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Editors

Religion and Place

Landscape, Politics and Piety

Chapter 4
Metaphors to Live by: Identity Formation and Resistance Among Minority Muslims in Israel

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4.1 Experiencing the Sacred on a Cold Winter Morning: Reflections on Religion, Politics, and Landscape

In the winter of 2002, I took students on a field trip that focused on Islamic monuments and landscape in the Galilee region in Israel. Our first stop was a local pilgrimage site called Maqam Abu al-Hijja, namely, the holy place of worship of a certain Abu al-Hijja. It was a fiercely cold morning, and the students relished the time spent inside the relatively warm shrine. As I was talking about the politics reflected in the internal landscape of the shrine – photos of the Dome of the Rock, Palestinian and Islamic symbols, etc. – a student pointed out to me a small graffiti near the entrance door. The handwritten Arabic inscription said: "Please God, help Osama Bin Ladin." Those were the days of post 9/11 and the height of the second Intifada, and the rifts between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority in Israel never looked more unbridgeable. I could see that the inscription was deeply disheartening to all the students, Jews and Muslims alike. All of a sudden, cultural-political-ethnical-religious boundaries came alive and were reified in the room. As we were standing there, a group of 25 people, we were no longer just an academic class learning about Islamic civilization and cultural landscape. Rather, we were instantly reduced to clans: Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, or so it felt. I did not venture to explore my students' views toward this inscription as I feared it would provoke a heated political debate. I wanted to prevent a situation in which my Muslim students would find themselves between a rock and a hard place. In the Israeli political climate, in a similar fashion to the one prevailing in the USA at that time, one was either with

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"us" against evil or by default against "us"[1] (Amaney and Naber 2008; Tehranian 2009). Instead, I opted to elaborate on the political nature of the sacred and issues of identity politics and landscape. A few months later, the inscription could no longer be seen; an unknown hand had erased it from the wall; clearly, someone did not like the message.

This short anecdote is just a reminder, if we ever needed one, of the political nature of the sacred. In recent years, religion and sacred sites have gained ample attention in studies ranging from political and cultural geography to sociology, anthropology, and political sciences (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Chidister and Linenthal 1995; Friedland and Hecht 2000; Kong 2001). This chapter is located at the intersection of some of these debates and scholarly attention. It explores the relevancy of the sacred in contemporary life and the importance of religion and religious landscape in sustaining personal and group identity. Specifically, it examines the role of sacred sites among minority groups as a nexus for identity formation, design of collective memory, self-empowerment, and resistance. This chapter focuses on the ways in which minority Islamic sacred sites serve as spatial metaphors. Through an analysis of the transformations of an Islamic sacred site (maqam), this chapter reveals the politics of identity and minority group resistance performed and enacted through the sacred. In this way, the chapter reinforces the theoretical notion that landscape is essentially a political, cultural, and ideological endeavor. In particular, this chapter engages directly with majority-minority relations in contemporary Israel and what seems to be a growing source of conflict in Israeli society – the evolution of a more elaborate, informed, and outspoken Palestinian identity among Arab-Israeli citizens.

4.2 Islamic Sacred Places in Israel as Spatial Metaphors

Landscape is surely one of the more vexing and therefore fascinating human creations. It is anything but self-explanatory, simple, or innocent. In recent years, cultural geographers have promoted time and again an understanding of landscape as a cultural, and therefore highly political, construction, sphere, or process (Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels 1998; Mitchell 2000). At this stage, I would like to build an argument around this understanding regarding the multivalence of landscape as a way to explain the definition of landscape artifacts/icons/landmarks as spatial metaphors. Following which, I will explain the ways landscape and, more specifically, landmarks serve to sustain group identity and transform into spaces of resistance. This will be linked more directly to the main goal of this chapter which is to explore the meaning of sacred sites for minority communities in Israel. I am totally in agreement with Ivakhiv's argument that the phenomena of religion and sacrality ought to be studied as ways of distributing significance across geographic spaces and as

[1] "Us" being in this case the Jewish majority.

involving the distinction of different kinds of significance from among those being distributed (2006). It is our task as geographers of religion to explore these landscapes and understand the meanings that are being distributed and fought over.

Landscape, as the argument goes, is not just simply out there to be studied as a natural phenomenon. It is certainly not "nature" (Tuan 1979). Arguably, landscape is "culture" before it is "nature" (Schama 1995). The very word landscape in its cultural meaning entails the existence and work of human agents (Olwig 1993). But if landscape is a product of human labor (work), then Mitchell is right to suggest that it is also about the role played by landscape: to mystify human labor and to make it (i.e., landscape itself) appear natural rather than the product of social-cultural-political forces (Mitchell 2000: 104). It should be seen as a cultural medium that has a dual role:

It naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable. (Mitchell 2004)

Hence, although landscape is a beguiling phenomenon and is perceived as a seemingly natural outcome of human labor, it is anything but natural or haphazard. The formation of landscape is inexorably linked to politics, power geometries, and struggles over meanings and ownership. The creation, or rather the construction, of landscape is all about power and therefore entails struggles and the use of force. The painting of a mural, the tilling of a field, the production or the demolition of an edifice (Saddam Hussein's monument in Tikrit is just an ostentatious example that comes to mind), and the construction of the Sacré-Coeur Basilica in Paris[2] are all but parts of negotiations and dialectics among different forces. Thus, the construction of landscape is a continuous dialogue and indeed a struggle among different forces. In this process, power is used, implemented, and contested as there are no power relations without resistance (Foucault 1980).

The use of power in the construction of landscape is unavoidably linked to ideology or, simply put, the way people want to represent themselves (Cosgrove 1984). Landscapes are ideological because they can be used to represent, legitimize, and/or challenge social and political control (Kong 1993). Thus, landscapes carry signs and symbols which represent social norms, identity, memory, cultural codes, and ways these were, and still are, fought and debated among different forces. It is indeed a text (Meinig 1979; Duncan 1990; Barnes and Duncan 1992) and hence susceptible as any other to many readings. Landscape is one of the most complex and intriguing signifying systems saturated with signs, symbols, and meanings (Barnes and Duncan 1992; Duncan and Duncan 1988). Inevitably, as a signifying system, it needs to be regarded and read as a text and therefore susceptible to all the dialectic and hermeneutic processes that are related to text analysis.

So, who gets to "author" the landscape? Who has the power of authority to write the landscape? (Mitchell 2000). In addition, and more pertinent to this chapter, what are the meanings assigned and the symbolization and cultural codes that may be

[2] This is a small tribute to Harvey's powerful cultural-political analysis of an iconic landmark, Harvey (1979).

read through Islamic sacred sites in Israel? The "landscape as text" metaphor is a very useful idea, but at the same time, it leaves us with the following conundrum: what is the metaphor describing? In what ways are those places being used as ideological/political/personal signs and signifiers and which contemporary needs and politics of those communities are being met? Following the understanding that landscapes are texts and may be read as texts, I will offer a "reading" of sacred sites found in local Palestinian communities. However, the evolution of these places in recent years is inescapably connected to general developments within the Israeli landscape, that is, the political geography of Israel at large.

4.3 Minorities and the Judaization of the Israeli Landscape

In order to set the activities related to Islamic sacred sites in Israel in context, it is pertinent at this stage to outline the central developments of the Israeli landscape – in other words, the cultural-political geography. It should be clear from the outset that the following are brief notes on the issues relevant to our discussion on the meaning of Islamic sacred sites (for more elaborate studies on the political geography of Israel for example, see Kimmerling 2001; Don Yihya 2001; Hilal 2006; Rouhana 2004; Yiftachel 2006).

The Israeli (then Palestine) landscape experienced dramatic changes and transformations during the nineteenth century mainly due to the growing interest and activities of European powers and the influx of new ideological groups to the region (Kark 1990). One of the most influential and meaningful changes was the growing presence of Jewish settlers and settlements which later served as the crucial platform for the emergence of the state of Israel. The return of the Jewish people to their historical homeland was a direct outcome of the advancement of the Herzlian concept of practical Zionism (Vital 1975). The years under the British Mandate (1917–1948) were crucial to the changes in the political geography with the massive influx of Jewish immigrants and refugees. However, the land was far from being deserted, and the Arab population located between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea did not sit idly by as Zionists established roots. Against the Jewish nationalistic project, the local Arab population promoted its own national Palestinian movement (Muslih 1998). The tension between these two opposing ethnic groups and ideological movements grew as both sides came to the realization that the war for Palestine was imminent following the UN vote for partition of the land (Laqueur and Rubin 2001). Shortly after the final British withdrawal on May 15, 1948, a full-scale war was launched between the Jews (soon to be the state of Israel) and their Arab counterparts. As a result of the war, Israel was established as a Jewish State and imposed ethnic rule within its sovereign territory, now covering 78% of Israel/Palestine (Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004). The majority of the Arab-Palestinian population fled or was forced out of the new emerging Jewish state, thus transforming the native Arab majority into a dispersed and marginalized minority in its previous homeland (Ghanem 2001; Morris 2001). The Israeli-Palestinians have become a

"trapped minority" which means that their Arab-Palestinian identity contradicted the hegemonic Jewish character of the state in which they were supposed to be equal rights citizens (Rabinowitz 2001).

As a sovereign state, Israel began a concerted project known as the Judaization policy and built over 500 settlements and cities in areas previously inhabited by Palestinians (Benvenisti 2000; Yiftachel 2006). One of the most important results of this project (which is still underway) was the disappearance of former non-Jewish cultural artifacts, landmarks, houses, villages, and other cultural spatial presentations of the Arab-Palestinian past and heritage. The outcome of this state-hegemonic project meant that the Arab minority was by and large deprived of accessibility to public space in general and to its own settlements. Arguably, the public space – the cultural-national landscape – was dominated by Jewish-Zionistic icons and symbols. Meron Benvenisti – an Israeli historian, a public figure, and an avid advocate of reconciliation and mutual recognition of the loss on both sides – encapsulates the gist of the contemporary Israeli landscape vis-à-vis its Arab-Palestinian origins through the following words:

> One need only read Israeli textbooks or see the albums of "before and after" photos – the land of 1948 and today – to realize how close we are to the point when the vanished Arab landscape will be considered just a piece of Arab propaganda, a fabrication aimed at the destruction of Israel. (Benvenisti 2000: 5)

In recent years, there has been growing activity among Palestinian citizens and groups in Israel regarding heritage locations that are mostly religious in nature. Thus, deserted mosques, religious endowments, graveyards, and other landmarks are being contested both publicly and legally. For this reason and as a part of an emancipatory process, several NGOs were established (Jabarin 2007). One of the more prominent ones is an offshoot of the Israeli Islamic movement appropriately named "the Al-Aqsa Association to Deal with the Property of Islamic Waqf." According to its director Sheikh Kamil Rayan, the organization focuses its activities on "the demand to apply Waqf assets to the preservations and development of neglected sites" (Haaretz, 19 April 1991; cited in Ghanem 2001: 128). Following the Oslo Accords (1995), there is a growing involvement of the Israeli-Palestinian minority in the Israeli public sphere. This followed the realization that the negotiations between Israel and Palestinian authority do not contribute to any significant improvement in their civil status or rights. This realization was translated into activities that "localize the national struggle" (Rekhess 2002). Thus, issues that had haunted Palestinian communities for decades, such as the right of return, accessibility to heritage sites, the "opening of the 48 files," refugees, land ownership, and their very definition as a national minority, began to surface more and more in the public media, in the courts, as well as in the Israeli parliament.

The battle for the (sacred) landscape is fought over many fronts from the local to the national scale and is manifested in various forms, for example, the struggle over the right to renovate the ruined minaret at the deserted village of Hittin, the contestation over the ownership of the mosque of Hassan Bey in Tel Aviv-Jaffa or the more photogenic and globalized conflict over the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem (Luz 2004, 2005, 2008). These places are highly effective in this cultural war.

Due to their religious connotations and social sensitivities (indeed, deep sense of place), they are less susceptible to the hegemonic machinery. Sacred places are highly evocative and therefore can successfully serve as efficient platforms to rally together people and groups that do not necessarily agree or cooperate on a daily basis. Thus, one may find adherents of the Israeli Islamic movement working shoulder to shoulder with representatives and supporters of the former Arab communist party in the struggle over the right to pray at the al-Aqsa mosque. In a different struggle, Arab Christians from Jaffa were at the forefront of a public struggle over the ownership of a mosque (Luz 2008). These places serve as locations and nexuses where various processes are underway: self-empowerment, memory design, identity politics, and more.

In the northern part of Israel, the Galilee, the state faces problems of control (at least according to the "official" perception) as the Jewish citizens of the region constitute less than 50% of the entire population. Over the years, different ideas and projects were offered in order to strengthen state control over this ethnically mixed region (Yiftachel 1992). One such solution to change the demographic balance (i.e., ratio between Jews and non-Jewish citizens) was the "Judaization of the Galilee" project that was launched in the late 1970s. The most successful part of this project was the construction of a new Jewish regional council named "Misgav," stretching over 200,000 dunums in the center of Lower Galilee (Sofer and Finkel 1988). Set between various existing Arab municipalities and built, partially at least, on appropriations of Israeli-Palestinians' land, this council was designated mostly for Jewish citizens (Luz 2007).[3] The formation of a new council consisting of 35 small villages scattered mainly on hills overlooking Arab-existing settlements contributed not only to changes in local demography but also to changes among respective local Arab communities. Against the background of years of marginalization and state-authored discriminatory laws against the non-Jewish population, this state-supported endeavor contributed directly to growing friction and contestations between Arab and Jewish councils in the Lower Galilee. During the early days of the October 2000 events (local name for the second Intifada within the Green Line), the region was in turmoil and Jewish settlements as well as various state symbols were attacked by Arab citizens of the neighboring villages. One cannot help but see the connection between the state project "Judaization of the Galilee" and local responses to the apparent discrimination against Arab-Israeli citizens of the Galilee. Indeed, as Don Mitchell already suggested, cultural wars were not confined to the field of representation but rather were raged across the landscape itself (Mitchell 2000).

Amidst these affluent new Jewish settlements lies the maqam of Abu al-Hijja, which is a local shrine that serves mostly people from the region. This sacred site is the point of departure and main case study for the current analysis. It will be demonstrated in the following text that this location and the recent changes of the region's landscape contributed significantly to the development and the changing perceptions of this shrine.

[3] Misgav Regional Council entails also six Bedouin villages.

4.4 The Rewriting of a Sacred Landmark: Historical and Recent Development at Maqam Abu al-Hijja

Maqam in Arabic literally means "a place." However, when the term is applied to places of this nature, it should be understood as "a sacred site" (Goldziher 1967). According to local and mostly oral traditions, the shrine of Abu al-Hijja is the tomb of a certain Husam al-Din Abu al-Hijja (Arraf 1993). Who was this person and what were his virtues that led to his burial site being transformed into a local pilgrimage shrine? The data is rather scarce as little is written about him in historical sources. His name Abu al-Hijja carries a rather military tone and means "father of the war" but probably should be translated as the "fearless warrior." His nickname was al-Samin, that is, "the fat which should be read as a sign of good health." He was of Kurdish origin and served as a high-ranking officer (Amir) in the army of Saladin during the famous third crusade led by Richard the Lion Heart from 1191 to 1192 (Holt 1986). He excelled in the battlefield and was awarded accordingly with the revenues from vast tracts of taxable lands (Iqta') mostly in the Lower Galilee. The village in which the maqam is found was also part of this fiefdom.[4] Abu al-Hijja died in 1196 on his way back to his hometown, Irbil, which is in contemporary northern Iraq (Ibn Taghri Birdi 1913). There are no indications that he met his death in this very village or that this tomb indeed holds his remains. What is even more intriguing is the very process of consecration of this persona who had neither religious background nor any known military virtues and whose only real connection to the area was his short army career and revenues he exploited from the locals. Why then would the people of the region promote an understanding of this military figure as a wali – an Islamic term referring to a righteous person who is considered a "friend of God"? To put this in a Weberian perspective, what was his charismatic lure and why would the local population attribute any special virtues to him? It would seem that his main claim to fame was his role in the holy war (Jihad) against the Crusaders.

Abu al-Hijja is not a singular or a unique example. The consecration of this place and person is but a case in point for a much wider phenomenon. Throughout the region, places and figures associated with the struggle against the Crusades have over the years become part of the mythologized and valorized local (and contemporary Palestinian) history and collective memory. Thus, for example, the alleged burial ground of the nephew of Saladin, Shihab al-Din, in Nazareth has become a pilgrimage site. The name Hittin, which is the place where Saladin defeated the Crusader army, was given to numerous Palestinian schools as well as to one of the divisions of the Army for the Liberation of Palestine. The "reconquista" against the Crusades and especially the period of Saladin have become part of a mythologized past for contemporary local Palestinian communities. It functions as a regulatory mechanism in the construction of landmarks and sacred landscape (Frenkel 2001; Luz 2002).

[4] For lack of better word, I use the European term fiefdom. However, it should be noted that the Islamic grant system of land was not similar to the European one.

It is rather difficult to reconstruct the historical geography of the maqam. It is not at all certain that the compound was actually constructed in this location prior to the late nineteenth century and certainly not in the format that exists today. Victor Guérin, a renowned and highly reliable French scholar, whose vast knowledge and meticulous surveys of the region are generally acclaimed, visited the small village of Kawkab on August 13, 1875. His description fails to mention a sacred site by that name although he does refer to another sacred site related to a certain local saint (wali) by the name of Ali (Guérin 1870). Surely this omission does not connote that maqam Abu al-Hijja did not exist at the time. But against the general lack of sources, it certainly poses some serious doubts as to the prevailing local historical reconstruction. So, in addition to the uncertain death place of Abu al-Hijja, we are also faced with inconclusive evidence regarding the construction date of the maqam. Indeed, as argued by Nora, there is a striking difference between memory and history. While history, as explored by historians, is about the representation of the past,[5] memory is life, borne by living societies (Nora 1989: 8–9). Put differently, memory is the vehicle through which myths are carried further. Memory and what is fashionably called collective memory rarely need verifications. It is the very essence of myth or as brilliantly formulated by Lincoln: "strategic tinkering with the past introduces the question of myth" (Lincoln 1989: 21). In my numerous visitations to the site, through conducting talks and interviews, or even when upon examining the fragmentary literature, not a single doubt was ever cast on the accepted (hi)story of the maqam. An assumed past (history as the case may be) is agreed upon according to which the place served as a sacred site since its inception subsequent to Abu al-Hijja's demise in the late twelfth century.

Today, the site is an integral part of the local sacred geography. One of the traditions that entailed visitations of the maqam was the annual ritual antecedent to the rainy season. Shortly before the "official" beginning of the winter (usually late October), the people of the village, accompanied by pilgrims from more distant locations, perform a pilgrimage to several sacred locations surrounding the village. The parade would end in a public gathering at maqam Abu al-Hijja during which a special prayer for rain (Istisqa) was performed (Arraf 1993). The upheaval of 1948 and the dramatic geopolitical changes that followed, in particular the formation of the state of Israel as a sovereign Jewish state, have led to the cessation of this pilgrimage. During the 1990s, as part of an initiative to transform the village into a tourist attraction, the ceremony was reenacted a few times but with meager success (Mustafa Abd al-Fatah, Interview with Author, April 28, 2005). In recent years, this initiative is no longer being carried out.

Located amidst an olive orchard, Maqam Abu al-Hijja today is far from being an impressive or extravagant landmark. It consists of two small halls, one serves as the entrance through which pilgrims can sit and pray and another one in which the tombs are located. This is the sacred center of the maqam where the pilgrims visit

[5] I think Nora is oversimplifying here as to the power-knowledge complexities of writing history, but his discussion opens up the debate about these distinctions.

with their special requests to ask for the intercession of Abu al-Hijja. The compound also consists of a courtyard in which a cistern can be found. The entrance to the sacred area is through a gate in this courtyard which is never really locked. The roof is adorned with two identical domes. Over the years, the ground surrounding the maqam serves as the village's main graveyard which is another reason for frequent visitations.

In 1989, a new mayor was elected to the village municipality. The new elected mayor was Ahmad Hajj of the left wing secular Arab-Jewish party of Hadash.[6] Shortly after beginning his time in office, he launched a renovation project which included among other historical sites the maqam of Abu al-Hijja:

> I wanted to renovate all historical sites. True, I am not a religious person but I think that some places need to be preserved by the people they belong to because they are part of their history. If you do not have a history you do not have anything, and especially because I am not religious I renovated the place because I wanted that my history in the area will not be erased. (Interview with author, December 28, 2005)

The renovation project included a complete do-over of internal parts of the maqam. In addition to renewal of the plaster and repainting of the walls, the external side of the domes was painted with the traditional green. New pictures were hanged inside the maqam. The themes of the pictures are quite intriguing. Along with traditional depictions of the sacred sites at Mecca and Madina, one could also find a number of pictures of the al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Beside placards carrying Quranic verses, pictures of a more nationalistic Palestinian nature were hanged. One such picture was that of a young crying boy clad in a Palestinian kefiyyeh. This is one of the most popular "Palestinian" self-presentations of the current occupation and predicament of the Palestinians. The boy in the picture personifies Palestine and the struggle for the lost land as well as the catastrophe (Nakba) suffered by the Palestinian people. Should this rather unsuble symbolization escape the beholder, the following caption is inscribed: "My beloved Palestine, how can I sleep while my eyes are clouded by the shadows of agony?" Thus, along with acknowledged and well-recognized religious symbols, one could find signs of the political national struggle. Furthermore, these symbols are often fused together to establish an understanding of the place as a religious-national icon. Indeed, maqam Abu al-Hijja is an Islamic sacred site and is promoted as such, but the construction of a layer of national meaning around it promotes it as a religious-national symbol. This fusion can be found across the board all around Israel. Several years ago, the Palestinian community of Jaffa joined hands in a public struggle to reclaim the mosque of Hassan Bey which was going to be transformed into a shopping mall (Luz 2005, 2008). Among the leaders of this public struggle were Christians, seculars, as well as other Jaffa residents who clearly were not members or adherents of the Islamic movement. These people went into conflict over a cultural icon or a

[6] This is the only political party in the Israeli parliament which advances the concept of full Arab-Jewish cooperation and promotes the idea of Israel as state of all its citizens as opposed to the current definition of a Jewish and a democratic state.

heritage site rather than a religious compound. Against the prevailing forces in Israeli society and after years of marginalization, the mosque has become an icon that symbolizes their civilian and political status. Another case in point is the promotion of the Haram al-Sharif – the Islamic noble sanctuary in Jerusalem – as the most revered national symbol (Luz 2004, 2009). The sacred sites in Jerusalem became coterminous with the idea of the Palestinian national struggle and national revival. Muslims and Christians, religious and seculars, and otherwise bitter enemies are firmly united regarding the importance and sanctity of this place. Its importance as a religious-national symbol rises high above any political differences and contestations. These new significances that are being distributed to sacred sites are part of the localization of the Palestinian national struggle. Put differently, in recent years, the war for national independence has been waged internally in Israel over numerous internal Israeli civic issues, sacred sites being but one sterling example of that.

To ensure a safe and fulfilling visit to the maqam, a new parking lot was constructed for the pilgrims and visitors. The dirt road leading from the village to the maqam was freshly covered with asphalt. A new gate was opened to the parking lot which enabled the visitors to enter directly from the local regional highway which ran parallel and was close to the maqam. New lawns and olive trees were planted, and the area surrounding the maqam was transformed into a recreation site. In recent years, the number of visitors coming to enjoy the maqam solely as a recreation site has been on the increase. Families, groups, and young people who want to avoid the public gaze and scrutiny[7] come here to enjoy peaceful hours in a place where they can truly identify with as their own. This may be better understood against wide-ranging processes of polarization and exclusion of Israeli society and in particular the growing animosity between Jews and Arabs in recent years. Parts of these processes are the ongoing efforts to exclude Arab citizens from public places. In the nearby town of Karmiel, dominated by the Jewish population, members of the city council were trying time and again to pass a new bylaw that would ensure that only citizens holding city passports would be allowed in the city parks (Zafon December 1, 2003). Plainly, this was an initiative to ban Arabs from surrounding villages from enjoying the city public spaces and using its parks for recreation. Attempts to gentrify the urban landscape are surely not endemic to the Israeli landscape but additions to the general class struggle in Israel where contestations and public debates are also fueled by ethno-national politics (see, e.g., Smith 1992, 1996).

In 1999, a new mayor was elected to the Kawkab municipality. The mayor, Nawaf Hajuj, was considered to be a sympathizer of the Islamic movement. Shortly after his election, he ordered the gate of the car park entrance to be sealed. Apparently, he was concerned about the "illicit" activities taking place in the vicinity of the maqam and took measures to minimize them. Ironically, it was the "secular" mayor who opened up the place and the more religious one who symbolically reduced accessibility to the place. Be that as it may, over the last 20 years, the maqam has undergone significant changes both in its physical appearance and in its growing importance and visibility among local communities. In the following pages, I will delve into the issue of resistance through the sacred and the symbolical uses of the sacred as part of the national struggle and resistance.

4.5 Resistance, Identity Politics, and the Sacred

On a warm Friday afternoon in April 2003, three women arrived at the gates of the maqam. For Ibtisam, who drove 2 h from the city of Ramle, this was her annual visit in which she asks for her family's health and well-being. Umm Hanni came from the nearby town of Sakhnin to pray for the quick recovery of her mother-in-law from a recent surgery. Hadija, who just recently divorced, walked with her three children from her house in Kawkab to seek solace from her current quandary. Normally, I refrain from making conversation with unescorted single women, but it was Hadija who first approached me asking if I knew if any of my neighbors might be in need of her services as a manual laborer.[8] Although I could not offer her any crumb of comfort, the conversation flowed, and the three of them were very open about their pilgrimage and visitation at the maqam. In fact, despite gender, religious, and ethnic differences, I was invited to attend their prayers at the tombs and later to the repast in the small picnic area. As we sat and enjoyed the meal, I ventured to ask them about the maqam and the man associated with it. Regardless of their total ignorance about his true identity and history, they assured me that he was a saint and a venerated man who helped many people over the years. If anything at all, they were willingly sharing their worldviews and expressing their identity without the tiniest doubt or fear. No words were said about the conflict, the problems of the Arab minority in Israel, and indeed anything that might be understood as relating to contemporary political or public issues. This brings us to the question of resistance and identity politics in sacred sites.

Resistance is typically reactive and cannot be understood apart from domination and power relations. It relates to those behaviors and cultural practices applied by subordinate groups that contest hegemonic social formation and threaten to unravel the strategies of domination (Haynes and Parkash 1991). It is also the ability of people to alter situations and realities through a myriad of tactics and behaviors. Resistance is therefore the weapon of those occupying subordinate positions in power-geography relations, who are therefore less likely to influence or change their spatialities. Naturally, those who have more access to resources (hegemonic groups) will also be those who will be able to codify space in accordance with their ideologies and political aims. Consequently, Islamic sacred sites within the Israeli landscape are inexorably linked, in my mind, with resistance and counter-hegemonic politics.

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[7] I am particularly referring to the consumption of alcoholic beverages and social encounters in a mixed company which are by and large condemned in local traditional Arab communities.

[8] She asked me that after she discovered that I lived in one of the new Jewish villages nearby.

Following Gramsci, I would claim that relations between dominant and subordinate groups are a process in which boundaries and consensual norms are always shifting and being negotiated (1971). Tangled in a web of political and social relations, dominant and subordinate groups are constantly competing and transforming the spaces they are sharing (or competing for) in accordance with their cultural, economical, and political stances. Resistance arrives from a place (and can take place) outside of the hegemonic control or less monitored by dominant agencies, be they state-controlled or socially constructed ones. Resistance therefore can be mapped as it is inevitably spatial (Pile 1997). It does not just simply take place but also seeks to appropriate place, a place that was subjected to hegemonic manipulations or is about to succumb to such dominant maneuvers that alter its character, accessibility, etc. From this perspective, resistance is less about particular acts than about the desire to find a place in a power-geography where space is denied or totally controlled (Scott 1990). The struggle for a particular space and the spatial changes in the socio-spatial boundaries of a place are inexorably linked to politics of identity. The struggle of a subordinate group over a particular place (resistance) is by and large a spatial-ization of identity conflicts and at the same time identity constructions around a particular object.

Resistance, according to Scott, includes any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims or to advance its own claims vis-à-vis any external or hegemonic power (Scott 1985). In my mind, one of Scott's strongest contributions is his claim that resistance predominantly is informal, hidden, and nonconfrontational. However, Scott demands political awareness on the part of the subordinate and a reactive approach to claims made by the powers that be. Scott therefore demands political consciousness on the part of the subaltern or subordinate. But sometimes, even when the intention is unclear or even when one completely denies the very existence of resistance or intention, the very posing of an alternative politics and cultural traits that are different from those of power may be/need to be considered as resistance. My argument here is more expansive than Scott's as I regard nonpolitical, unintended, or even unintentional acts as forms of resis-tance if they emanate from identity politics of subordinate or subaltern positions (Vinthagen 2007). The three women that performed their identity at the maqam may be totally oblivious to the nature or possible interpretations of their acts. They might even rule out such a statement on their part. However, I read it as resistance in the context of the Lower Galilee and Israeli society at large, and given the current politi-cal situation, the very portrayal of social behaviors which are inconsistent or at odds with that of the Jewish-hegemonic majority calls for a highly politicized read-ing. Therefore, resistance may be defined as positions, intended or unintended, which have the potential to influence power or hegemonic positions. Put bluntly, I hold the three women's activities in a minority sacred site as resistance even if they fail (or refute) to acknowledge these acts as such.[9] The very projection of alternative

cultural traits needs to be considered as resistance as they carry political implications or at least possibilities. This is certainly true in cases when the subject is fully aware of his acts and defines them against the hegemonic group.

Another pertinent issue is raised by Chivallon in her exploration of religion as an essential feature of the diasporic experience of the Caribbean in the UK (2001). Chivallon takes issue with Pile's formulation of resistance in/through a place, in particular the question of ownership and resistance. Chivallon claims that as soon as the subordinate is in control of a place, his performance therein can no longer be considered as resistance:

> I agree completely with Pile's analysis (1997), in which he remains wary of a working of power relationships which is seen as "a separation of one space (of domination) from another (of resistance) ... Resistance, then, not only takes place in places, but also seeks to appropriate space, to make new spaces" (page 16). I believe, however, that from the moment when forms of resistance have access to the full codification of the physical space, they are no longer in a position of resistance (Chivallon 2001).

The ownership of maqam Abu al-Hijja was never in question. It is owned, oper-ated, and controlled by the people of Kawkab who naturally regard it as their own. Nevertheless, I chose to read their activities therein as resistance because even if they were unintentional, they are contrasted with hegemonic positions and carry the potential to undermine them. The fact that the people of Kawkab have access to the full codification of the physical space does not change either their subordinate position or their relations vis-à-vis the state and the Jewish majority. But even if the issue of resistance could be put to question, at least theoretically, where activities of uncertain political implications are concerned, the following statement leaves little doubt as to the identity politics entailed in adhering to Islamic sacred sites:

> The holy Islamic places are more important to me than the Christian ones...the mosque in Jaffa or in Acre, and the mosque in a ruined village are all signs for the continuation of Palestine.... I would pay good money for a mosque to be built atop Mount Carmel because it challenges the political Jewish identity of the State of Israel. (Nadim Rouhana, interview with author, August 2002)

The speaker was Nadim Rouhana, a Palestinian from a Christian family who grew up in Israel and currently resides as Professor of International Negotiation and Conflict Studies at Tufts University (http://fletcher.tufts.edu/faculty/Rouhana/default.shtml).

For him, the identity politics involved with Islamic sacred sites in Israel are apparent and undeniable. The existence of such places, the contestations involved with them, and their symbolic meanings are part and parcel of the ethno-national conflict. The fact that he is not a Muslim and yet can fully identify with such places clearly suggests that these locations have long since surpassed their religious, cultural, or historical framework. Within the Israeli context, these places are becoming highly politicized as they are perceived as part of the Palestinian national identity and heritage. Indeed, as stated by Rouhana, they have the capacity to challenge the Jewish identity of the state. But these places are also highly instrumental on a local scale for individuals and communities while sustaining and performing their identity. Surely, the growing activities in sacred sites cannot be fully explained simply

It might be argued that it is not against me that they resist but rather internal politics among the minority group and particularly male domination. I as an outsider might not be their frame of reference, and therefore, no such claims or statements were made.

Jamil is a young man I met in Kawkab. He was entertaining friends on his front porch as I passed his house. I asked for his permission to take a picture of the emblems above his front door. I was duly invited to join the conversation, and while we were sipping our drinks, he showed interest in my work. I explained that I was trying to understand how Israeli-Palestinians relate to their sacred sites. We discussed maqam Abu al-Hijja, and he shared with me some of the traditions assigned to the place. He told me that his father who suffered from a walking disability stayed by the tombs an entire night and in the morning he walked all the way back home fully cured. Jamil insisted that he did not consider himself a religious person but time and again he visited the maqam:

I do not go there because I believe in the sanctity of Abu al-Hijja or that I actually pray there. For me this is my place and it is important for me that it will look nice and particularly now because of the new Jewish places that were recently developed around us. I am not ashamed of what I have; far from it. Abu al-Hijja is part of my history even though I am not a religious person. (Interview with author, June 2005)

His answer reminds us of what was previously quoted from Ahmad Haji, the former mayor, who insisted that his initiative to renovate the maqam should not be perceived solely as a religious issue. For him, the maqam was a part of his heritage and therefore a venerated cultural attribute. Hajj was very upfront about the political implications of this site. He supplied an explanation, at least a partial one, of the importance of the period of Saladin among Palestinians and why sites affiliated with that period have grown in significance in recent years:

Q: But what is so special about Abu al-Hijja? After all has been said and done, he was but a military figure, a general in the army of Saladin. What do you have in common with this man from the twelfth century who was a Kurd and exploited the peasants of this region?
A: I feel close to Abu al-Hijja, not because he was a general or a Kurd, but because he was involved and helpful with the battle against the Crusaders. Through fighting the Crusaders he ultimately helped the Palestinian cause and people. (Interview with author, December 28, 2005)

Thus, the mythical "glorious" victory against the Christian-European forces of the 12th Crusade is fused with the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Palestinian national struggle. This fusion of religion, history, and past and contemporary politics is even more intriguing when we are reminded that Hajj, according to his own self-definition, was a highly secular person. This fusion allows for a highly speculative interpretation and understanding of the past to sustain contemporary needs. Thus, a history of the place is being formed and concretized to sustain the dire needs of the present. The maqam, as any other "place," is a complex web of relations, of domination and subordination, and of solidarities and cooperation (Massey 1993). At the same time, it is inexorably linked with controversies, conflicts, struggles over control, and debates (as well as more physical contestations) over meaning and symbolism. Being a "web of signification" (Ley and Olds 1988) inevitably transforms the place into a site where that significance and its "true" nature is up for grabs for those already in power or those in the search for power. Places, as the argument goes, are spatial metaphors through which people (singular and plural) can represent themselves and thus concretize their culture; that is, through places, cultural

ideas and abstracts become concrete. The maqam and the person commemorated therein are refashioned and are perceived as parts of the national heritage. Thus, the place is able to accommodate and sustain a highly complex and flexible identity politics as well as serve as an accessible and handy platform where resistance can be performed.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the process of placemaking in the construction of sacredness and a sacred site is the foreground of the politics of spatial relations. Indeed, as the case of Abu al-Hijja reveals, the encounter with the sacred is a mediated and negotiated experience rather than an inherent one. The construction of the place follows other sociopolitical processes within and without the community of Kawkab. The ways in which the construction of a religious-political community and particular identity politics are understood are embedded within wider Palestinian national discourses. All around Israel, Islamic (Palestinian) religious sites are becoming highly politicized and serve as platforms where new identity politics are being formed to meet with contemporary needs.

Maqam Abu al-Hijja is also a case in which the past of the place is used and transformed in order to meet with contemporary needs. The sacred site of the minority is promoted as a religious-national icon and therefore part of an emancipatory process. This hybrid of meaning and rather unreserved construction of historical events emanate from a rather unique process of identity politics which is underway among Palestinian communities in Israel. In this sense, identity has both an individualist and a collective meaning. Going back to the very basic definitions, identity can simply relate to "a person's sense of belonging to a group if (it) influences his political behaviors" (Erickson 1968). The common interest calls for a common identity. In order for different people to join together, a very rich understanding of this identity is being formed. Thus, identity politics serve as rallying and organizing principles of social action among Israeli-Palestinians. They inform and guide cultural political behavior and enable different forces to unite over an all-encompassing understanding of the sacred site. Identity is not only about individuality and self-awareness but also and especially about identification with, and commitment to, shared values and beliefs in a social collectivity to which a person belongs. At any given time, a person may have multiple identities, each of which may always have some bearing on his or her political conduct and social roles in society. In the case of maqam Abu al-Hijja, the construction of a "mythical" past and the nationalization of the sacred allow individuals who might otherwise be at odds with each other to find a common ground: a common interest that involves a shared identity and collective hi(story) through politics of resistance. The maqam of Abu al-Hijja is a relevant case in point through which one can study the phenomena of religion and sacrality as ways of distributing significance across geographic spaces and involving the distinction of different kinds of significance from among those being distributed.

The study of the changing landscape and socio-spatial activities therein reveal the importance of critical geography of religion as a way to explore sacred places and understand what meanings are being distributed and fought over.

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Chapter 5
Myth, *Miramiento*, and the Making of Religious Landscapes

Elizabeth Olson

5.1 Introduction

> It looks just like Switzerland...

This comment came from a Peruvian development practitioner with extensive experience of resource development in the rural Andes. We were having lunch and discussing watershed governance, and the conversation drifted to my interest in the links between religious affiliation and social organization in Latin America. He began explaining the development success of several indigenous communities in a region of the Andes where investment in an Evangelical community had resulted in unequaled development. As we continued talking about this place, he soon revealed that he had never been there, but that he had seen pictures shown to him by other development professionals who had been there. My curiosity was less in the mechanical aspects of the success, for his narrative of fat cows and healthy children raised a very different question – why, in the several years that I had been working in Latin America, did this narrative of Evangelical success always adhere so tightly to concepts of landscape? How were these "Evangelical" places being made so convincingly that they were described to me first by a Spanish tutor in Guatemala and, 3 years later, by this development practitioner in Peru?

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect upon the ways that religious difference becomes produced in and through embodied religious landscapes. I begin by outlining some of the central arguments emerging from geographic research on the construction of religious landscapes. The data is drawn from ethnographic research conducted in 2002 and 2003 in two rural districts of the high provinces of Cusco, Peru. I explore the ways that religious boundaries and differences become part of a rural landscape and gain shape through *miramiento*, a gaze which acts as a strong

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