



Ahmad H. Sa'di & Nur Masalha. *Decolonizing the Study of Palestine: Indigenous Perspectives and Settler Colonialism* after Elia Zureik. London: I.B. TAURIS. 2023. 350 pp. ISBN 978-0755648351. € 31,22.

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Ahmad H. Sa'di & Nur Masalha. *Decolonizing the Study of Palestine: Indigenous Perspectives and Settler Colonialism after Elia Zureik*. London: I.B. TAURIS. 2023. 350 pp. ISBN 978-0755648351. € 31,22.

On January 16, 2023, academia lost one of its major sociologists, Elia Zureik, Professor Emeritus at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, and founder of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Doha, Qatar. Professor Zureik was an intellectual, teacher, writer, lecturer, and activist. Since the 1970s, his writings on the state, surveillance, power, and oppression – and therefore resistance – have been groundbreaking socio-political pieces. His commitment to and defense of Palestinian rights both inside and outside of Israel and his detailed depiction of Israel's colonialist project in Palestine made him one of the foremost authorities on Palestinian society, settler colonialism, and resistance studies.

This edited volume traces his work through the lenses of settler colonialism, departing from his most famous book, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism* (1979), which was one of the first attempts to explain the subordinate status of Palestinian citizens in Israel under the Zionist Israeli regime. The first two sections of the book, *Colonial and Decolonial Conceptualizations of Palestine and Zionist Settler-Colonialism: Tenets and Practices*, depart precisely from this standpoint. Here, the first chapter by Ahmad H. Sa'di tries to set the «Agenda Towards a Decolonization of Palestinian Studies» (p. 13). Here, all the myths developed by the Zionist movement to legitimize the dispossession of the Palestinian people are identified. Palestine was conceived as «A land without a people» by the first Zionists (p. 14), who were able to «Make the desert bloom» (p. 16). This was further legitimized by what Sa'di calls «A Modernizing tutelage» (p. 19), advocating for the modernizing effect of Zionism on the land of Palestine. Hence, to decolonize the study of Palestine, it becomes paramount to apply anti-colonial writing that consistently uses the concept of «internal colonialism» (p. 24), «settler colonialism» (p. 25), and «the coloniality of being» (p. 26), that entails the normalization of the de-humanization of a particular group. Sa'di exposes how this takes place in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Al-Khalil. Similarly, Nur Masalha magisterially addresses the issue of toponomy in his piece «Indigenous versus Colonial-Settler Toponomy and the Struggle over the Cultural and Political Geography of Palestine» (p. 37). He underlines: «The Israeli place-renaming projects had their roots in the British colonial biblical explorations in the 1870s» (p. 38), showing the long-lasting role of the European elites in imposing their power over the Holy Land. In the same chapter, Masalha draws a clear connection between the military and the archaeological endeavor, and stresses how often

biblical archaeologists simultaneously had prominent positions in the military and vice-versa (p. 42). After the Nakba, the Israeli government applied different methods to pursue this mission. Primarily, this process unfolded top-down, from the highest levels of authority by creating various official bodies, including the Hebrew Names Committees in the military, followed by the creation of the Israeli Governmental Names Committee, through a revival of medieval Crusader toponyms and the implementation of broad Judaization strategies. These efforts emphasized the dominance of Biblical influences over Arab indigenous names and culture (p. 46). This process is now known as memoricide through the appropriation of the Palestinian heritage and the erasure of the Palestinian past (pp. 48-49). Finally, in the colonization of 1967 Palestinian Territories, Masalha makes a step further, noting how Hebrew toponomy not only replaced Indigenous Arabic names but has now been translated into English and Arabic on road signs, most of the time mimicking Arabic names (as shown at p. 60-61 table). Finally, Raef Zreik, in Chapter Three, contributes to the philosophical debate over the possibility of having a Jewish state that is also democratic, demonstrating how a democratic Jewish state is a contradiction in terms. However, he asks «whether a settler colonial movement can conduct itself as a liberal state» (p. 74).

Part Two starts with Amal Jamal's piece on «The Epistemology of Zionist Settler Colonialism and the Ontological Securitization of Palestinians» (p. 93). Underling the nexus between knowledge and power, the author stresses the importance of applying the settler colonial framework in reference to Israel to allow the epistemological shift needed to challenge the mainstream Israeli discourse (p. 97). In Chapter Five, Isamel Abu-Saad draws attention to the situation of Al-Naqab considering the region «The Unfinished Settler-Colonial Conquest» (p. 115). The chapter departs from the historical conquest of the area and its designation as an «empty land» (p. 116), through which followed the usual displacement and dispossession with the Nakba (p. 118). Although the Naqab continued to be a significant «frontier icon» (p. 119), Jewish immigration in the region has been historically reduced compared to other areas; this is why, in the 60s, it became the target of a massive urbanization project that aimed at reducing the Palestinian presence in the area (p. 121). This was achieved by transitioning the Bedouin farmers living in the region into an urban proletariat. While this transformation was ostensibly framed as a means to enhance services for the Bedouin community, the underlying colonial objective was to eradicate the traditional Naqab Palestinian way of life (p. 123). The contest for land control and the Palestinian demographic has persisted up to the year 2022. Thousands of people opposed the new demolition projects of two Bedouin villages in the area. The police shot at protesters, causing several injuries. Over 150 Palestinians were arrested, includ-

ding 60 minors. The government plans to move into the new settlements where 500,000 new Jewish residents demolished the historical Palestinian villages. Areej Sabbagh-Khoury's Chapter Six builds on Elia Zureik's "internal colonialism" concept to explore «The Paradox of Settler Colonial Citizenship in Israel» (p. 149) describing the condition of Internally Displaced People (IDP) after 1948. The main theoretical contribution concerns the identification of the Accumulation by Dispossession (ABD) process, underlining an exciting difference with other colonial endeavors: «ABD in the Zionist case did not take the form of capitalist privatization, as in other settler-colonial cases, but instead collectivist privatization that serves the Jewish National body» (p. 156). Finally, Yasmeen Abu-Laban's contribution, «Celebrating Survival» (p. 169) successfully introduces the concept of Anti-Palestinian racism in Western contexts and the study of Israel/Palestine in particular.

Going further with the book, part three, *Zionist Settler-Colonialism: Surveillance*, delves into surveillance studies and the other topic to Zureik has devoted much of his scholarly work. In collaboration with Mark Salter, he co-edited *Global Surveillance and Policing: Borders, Security, Identity* (2005), a compilation of essays contributed by experts from diverse fields such as information and communications, political science, identity studies, and international law David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban which whom he collaborated in the past in writing *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine* (2010), also appear as contributors of this volume. In Chapter Eight, the first of this section, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Abeer Otman discuss «Secrecy as Colonial Violence» in East Jerusalem (p. 185). Israel's constant advocacy of «secret files» (p. 189) and «secret information» (p. 185) is a clear strategy to maintain the Palestinian population under continuous threat and insecurity, particularly in urban contexts such as Jerusalem. Here, it also erodes personal and community links, spreading a sense of fear that makes people isolate and doubt their neighbors and stop engaging with them to avoid the risk of being arrested and persecuted (p. 195). In the following chapter, Helga Tawll-Souri retraces the history of «Israel's Telecommunications Lines and Digital Surveillance Routes» from the Ottoman period until today (p. 207), showing the dominance of Israeli sim-card and line services in almost all the Palestinian Territories with the exception of area A.

The fourth part, *Palestine: Connections, Ruptures, and Popular Resistance*, addresses the other face of oppression: resistance. Chapter Ten, by Magid Shihade, engages again with imperialism in the attempts to theorize the Palestinian question as a global issue more than a local one (p. 230), departing from Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) theorization of nomadology and mobility (p. 231). The author advocates for the imperial character of Zionism, given the past and present

support of former empires and colonial powers. The other side of this global element is the international solidarity movement in the form of the BDS. In addition, extensive reference to Ibn Khaldun and Frantz Fanon's psychological impact of settler colonialism on Indigenous-Native people is made. Then, Marwan Darweish historically recalls the steps of the non-violent «Popular Resistance in Palestine» (p. 247). The hallmarks of this resistance were its spontaneity in different historical moments; the absence of a united and coherent national leadership (p. 249); the commitment to negotiation; the prevalence of symbolic resistance; the submissiveness of the Palestinian political elite, and the critical role of religion particularly in an initial and last phase. Finally, part five concerns the *Issues of Bio-power*. Sami Miaari and Dorde Milosav devote their chapter to the statical study of «The Effect of the Separation Wall on the West Bank Labour Market » (p. 269). They demonstrated that «the wall caused a significant decrease in Palestinian hourly wages and a reduction in the number of days worked during the month. On average, Palestinians living in the localities affected by the wall worked 5% days less for a 10% lower hourly wage» (p. 271). Elia Zureik's contribution, together with Sami Tamari, points the spotlight on the importance of «Palestinian Refugee Archives» with a particular focus on the «UNRWA and the Problem of Sources» (p. 295). The incredible source of data that this archive represents concerning Palestinian refugees should not be forgotten and preserved in the following years.

In conclusion, David Lyon interprets the intellectual value of «Elia Zureik's Sociological and Critical Contribution to Palestinian and Surveillance Studies» (p. 323). Departing from his biography of “émigré Palestinian sociologist” he retraces his interest in communication and information technology with its unfortunate link to surveillance, combining it with the study of Palestine. Departing from his positionality, he enlightened on unexplored aspects of the Zionist settler colonial endeavor, providing us with pivotal theoretical tools still in use nowadays.

This edited volume is undoubtedly an essential step in decolonizing the study of Palestine. Its richness and methodological accuracy allow us to insert it in the general debate of decolonizing academia from an Indigenous-Native perspective. However, certain issues remained unexplored. More methodological tools that practically try to answer how to decolonize the study of Palestine need to be developed; similarly, more indications for non-native Palestinian authors should be considered and addressed. Authors such as Elia Zureik certainly opened up this way, and we must follow as researchers who approach the study of Palestine from an anti-Zionist and human rights standpoint. Quoting a Spanish feminist

Decolonizing the Study of Palestine (Ahmad H. Sa'di & Nur Masalha)

motto, “Roots must trust the flowers”.¹

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¹ This motto, originally in Italian (“Le radici devono avere fiducia dei fiori”), is attributed to the Spanish philosopher, Maria Zambrano, who died in Madrid in 1991.