”

The following decades of 1948 [Naqba for Palestinians and the establishment of the State of Israel for Jew] the streets which renamed were primarily Jewish and Israeli-Zionists in its nature. The previous analysis of the street renaming in the Old city of Acre reveals that the main forces behind the process were nationalistic, thus the diminishing the indigenous Palestinian character of the Old City as part of the attempts to erase the Palestinian cultural identity.

The above analysis shows the strategic plans of the colonial regime aiming at destructing the Palestinians cultural heritage which is impeded by the course of economic development and modernization, which had begun since the establishment of Israel, impacting the indigenous people to the present day. During the process of heritage destruction, expulsion, and looting, a large portion of Palestinian cultural heritage was lost, including destruction or modification of cultural heritage as a colonial tool to rupture and uproot the Palestinian indigenous people from their socio-cultural and socio-economic environment. The indigenous people who are remaining living in Israel represent the defeated minority who used to live in strong social relations with a significant culture, social fabric and spatial context.

CONCLUSION

Humanity and human are rooted in the earth and everything is centered in the environment and is linked to the use of a specific territory which one’s rooted in. Human activities have revolved around the territory they live not only to extract resources from, but also as a cultural context and social fabric. Some cultures have the desire to seize more land and spatial atmosphere in order to obtain new territory; therefore they identify the indigenous people of that land as an obstacle to achieve their desire. At a very basic principle, colonialism is the desire for, setting on, and controlling of land, and spatial structure that a culture and heritage does not possess; place and space that are lived on an owned by other people.

The Israeli governmental policy represents the colonial dominant Jewish majority which aims at applying the Zionism ideology. Land confiscation, spatial control, expulsion, colonial gentrification and rupturing indigenous people from their cultural and social environment are significant tools and measurements to repress the Indigenous people’s minority. The spatial and political conflict between the Israeli colonial Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority revolves particularly around the Palestinian cultural heritage, traditional cultural identity.

This conflict between the governmental policies aiming at controlling the environment of the Palestinian indigenous people and the Palestinians socio-cultural traditional identity shared by the indigenous minority, has a direct impact on the Palestinians in the Old City of Acre. Israel defines itself as a Jewish State that is politically, socio-economic and socio-cultural structured to ensure the dominance of the Jewish majority over the Palestinian indigenous people as minority.

The indigenous people of Acre are exasperating to revitalize and to protect their cultural heritage. The colonial system of the dominant group drives the Palestinians to resist the efforts of dismantling their heritage. The Palestinian minority in Acre exert their efforts to protect their cultural identity and historic spatial which offers them a way out of the colonial gentrification and poverty that they are facing. The oppressed minority utilizes their social and heritage capital as a key pillar to resist the colonial policies established by the colonial Zionist ideology, and attempting to create a society based on equality, liberty, mutual understanding and coexistence in the Old City of Acre.

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