Mapping the nation: street names and Arab-Palestinian identity: three case studies

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ABSTRACT. The naming of streets is part of the ongoing process of mapping the boundaries of the nation. This article examines three sets of Arab-Palestinian street names – pre-1948 Haifa and Jerusalem and post-1948 Umm el Fahm – as locally constructed 'texts of identity' in the historical and political context of their official creation. The investigation aims at charting the ideological orientations represented and the political messages entailed in these three different textual manifestations of Arab-Palestinian national identity. The analysis focuses on notions of historical and cultural heritage as expressed in the choice of street names. Finally, it offers an interpretative evaluation of this process, placing it within broader ideological and historical contexts.

'All Nationalisms are at heart deeply concerned with names: with the most immaterial and original human invention.' (John Berger)

Introduction

Ideologically charged and evidently present, commemorative street names are instrumental in the symbolic construction of national identity, mainly in terms of historical heritage. In this capacity they belong both to the discourse of political identity and to its experience on the level of everyday life.

The objective of this article is to examine three sets of Arab-Palestinian street names as locally constructed 'texts of identity' in the historical and political context of their official creation. The investigation aims at charting the ideological orientations represented and the political messages entailed in these three different textual manifestations of Arab-Palestinian national identity. The article does not attempt to examine popular responses to official names or the measure of their acceptance by local residents. Rather, it examines street names in Arab-Palestinian localities as an aspect of an official identity-formation procedure that reflects ideological premises and a sense of

identity prevalent among those local elites in charge of naming streets. The analysis focuses on notions of historical and cultural heritage as expressed in the choice of street names. Finally, it offers an interpretative evaluation of this process, placing it within broader ideological and historical contexts. Though no comparative approach is attempted, the different historical, geographical and political contexts provide an opportunity to study the symbolic construction of Arab-Palestinian historical and cultural heritage as well as the geographical frame of reference in specific local settings. In this respect, this article highlights a hitherto neglected aspect of the formation of Palestinian-Arab political identity.

Despite the political salience of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the literature on Palestinian-Arab identity is relatively limited. There is a growing body of literature on various aspects of the history of the Palestinian Arabs (Doumani 1995; Kimmerling and Migdal 1993; Miller 1985; Scholch 1993; Khalidi 1997), with many focusing on the development of the Palestinian national movement (Porath 1977; Muslih 1990). This is, of course, unsurprising given the prominence of the national movement to the national definition of the Arab Palestinians since the end of World War I. It is equally unsurprising, therefore, that the historiographical debates within this body of literature centre around the question of the origins of the movement, and whether or not, and to what extent, was the creation of Palestinian-Arab nationalism a response to Zionism.

Few and far between, however, are the studies that attempt to examine Arab-Palestinian identity in terms of its symbolic construction. A crucial question in this context is what does it celebrate in terms of historical heritage and cultural tradition(s). This article offers a study of Arab-Palestinian identity that takes into account three factors. The first is that national identity is to a substantial extent a thematisation of history in terms of shared heritage. The second is the understanding that national identity does not involve a coherent and definitive notion of national history but rather comprises a set of options that, though not mutually exclusive, displays important variations on key issues. In the Arab-Palestinian case, this entails the need to distinguish between differing versions of historical heritage and notions of homeland promoted in different periods and contexts by Arab-Palestinian local elites. This method of inquiry provides an opportunity to discern between different symbolic models of identity. The third is that symbols and symbolisation play a major role in the political construction of collective or national identity because symbols mediate between political elites and 'ordinary' people. Accordingly, analysing commemorative street names substantiates identity as a symbolic aspect of lived experience rather than merely locating it in intellectual discourses or programmatic proclamations.

The study of different sets of Arab-Palestinian street names representing different periods and political contexts provides an opportunity to discuss various models of Arab-Palestinian identity promoted by political elites in control of local government. This method of inquiry directs attention to the

existence of different options and alternatives for the composition of an Arab-Palestinian identity.

Street names belong to the urban texture, and their introduction into local geography is a measure of administrative control. The use of street names for commemorative purposes in Palestine was first introduced in newly founded Jewish settlements, most notably in bigger urban settlements such as Tel Aviv and, later on, Jewish Haifa (Bar Gal 1987). The British mandate government established in Palestine in the early 1920s directed both Jewish and Arab municipalities to introduce street names.[1] From the British perspective, the issue was administrative rather than political, but the result was that 'Jewish' and 'Arab' street names that appeared in this period represented the political identities of the two proto-national communities. British efforts were especially persistent in the big cities and especially in those where British political and strategic interests were most manifest: Jerusalem, the capital of British mandate Palestine, and Haifa, the main British port in the Levant.

With the exception of Haifa, and in contrast to the situation in Jewish localities, Arab local elites showed little interest in investing streets with official names that could serve commemorative and hence political purposes. In Jerusalem it was the British authorities who initiated a grand-scale naming activity. In pre-1948 Jaffa, the Arab city adjacent to Tel Aviv, only seven streets were officially named. Of these, one commemorated King George V; three were named after three local dignitaries; three political names celebrated Hashemite kings (Hussein, Feisal and Ghazi). Other towns and cities adhered to the traditional mode of popular designations that celebrated local topographical features and were devoid of political significance.

In contemporary Israel, where local authorities are autonomous regarding naming streets, the most significant development is the attention given by the Islamic movement to the use of street names as commemorations in localities under its control in accordance with the movement's ideology. This is the case with Umm el Fahm and Kafr Kasm, where the Islamic movement's control of local government was also evident in the creation of a comprehensive set of street names according to the movement's notion of Islamic heritage. The resolve of local representatives of the Islamic movement to utilise street names as a commemorative instrument testifies to the movement's political vigour and sophistication. In this context, street-naming is another method of the Islamisation of the public domain.

This development is especially significant in light of the fact that other Arab localities in Israel have not launched a comprehensive naming of streets. Hence, the street names of many Arab localities do not serve as markers of political identity. In Nazareth, the biggest Arab city in Israel, only twenty streets are named, of which some commemorate leaders of the Communist Party, which has controlled the town hall since the 1970s. Nazareth's main street commemorates Pope Paul VI, who visited the city in 1964. The naming of streets in cities and towns under the control of the Palestinian national authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is not pursued in this study.

What makes these naming procedures different is that for the first time they are conducted in the context of Arab-Palestinian state-building. However, so far these procedures are not transparent and have not yet produced a significant change.

To conclude, therefore, in the pre-1948 era, Arab Jerusalem and Arab Haifa constitute the only two comprehensive sets of street names that can be treated as textual manifestations of an Arab-Palestinian identity. In addition, it became apparent that in contemporary Israel only those municipalities controlled by the Islamic movement included comprehensive street-naming in their planning agenda. Hence, our choice of Umm el Fahm was based on the fact that it is the largest city controlled, since 1989, by the movement (population in 1998 was 38,000 residents; in Kafr Kasm it is about 15,000). Thus, our analysis includes two historical cases, Arab Haifa and Arab Jerusalem prior to 1948, and one contemporary case – that of Umm el Fahm. It should be stressed, however, that these cases do not exhaust all possible options for an Arab-Palestinian identity. Their significance lies in that they present different options that have officially been pursued at the level of local government.

Finally, we should add that the material available in each case differs. The city archives of Haifa include almost no documentary material concerning the actual decision-making procedures. This is because the names were proposed by Arab neighbourhoods and not by the municipality. What we have are general considerations, and a list of official names. Similarly, the municipal authority in Umm el Fahm refrained from providing any information about the naming procedures in the city. The official argument was that the names reproduced in the city maps were determined by the city engineer. The case of Jerusalem is entirely different. The material found in the city archive details meticulously the decision-making procedures, through protocols and maps.

Material concerning decision-making procedures is, of course, an advantage since it details the ideological premises that underlined the naming process and highlights the views that prevailed among decision-makers. Yet even with the absence of relevant archival material, a content analysis of sets of street names, when such exist, may yield useful information, especially if the ideological orientation of the decision-makers is clear.

The symbolic make-up of political identity

Collective identity is constructed by and experienced through shared symbols and representations. At the same time, these symbols and representations substantiate identity and objectify it. In order for it to be socially effective, collective identity has to be culturally shared. A sense of identity is defined and maintained in terms of attachment to symbols and representations. The power of the latter to evoke identification among individuals is decisive in determining the social relevance of these symbols and representations. Having

stated this, it should be pointed out that identities are not only symbolically constructed but are also socially negotiated in specific historical contexts and political circumstances. The symbolic construction of identity reflects prevalent political interests and power relations. In particular it reflects certain needs of political elites and their ability to manipulate symbols and notions of common heritage (Kertzer 1996: chs. 5, 6 and 8).

The symbolic make-up of the identity of groups and organisations entails iconic representations, such as flags and emblems, but to a substantial extent also entails the symbolisation of history. History provides a sense of continuity with the past. Designed to serve social and political purposes, history often assumes the form of myth: history – or, rather, a particular version of history and a certain interpretation of the past – makes sense of the present. It serves to legitimate ideological claims as well as to justify as-yet-unfulfilled aspirations. In this frame of reference, history is not a scientific endeavour or a selfless pursuit of the 'past as it really was'. History is heritage and legacy. It defines 'who we are' in terms of a collective story of common origins and collective biography that transcends the particular biography of each individual. History is a narrative of the past, where events and heroes represent momentous particulars of 'our history'.

The manufacture of history also takes the form of commemoration that amounts to the formation of a 'register of sacred history' (Schwartz 1982: 377; see also Gillis 1994; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Commemorative procedures both integrate history into lived experience and allow it to be culturally shared by individuals. While memorials objectify history in terms of location and iconic representations, commemorative street names present a different commemorative mode (Azaryahu 1996). They indeed define history in terms of location, but they lack the sacral aura of memorials. On the other hand they introduce historical memory into a sphere of human activity that seems to be separated from the realm of ideology. The naming of streets is a political act that expresses power and authority (Palonen 1993). However, its ostensible ordinariness allows it to implicate politics into the practices of everyday life. Indeed, street names constitute a typical arena for the expression of what Michael Billig has labelled 'banal nationalism': the reproduction of complex sets of habits and representations that together make up the collective identity of the nation in a banal and mundane way (Billig 1995). Both manipulated and manipulative, commemorative street names belong to the symbolic foundations of identity.

From the perspective of those in charge of moulding the symbolic infrastructure of society, the main merit of commemorative street names is in that they introduce an authorised version of history into ordinary settings of everyday life. The authorities in charge decide what is an appropriate commemoration (and by default what is an inappropriate one). In this regard, naming streets is an aspect of the politics of public commemoration. The matching of commemorations and streets produces a hierarchy of historical memory. The spatial distribution of commemorations does not necessarily

convey a notion of historical coherence. However, all commemorations are interdependent in the sense that they belong to a definite and, at any given point in time, finite set that operates as a textual manifestation of heritage and hence identity. This set is culturally shared by all users of the streets, regardless of their political attitudes and ideological preferences. As a text of identity, a set of street names is susceptible to interpretative evaluations. The official interpretation is important since it represents the intentions prevalent among those in charge of the text. Yet as with other texts, there is no definitive interpretation but many possible interpretations that reflect different points of view. The meaning of commemorative street names is refracted through personal and ideological prisms. However, what matters is the plausibility of interpretations – and, last but not least, the social resonance of specific inter-pretations that may render them culturally and politically relevant.

Haifa: 1934–48

A study of Haifa's municipal protocols reveals that in the 1920s street names in Arab neighbourhoods were distinctly vernacular. As a response to British pressures to determine street names and to assign street signs, an unofficial 'Street Names Committee' was set up. In October 1934, the municipality decided to formalise the work of the committee.[2] Its members included two Arabs and one Jew. At a later stage, the committee was reorganised to include two Jews and two Arabs, thereby guaranteeing parity between the two com-munities. It should be noted that the names were decided by each community separately and the work of the committee was limited to the approval of the names suggested by the different neighbourhoods. Since Arabs and Jews lived predominantly in separate neighbourhoods, the potential for conflict regard-ing names was minimal and, indeed, the organising principle that emerged was that Arab and Jewish areas were conferred with Arab and Jewish names respectively.

The introduction of an official Arab nomenclature was accomplished in Haifa in the late 1930s and the 1940s.[3] An official list prepared in 1948, prior to the armed conflict between Arabs and Jews that brought about Jewish political and demographic hegemony in the city, specified more than seventy Arabic names.[4] The list can be seen as a politically created geographical text of identity. The analysis of the list reveals that to a substantial extent the historical and cultural heritage it evoked defined Arab identity in the broadest meaning of the term. Among the cultural figures commemorated by the street names were scientists, philosophers, poets and geographers from the golden age of Arab-Muslim culture, such as Ibn Sina (985–1037), Ibn Rushd (died 1198), Al Adrisi (1160–1251) and Al-Bukhari (821–97). Among the political figures of Muslim history commemorated were caliphs such as Khaled ibn el Walid (seventh century), Omar el Khattab (584–644) and Haroun el Rashid (786–809). The conflation of the Arab and the Islamic emphasised these two

as constitutive for the definition of Palestinian-Arab identity. In Haifa, where the Arab population consisted of both Christians and Muslims, the Christian component was virtually absent. It is interesting to note that only two streets commemorated Christian Arabs. One commemorated Al Akhtal, the seventh-century Christian poet who served in the court of a Muslim king. The other commemorated Al Yazigi, a nineteenth-century Christian-Arab poet.

Three contemporary political figures were commemorated by street names. Local history was represented by the name of Hasan Shukri, who served as the mayor of Haifa until his death in 1940. The designation 'Feisal Square' commemorated a contemporary Arab leader whose name was associated with the attempt to establish an independent Arab dynasty in the Levant and who later became the Hashemite king of Iraq. It should be noted, however, that the public honouring of the memory of King Feisal in Haifa also commemorated a local historical event: following his death in Europe in 1931, en route to Iraq the funeral procession passed through Haifa. The third figure marks an example of an unequivocal pan-Arab statement. This was the commemoration of Omar el Mukhtar, the leader of a rebellion against Italian rule in Libya who was executed by the Italian colonial authorities. As a martyr of the resistance against European colonialism, the commemoration of Omar el Mukhtar signified both pan-Arab solidarity and anti-colonial sentiments.

Haifa's Arab street names also articulated the geopolitical dimension of identity. The list of street names that referred to the geography of British mandate Palestine included Beisan, Lod, Shafr-am and Nazareth. Lod was the only place that was not in the north of Palestine. The list of geographical names also included cities and regions located outside of the borders of Palestine. They included Najd and El Hijaz (Saudi-Arabia), El Mosul, Basra (both in Iraq), Litanis and Tyrus (in Lebanon). El Mosul was the origin of the oil pipeline linking northern Iraq to Haifa, and the reference to it in Haifa signified the geopolitical status of Haifa in the British empire. The references to Irbid, Ajloun, Akaba, Amman and As-Salt, all in Trans-Jordan, however, created a map of the region that transcended the official administrative borders of British mandate Palestine and, together with the geographical references to places in Palestine, delineated an Arab region which did not conform to the political-administrative divisions created by the British empire; at least as far as Haifa's street names were concerned, Palestine and Jordan constituted one geographical Arab region.

The golden age of the Arab-Muslim political history was evident in the names of conquerors and generals. Tariq, the Arab conqueror of Spain in 711, was one such historical hero. Another prominent hero was Salah al-Din (Saladin), celebrated in the Arab political myth as the 'liberator of Jerusalem'. The commemoration of Saladin was significant because it was not a mere commemorative gesture but articulated a contemporary Arab-Muslim mythical notion of history. As the 'liberator' of Jerusalem from the rule of the Crusaders, Saladin encapsulated Muslim, and by extension Arab, commitment to Jerusalem as a Muslim holy city that should not be ruled by

non-Muslims. A prominent Muslim historical hero, Saladin embodied an important and contemporary Arab political myth that was strongly affiliated with the Islamic aspect of Arab identity and which, in the contemporary context of its evocation, was permeated with anti-British and mainly anti-Zionist sentiments. In the Palestinian-Arab context, another important commemoration was that of Yarmuq. Ostensibly a geographical designation – a major tributary of the Jordan river – Yarmuq was the battle site where in 636 AD the Arab-Muslim armies defeated the Byzantine armies. This Arab military victory meant the end of Byzantine-Christian rule in Palestine and the beginning of its Arab history.

Jerusalem: a colonial pattern, 1920–46

The case of the Arab street names either introduced or proposed in Jerusalem prior to 1948 is unique because it represents a colonial rather than a national pattern. Actively involved in regulating the street names of Jerusalem, it appears that the British authorities were intent upon reducing nationalist undertones. The preference was for names that commemorated the continuous history of Jerusalem and its status as a holy city to Jews, Christians and Muslims. In addition, as became evident, each community could celebrate its historical-cultural heritage, so long as these names were interpreted in a historical, cultural or religious rather than nationalist perspective.

Being the capital of British mandate Palestine, Jerusalem enjoyed a special status among the cities of British mandate Palestine. Moreover, as a holy city, Jerusalem was laden with historical and religious sensitivities. These facts compelled the British authorities to take a special interest in the naming of Jerusalem's streets. This was already evident in the activities of the 'Pro-Jerusalem Society' founded after the British occupied the city in World War I. The society was committed to the improvement of Jerusalem to the benefit of its residents in accordance with its historic and religious importance. Accordingly, the society, which was presided over by the British governor of Jerusalem, proposed a set of names that reflected the history of the city rather than a particular communal heritage and political ideology, with a special emphasis upon the history of the Crusaders, the former Christian-European rulers of Jerusalem. Thus, this list of commemorations included both Saladin, the 'liberator' of Jerusalem, and Baldwin, the ruler of the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, both in the area of the new Arab Jerusalem, north of the Old City. From the historically objective perspective favoured by the Pro-Jerusalem Society, whose main concern was the history of the city as a progressive narrative account, these two historical figures were rendered congruous rather than mutually exclusive. This British approach favoured history over political mythology, and hence the latter was substantially subdued. The importance of this was in that it enabled a modus of naming that could be acceptable to all the communities of Jerusalem.

Later on, the municipality of Jerusalem, where the city's three main religious communities were represented according to a preordained arrangement, attempted to introduce new names for the main thoroughfares of the city. Among the names approved by the municipality prior to 1938 was King George Street. Other names, mostly pertaining to the Hashemites, the Arab dynasty allied with the British empire – for example, 'King Ali Road', 'King Feisal Road', 'Ghazi Road' and 'Amir Abdulla Road' – were approved but not in use.

In 1938 the municipality attempted to regulate Jerusalem's street names by appointing a special committee, the Street Naming Committee (hence: SNC), to deal with the subject. Its members reflected the religious composition of the municipal council, and accordingly included Christians, Jews and Muslims.[5] The SNC was advised by a special Jewish sub-committee, with the intention that Arab 'learned gentlemen' would co-operate, too, in an advisory capacity. While the Jewish sub-committee was actively involved, the Arab advisers 'failed to attend to this matter'.[6] In 1938 an appropriate municipal by-law was issued in order legally to regulate the naming of streets.[7] In 1939 it was suggested that the director of the Department of Antiquities should be nominated as the chairman of the SNC.[8]

The guidelines concerning the naming of streets were formulated by the municipal council of Jerusalem in its meeting on 23 December 1940 in accordance with the recommendations of the SNC.[9] In this meeting it was decided 'not to name streets after living persons except in extraordinary cases to be agreed upon by the council'. Furthermore, the majority of the members of the council recommended the naming of 'streets after important persons and persons considered to be on the historical plane'. The minority view was that except for extraordinary cases, only names that pertained to the history of Jerusalem should be approved. The implication of the decision was that 'history' was not limited to the history of Jerusalem, but could also reflect particular communal histories which, in the political context of the period, were proto-national.

The geographical juxtaposition of contingent versions of historical heritage was further ensured by the decision 'to divide the city into three zones, each predominantly Arab and Jewish and the third mixed; to invite the Arab members of the committee to propose suitable names for streets in their zone and the Jewish members in their zone. As regards the mixed area the whole committee was to propose suitable names.'[10] This proposal meant that in the nationally homogeneous areas, each national community was autonomous regarding the selection of street names.

The objections raised by the Jerusalem municipality against specific recommendations of the SNC highlight the delicate manoeuvring necessary in such a policy. Most notably such objections were against names that fell outside their 'communal' jurisdiction. For example, Jewish members of the council suggested an alternative street for the famous Arab geographer Ibn Batuta, since the street was in a Jewish neighbourhood; Arab members of the

municipal council proposed to change the name of Baldwin Street 'after an Arab personality as it passes entirely through an Arab area'; Jews and Arabs alike rejected the name 'Godfrey de Bouillon Street' and suggested naming 'this street with a name which could be more easily pronounced'.[11]

In the summer of 1945 the British government dissolved the municipal council and in its stead a British commission was set up. In October 1945 a new initiative was launched by the new municipal government with the aim of achieving a systematic and comprehensive set of street names for Jerusalem. This spate of activity lasted until mid 1946. The proposals of the SNC were prepared by an Arab and a Jew and a representative of the Department of Antiquities as advisers, and presided over by a British representative.[12]

The directive of the government in regard to principles according to which streets were to be named was that: 'As far as practicable it is desirable that the names chosen should relate to historical associations and the character of the town as a Holy City to the three faiths whose adherents are found throughout the world.'[13] The SNC, however, redefined the criteria in such a way that in addition to the importance assigned in certain areas to the history of the city itself, the composition of the local population was also acknowledged as a factor to be reckoned with. In particular, it was decided that also the 'past history and the nature of the population resident in them' should be taken into consideration. This amounted to a reaffirmation of the principle of communal autonomy agreed upon previously and already practised in the Jewish parts of the city.

The main focus of the work of the SNC was to name the streets in the Old City. As a special zone, the ninety-two names thus officialised were mainly traditional and vernacular.[14] The Arab areas outside of the walls of the Old City included those north of the Old City (Sheik Jarah) and the new neighbourhoods southwest of the Old City, such as Katamon, Bakaa and Talbiye, in which a substantial number of middle-class Christian Arabs resided.

In accordance with the policy of the SNC, the street names selected evinced a supra-communal heritage that included both Arab-Muslim historical figures and Byzantine-Christian emperors as well as prominent fathers of the Christian church. The decision to name the thoroughfare leading from Herod's gate northwards 'Haroun el Rashid Street' implied a tribute to an Abbasid caliph who figured prominently in early Arab-Muslim history;[15] similarly, naming a street after Tariq, the Arab-Muslim conqueror of Spain, celebrated the military expansion of the Muslim caliphate in its formative period.[16] Naming streets after Ibn Khaldoun, the twelfth-century Arab geographer, el Muttanabbi, Ibn Shaddad, Ibn Sina or al Maarri celebrated the golden age of Arab culture.[17] Modern representatives of Arab culture included writers and poets, such as el Rasafi (Iraq, 1875–1945), el Manfaluti (1876–1924) and Muhammad Abdu (Egypt, 1849–1905).[18] Altogether, prior to 1948 Jerusalem's Arab street names celebrated a pan-Arab cultural heritage; interestingly, no local, Arab-Palestinian personalities were commemorated.

Significantly, such street names that celebrated the golden age of Arab history were imbued with a predominantly Islamic accent. The Christian aspect of Arab-Palestinian identity was not articulated in terms of Arab history or culture but by a direct reference to the early history of the church. Thus, naming streets and roads after early fathers of the Christian church, such as Procopious, Sophronios, Nicodemos, St Saba, Jeranimos, St Euthmios, St Jersimos, St Porphyros and St Nikophoros in the Arab neighbourhoods of southwestern Jerusalem celebrated religious history rather than national identity.[19]

The versatile character of the historical heritage that was officialised by the SNC was evident not only in specific commemoration but also by spatial juxtapositions that amounted to statements in their own right. Naming a thoroughfare in western Jerusalem 'Omar Avenue'[20] celebrated not only an important Arab-Muslim caliph but also referred to Jerusalem's own history: Omar was the builder of the 'Omar Mosque', a central Muslim shrine on the Temple Mount. Interestingly, however, the commemoration of Omar was geographically adjacent to that of Justinian, the Byzantine emperor of the sixth century who had been a prominent builder of Christian, pre-Arab Jerusalem. Another road was named after Heracleus,[21] the last Byzantine emperor to rule Palestine. The defeat of his army in 636 AD in the battle of Yarmouk paved the way for the Arab-Muslim rule of Palestine. Yet in Christian tradition Heracleus was celebrated as the defender of the faith who recovered the Holy Cross, the most revered among Christian relics, from the Sassanid Persians who conquered Jerusalem in 614.

The historic heritage commemorated by the SNC both acknowledged communal histories and particularistic concerns and emphases and attempted to transcend them within the framework of the history of Jerusalem as a coherent framework acceptable to the different national and religious communities. Interestingly it was decided not to name streets after 'biblical or similar not calculated to be generally acceptable to all parties and communities'.[22] Legitimate names were such that were 'historical generally' or 'commemorative of important events (battles, treaties etc.)'.

Adhering to the history of the city while avoiding names that could be especially offensive to a particular community – Jewish, Muslim or Christian – served to balance different and even conflicting interests. The profound concern of the British authorities for Jerusalem as a holy city for the three major faiths resulted in the formation of a unique historical heritage, which both acknowledged the interests of different national communities (Jews and Arabs) and satisfied British notions of an appropriate representation of history. In this manner, the Arab street names that were approved by the SNC did not evince a particular Arab-Palestinian identity. Arab-Muslim historical and cultural heritage was introduced into the cityscape, yet any direct references to current political concerns of Arab-Palestinians as a separate political community were absent. Since no geographical street names were introduced, no territorial context or historical geography was implied as

a marker of identity, and Arab identity was defined solely in terms of those historical figures found worthy of commemoration. The emphasis upon local history and the accentuation of the historical, cultural and religious at the expense of the national as determinants of heritage and identity was a strategy rather than a definitive interpretation. The susceptibility of certain names to political mythologisation was almost unavoidable. The notion of Saladin as belonging to the local history of Jerusalem was a legitimate option; yet what mattered in practice was that in Arab-Muslim mythology as it emerged in the 1920s, Saladin was conceived as a national hero by virtue of his being the 'liberator' of Jerusalem. As such, his political significance in Arab-Muslim consciousness transcended any attempts to associate him with Byzantine emperors, Crusader kings, Mamluk rulers and Turkish sultans who represented the history of Jerusalem as a dynamic succession of rulers and regimes.

Umm el Fahm: the Islamic movement, 1990s

The street-naming procedure of the streets of Umm el Fahm was conducted at the convergence of two independent processes. One was the urban development of Umm el Fahm and its formal investment with the status of an Israeli town in 1985. The other was the political dominance of the Islamic movement that won the municipal elections in the town in 1988. The comprehensive determination of street names in 1993 evinced the newly acquired urban consciousness of the local government; the specific set of names evinced the perspective of the Islamic movement in Israel and its ideological orientation.
    The compilation of a comprehensive list of street names conflated urban planning and ideological self-assertion. Marked in a fancy city-map and explained in a special brochure compiled and published by the Umm el Fahm pedagogic centre (Jamil 1994), Umm el Fahm's street names were a celebrated urban feature. However, some of the (presumably already named) streets depicted in the map were not yet constructed and their names were merely projected ones. Nevertheless, this map reflected notions of collective identity prevalent among members of the Islamic movement inside Israel. Though ostensibly of local effect, the list may be considered representative of the political ideology of the Islamic movement concretised in terms of local government. Moreover, it provides insight into attitudes prevalent at the time when the list of street names was compiled. In this sense, it does not represent the final product of a gradual accumulation process, as is normally the case with street names, but rather an attempt to provide a rigid framework that, by taking into consideration future urban developments, would determine the symbolic content of the local landscape according to the viewpoint of the Islamic movement in the early 1990s.
    Interestingly, though, the naming procedure was not formally regulated. According to local authorities, it was an internal decision made in the office of the city engineer. Officially, no minutes of the decision-making procedure

existed, and therefore an evaluation of the process is impossible. For whatever reasons, the reluctance to expose the decision-making process is in itself a political statement of some significance and perhaps even demonstrates an awareness of those involved of the possible subversive potential entailed in the list they compiled.

As a whole, the Umm el Fahm list of commemorations of historical figures includes sixty-five names. The overwhelming majority of these names – sixty-three altogether – are names of historical persons that belong to the early history of Islam. Among these are names of caliphs, military commanders, religious authorities, poets and scientists. The Islamic aspect is emphasised through the names of religious authorities, with twenty-one street names commemorating the names of religious authorities who won fame for their religious learning and dedication. Among those are founders of religious schools, and of special significance are early converts to Islam, with direct association to the Prophet being a distinguished merit.

The theme of early Islamic glory is reinforced by the commemoration of famous Islamic victories. This category of commemorations include seven representatives of early Islamic heroic history. Four commemorations – Bader, Uhad, el Handak and el Qadissiaa – celebrate early victories of Islam in the period of its emergence and expansion. The names el Yarmuq and Hittin belong to the history of Islamic conquest and reconquest of Palestine. While the name el Yarmuq refers to the battle that paved the way for the Islamic occupation of Palestine, the reference to the battlefield of Hittin celebrates the Islamic 'reconquista' of Palestine from Christian rule by Saladin.

These names reveal an emphasis upon the early period of Islamic history. Stretching from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, this was an era of territorial and religious expansion, military conquests (mainly the first two centuries of Islamic history), intellectual and scientific achievements as well as religious accomplishments. Invested with the special meaning assigned in mythic thought to the era of foundation, these historical commemorations also reproduce the Muslim-Arab myth of the golden age. The notion of the golden age not only supplies a source of pride in a period of hardships, but also provides a model for eventual revival, which is a main concern of contemporary Islamic movements.

Muslim presence in Spain is another commemorative theme. Four street names reproduce Islamic history in Spain, yet the message entailed in these commemorations transcended their relatively small number. The commemoration of Tariq, the Muslim conqueror of Spain, also pertains to the early military history of expansive Islam. Ibn Rushd (1126–98), the famous Andalusian philosopher, is a prominent example of intellectual greatness that epitomises the contribution of Andalus to Muslim culture. These two commemorations, however, are not unequivocally 'Andalusian' because they also highlight commemorative themes that are more general, such as Islamic military history (Tariq) or Muslim intellectual heritage (Ibn Rushd). The

Andalusian theme is clearly manifested in two specific geographical references: Qordoba (Cordoba) and el Andalus (Andalusia).

The geographical references to Muslim Spain constitute an exception in a list that contains no other such references to Islamic territories. A plausible explanation for this may be the special status of Muslim Spain as a 'lost territory' that once belonged to the realm of Islam but was later lost as the result of a Christian reconquista that culminated in the fall of Granada in 1492. The reference to Muslim Andalus and its belonging to Muslim heritage, however, contains not only the notion of attachment to a territory lost to Islam but also implies a religiously founded commitment to its belonging to the 'Dar el Islam', namely, the nation of Islam. In the context of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the subtle message entailed in this seemingly nostalgic reference to Andalus represents possibly an assertion of the Islamic commitment to Filastin (Palestine) as a constitutive element of Dar el Islam.

The Palestinian aspect of Islamic heroic history is represented by two names. One is Bibras, the Mamluk sultan of Egypt (1228–77), who contributed substantially to the demise of the Crusader presence in Palestine. The prominent stature of Saladin in the overwhelmingly Muslim political mythology is reaffirmed by a double commemoration, one being a main street in the centre of Umm el Fahm, the other being the naming of a mosque after him.

Among the historical figures commemorated by the Umm el Fahm municipal authorities, only two belong to contemporary political history. These are Omar Al Mukhtar (1858–1931) and 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam (1882–1935). Both Al Mukhtar and al-Qassam were martyrs of the struggle against foreign rule. Omar Al Mukhtar was executed by the Italian colonial government in Libya, and was commemorated in various Palestinian-Arab cities and neighbourhoods prior to 1948, including Haifa. In this sense, his commemoration signalled continuity with earlier commemorative patterns. Albeit of minor significance from an urban perspective, the commemoration of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam deserves greater scrutiny because of its specific contemporary context and meaning.

In his capacity as an Imam and a devoted Islamic activist, in the late 1920s al-Qassam began to promote the position that clandestine military preparations should be made for an eventual fight against the British government and the Zionist project (Porath 1977: 134–9; Seikaly 1995: 240–5; Khalidi 1997: 189–90). In the early 1930s al-Qassam organised a group of devoted followers that became involved in violent activities, including murders, in Lower Galilee and Northern Samaria. Following his death in 1935 in a gun battle with British military forces, al-Qassam, 'a symbol of radical response' (Seikaly 1995: 241), was canonised as a martyr of the Islamic resistance movement. His followers took an active part in the great Arab rebellion of the years 1936 to 1938. The canonical status of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam in the pantheon of the Islamic movement was reaffirmed in the early 1990s, when his name was appropriated by the terrorist group of the Palestinian Islamic

Jihad organisation: 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Squads assumed responsibility for some of the most violent terror acts inside Israel, beginning in 1994. The commemorative reference to al-Qassam in Umm el Fahm, and thus his canonisation by the municipal authorities as a hero, amounts to the valorisation of the historical legacy he represented in a contemporary context.

In the official biography, as presented in the brochure produced in Umm el Fahm, only seemingly historical facts were mentioned, such as his political career in Syria and the circumstances of his death in Palestine. In its capacity as a legitimisation for the specific commemoration, the official, ostensibly educational, presentation of the 'historical' al-Qassam highlights both contemporary needs and constraints. Refraining from glorification of martyrdom is one significant aspect. More importantly, however, this passage fails to mention the anti-Jewish/Zionist content of his ideology and activity. Apparently not accidental, this omission serves to articulate the legacy entailed in the name of al-Qassam in historical rather than contemporary political terms. Beyond the level of this measured and seemingly cautious presentation, however, the fact remains that the implied message of the commemoration is the existence of historical continuity between the struggle waged in the 1930s to that of the 1990s. Notwithstanding the terrorist connection, the commemoration of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam as the only 'local' Palestinian hero underlined Islamic resistance as an historically continuous tradition.

In light of the context in which the Israeli public became acquainted with a hitherto almost obscure historical figure, however, the commemoration of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam in an Israeli town is somewhat problematic; at least in Jewish-Israeli ears, the name of al-Qassam does not evoke a historical figure whose merits might be strongly disputed, but, rather, an ominous strategy of political terrorism. Indeed, the decision of the local council of Kafr Qara, also governed by the Islamic movement, to name a street after 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, evoked severe criticism (Rahat 1997: 3).

The commemoration of al-Qassam as the sole hero of the pre-1948 period is also important. Significantly, no other Islamic or national political or military leader of the pre-1948 period was commemorated in Umm el Fahm. Thus, neither Hajj Amin Al Husseini, the most prominent Arab-Palestinian leader and the mufti of Jerusalem, nor prominent military leaders of the Arab revolt of 1936–8 and the military conflict of 1948, most notably 'Abd al-Qadir al Husseini and the Syrian-born Colonel Al-Qawuqji, were canonised in the list of street names. It may reflect a prevalent notion that these prominent national Arab-Palestinian leaders of the pre-1948 era represented failure rather than triumph or, perhaps, the choice reflects an ideological rejection of the national (in contrast to the religious) aspect of their legacy. Beyond such tentative considerations, however, it should be noted that al-Qassam represented an ideal of Muslim radicalism. In addition to his function as a Muslim cleric, a basic distinction between the former leaders and al-Qassam is that the latter was a martyr of the Islamic resistance and hence embodied the ideal of self-sacrifice in the service of *jihad*. As the first Muslim martyr of the struggle

for Muslim Palestine, al-Qassam encapsulated the heroic heritage of the Palestinian-Arab Muslim movement.

The matrix of identity suggested by Umm el Fahm's street names is complemented by geographical names. Commonly, such names provide a geographical index that serves as a territorial outline of the national homeland. Umm el Fahm's geographical matrix included five names: Al Quds (Jerusalem), Al Halil (Hebron), Haifa, Yaffa (Jaffa) and Sarafend. A major feature of this list is the absence of major Arab cities such as Nazareth, Nablus or Gaza. What it includes and what it excludes seems to imply that the main message was not an attempt to outline the territorial framework of an Arab Palestine. Rather, it emphasises the Islamic aspect of Arab Palestine by reference to the two cities famous for their Muslim shrines: Jerusalem, with the Al Aqsa Mosque, and Hebron, with the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

The other three geographical names do not designate a current Arab-Palestinian (national) geography but rather allude to a Muslim historical geography, namely the geography that was eradicated in 1948 when the state of Israel was founded. The references to Jerusalem and Hebron celebrate Muslim Filastin by means of the location of its two most prominent Muslim shrines. Jaffa, Haifa and Sarafend, on the other hand, represent the Islamic past of the land. In a sense, both Jaffa and Cordoba, although belonging to different geographical and historical contexts, assert the validity of a Dar el Islam as a religious-geographical concept that transcends the political realities of the present and is therefore a fundamental obligation. In this respect, the 'geography' entailed in Umm el Fahm's street names asserts Islam, defined in both religious and historical terms, as an essential property of Filastin that transcends contemporary political conditions. Such an ideological argument may also be seen as potentially subversive, ignoring, as it does, the recent history of the region and hence providing a basis for the delegitimisation of the state of Israel.

Conclusion

In their capacity as commemorations, street names suggest more than spatial orientation. They also offer historical orientation, a 'map of history' of sorts, as well as an official version of historical heritage. As a set of commemorations, street names partake in the symbolic construction of identity. Accordingly, reading street names amounts to deciphering an officially constructed text of identity that reflects the interests and attitudes of local political elites. In this sense, the examination of different sets of street names provides an opportunity to discern variations and modulations that possibly reflect different ideological frames of reference.

The three case studies presented in this study represent variations on the theme of Arab-Palestinian identity. The importance of these variations is that they display different versions of Arab-Palestinian identity as viable options.

Of these three cases, the case of Jerusalem is exceptional in the sense that it highlights local history as the building material of the historical heritage commemorated by street names. This notion of heritage was promoted by the British authorities and did not necessarily reflect the ideas prevalent among Arab-Palestinian political leadership. The model of Jerusalem celebrated local history rather than national myths. With local history as the primary organising principle, heritage was articulated in inclusive terms, where old conflicts and rivalries were transposed into meaningful aspects of the city's history.

Arab Haifa, on the other hand, suggested a pan-Arab model of identity. Historical heritage was defined in terms of the history of Arab culture with an emphasis on the golden age of Arab history during and following the establishment of the Caliphate. The commemoration of two Arab-Christian poets, however, acknowledged a notion of Arab identity that transcended Arab-Islamic culture. Geographically, the pan-Arab orientation was manifest in terms of a geography that transcended the political and administrative boundaries of British mandate Palestine. In contrast to the pan-Arab model celebrated in the street names of Arab Haifa, the model suggested by Umm el Fahm street names celebrates a pan-Islamic version of Arab-Palestinian identity. The 'Palestinian' aspect is present, but is articulated in an Islamic context, in terms of Islamic resistance and the notion of an Islamic Filastin as a part of Dar el Islam.

The existence of different options is an aspect of collective identity, where modulations belong to the dynamics of identity-formation. Pre-1948 Arab Haifa and contemporary Umm el Fahm share a common emphasis on the golden age of Arab-Muslim history. None the less, these two cases represent two divergent options: one that celebrates a pan-Arab orientation and the other a pan-Islamic orientation. Finally, it should be noted that in both cases, the local, Palestinian aspect is subordinate to a broader framework of solidarity and identification that transcends Palestine in its political boundaries. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of other options, most notably such that emphasise the 'Palestinian' over the 'Arab' in terms of historical heritage and sense of national homeland. Future research on street names in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan may evince notions of Palestinian identity that emphasise pre-1948 Arab-Palestinian geography. Here, current and future developments in areas controlled by the Palestinian national authority may introduce new notions and options of Arab-Palestinian identity that evolve in a specific context of state-formation.

Notes

1 See letter from the deputy district governor to the mayor of Tel Aviv, 28 January 1925: letter from the deputy district governor to the mayor of Jaffa, 6 February 1925 (Tel Aviv Municipal Archive 3/76).

2 Protocol of meeting of Haifa Municipality, 4 October 1935 (Haifa Municipal Archive).

3 For a comprehensive history of Haifa under the British mandate, see Seikaly 1995. Seikaly, however, does not discuss street names.

4 This list is to be found in file 209, Haifa Municipal Archive. The following discussion is based upon an analysis of this list of street names.

5 In 1938 the Christian representative was Anastas Hanania, and the two Muslim representatives were Saad El Din El Khalili and Hassan Sudki El Dajani. Dajani (1898–1938) was politically affiliated with the Nashashibi clan and in opposition to the El Husseini leadership. He was murdered in 1938. In 1940 the chairman of the SNC was Yakub Farradj (1874–1944), the leader of the Greek-Orthodox community of Jerusalem, who supported the British, and served for many years as the deputy mayor of Jerusalem.

6 'Report on Naming of Streets', mayor of Jerusalem to the district commissioner, 19 July 1938, Jerusalem City Archive (hence: JCA) 833/A 18–6.

7 Report on the meeting of the SNC, 1 January 1940.

8 Letter from the mayor of Jerusalem to the district commissioner, 9 May 1939, JCA 833/A 18–6.

9 Decisions taken by the council at their 180th meeting held on 23 December 1940, item 1212: reports of the meeting of the Street Naming Committee held on 8 October 1940, JCA.

10 Decision taken by the council at their 180th meeting held on 23 December 1940.

11 Report of meeting of the SNC, 18 October 1940, JCA.

12 These were Dr Eugene Weber and Sheikh Dia Ed Din El Khatib, the commissioner of the Muslim courts. The Department of Antiquities was represented by Mr Baramki. On their status as 'advisory members' see Minutes of a meeting of the SNC, 11 October 1945.

13 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 11 October 1945, JCA.

14 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 13 December 1945, JCA.

15 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 3 January 1946, JCA.

16 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 7 March 1946, JCA.

17 *ibid.*; Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 7 February 1946, JCA.

18 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 7 March 1946, JCA.

19 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 7 February 1946, JCA.

20 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 3 January 1946, JCA.

21 Minutes of the meeting of the SNC, 7 February 1946, JCA.

22 Memorandum, 2 October 1945, JCA.

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