The London School of Economics and Political Science

Custodians of descent

Religion, kinship, and continuity among Palestinian Orthodox Christians

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Abstract

This thesis examines the religious life of Palestinian Orthodox Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, a Church composed of a Palestinian parish and a Greek monastic hierarchy. Based on eighteen months of fieldwork in the Old City of Jerusalem and its environs, it provides an account of how Orthodox Palestinians protect the continuity of their society in the face of Greek religious authority, Israeli occupation, and growing economic pressures. In particular, it shows how Palestinians frame their religious and political lives in this context through powerful idioms of descent.

My research suggests that for Orthodox Palestinians, Christianity is less about scripture or spirituality than it is about history. More specifically, it is an inheritance passed down from their parents and grandparents and generations of Palestinians before them. Through an ethnography of saints' festivals, family life, property relations, and religious activism, I describe the ways in which such idioms are articulated and acted upon. I argue that descent is not a feature of kinship alone but the product of a specific history that has tied religious institutions to the Palestinian family in profound and surprising ways.

Thus while the thesis is ethnographic in focus it also draws on memoirs, religious tracts, and genealogies in order to highlight how this history unfolded and how it informs contemporary Palestinian life. The first part explores the internal dynamics of the Patriarchate while the second takes a wider view, showing how the Orthodox community has been transformed by larger political and economic forces. The result is an attempt to rethink the concept of descent by demonstrating how it became the defining feature of Christianity's oldest Church.

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Acknowledgements

Though I didn't know it at the time, this project began when I was studying Arabic in Jerusalem over a decade ago. I became friends with a man I call Khaled, who since our first meeting has never stopped teaching me about the Orthodox Church: both its venerable past, and (for him) its ignominious present. So, first and foremost, I wish to thank Khaled, and all the Palestinian Christians who have shared their lives with me over the years.

A large number of people have helped me over the years but I would like to single out a few. Though some have pseudonyms for confidentiality reasons, I especially need to thank Abla, my friend and landlady, who is one of the most generous and direct people I have ever met. She has shared her home with me for years and I will always be grateful. Andraous has also been a close friend for a long time. He opened his home to me and taught me a great deal about Orthodoxy and the Old City. I also wish to thank the Haddad family, Nora Kort, Rania and Aida, Maro and Michael, Hala, Im Yousef, George, and Yousef. Outside the Old City, I would like to thank Assis Naim, Hiba, Sawsan, Dima, and Rima. Thanks also to Said and Nadia for being good friends and hosting me many times.

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Note on transliteration

This thesis follows a simplified version of the transliteration conventions used by the International Journal of Middle East Studies – i.e. without diacritics. For colloquial words and expressions that deviate from Modern Standard Arabic, I transliterate them as they are pronounced. Where a common spelling used in my field site deviates from the IJMES conventions, I use the former.

Glossary

Mukhtar – The lay representative of the Palestinian Orthodox community.

Wakeel (pl. **wukala'**) – A lay trustee of a church. Usually there is a head and several others who form a committee to manage the affairs of the parish.

Hosh – An intimate neighborhood, usually a single compound or cluster of houses.

Hara – A residential quarter.

Waqf – A property endowment, usually formed by a family or a religious institution to prevent a property from being sold, divided, or alienated over time.

Usufruct – A legal term broadly related to use rights over a particular property.

Dar/bayt – A house.

A'ila/usra/ahl – Different terms for "family".

Ameh (kollyva in Greek**)** – Lit. "wheat" in Arabic (*qameh*). A cake made from boiled wheat served at memorial services for the dead and at saints' feasts.

Mar Yacoub – The Palestinian Orthodox parish church in Jerusalem, adjacent to the Holy Sepulcher.

Traditional Churches – A common phrase in Jerusalem referring to all denominations except the evangelical ones.

Church – A denomination, e.g. Armenian Orthodox, or a metonym for a sectarian community as a whole, e.g. "those who belong to the Church".

church – A physical church building.

Clergy – Married clergy do not advance to high office, so the usual distinction between laity and clergy is here between laity & married clergy vs. celibate, monastic clergy.

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Map of East Jerusalem

Source: United Nations OCHA-oPt (2011)

Map of the Old City

Source: Survey of Palestine 1936/1945 - National Library of Israel, Eran Laor Collection

Introduction

Palestinian Orthodoxy and the problem of descent

> "History and genealogy are not rationally conceived devices for ordering past experience, to be perfected by an ever more enlightened humanity or to be manipulated by clever politicians. They are themselves 'mystical symbols'…[that] serve to mediate social intercourse. The creation and transmission of history is a ritual act".
>
> - Gillian Feeley-Harnik[1]

From the first time I travelled to Jerusalem to study Arabic until the day I finished my doctoral fieldwork years later, Palestinians spoke to me of history. At first, I didn't know what to do with all of the information I was given: specific dates from Ottoman history, names of officers from the British Mandate, and countless anecdotes about people and events that had made their mark on an ancient and enigmatic city. But as time went on and I came to know the standard historical narratives of governments, religions, wars and occupations, I became more interested in the more specific familial and communal details embedded in these larger stories.

Among Palestinian Christians, one such detail was furnished by a friend, Khaled, who took it upon himself to educate me about the Orthodox – as far as he was concerned, and with some justification, *the* Christian community of historic Palestine. As his friends are keen to point out, Khaled is a proud Orthodox who does not miss an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of his Church. But his pride does not come from being related to the Christians of the Bible, as many Palestinian Christians now do claim, nor does it derive from theology or the authority of Orthodox texts. Rather, it comes from being a persistent part of history.

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[1] 1978: 414

"You know," he once told me, standing outside the Old City's Damascus Gate, "they used to call us the 'blue-boned.'" He watched Israeli soldiers check Palestinian IDs at the top of the stairs.

"Really?" I asked, "Why?"

"The Ottomans, they used to torture the Christians", he responded. "And the iron chains turned their skin blue, so the Orthodox were known by this name."

This statement stayed with me for a long time, and towards the end of my fieldwork I was reminded of it again. I had been running around the city trying to speak to everyone one last time, and had not seen Khaled in a while. I arranged with him to meet before the Holy Fire ceremony at Easter, my last big event before returning to the UK. I lived in the Christian Quarter, from which the procession to the church begins, so all I had to do was wait. But after several hours, Khaled never appeared and the procession left without him.

After the ceremony, I was leaving the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and spotted Khaled in the crowd. As we left, he told me he was held up by Israeli police at the gates of the city. He told them he was from an old Orthodox family and had the right to carry his family banner at the ceremony. The soldiers just looked at him. No "Christian" name, nothing to identify him as Orthodox.

"Where is your crucifix," they asked.
"I am Orthodox," he replied, "I don't need a crucifix."

Khaled is of course not representative of all Orthodox Christians but he represents a pronounced version of a sensibility I encountered often, one that I have come to see as central to the Palestinian Orthodox tradition. For many Orthodox Palestinians, religion is not a faith – or rather, not only a faith. When I was asked what my religion was, which happened often, I would usually say something like, "uh, I'm not very religious." The response was nearly always the same: "You don't understand. I'm not asking what you believe, that's up to you. What is the religion of your father?"

This is not to say Orthodox Christians do not care about theology or desire a connection with the divine. They do. But this desire is not primarily reflected in relation to

texts or icons or even the Eucharist, important as they all are. It is rather something one carries inside, something one inherits.

This thesis represents my attempt to reflect such a view of the Christian tradition as it was explained to me and as I encountered it myself in the unique context of Jerusalem. As the two images presented above indicate, this view of the Christian religion brings together relationships often considered political – between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers in one era, or Ottomans in another – as well as those considered to be forms of kinship. It is not a Christianity that often appears in civilizational histories or anthropological theories but it is fundamental to Palestinian Christian experience.

Overview: The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem

The "*Rum*" or Roman Orthodox Church, the Church of the Byzantine Empire, is the oldest and possibly the largest Christian denomination in Israel/Palestine today, though accurate statistics are difficult to come by. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is one of the five original patriarchates of the Orthodox Church, which included Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople (Istanbul). While the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Istanbul holds pre-eminence as the first among equals, the Jerusalem Patriarchate also holds a special position as custodian of the holy places. This has historically granted the patriarchs of Jerusalem outsized influence and funding in relation to the other patriarchates, and perhaps, over the centuries, more than its share of political intrigue.

In the past two thousand years, the Jerusalem Patriarchate has mostly operated under Muslim rule, with the Ottomans lasting the longest. The Church is well-known for its ability to adapt to changing power structures – a tradition it continues today with respect to Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan – and for much of the 19th century the Church flourished, its population rising steadily until the First World War, and its ownership of valuable real estate rapidly growing as well. This all changed with the emergence of national movements in the Balkans and the Middle East towards the end of the Ottoman period. The Russian revolution led to a massive decrease in pilgrims to the

Holy Land, the hierarchy of the Patriarchate of Antioch was "Arabized", and a national Palestinian movement emerged to similarly transform the seat of Jerusalem – with different results.

The Patriarchate is composed of a hierarchy of around 100 Greek monks and a laity of between 50,000-60,000 Palestinians.[2] As I describe in Chapter 1, the small number of Greeks became the norm after the fall of Constantinople but it wasn't until the modern era and the rise of nationalist movements that the Greeks began to see themselves as an exclusive ethnic and national community. This attitude contributed to the emergence of a Palestinian Orthodox national movement seeking greater involvement in Church affairs – but this movement was thwarted by the Patriarchate's close ties to the authorities and by the fact that unlike many other Orthodox Churches, the Jerusalem Church has a unified hierarchy. The monastic brotherhood, called the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher or the *Spudaioi* – "the industrious ones" – is tasked with protection of the holy sites, while the Patriarchate is theoretically tasked with pastoral care of the Palestinian parish. In the Latin Catholic Church, for example, these institutions have separate hierarchies but in the Orthodox Church they are unified in a single structure with the patriarch at the head of both.[3] As we will see throughout the thesis, this means that many Greek monks see pastoral care in relation to their vocation to protect and control the holy sites. Palestinian activism appears to threaten this control, which has meant that despite a high degree of factionalism within the Brotherhood, it has remained united in its opposition to Palestinian attempts at reform. Palestinians continue working towards reform today, but so far without success.

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[2] This is a rough estimate as neither Palestinian nor Israeli official sources specify Church denominations. The total Palestinian Christian population for Israel/Palestine is around 160,000 (PCBS 2019, CBS 2017). The World Christian Database estimates the Orthodox total is 47,400 (Johnson & Zurlo 2017) while Sabella puts it at 67,250 for 2014 (ND). See also Tsimhoni 1993: 26, Sabella 2000. The Patriarchate's jurisdiction also includes Jordan, for which Kildani attributes a population of around 121,000 Orthodox (2015; cf. Haddad 1992). Around Amman many Christians are Palestinian refugees but there are also longstanding Christian populations e.g. in Karak, Madaba, Salt, al-Husn, and Fheis.

[3] The Catholic Church is divided between a Palestinian-controlled Patriarchate and a Franciscan, European-controlled Custodial Curia, which holds the purse strings.

The struggle for authority within the Church has been a major feature of Orthodox life for the past century, but it is not the only feature. Equally important is the reason most Orthodox give for remaining in the Church under the Greek control, for not fleeing to the Latin or Greek Catholics (though some certainly did), both of which have Palestinian hierarchies. The reason is history: both Palestinian and Orthodox.

The Orthodox tradition is at bottom a tradition of carrying the divine presence through time. This feature of Orthodoxy may appear especially salient in the land of the Christian holy sites, but in fact it is central to most Orthodox contexts, just not always expressed in the same terms. Theologians and monastics, for example, speak of *theosis* or "divinization", a process through which one learns to become more god-like by shedding one's individual characteristics for the sake of one's divine personhood. This process is often associated with monasticism but its roots can be found in a pronouncement of St. Athanasius meant for all Christians, that "God became human so that we might be made god" (Ware 2015: 20). It is expressed in spiritual terms: divinity exists within the human and can be brought out through prayer and participation in the life of the Church. This sounds like a spiritual discipline, something accomplished in the present, or at most in the span of an individual life. But theologians insist that one's ability to become god-like is not an individual quest but one accomplished in relation to others, and especially the saints who came before and reveal the way forward. Without these historical instantiations of the divine presence, there is no Church (Yannaras 1996, Meyendorff 1998, Lossky 2005).

Similarly, today many Orthodox Christians speak of history in terms of heritage – in Post-Soviet states, for example, a heritage that was lost and must be regained after socialism (e.g. Pelkmans 2005, Forbess 2013; cf. Naumescu 2007). It is thus expressed in the political language of ethnicity, land, and nation. Still, the process is conceived as one of an identity carried in the bodies and land of Romanians and Russians, something that cannot be lost entirely, only forgotten.

Still others speak of the Orthodox ritual tradition, of preserving ancient practices passed down for centuries. The Old Believers of Russia would be one extreme example of this (Rogers 2009, Naumescu 2011), but there are many others – including the veneration

of icons (Luehrmann 2010, Hanganu 2010, Kenna 1985) and the preservation of Byzantine hymnal traditions (Englehardt 2014). Moreover, the idea of continuity between the Orthodox tradition and modern society often permeates state structures. Renee Hirschon, for example, indicates that until very recently, Greece continued to follow the logic of the Ottoman millet, which institutionally merged religious and state authority (2008). For many Greeks, she and others argue, the idea of preserving Orthodoxy is often considered equivalent with preserving the nation. This does not mean that religiosity is particularly pronounced. On the contrary, as in many Palestinian contexts, Greeks often appear to see Orthodoxy not as religion, narrowly defined, but simply as an intrinsic part their social life without being marked as something distinct (e.g. Herzfeld 1985).

Anthropologists studying Orthodox contexts often emphasize this point, highlighting its difference from many Catholic and Protestant contexts where a sharp division is sometimes drawn between spirituality and social life. They point out that sin does not carry nearly the same weight for Orthodox Christians, nor does divorce. Orthodoxy is peculiar because it is the most traditional of the Christian sects in one sense, its priests often wearing long beards and dressing in black, their large pectoral crosses preceding them into every room. They also fast a great deal more than other Christians and their devotions can be more physically arduous, requiring long periods of standing, kneeling, or prostrating themselves on the floor.

In another sense, however, Orthodox Christians are far less ascetic in practice than Catholics and Protestants. The fast, for example, does not carry the connotation of opposition between body and soul that one finds in some western traditions. In many Palestinian contexts Christians prepare special dishes during fasting periods that they look forward to eating. Some people allow themselves fish on weekends during the fast, which often becomes a social event. And all of this creates anticipation for the feast day at the end of the fast, for which delicacies too difficult and expensive to prepare normally are served in great quantities. Easter, for example, was the only time I was able to eat stuffed lamb's neck (*raqaba mahshiyya*). Periods of fasting thus do not mark a separation from "the world" per se but a different way of being in it.

This is not to say that all Orthodox Christians are relaxed about spiritual discipline. Certainly some Palestinians are more austere in their attitude than others, and some Orthodox countries appear to emphasize oppositions of body and spirit more than others (e.g. Boylston 2018). Scholars can and do disagree about the extent to which Orthodoxy conforms to the division, so often attributed to Christianity as a whole, between body and spirit, or humanity and divinity. But for the sake of comparison, it is worth taking the opposite argument to its logical extreme: perhaps, as many Orthodox claim, Christianity is not a religion of such divisions. Perhaps the reverse is true, and Christianity for most of its history has been a religion of immanence and continuity. What would that mean for our understanding of the religion today?

Palestinian Orthodoxy: between the family, the Church, and the occupation

In late Ottoman Palestine, Orthodox Christianity was centered around the veneration of regional saints (Canaan 1927, Tamari 2009, Grehan 2014, Bowman 1993). Certain saints like George and of course members of the holy family were universal, and Christians would travel great distances to attend their feasts, especially Mary's Dormition (or death), Easter, the feast of St. George in Lyd, and a few others. But a saint's feast, large or small, generally looked the same. A small and relatively short evening prayer would be conducted in the shrine or crypt on the eve of the feast, followed by a full liturgy with hundreds in attendance the next morning. Palestinians from the area, often including Muslims and Jews in addition to Christians, would set up tents around the shrine and remain in the area for days, eating, socializing and playing music.

Today, the Israeli separation barrier, military checkpoints, emigration, conversion, and other factors have mostly ended the practice of sleeping and feasting around the shrine, but the atmosphere of the feast remains. As I describe in Chapters 1, 2, & 3, monasteries still invite pilgrims and local Christians for a meal (and sweets and brandy) after the liturgy for a saint's feast. At the feasts for St. George, some families still slaughter a lamb or a goat despite protests from local councils. At such feasts, and in the Orthodox

community generally, the materiality of worship is always emphasized: the shackles of St. George and Elijah, the tomb, bath, and home of Mary, and more prosaic icons, candles, oils and scents. These are a part of everyday life, and as we will see, they are the media through which religion converges with those aspects of life normally considered kinship, ethnicity, or class.

I conducted fieldwork in Palestine/Israel for eighteen months between 2016 and 2018 in Jerusalem, including the Old City, the Palestinian suburbs, and nearby towns and villages in the West Bank. In this context, the political opposition between Palestinians and Greeks coexisted with their cultural and religious affinity, or even intimacy, often in contradictory ways. But more than anything else, what Palestinians emphasized to me was the desire for continuity.

As I will explain below, the center of gravity for my fieldwork was the Old City, home to around 5,000 Christians. The Old City is a mostly working-class environment and its residents are often internally-displaced refugees or the children and grandchildren of refugees from the 1948 war leading to Israel's independence. For Palestinians, it is called the *Nakba* or "catastrophe" and it caused the forced displacement of 700,000 people.

The other major group I consider are the established families of Jerusalem. Many of these families also lost homes in the war, and as a result the economic differences between the two groups are not always marked. Nevertheless, even those established families that lost homes were generally highly educated, well connected, and much more likely to purchase homes in the Palestinian suburbs after the war.

Palestinians from established Jerusalemite families spoke of continuity in terms of family history. They told me about their genealogies, their ancestors who fought for the Ottomans, worked for the British, or travelled around Greater Syria as merchants. But they also went deeper into the past, beyond what the genealogies or anyone's memory could record. For that past, they referred to the Church.

In Chapter 1 I describe how the Orthodox Church, at least as it is represented by the hierarchy, expresses its history by establishing material indexes for events in the past and then preserving them in ritual. If an event needs to be remembered, it must be

incorporated into the cycle of feasts and fasts and repeated annually. These indexes are laid upon one another so that the vitality of the original event carries the others through history.

A classic example would be the Feast of the Cross, one of the central feasts of the Orthodox year. Most fundamentally it is a feast marking the crucifixion of Christ; then, it marks the 4th c. discovery by the Empress Helena of the true cross, buried beneath Golgotha; finally, it marks the return of the cross to Jerusalem by Heraclius after it was stolen in the 7th century. Today, when the Greek patriarch and his monks fight with Armenian monks to celebrate the feast in an Armenian-held shrine, they explain their behavior by invoking Heraclius: as his successors, they will not be denied.

When Palestinians speak of Church history, they make a similar conceptual move. An Orthodox shopkeeper in the Old City is the descendant of a mukhtar, the Orthodox lay representative. That particular mukhtar, it is believed, protected the icon of the Virgin Mary generations earlier during the festal procession of Mary's Dormition when Bedouin thieves attempted to steal it. Today, the shopkeeper's family is still recognized by the hierarchy; every year, a member of the patriline has the honor of carrying the Virgin's icon during the feast.

As Gillian Feeley-Harnik writes in the epigraph, neither history nor genealogy is a neutral process. Each contains elements of the truth while also attempting to change it. The shopkeeper above is far from being a paragon of Christian piety but in an important sense he is as Orthodox as a neighbor who attends every feast, liturgy, and prayer. This is because for him, and many others, one is not Orthodox because one encounters the divine in the present, but because one is already a part of that presence, having carried it in the family for generations.

Established Orthodox families thus tie themselves not only to the land and people of Palestine, but to the body of the Church, which carries the divine spirit and passes it down. This is a genealogical imagination, as Andrew Shryock has described it (1997), only

instead of the nation, it refers to the Church. Thus the genealogy is doubled: both Palestinian and Greek, agnatic and divine.[4]

The families of the Old City have a slightly different relationship to both the past and the Church. Because many of them originated in other parts of the country, their families are often small and scattered. In a sense, they do not have a genealogy – or perhaps more precisely, as it locates them elsewhere, it does not matter. As a result, to a certain extent these families do not have history (cf. Gilsenan 1986). What they do instead is the subject of Chapters 2 and 4. Having moved into Church-owned houses in the Old City, sometimes in former convents, these Christians became a part of the Greek monastic community and the wider imaginary of the Church. As in old cities throughout the Middle East, many residents live in compounds that consist of several families or more, only here they also share a chapel where their children are baptized and married. To a certain extent, such material links cause the sacred space of the church to converge with the 'sacred' space of the home – both reflected in the Arabic word *hurma*. In a sense, the Church is able to repair the breaks in these families created by the war, providing them with kin and continuity in the absence of blood relatives. But it is more than that too: the discourse of Christian descent marks a process of becoming Orthodox history.

Like established families, Old City residents also speak of continuity, especially in relation to Church property (Ch. 4) but also in hospitality relations with monastic neighbors, Orthodox space, and the material substances shared by religion and family. This last example brings together the two groups, the Old City residents and the established families of the suburbs. For both place themselves in history through idioms of filial descent and through the descent of Orthodoxy. At the feast of St. George (Ch. 1), Palestinians bless the olive oil pressed from family trees by pouring it over the saint's tomb. During the feast, the oil spreads everywhere: people collect it in bottles to take home to heal cuts, headaches, and inner anxieties, but in the process they also get it all over themselves and others, over the walls, stairs, and floor. It becomes quite literally the shared substance of Orthodoxy.

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[4] As with Muslims who claim prophetic descent (Shryock 1997, Vom Bruck 2005, Ho 2006, Samin 2015).

Throughout the thesis, I attempt to show how such mediating factors bring together the genealogy of the family and the genealogy of the Church. This includes physical substances like oil, holy fire, and the foods eaten at the graveside of loved ones. But it also includes discourses of property and law through which the religious and family continuity merge in important ways.

The problem with descent

The individual chapters of the thesis will address a number of themes that came up during my fieldwork which connect to the idea of creating continuity in different ways. Each of these chapters also addresses specific theoretical questions and literatures in anthropology. I have attempted to keep these discussions relatively focused, using some sources from broad anthropological theory but mostly anthropological cases that speak directly to the ethnographic context of the chapter. Here, however, I will address the broader theoretical potential of the thesis.

Most fundamentally I am studying the relationship between two different ways of reckoning descent, through 'religion' and through 'kinship' – with the latter including filiation but also generational continuity established through land, property, law, and other means. In the experience of social life, these two categories are very often inseparable but for the sake of discussion I will be distinguishing between them conceptually in this dissertation. This is necessary because of the complicated ways in which localized discourses of religion overlap with the religious discourses of modernity on the one hand and the religious discourses of anthropological theory on the other.

The experience of Palestinian Orthodox Christians raises three interconnected themes related to the study of descent: first, the relationship between the lineages of individual families and the ancestors they claim in the deep past, including figures from Ottoman Palestine as well as saints and apostles from the Early Church. Second, I look at how lineage Christianity is reproduced not only through idioms of agnation but also in

everyday domestic settings. Finally, I examine the ways in which idioms of descent influence broader social and political forces in Palestinian society.

In the process of exploring these themes, I attempt to show how the experience of Christian descent is mediated – through indexes of time and space, gender and class positions, and varying views of history. But most generally I wish to demonstrate the extent to which descent is one of the central organizing features of Palestinian Christian life, and that in addition to being a feature of many societies in the Middle East, it is also a fundamentally Christian understanding of descent. Without recognizing its religious character, I argue, the significance of descent as a conceptual category is easily misunderstood.

I have framed the discussion of Christian descent around my three central fields of interest: the comparative study of the Middle East, kinship, and Christianity. As I have come to learn over the course of my doctoral studies, a large proportion of the scholars in each of these fields find the study of continuity in general and of descent in particular to be a problematic endeavor. In my opinion, this need not be the case. As such, this section will address each field in turn. I suggest the concerns scholars have raised with regards to continuity boil down to two problems, procreation and historicity, and the rest of the chapter outlines how my thesis attempts to address them, analytically and methodologically.

Middle Eastern Studies, kinship, and Orientalism

In 1973, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* was published, edited by Talal Asad, indicating a period of renewed reflexivity in the discipline with regards to its role in colonial projects and discourses around the world. In 1978, Edward Said published *Orientalism*, which put further pressure on scholars of the Middle East to rethink how they approached the region. This movement continues today in the context of numerous wars initiated, led, or supported by western powers and a host of non-military conflicts just as significant and involving just as much a western presence – in the form of

governments and corporations but also development organizations, consulting firms, and international NGOs.

The critique of Middle East scholarship then as now was multifaceted but a central theme has always been the way in which studies of Middle Eastern societies tend to overemphasize stasis, internal coherence, and difference from the west. On the one hand, this critique was articulated from a Marxist perspective, for example by Asad, who argued that early Israeli anthropologists provided a view of Palestinian village life and its *hamula* or clan structure in the 1950s and 60s that ignored the extent to which it was transformed by Israeli settler colonialism (1975, 1976). In the same vein, the historian Roger Owen took Islamic studies scholars to task for presenting Islamic history as a "breathless account of battles, murders, and the rapid rise and fall of different dynasties, with little suggestion that history is more than a chronicle of random events" (1973: 289). He points out that the 1000-page *Cambridge history of Islam* (1970), edited by Bernard Lewis and other professional orientalists, includes a lone chapter on "Economy, Society, [and] Institutions" while the single chapter on "The Political Impact of the West" ignores the scholarship on imperialism to emphasize "cooperation" between Middle East and West (ibid: 290).

Traditional orientalist scholarship, in other words, was accused of treating political and economic history in a superficial way while emphasizing the greater continuity created by Islam and kinship structures. The latter became a particular sticking point in anthropology, especially in relation to the theory of segmentation, which Lila Abu-Lughod famously singled out as one of three prestige zones in the regional literature – along with Islam and "the harem" (1987). The debate over segmentation has been explored in detail elsewhere so I will not attempt to do so here (but see Dresch 1986, 1988, Abu-Lughod 1987, Scheele & Shryock 2019). What matters here is that in the 1970s-80s anthropologists increasingly came to see the earlier generation's focus on systems of descent, whether as conceptual systems or formal rules, as distorting the view of Middle Eastern societies in significant ways. For Abu-Lughod, the study of segmentation made men appear to be concerned with honor according to the model more than they were in

actual social life. If men were studied in domestic spaces, she suggested, a different picture might emerge.

This is what she attempted to accomplish with *Veiled Sentiments* (1986), her influential ethnography of Bedouin oral poetry in Egypt. In fact, in that book Abu-Lughod does not dismiss the traditional themes of the literature at all; honor, modesty, and Islam are all central to her analysis. Rather, she focuses on how the ideology of honor is complicated or subverted in and around the home, especially when articulated in the register of romantic love. Asad accomplished something similar in his rarely-cited ethnography, *The Kababish Arabs* (1970), a nomadic society in northern Sudan. There he did not eschew the thematic focus of his contemporaries in order to study, say an industrial factory in Cairo, but rather wrote a quite traditional ethnography of "tribal" society – but one that brought colonial power into the center of his analysis of nomadic politics. At the time, the book was understood as a contribution to the field, being favorably reviewed by Robert Fernea and Ernest Gellner.

These interventions into Middle East anthropology thus provided strong criticisms of the theoretical paradigms of the day while also building on the work of the anthropologists they criticized. Moreover, their criticisms were fundamentally methodological: neither Asad nor Abu-Lughod questioned the existence of descent relationships or their centrality to at least some aspects of Arab kinship. But this soon began to change. Over the next several decades, descent paradigms dropped out of view almost altogether. By 2012, when Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar conducted their own survey of the field, they wrote the following:

> Tribal social organization has practically vanished as a topic of concern for scholars, though not for policy makers, right-wing analysts, and anthropologists embedded with the US military, many of whom persist in using stereotyped notions of tribal structures to explain political violence (2012: 540).

The moral import of this statement is clear, and while it is certainly true that political leaders have taken up the "tribalism" of the Middle East as a clarion call for military intervention, they make the same claims about Islam, often in the same breath. And yet

this has not caused Islam to 'vanish' as a research subject; on the contrary, it prompted anthropologists to study the religion ever more closely (e.g. Starrett 1998, MacLeod 1991, Abu-Lughod 2002, Bowen 2003, Mahmood 2005). Thus the decline in research on descent does not seem to be the result of its declining significance to the region's inhabitants but rather of the way in which anthropologists define kinship.

Kinship and procreation

Since the late 1960s, anthropologists have mounted a powerful critique of kinship theory. As many others have pointed out, David Schneider's assertion that kinship theory was based on local European assumptions about sexual procreation, i.e. that it produces descent relationships through shared blood, was foundational (1968, 1984; see also Carsten 2004:18-20, Yanagisako & Delaney 1995: 9). His work, which showed that such assumptions of biological kinship were not shared across cultures, has been described as dismantling the entire conceptual apparatus of kinship studies (Carsten 2004: 19). This opened up a number of new fields of research that would further question the centrality of descent models of kinship associated with Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, and Meyer Fortes, or even affinity models associated with Levi-Strauss and Dumont. What emerged instead was a cultural model concerned with meaning, sentiment, and symbol.

I will address the cultural framing of kinship below but it is important first to point out that the new paradigm did not give up a perspective of kinship's ability to organize societies. On the contrary, a new generation of feminist anthropologists used Schneider's argument to incorporate a stronger understanding of gender inequalities in the study of kinship. In particular, sexual procreation came to be understood as an ideology that represented the gender roles of women and men in terms of nature and culture. This theory was most famously articulated by Sherry Ortner (e.g. 1974), but here I wish to discuss Carol Delaney's more specific formulation of it with regards to the Abrahamic religions – which, she argues, informs many Western anthropologists.

In Delaney's first monograph, *The seed and the soil* (1991) she describes beginning research into Abrahamic cosmology as a Masters student in theology at the Harvard School of Divinity. When she began doctoral training in anthropology at Chicago under Schneider, she became fascinated by the biblical sacrifice of Isaac and the Virgin Birth debate, and the relationship of these foundational myths to the broader cultures of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian societies (Delaney 1986, 1991, Leach 1967; cf. Bloch 1992:95). She decided to conduct fieldwork in rural Turkey, where she set out to better understand local theories of procreation in areas where "Western scientific theories had not yet fully penetrated" (Delaney 1991: 21).

Delaney found that her interlocutors largely adopted an equivalence between monotheism and a monogenetic theory of procreation. According to this perspective, life is created by a single progenitor, God, whose representative on earth is Abraham (ibid). Men who carry the seed of Abraham derive authority from the fact that they create life while women merely carry it. She also calls this the "seed-soil" theory, for in the Turkish vernacular, men provide the seed (*dol*) and women the soil (*dolyatagi*, or "seedbed") for new life (ibid: 33). Patriarchy, according to this view, thus describes not the authority of men, but of men as fathers (ibid: 35). This authority derives from a cosmology centered around a male ancestor who takes the place of God on earth. As a result, men feel themselves to be godlike in the production of children: villagers routinely told Delaney that "the father is the second god after Allah" (ibid: 33).

This theory has important implications for the study of kinship and gender in Abrahamic contexts, and particularly in the context of the Middle East where many societies maintain at least a loose connection to patrilineal descent and endogamy. But it is also meant to explain the hegemony of a specific kind of western patriarchy, which Delaney argues is based on the naturalized view of women as child-bearers. This obtains in western societies, she argues, because even though knowledge that women and men

contribute equally to the genetic makeup of a child is widespread, the ideology of seed-soil is nevertheless "suffused throughout the culture" (ibid: 13).[5]

The feminist critique of kinship has been an incredibly important development in the discipline. Among other things, it allowed anthropologists, especially economic anthropologists, to show the great extent to which those aspects of 'the economy' that were often dismissed as domestic were in fact driving forces of social change. Sylvia Yanagisako's theory of the sentimental modes of production (2002) and the Gens Manifesto (Bear et. al. 2015) are two influential examples.[6] This move has often been described as "thinking across domains" of anthropological thought in order to develop critical insights beyond the hard modern categories that separate the dominant domains of politics and economics from the subordinate categories of kinship, gender, race, sexuality, disability, and religion (Yanagisako & Delaney 1995, Yanagisako 2007, McKinnon & Cannell 2013).

Kinship as culture

As a postgraduate student, I was excited to read about these developments and found that they were having very obvious and concrete effects on what one could do with the evidence produced during ethnographic fieldwork. Anthropologists like Yanagisako were going into western industrial or post-industrial settings and showing convincingly just how powerful kinship relationships, for example, are in determining the production and reproduction of capitalism.[7]

As an anthropologist particularly interested in religion, however, I was disappointed to find a near total absence of discussion of religion or ritual in this new wave of theoretical thinking. At first, it struck me as strange: Yanagisako's ethnography of

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[5] She makes this argument with respect to Malinowski (1991), Leach (1986), and 19th century Europe more generally (Yanagisako & Delaney 1995: 4-9). Importantly, for Christian contexts the nature of her evidence shifts from ethnography to theology and scripture.

[6] See also Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974, Reiter 1975, Collier & Yanagisako 1987, Strathern 1992, Yanagisako & Delaney 1995, Carsten 1995, 2000, Franklin & McKinnon 2001, McKinnon & Cannell 2013.

[7]E.g. Yanagisako & Delaney 1995, McKinnon & Cannell 2013: 3-38, Yanagisako 2002: 1-34, Bear et. al 2015.

textile factories in Italy describes her interlocutors as Catholics but there is little discussion of their religious life or how Catholic ideas about kinship inform the way they understand the family. Similarly, after describing in the introduction the religious origins of procreation ideology, *Naturalizing Power* does not include a single chapter exploring actual religious life. Finally, the Gens Manifesto does not mention the words religion or ritual at all, and of its authors only Laura Bear's ethnographic work discusses the subject in any detail (2007: Ch. 10, 2015: Ch. 6). These interventions are powerful but at the level of theory, ritual is again encompassed by kinship, affording further examples of seemingly non-economic modes of action that, when analyzed more closely, are central to the economic lives of her interlocutors.

As it turns out, the disappearance of religion from the framework of kinship studies is closely related to the definition of kinship as culture rather than structure. This was already clear in David Schneider's work, as Delaney points out.[8] In an article on kinship, nationality, and religion, Schneider makes his familiar distinction between the "pure" and "conglomerate" domains of kinship. The "pure" or purely symbolic level consists of the opposition between a relationship through natural substance on one hand and a relationship through a code of conduct on the other. At this level, he argues, kinship is structured in fundamentally the same way as both nationality and religion.

> It might well be that at the level of the 'pure' domain, religion, nationality, and kinship are all the same thing (culturally), and that their differences arise through the kinds of combinations and permutations they enter into (Schneider 1977: 71).

"If all this proves true," he concludes, "the question arises of the utility of any definition of 'kinship' until we have more fully explored the ways in which culture as a system of symbols and meanings is formed" (ibid).[9] Thus, it seems, the categories have converged: there is neither kinship nor religion, only culture (See Cannell 2013: 224).

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[8] On Schneider and religion, see Cannell 2013.

[9] Drawing on this article, Yanagisako wrote, "[Schneider's] observation of the common structure of meaning that organizes kinship, nationality, and religion in the United States incited a generation of anthropologists

Of course, similar propositions have been made by Geertz, Sahlins, and others, but it is significant that the feminist critique of kinship came to its view of culture this way: not as a system, for many of these same anthropologists were also active participants in the movement to "write against culture" (Abu-Lughod 1986). Rather, culture became the underlying logic of kinship alone, allowing it to pull into its domain a large range of feelings, practices, objects, and relationships that would, in an earlier era, have remained separate.

I will address some of the interventions of specific anthropologists in the chapters of this thesis, for example in relation to the house, hospitality, and the laws or rules of kinship in personal status courts. Here, however, I would like to point out that in general, this move seems to turn the effort to think across domains into something very different. While drawing theoretical strength from emotions and desires or domestic spaces can be extremely fruitful, when all of the features of kinship are treated as being structurally/symbolically the same, the cultural turn becomes a way of enlarging kinship without distinguishing between its parts. As a result, I argue, religious difference has been effaced from the analysis of kinship and transformed instead into sentiment.

Descent, 'ancestral affinity', and new kinship

Yanagisako's ethnography of Italian family firms is probably the most prominent example of this trend as it turns the methodological focus on sentiment, affect, and desire visible in many ethnographies into an explicit theory. But recently as a number of scholars have started to revisit themes of descent, ancestry, and the search for "roots", especially among the Abrahamic religions, they have taken up a similar framework.

One recent example is Naomi Leite's ethnography of Jewish Marranos in Portugal, *Unorthodox kin* (2017). Leite's interlocutors are a community of Portuguese citizens who claim to be descendants of the Marranos, Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism

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to analyze the intermingling symbols and meanings among what had been previously treated as distinct cultural domains" (Yanagisako 2007: 37).

during the Inquisition but remained Jewish in secret, passing down tokens of their identity from one generation to the next. Today, they seek to reclaim their Jewish heritage and be formally recognized as a part of the Jewish community, but are often treated with suspicion by that community. Leite's work is particularly interesting for me because she shows how Marranos demonstrate their Jewishness not necessarily through spiritual or ritual means but through indexes found in their family history and domestic life. In many ways, this is also what Orthodox Palestinians do – for while they do not need to 'prove' they are Christians by regularly attending church, their claim to carry Orthodoxy in their blood and property and land is endlessly being undermined by modern discourses of what religion is and is not.

Interestingly, however, though Leite's interlocutors often speak of descent and a relationship to generations past, she frames her project not around the concept of descent, but affinity:

> Individuals throughout the Portuguese and Jewish diasporas…discover Marrano history within the self, via genealogical research, familial lore, or pure intuition, as descendants of Inquisition-era Portuguese Jews are now scattered across the globe. They may internalize that history of suffering and survival as their own, a personal heritage carried, as it were, in their veins. This is an ancestral affinity – a sense of connection and sympathy across many generations (2017: 25).

For Leite, the significant feature of Marrano Jewishness is the desire for connection, which she describes as "experiential resonance, mutual connection, biogenetic relatedness, shared history, and shared destiny" (ibid). These very different "forms of affinity" are unified in the experience of closeness with a Jewish identity, thus the temporal and generational features of Marrano heritage appear part of a greater, more diffuse kinship.

As I described above in relation to Yanagisako, Leite emphasizes the importance of emotion and affect in the formation of kinship relations. She shows, for example, how interactions with foreign Jewish visitors to Portugal, who were often more accepting of their identity as Jews than were the Portuguese, allowed Marranos to feel part of the Jewish world (ibid: 256). "These interpersonal bonds", she argues, "offered far more

lasting experiences of belonging than did biological descent" (ibid: 257). Because these visitors tended to be Ashkenazi, or of European origin, rather than Sephardic like the established Jewish communities of Portugal, many Marranos identify as Ashkenazi. Their horizontal affinity with Ashkenazi makes them feel more Jewish than their vertical belonging to the Sephardic genealogy, so they identify themselves with the former (ibid: 260). Analytically, this means for Leite that "the time-honored anthropological question of how descent is reckoned…is turned on its head":

> Rather than being ascribed to a predetermined descent group by the social facts of their   birth and the birth of relevant ancestors before them, urban Marranos in effect decided for themselves the group to which they would belong and pointed to ancestry as the reason (ibid: 16).

For her, then, ancestry is created through a cultural process of "kinning" in the present, not a "biological" relationship to the past. Anthropological theory is subverted because Marranos are not proving the purity of their blood so much as they are re-discovering Jewishness in everyday relations to other Jews.

This is a fascinating case and Leite's discussion is much richer than I can possibly convey here. Nevertheless, I question the decision to explicitly undervalue the language of descent used by Marranos themselves. Doing so means ignoring what for Marranos is essential, even in the discourse of being Ashkenazi. For it seems to me that they are happy to consider themselves Ashkenazi not merely because they feel closer to those Jews, but because both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews can claim legitimate lines of descent to Abraham. Thus while there is great value in complicating a strictly biological view of descent, this does not require abandoning the concept for its opposite. On the contrary, it seems to me that the desire to feel continuity between oneself and one's ancestors through time is an important specific characteristic of descent which the concept of affinity may misrepresent.

Enlarging Christianity

So far I have attempted to outline the problem of continuity and descent for new kinship theory and the potential consequences of its way of addressing the problem. Specifically, I argued that in order to make kinship 'big' enough to tackle the dominant domains of economics and politics, it diminishes the extent to which people define kinship – and especially the desire to maintain kinship continuity over time – in religious terms. Returning to Delaney, we can now see how the rejection of procreation – understood as an ideology that is both western and Christian – informs the dominant theoretical approach to kinship today. It is so influential that even an ethnographic case based on re-discovering an ancient Jewish ancestry – explicitly defined through descent – can be described by an anthropologist as affinity.

My hope in this ethnography is that the experience of Palestinian Orthodox Christians can help to calibrate this theoretical approach to kinship by addressing how exactly Christianity and the ideology Delaney and many others describe are – or are not – related. The chapters of my thesis show ethnographically what Orthodox Christians say and do to maintain a sense of continuity for their families and community, but it is also important to indicate at the outset what this approach will look like.

The anthropology of Christianity "for itself" was initiated by a number of anthropologists in the late 1990s/early 2000s partly as a response to scholars who studied societies that self-identified as Christian but decided to emphasize the older, non-Christian aspects of their culture instead. The new generation wished to show the extent to which Christianity made a difference in these societies, and to privilege the emic identity of Christians for whom religion was paramount (Cannell 2006, Robbins 2007).

From the very beginning, this was a difficult goal to achieve. Many early studies in the sub-discipline took place in postcolonial contexts where Christianity was indeed first brought by western missionaries, and the extent to which Christianity and ideologies of modernization were aligned had to be addressed. A number of scholars did this very effectively, showing how such ideologies informed missionary attitudes towards various societies and also how those societies in turn transformed Christianity into something of

their own (e.g. Keane 2007, Engelke 2007; cf. De la Cruz 2015). So one trend in the sub-discipline was to carefully delineate the colonial frame from postcolonial practice.

At around the same time, Joel Robbins came out with his well-known critique of continuity thinking, or the tendency among anthropologists not only to overemphasize otherness and difference, but also the temporal continuity of non-European cultures (2007). Christianity was ignored in so many contexts, he argued, because it appeared not to "really" change their cultural system; it merely mapped onto pre-existing cultural forms. He thus took the Comaroffs to task for focusing entirely on practice and not on the interior lives and self-ascriptions of the Christians they studied (ibid; see also Cannell 2007). It seems that anthropologists of Christianity largely agreed with this sentiment. But he paired the critique with another assertion, an "ideal-type" of Christianity as being defined by temporal rupture, the clearest example of which is conversion.

In the fifteen years since Robbins published that essay his rupture paradigm has remained very influential, with Naomi Haynes, for example, publishing a new iteration of it last year (Haynes 2020). But in that time a large number of new ethnographies of Orthodox Christian contexts have also emerged, and for the most part those anthropologists have not found the paradigm as useful as scholars of Protestantism have. On the contrary, Orthodox Christians around the world often emphasize continuity of their history and traditions over time (Naumescu 2018, Calder 2014, Pelkmans 2005, Forbess & Michelutti 2013, Pop 2011, Hann 2007, Hann & Goltz 2010).[10]

Robbins anticipated this criticism in his original paper, responding that "it is when anthropologists encounter convert cultures whose religion most closely approximates this [rupture] model that they have had the hardest time studying people as Christians" (2007: 17). Thus while anthropologists of Orthodoxy may protest that evangelicals talk a lot more about rupture than Catholic and Orthodox Christians do, the issue is really not about the Christians themselves so much as it is about the anthropologists and their ideological

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[10] It is worth singling out the interventions of Chris Hann (2007, 2011, 2017), who stresses that Eastern Christians do not fit the rupture paradigm. I agree, but instead of building an alternative anthropology of the east, I attempt to draw Orthodox sources into the central debates of the sub-field, including over continuity/rupture.

frame. But this too is a problematic statement, because it is not at all self-evident that the religion of anthropologists is closer to Pentecostalism than it is to Orthodoxy. Moreover, by highlighting those people who identify themselves first and foremost as Christians (as opposed to Germans or carpenters), he is re-enforcing a very specific view of Christianity that his colleagues have been trying to dispel.

In an important sense, Robbins has done for Christianity what Schneider did for kinship: he enlarged it, bringing it the center of analysis in order to complicate the prevailing view in anthropology that religion is a subordinate domain of social life. And like the kinship theorists, doing so forced him to shut out those aspects of Christianity that do not declare themselves as exclusively Christian. At an ethnographic level this is fair enough, as Pentecostalism is fast becoming the largest Christian denomination and rupture is central for them. The problem which I do not think Robbins pays close enough attention to is the fact that this paradigm is also the one used by generations of European intellectuals and anthropologists to differentiate "modern" religion from religion everywhere else.

The continuity critique and the secular

For Robbins, continuity thinking is problematic because it precludes the Christian impulse for change. Among contemporary Pentecostals this may well be true, but in European history it most emphatically is not. In Chapter 6, I take up the claim of Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin that St. Paul set the stage for Christian exceptionalism when he wrote that "there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is no male and female" in Christ (1993: 694-695). Unlike Judaism, Paul appeared to be saying, Christianity will be a universal religion that accepts everyone on the basis of faith alone. The Boyarins criticize this ideology in a very interesting way, showing how the universalism of Paul is in fact not the recipe for egalitarianism and mutual respect it appears to be. But in attributing Paul's ideas to all Christians everywhere, or even just

Christians in the west, they make an unacceptable link between scripture and practice that needs to be investigated empirically.

I bring this up because since the beginning of the discipline, anthropologists have drawn on the work of scholars that makes exactly this kind of assumption for many periods of Christian history (see Cannell 2006: 14-22). Delaney, for example, did fieldwork among Turkish Muslims but relies on secondary literature for her analysis of Christianity's influence on anthropology. The same can be said of Dumont (1983), Leach (1972, 1966), or Sahlins (1996), all of whom wrote, quite ingeniously, about how Christianity helped to produce something fundamental about the modern world. But these writings all depend on selective theological and secondary historical sources despite the availability of plenty of comparative ethnography. Even for the earliest of these examples, Leach could have referred to ethnography from Greece (e.g. Friedl 1962, Campbell 1964) or even Hertz's study of French and Italian Catholics (1983). But on the subject of modernity, ethnographic data does not appear to be necessary for these authors as they are not so much describing a sensibility shared by actual Christians as an ideology of the west.

Robbins similarly assumes an equivalence between the rupture he sees in Papua New Guinea and that which Christian intellectuals described in early modern Europe, which in turn informs the ideology of contemporary anthropologists.[11] But these are not the same. The former is a Christian rupture, described in relation to Christian scripture and the Christian God, while the latter is the product of secularism.

Here the work of Talal Asad is crucial. Asad shows how the modern concept of religion emerged not in opposition to, but out of the secular, a historical concept that emerged not only from Christian sensibilities and concepts but also more general ideas about the body, pain, and agency in European history (2003). This matters for anthropologists because it demonstrates that the modern doctrine of secularism does not only define and delimit the boundaries of religion, but religion *and, or in relation to,* other

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[11] "But when Christianity became dominated by gentiles, the drive for differentiation became strong. It found an early expression in Paul's rejection of the Jewish law and later developed into a doctrine of radical discontinuity with what came before…the memory of this rupture is preserved in Christian tradition" (Robbins 2007: 11).

cultural domains. Asad's definition of secularism is the process "by which a political medium…redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion" (2003: 5; cf. Bowen 2010).

Secularism, in other words, defines for a particular context not only what counts as religion but also what counts as kinship, gender, class, etc. Even if the intellectuals and anthropologists concerned were Christians, their point of reference was not the Christian God but the idea of the social. As closely related as these concepts undoubtedly were, they must be distinguished. Otherwise, when I write about Christian continuity in Orthodoxy, there will be no reason why anthropologists of Christianity who focus on "convert culture" should not see in the Orthodox case one more example of continuity thinking, of an anthropologist emphasizing cultural uniformity at the expense of that which makes Christianity unique.

For me, both the rupture paradigm of Christian anthropology and new kinship theory present the discipline with a fundamentally secular understanding of religion.[12] By secular, I mean a view of religion that is not always and essentially connected to the other domains of social life, but which is either separated from or subsumed by them. A practice, relationship, object, or sensation is either Christian or it is ancestor worship, veneration or memorialization, but not both.

We saw earlier how new kinship theory's emphasis on sentiment and emotion can have a flattening effect whereby religious sentiments that occur in domestic settings appear simply as forms of kinship. In the anthropology of Christianity, by contrast, religion is distinguished from everything else but the effect is the same. In an effort to show that Christianity is not kinship, for example, the areas of overlap between the domains are avoided in favor of those areas where the most difference can be perceived. This leads to an emphasis on transcendence, conversion, interiority, and rupture, the very features of the religion highlighted by those Christian moderns who sought to define religion in secular terms, i.e. as the private beliefs of individual, autonomous subjects.

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[12] Cf. Cannell 2013: 230-235

One result of this tendency has been that many anthropologists studying Orthodox contexts have not framed their work in relation to the anthropology of Christianity, focusing instead on Orthodoxy as a single tradition or on the anthropology of religion, with the result that Orthodoxy does not appear in many comparative discussions of Christianity. This thesis thus attempts to take up the lessons of Orthodox ethnography and put them in more direct conversation with that comparative framework, just as it attempts to discuss kinship within rather than outside the frame of new kinship theory.

The lineage of Christianity

In recent years, a number of scholars have started to formulate an approach to Christianity that addresses the convergences between kinship and religion more explicitly, sometimes under the banner of "divine/spiritual/sacred kinship" (Thomas et al. 2017, Forbess & Michelutti 2013, Feeley-Harnik 2019, 2017, 2004, Cannell 2013, 2011, 2017). So far, these projects have been comparative, either among Abrahamic religions (Thomas et al. 2017) or between religious traditions of all kinds (Forbess & Michelutti 2013), though Christianity always holds an important place conceptually for the reasons described above. When it comes to the specific nature of Christian kinship, Fenella Cannell's essay on "the re-enchantment of kinship" (2013) suggests a way forward.

After providing a critique of kinship theory – which builds on both modern and classic discussions[13] – Cannell suggests that within the frame of modernity, "kinship may be an acceptable locus for ineffable meaning when explicitly religious framings are not" (ibid: 235). In other words, when people experience something that they are wary of calling religious, they resort to the language of kinship, which is capacious enough to make such experiences understandable while also being acceptable by modern standards. She suggests further that when anthropologists of kinship encounter such experiences they might use them to interrogate the boundaries of kinship, to see them as producing "a

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[13] See also Cannell 2005, 2006, 2007.

space of mystery" within the familiar context of the family. Referring to research on new reproductive technologies, she asks:

> [W]hat if the work being done in these conversations…permits the expression of feelings about kinship as what is mysterious, yet intimate, in the human condition; the sense of connectedness to and yet separateness from others, both past and present, living and dead (ibid: 234).

The idea of pursuing kinship as something "mysterious, yet intimate" brings us beyond the notion of sentiment by highlighting the link between human kinship and those human-divine relationships that are so often produced in the context of family and the space of the home.

In her work on English Anglicans and American Mormons (who fully identify as Christians), Cannell indicates that this space of mysterious intimacy, of divine kinship, often appears in the way Christians think and speak about lineages and ancestors (2011, 2013, 2013a). In the Mormon context, for example, she describes the extent to which salvation is marked not only by faith but also one's lineage (2013). To a certain extent, Mormons achieve entry into heaven on the basis of being a member of the Abrahamic lineage. This lineage ascription is secured through a patriarchal revelation but most of the time it is described as a process of recognizing or discovering one's identity rather than changing it, something that was always inside the person, leading them to the Church. Gentile converts "experience their blood being physically changed by the sacrament of baptism" much the same way converts to Judaism do (Leite 2017), but most Mormons, including many converts, already have "the blood of Abraham" in their veins before coming to the Church (ibid: 86). In both cases, the common attribution of difference to Christian descent, which supposedly replaces "blood" kinship with ritual,[14] does not pertain. Descent, "real" social descent, is not replaced by the spirit but confirmed by it. In this case, it is a central part of the process of becoming and remaining a Christian.

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[14] I.e. in the form of baptismal godparents (Seeman 2017, Boyarin & Boyarin 1993)

Gillian Feeley-Harnik makes the same argument for 19th century England, where she found that ideas about family continuity in Darwin's era were not purely filial but rather mediated through a large range of alternative discourses related to land and animals. Moreover, she found these relationships were often religious in nature, described in the Christian language of Non-Conformist Protestants as God's endowment of intelligence to his creation (2017; see also 2001). Feeley-Harnik's critique is aimed at anthropological theories of descent that adopt a purely schematic approach to filiation which occlude the process through which continuity is achieved (See Ch. 1). But it does not reject those theories so much as it re-enchants them, recuperating their original "immoderate" and "immodern" character (Lambek 2013).

Indeed, as I describe in Chapter 1, Feeley-Harnik invites us to think about Christianity as a form of totemism – a religion which, when we look beyond its narrowest and most ideological formulations, is full of connections to "non-religious" domains of social life. This is precisely the kind of critical insight I wish to bring to bear on the anthropology of Christianity more broadly. Moreover, while it is not generally framed as such, the literature on Orthodoxy overlaps significantly with this approach to both kinship and religion.

Continuity and Orthodoxy

The literature on Orthodox Christianity was for decades mostly limited to ethnographies of Greece, but has now grown considerably in Post-Soviet Europe and also now includes studies of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox communities in the Middle East, Ethiopia, and other parts of the world. This scholarly corpus includes a wide range of thematic interests. Much of Eastern European literature, for example, examines the massive Orthodox revival that has occurred after socialism and its complicated relationship to the state and ethnic/national discourses. Continuity and tradition feature heavily in this literature, as many Christians refer to themselves as "returning" to their tradition and their heritage rather than converting (e.g. Pelkmans 2005, Naumescu 2007,

Engelhardt 2014). Studies of formal ritual and unsanctioned customs are also a major feature of this literature, and while they have taken many different theoretical positions, a large number of studies have taken a material approach, following especially Keane (2007, 2008) and Engelke (2007, 2011) to examine how divinity is mediated in Orthodox contexts and the extent to which that mediation overlaps with or is distinct from Protestant and Catholic forms (Naumescu 2011, Boylston 2018, Carroll 2018, Shenoda 2010, Heo 2012, 2018). To date this has provided the strongest comparative framework for discussion of the similarities and differences among the Christian traditions (e.g. in Luehrmann 2018).

The literature on Greece is also highly varied but kinship features more prominently. Early studies focused on honor, shame, hospitality, and rural life in a way that spoke directly to studies of the Middle East and North Africa and which has been compared with them under the banner of Mediterranean studies (Peristany 1965, Campbell 1984, Gilmore 1987, Dubisch 1995). Later, in the 1980s, a wave of studies analyzed gender inequalities in similar, mostly rural contexts, often in relation to religious traditions (e.g. Dubisch 1986, 1989, Caraveli 1986, Seremetakis 1991, Du Boulay 1986, Kenna 1976, 1976a, Herzfeld 1986, 1985). A number of studies that focused on religious themes were also made, for example on death rituals (Danforth 1982, Kenna 2015), local practices that pushed the limits of orthodoxy (Du Boulay 1982, Stewart 1991, 2012, Danforth 1989), and practices at saint shrines, pilgrimage sites, and convents (Du Boulay 1974, 2009, Hirshon 1989, Dubisch 1995, Iossifides 1990, 1991, Sarris 2000, 2004).

Studies of Orthodoxy in other parts of the world are more recent and fewer in number but several of them focus on materiality and the ways in which divine presence is mediated in Orthodox societies (Bowman 1991, 1993, Shenoda 2010, Bandak 2012, Boylston 2018, Heo 2018). Here the contrast between Orthodox societies and Protestant or even Catholic ones is most striking, as well as the difference in historical context. Ethiopia, for example, is one of the only Orthodox countries in the world where the religion is growing rapidly (Pew 2017), and Middle Eastern contexts reveal forms of religious materiality that overlap in many ways with Islam – even as they sometimes also lead to conflict (Heo 2018, Mahmood 2016).

All of these literatures reveal an abiding interest among local Christians in continuity of one form or another, though of course they and the anthropologists who study them characterize this continuity in a variety of ways. In what follows I will try to link some of this literature with the analysis of Christian descent I described above. In a word, the link is historical.

As I mentioned at the start of this introduction, my interlocutors in Jerusalem speak both in terms of descent and in terms of history – or to be more exact, Church history. Something similar can be found in many other Orthodox contexts, only not necessarily framed in the same terms. In particular I will focus on Charles Stewart's recent discussion of historicity in Greece and Post-Ottoman contexts, which links on the one hand with the idea of Orthodox religious transmission, which is a major feature of the literature on Post-Soviet Europe, and on the other hand with the interest of Middle East anthropologists in alternative forms of history. The basic point is that historicity, or the relationship that people establish with the past (Stewart 2016: 80), is variable and as such should be studied in their own terms rather than assumed. In order to do this in the present study, I believe the anthropological focus on transmission needs to be expanded to include both ritual and descent-based modes. Doing so would not only better reflect the language of Orthodox Palestinians themselves but also allow me to situate discourses of Christian descent in relation to other forms of historical narration.

In a recent essay, Stewart suggests that anthropologists have long taken for granted a rather narrow understanding of history. In accepting the need for verification and factuality, we risk steamrolling the "architecture of local thinking about the past" and losing much of what is interesting about the way people relate with, and reposition themselves within, their history (2016: 81). Building on this critique in the specific context of post-Ottoman societies, he observes that in the "temporal topologies" of these societies, "the past, present, and future may be bent around one another rather than ordered linearly" (2017: 129).

He provides an example from Turkey, where a mob set fire to a hotel in which Alevi Muslims were attending a cultural festival, killing thirty-seven. Every year, the Alevis

and their supporters return to the site to commemorate the event, and in doing so they "re-experience sensorially the authority of the state in conditions approaching those of the original incident" (ibid: 138). In the minds of the living, the massacre has become a part of Alevi historical consciousness: it is a martyrdom place in relation to a string of preceding martyrdoms, including a sixteenth-century execution and going all the way back to the famous martyrdom of Husayn in the seventh century. As for many Shi'a, the Alevi reference to Husayn is a marker not only of martyrdom in a general, symbolic sense but also the martyrdom that defines and in some ways initiated their religious tradition. Stewart emphasizes that these events are not experienced chronologically but all at once in a kind of time-knot, where the past, present and future come together.

This example brings us very close to the Orthodox experience in Jerusalem. When I described the Feast of the Cross and the experience of the shopkeeper at the Dormition feast, a similar temporal logic is visible. Even more clearly, the scene with which we began in which Khaled spoke of the Orthodox as "blue-boned" Christians who "don't need" a crucifix because their Christianity is inside them demonstrates the way past traumas are compounded and experienced together in the present.

Here the broader literature on Orthodoxy is important. Recently a number of scholars have taken up Asad's concept of the discursive tradition arguing that Orthodoxy is very much like Islam in the way it constantly relates present-day religious practice to a tradition that is both textual, ritual, and oral. Vlad Naumescu in particular has drawn out the benefits and pitfalls of this approach (2011). He argues that Asad's focus on temporal transmission is extremely important for Orthodoxy, but suggests, like Stewart, that further attention needs to be paid to the variety of ways people engage with the past. Asad's concept is incomplete, he argues, because it remains within the normative historical framework of modern social and human science.

Naumescu's interest is in pushing the study of transmission into the domain of cognition and semiotic anthropology with powerful results, but I would use his critique of the discursive tradition to push in a different direction, towards genealogical understandings of time. For in the Palestinian case, religious historicity is also described

and enacted in descent relationships. The relationship between Khaled and the blue-boned Orthodox of the past is not just one of a shared faith, but a literal ancestral connection.

As such, in this case Stewart's invitation to construct a more flexible historical narrative requires paying attention to descent logics. Here, recent studies of descent discourses among Arab Muslims are very helpful. Like Naumescu, Gabriele vom Bruck employs a cognitive framework to understand the descent relations of Yemeni *sada*, or descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, (2005). Andrew Shryock, by contrast, focuses on socially-defined descent relations among the Balga Bedouin in Jordan (1997; see also Ho 2006, Samin 2015). Both examples highlight forms of historicity with distinct technologies and temporal mediators associated with descent, for example oral transmission, repetition, and ancestral memory. Shryock's interlocutors use their lineage histories to establish an alternative national imagination to that produced by the state. Vom Bruck's interlocutors, who were once rulers with a lineage distinct from the rest of Yemen's population, use the traditions of the Prophet's family to interpret recent historical events in light of the experiences of ancient Islamic forebears. Like Alevis with a single royal lineage, the sada are physical embodiments of Islamic history.

Both of these cases are instructive for my own ethnography: like the sada, Orthodox Palestinians use their religious tradition to connect individual lineages to the deeper Christian one. But their lineage informs their identity as Palestinians. They have a different genealogical connection to the land than Muslims do, but one that is equally indigenous. Moreover, their relationship to nationalism is complicated by the fact that it is imagined in relation to the Church, which has long been led by Europeans. I thus describe Palestinian Christian descent as a political idiom and a religious one, for the two inform one another and provide alternative modes of transmitting Palestinian Orthodoxy. Sometimes these overlap, and sometimes they diverge. It is the goal of this ethnography to explore this process in the everyday social life of Jerusalem.

Methodology

When I first arrived in Jerusalem to conduct fieldwork, my plan was to study the materiality of Orthodox Christianity and how it informs wider social and political relations. However, whenever I asked about the significance of the objects, sensations, and sounds of Orthodox prayer I was told about history instead. Why does the miraculous holy fire at Easter matter, I would ask. What makes a specific icon so effective? What is so beautiful about this particular hymn? More often than not, the answer was their history: their connection to specific moments in the past and the generations of people who have transmitted the power of those moments into the present.

So the framework of my project shifted in order to accommodate the career of objects, persons, and practices through time. At first, I thought this would be a relatively straightforward adjustment but it eventually took over my entire project. This was because it was not just history that Palestinians emphasized, but a history reckoned through descent. This proved difficult to square with much of the scholarship on Orthodox Palestinians, most of which has been conducted by political scientists and historians and tends to employ a chronological political narrative focused on the central dates of Palestinian national history: the Young Turk Revolution, the 1936 revolt, the wars of 1948 and 1967. There is nothing wrong with this focus; in fact, it has been extremely helpful to me. But a straight political history is also incomplete, as many anthropologists and social historians have pointed out (Feeley-Harnik 1978, Doumani 1995, Lambek 2002, Palmié & Stewart 2019, Shryock 1997).

This study thus highlights historical narratives that claim descent relations can carry the presence of the divine in the bodies, idioms, practices, and possessions of Palestinian Christians. Moreover, it takes seriously the claims of these Christians that this process of human and divine transmission has, as much as wars and political ideologies and economic shifts, changed the shape of Palestinian history in significant ways. In order to substantiate these claims, I have tried to adopt a methodological approach to both fieldwork and ethnography that will accommodate them.

In a way, my fieldwork was organized as a conventional holistic study of urban neighborhoods that included political, economic, familial, and religious elements. Having spent several years living and studying in Palestine/Israel and Jordan in the past, I knew I wanted to live in the Old City's Christian Quarter. This was a natural starting point for research as it is home to half the Christian population in the city as well as the Patriarchate's central monastery and the local parish church, Mar Yacoub (St. James). The Old City is also a good place to do fieldwork because people live very close together. One can meet a large range of (mostly working-class) people, and encounter them throughout the day.

In order to also spend time with the Christians who live in the suburbs, I volunteered at several Christian NGOs including an ecumenical theology center called Sabeel (Ch. 5) and an Orthodox women's organization called the Arab Orthodox Society (Ch. 4). These organizations are mostly located outside the Old City (with the exception of the AOS), and this allowed me to spend time around middle and upper-class Christians. Finally, six months into fieldwork a scandal broke over the Greek hierarchy selling valuable property to Israeli settlers. This led to my following the activist movement against the hierarchy, comprised mostly of Orthodox from more prominent suburban families (Ch. 4 & 7).

When conducting fieldwork in these settings, my method was simply to follow my interlocutors in whatever directions they went (and allowed me to go). This led me to leave Jerusalem relatively often for feasts in Lyd (near Tel Aviv), the Bethlehem area, or Jericho, for conferences in Haifa and Nazareth, and for family visits to villages near Jerusalem but on the West Bank side of the Separation Barrier. I also took two trips to Jordan to visit the family and friends of Jerusalemites and to interview activists and clergy, mostly in the Amman area.

My fieldwork was thus holistic in nature, but the way I frame the material is much narrower. The thesis does not provide an ethnography of either religion or kinship. Instead, I have focused as narrowly as possible on the points of intersection between these domains. What results is not a complete account of Palestinian family life or the

Orthodox religious tradition but a study of how they operate together to provide a unique understanding of descent. The same applies to monastics, whom I often write about but with a focus on their effect on Palestinians and Palestinian Orthodoxy.[15]

This approach has certainly created some gaps. I have not, for example, provided an in-depth account of Christian marriage practices, though they emerge in relation to conversion (Ch. 6). Similarly, my coverage of Palestinian kinship relations sometimes privileges unrelated neighbors over, say, parent-child or sibling relationships. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the political elements of the study are mostly confined to the scale of the Christian community, though I attempt to signpost areas where important links to wider political events or discourses exist. In a few chapters, the national scale enters the narrative more directly – for example with the settlement movement in Chapter 4, Israeli neoliberalism in Chapter 5, and state discourses on Jewish and Arab DNA in Chapter 6.

In all of these parts of the text, however, I have taken up a rather specific approach to Palestine/Israel, the occupation, and the national frame - following the social historian Beshara Doumani:

> Considering that the historiography of Palestine is dominated by nationalist discourses…and these discourses are built on the premise of sharp discontinuity from the past caused by outside intervention, there is no shortage of assumptions to be revised and new issues to introduce (1995: xi).

As a result, he calls for greater attention to "long-term processes…highlighting the agency of the inhabitants in the molding of their own history" (ibid). Thus while I could never write this ethnography without previous work on political economy, in order to highlight the specificity and value that Orthodoxy carries to my interlocutors I have sometimes had to privilege longer historical connections and somewhat hidden contemporary ones. This means that some themes from the political debate do not appear as saliently as they might have.

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[15] Successful studies of a monastery and the neighboring village exist (e.g. Forbess 2005, Iossifides 1990, Dubisch 1995), but given Jerusalem's political context, I felt focusing on the laity was challenge enough.

For the most part, I think these gaps are justified because they are subjects about which much has already been written. The literature on the Jerusalem Patriarchate, for example, is almost entirely written from a political perspective. Little is known about the connection between the religion of Orthodoxy and the power of the Patriarchate. By closely examining how Palestinians understand Orthodoxy, and how relations of descent influence domains of social life that appear independent from them, I hope to begin establishing that connection.

Moreover, what is lacking in breadth I hope to make up for in depth. Throughout my fieldwork, I supplemented direct participant observation with other sorts of historical materials. I regularly met with several amateur historians, like George Baramki in Chapter 1, and collected self-published memoirs, genealogies, and religious magazines. I tried for months to gain access to parish records at Mar Yacoub with some success, and I collected a large number of legal documents related to the Church's land sales. Finally, Palestinian Christians publish a lot: on the occupation, on Islam, on history, and on theology. Whenever I was stuck at checkpoints, travelling on buses, or simply couldn't find anyone to talk to, I read these texts, written in Arabic or in English. I discuss some of this material in Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6, but I also used it to inform my fieldwork and to frame my use of historical scholarship.

The structure of the thesis

Initially I attempted to include within each chapter a discussion of kinship and religious practices and a discussion of how these practices are situated within the larger context of Israel/Palestine. This proved very difficult to manage. As a result, I have split the thesis in half, with the first four chapters addressing the internal dynamics of the Church and the last three addressing how the Orthodox Church has been affected by external trends in the Christian community, which includes large numbers of Greek (Melkite) and Latin Catholics and a smaller number of Protestants.

The chapters of Part 2 thus provide alternative perspectives on the themes raised in Part 1. In **Part 1**, they show how even as Orthodox Palestinians continue to define their relationship to Christianity in terms of descent, they are also confronted with a range of alternative registers in Palestinian, Israeli, and international public discourses. By bringing these registers into the frame, I attempt to show how idioms of descent are disappearing, changing, or persisting in different contexts. I hope that doing so allows me to more accurately assess the meaning of continuity for Palestinian Christian society as a whole.

Each chapter of the thesis addresses a particular area of social life in which the convergence of different idioms of descent is particularly salient. **Chapter 1** discusses how Palestinians and Greeks define their relationship to descent in relation to space and place. Through ethnography of saints' feasts, it investigates the alternative claims of indigeneity made by laity and clergy, describing them both as mechanisms through which ritual accumulates history.

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the Old City of Jerusalem, focusing on the way unrelated refugee families develop kinship relations with one another through hospitality and idioms of religious law. It suggests that after 1948, the institutions of family and church merged in important ways. This argument continues in **Chapter 3**, extending the analysis to include the related and unrelated dead. The chapter discusses practices at funerals and family gravesites but also at the tomb of the Virgin Mary, showing how different forms of descent-based authority are produced in each context.

Chapter 4 further complicates the question of authority by taking up the ownership claims of Palestinians and Greeks over Church property. It first shows how, during the Ottoman period, the monastic brotherhood came to be legally defined as a family and its property as a family trust. It then discusses the profound implications of this arrangement for Palestinians, for whom Church property is both a form of disenfranchisement and a mechanism through which they can maintain family continuity in the face of occupation.

Part 2 of the thesis takes up three religious movements originating outside the Orthodox community but which influence it in important ways. **Chapter 5** examines an

ecumenical movement that emerged in the 1980s and profoundly changed the way Christians of many Church traditions speak about time. It focuses on one ecumenical organization, showing how the dramatic political and economic changes of the period led Christians to develop a framework for understanding their past in secular terms. **Chapter 6** takes this argument further, showing how the evangelical movement took up the banner of secularism as a way of claiming a purely biological descent relationship to Abraham so that religious conversion (of Jews and Muslims) could be described as an alliance between members of related lineages. Finally, **Chapter 7** concludes the thesis with a discussion of a youth movement that emerged in 2007 among Old City Christians who "failed" to convert to evangelicalism. In the wake of the Second Intifada, these youths built a movement to revitalize the Old City, ironically, through a return to the idea of Orthodox descent.

Taken together, the chapters of the thesis make an ethnographic and historical argument about the career of Christianity in modern Palestinian society. Drawing a line through Ottoman property laws, the Status Quo regulations, and evangelical debates on the Abrahamic lineage, they show how descent relations have transformed as they crossed social domains, as they were mediated through land, nation, Bible, and blood. Nevertheless, through all of these transformations, descent has persisted as a religious idiom, remaining in many ways the lodestar of Palestinian Christian faith.

In highlighting this persistence, the thesis makes an argument about the nature of descent as an anthropological concept. It suggests that the problem of descent derives in part from it being analytically separated from the category of religion. Each chapter demonstrates this separation by exploring contexts in which religion and kinship converge to produce forms of descent that cannot be explained without the conceptual tools of both domains. And while the result is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject, I hope it highlights the wider significance of descent for ongoing debates about kinship, Christianity, and the Middle East.

Part 1

Palestinian Orthodoxy

Chapter 1

Generating Orthodoxy: Greek and Palestinian ideologies of descent

> I am Orthodox because my father was Orthodox. It is the only way.
> -Farah, Palestinian Orthodox Christian, 2018

> The book of generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren…and Jacob begat the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ…
> -Matthew 1:1-16 (KJV)

Christians speak of Christ's birth as a miracle. And according to the Bible it was, a child born of a divine father and a human mother. In the story, Joseph becomes a secondary figure: a guardian and caretaker rather than a progenitor. But why then do the Gospels of Luke and Matthew begin with such exhaustive descriptions of Joseph's lineage? What difference does it make that the line of descent runs through the adoptive father rather than the mother, who gave Jesus humanity? Why does the lineage matter at all?

Christianity has been described as a religion characterized by individualism, transcendence, universality, and most recently, temporal rupture. One of the arguments that will run throughout this thesis is that Christianity is also a religion of descent. This chapter thus introduces the concept of Christian descent in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, describing the ways in which the Greek hierarchy and the Palestinian laity express their relationship to the Orthodox tradition.

The chapter opens with ethnography from the feast of St. George, one of the most popular feasts for Palestinian Christians, and the custom of collecting olive oil from the saint's tomb. I then compare the formal feast with the domestic contexts in which the

festal oil is produced, demonstrating how concepts of Palestinian rootedness in the land are connected to the deeper history of the indigenous saint. Drawing on Gillian Feeley-Harnik's argument that descent relations often include not only human lineages but also forms of generation linked to land, I suggest that the Palestinian Orthodox relationship to St. George is a form of descent.

The rest of the chapter shows how the Greek hierarchy situates Palestinian idioms of rootedness and religious descent within its own religious discourse. It turns out that the hierarchy also describes itself as a lineage, only where the laity's descent claims are associated with land, the clergy's are associated with historical spaces that elicit a parallel between the present and the Byzantine past.

While the Palestinian approach to Orthodox descent is clearly subordinate to that of the hierarchy, the chapter demonstrates that this is not simply a question of great and little traditions. The two approaches are in fact the same, each establishing a way of incorporating history into an Orthodox tradition rooted in the distant past. The authority of the Church hierarchy is maintained not because its religious discourse if fundamentally different from the Palestinian one, but because it is the same.

The feast of St. George

After Easter and Mary's Dormition, the largest event in the Orthodox calendar is the feast of Saint George, patron saint of Palestine. This is the George also claimed by England, Ethiopia, Greece and other countries: George the dragon slayer. The Palestinian claim, however, is somewhat older than the others. According to the myth, George was a Roman soldier killed for being a Christian in the 4th century. His tomb is located in Lyd, a historically Palestinian town near Tel Aviv. Every year for centuries the Church has celebrated his feast day, always in the autumn.

In 1948, Lyd was forcibly evacuated and its Palestinian residents dispossessed. It has become an Israeli town with a Jewish majority, although a Palestinian minority remains in the old town. Lyd has been a pilgrimage site for many centuries, but after 1948

the warrior saint took on new meaning for Palestinians. For many years, George or the Arabic Jiries has been one of the most popular boys' names in the community, and one can find icons of George slaying the dragon in many if not most Christian homes – and stone carvings of the icon above many lintels and cornerstones as well (Fig. 2). Recently, the icon has been re-imagined in modern form, with the Israeli Separation Barrier surrounding the dragon (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 – St. George icon w/ Sep. Barrier

Fig. 2 – St. George etching in a convent

Thus like many saints of the Orthodox and Catholic world, George is attributed with a number of meanings by different communities in different historical periods. Today he is a symbol of resistance against the occupation, and the location of his tomb in a depopulated village provides a powerful reminder of that historical legacy. But the political relevance of the saint is only one part of his appeal, one that converges with the others in the annual celebration of his feast. This brings us to the modern day. In what follows, I describe my fieldwork in Lyd at George's feast day.

As with other feasts, the eve of St George's name day is marked with an *esperinós*, a Greek word for vespers also used in Arabic. It is a short liturgy, usually less attended, that among other things provides the laity with a first chance to encounter the saint's

tomb (or relics or icon). When I attended the feast a busload of Jerusalemites drove down just for the service as a way of avoiding the crowds of the following day. When I entered the Church, the Greek bishop tasked with leading the liturgy had still not arrived but Abuna Farah, the Jerusalem parish priest, was standing by the iconostasis blessing people with a small brush. For each person he dabbed the instrument in a small pot of olive oil blessed from contact with the tomb, and then brushed a small cross on their forehead, cheeks, chin, and hands. He then offered his small silver hand cross to them to kiss before they moved on.

Fig. 3 - St. George chains & priest w/brush

Fig. 4 – Collecting oil from St. George's tomb

The church was quiet. A few people were sitting and chatting in the pews while others smoked outside. I noticed the stairs leading into the crypt and went down. Here everything was dark. It was a small, stone chamber with a domed ceiling illuminated by a single dim light on the far wall. Save for the tomb it was empty, the floor covered in wood shavings. In one corner I could see a *tanaka* of olive oil (16L tin) and a number of soda bottles also full of oil. In the center of the room was a marble tomb, raised in Orthodox fashion with a cross and an icon of the saint engraved in the cladding. In the space around where the saint was depicted astride his horse the marble had been removed, creating a small basin. This was filled with olive oil.

Atop the tomb lay a number of plastic syringes. Confused, I stood stolidly by the wall until a group of women came down with empty bottles. Entering the room, they approached the tomb and unceremoniously dunked their bottles into the basin to collect the oil. The one carrying the smallest bottle picked up a syringe and started squirting oil into it. As I watched, more and more people entered the crypt and they jostled for position. When the oil in the basin began to run low, one of the women retrieved a bottle of oil from the corner and replenished it. Once they had filled their bottles, they made their way to a second set of stairs on the far side of the room. Most remained for the vespers liturgy, which on the eve of a feast is generally short.

The following morning, the atmosphere was very different. As with any major feast, the patriarch and his retinue arrived early and performed the liturgy for several hours. The laity, along with many pilgrims and tourists and also local Muslims, arrived steadily throughout the service and by the time it finished the entire complex – the Church interior, the alleyway between the Church and the monastery, and the road beyond – were packed with people. At one point I left to call my landlady Abla, who asked me to bring her back some oil from the tomb. When I returned, the road was blocked and I had to walk around to the front of the church.

Israeli police had set up barriers in the middle of the square with a narrow walkway for those attending the feast to pass through. Off to the side, outside the barriers, a dozen or so Orthodox Palestinians protested against the deals the patriarch apparently made to sell valuable Church property to Israeli companies. They carried several large banners: "the Church is not for sale,""Akka [Acre] will defend Orthodox *awqaf* [endowed property] and the Arabic roots of the Church", "the awqaf of our ancestors are for the grandchildren of our grandchildren", and "our awqaf is our past, our present, and our future."

Fig. 5 - Protest outside the Church of St. George

After spending some time speaking with protestors, bystanders, and local shop owners watching from their stoops, I returned to the feast. There were police officers standing at the entrance of the small passage leading to the Church and a lay *wakeel* tasked with keeping order at the front door. Every parish church has a committee of elected or Church-appointed laymen who make decisions on behalf of the parish and serve as a liaison between the lay community and the Church hierarchy. This man had the unenviable job of physically slowing the flow of people into the church, which was quickly becoming full. Pilgrims in matching caps pushed their way forward and he pushed back, admonishing them to behave. He was dressed for the part, wearing sneakers and a t-shirt with the phrase "basketball never stops" written across the front in all caps.

Eventually, as others exited the church, he let us through. I found a monk from the Greek Brotherhood, the only Palestinian monk at the time, standing on a set of stairs watching events unfold from above. I joined him and watched as the crowd split into two distinct groups. The door to the Church is on the far side from the 'Royal door' of the iconostasis, where the altar stands and the liturgy is performed. The iconostasis runs the length of the room, but is divided by a row of standing chairs – typical of Orthodox churches – that create an artificial wall between the clergy and those seated in pews opposite them on the one hand, and an open space for the laity to perform their personal

devotions on the other. I watched as the pilgrims, from Greece, Cyprus, Georgia, and Romania, headed to the far side of the church where the liturgy was taking place, while the Palestinians ignored the liturgy almost entirely. The space seemed set up for this, cordoning off a liturgical zone, as if protecting it from the local laity.

In this second area, Palestinians purchased candles from lay women by the back wall. They took these and proceeded to a large iron station filled with sand for planting them. Generally, the locals either took their tapers here or they purchased enormous meter-long candles (symbolizing George's spear) and set them up in rows outside the church walls. After lighting a candle, they generally proceeded to the iconostasis to kiss the icons there. Others went to a small table upon which stood an icon of George and a small drawer holding a set of iron chains. These chains, also used at the shrine in al-Khader, carry the blessings of the saint and are thought to have healing properties. During the feast mostly women and children stepped through them, passing them over their bodies. Parents showed their children how to do it and then the children did the same.

All the while the laity are visiting the various stations around the room, the patriarch is carrying on with the Divine Liturgy. A dozen bishops and other clergy assist him behind the iconostasis and two choruses, one Greek and one Palestinian, chant the hymns while the laity, including some mostly elderly Palestinians and a great number of pilgrims, stand or sit opposite and join in. When the Palestinians can hear an Arabic hymn, they join in, and they generally fall silent for the Greek, with the exception of those Palestinians with Greek mothers, of which there are a fair few.

But for the most part, the lay Palestinians are doing their own thing on the other side of the barrier and all the happier for it. They chat and greet one another, kiss the icon and then their friends. Young fathers carry their sons dressed in St. George costumes and take pictures by the iconostasis. And then, of course, they go down for oil.

After securing an empty bottle from an overzealous friend who arrived at the church with four, I attempted to retrieve some oil for my landlady. The queue was backed up past the stairs so I waited behind a group of Romanians and two Israeli Jews with their tour guide. Every few minutes we would take one step forward, or one step down. It soon

became clear why there were wood shavings on the floor. There was oil everywhere: on the stairs, the railings, the walls, and eventually also our bodies. Sweating and greasy all, we reached the tomb and I managed to get one squirt of a syringe into my bottle before another wakeel, stationed at the front with a full tin of oil in his hands, sent me on my way.

Outside the church, all of those who had entered the crypt with me stood by the wall with their bottles. I was astonished to find a woman I know from Jerusalem standing with two full-liter bottles completely filled. A group of young Ethiopian men rubbed the oil into their hair, while a Palestinian man rubbed it into his neck.

The service went on until the patriarch came out to serve the Eucharist. The heat from inside the church, caused by the number of people but also the number of candles, had forced many people outside but they all returned for communion. After this, people began to leave. Normally, the monastery of a major shrine hosts the worshippers for lunch or at least cognac, sweets, and coffee, but because of the protests the convent doors remained shut. The activity inside the church continued for some time, as the laity continued to visit the shrines, but the police left, and the protestors left, and eventually the feast came to an end.

Palestinian or Orthodox?

When I asked Palestinians about St. George, they did not stress the story of the dragon. George was significant to them rather for his courage and martyrdom – and also because he was Palestinian, an indigenous saint of the land. Khaled, an Orthodox activist, explained this to me. "His father was a Roman but his mother was Palestinian, and it is through the mother that you take your culture."

This feature of the saint's appeal is highlighted in the olive oil customs described above. The feast generally occurs just after the olive harvest and marks the beginning of the rainy season. Farmers from the surrounding villages donate oil from the harvest to the shrine, which is then used at the feast. So the traditions of the feast are local, and similar

practices accompany other feasts at different times of the year and the agricultural cycle, for example pomegranates at the feast of the Cross, marking the end of summer.

Many commentators have remarked on the similarities between the customs of Palestinian Christians and Muslims and the extent to which both apparently deviate from orthodox views of their religion (Grehan 2014, Qleibo 2013, Tamari 2009, Canaan 1927). They have a number of shared saints and shrines around the country and similar traditions associated with them. Al-Khader, one of the Arabic names for St. George, is also associated with a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and Muslims frequent the shrine and pass through the chains as much as the Christians do. During the Ottoman Empire, it was thought that contact with St. George's church could heal those people afflicted with mental illness. They would be chained to the walls, fed very little, and beaten by a priest or lay custodian in order to weaken the body and force the demons out. Some of these people, Muslims and Christians, claimed that George appeared to them and healed them, as Tawfiq Canaan recorded in his survey of popular religious practices in early 20th century Palestine (Canaan 1927). When the authorities put a stop to these practices, a new facility was built in a structure near the church to take better care of the patients, but a wire was set up to connect the church to the new buildings so that the *baraka* (blessing) of George would still be able to reach them (ibid).

The feast of St. George is also associated with the sacrifice of sheep, and this is still practiced today, although perhaps on a smaller scale than it once was. But a number of Orthodox Christians have told me of friends and family who have sacrificed a lamb at the threshold of a new house, or even a new car, for protection, and the feasts at Lyd and al-Khader are the two most popular occasions for this among Christians.

Feasts for saints often thus prompt discussion of syncretism, folk religion, superstition, and custom in academic discussion. As we saw in the Introduction, anthropologists of Christianity in particular have taken issue with the extent to which Christian faith is explained away as a foreign import. This was especially pronounced in postcolonial settings where Christianity was introduced by European missionaries, causing a generation of scholars to view it through the lens of colonial power. As a result, they

emphasized how self-described Christians continued to practice aspects of their former traditions, in a sense "localizing" Christian forms to a continuous indigenous culture. More recently, anthropologists of Christianity have attempted to take the self-ascription of Christians more seriously, with Robbins taking the opposite position that conversion constitutes a "rupture" with the past (2007). Since then, anthropologists of Christianity have developed their thinking in a range of theoretical directions, including material (Keane 2007, Engelke 2007, Meyer 2012), theological (Robbins 2006, Lemons 2018, Carroll 2017, Forbess 2015), psychological (Luhrmann 2010, 2012, Naumescu 2007), and ethical paradigms (Carroll 2017, Keane 2016).

These various approaches have helped to produce a body of literature that addresses "the difference that Christianity makes" (Cannell 2006). Nevertheless, the question of what counts as Christian remains a thorny one. Within the rupture paradigm – and for many, ethnographic best practice – when a Christian says a certain practice is a part of her faith, the anthropologist must take this claim seriously. But Christian traditions with a more established Church hierarchy than the evangelical and Pentecostal traditions (which make up the bulk of the literature) present a methodological problem. This is because for Church hierarchies, many of the practices of lay Christians are in fact not Christian at all. They are tolerated customs, folk practices, popular religion.

In such contexts, the divide between the Christian and the non-Christian is thus further complicated by the divide between the clergy and the laity. In the Orthodox Church, the boundary between them is often described in terms of tradition. Tradition is a vague and somewhat problematic term. The theologian Kallistos (Timothy) Ware puts it this way:

> Orthodox are always talking about Tradition. What do they mean by the word? A tradition is commonly understood to signify an opinion, belief or custom handed down from ancestors to posterity. Christian Tradition, in that case, is the faith and practice which Jesus Christ imparted to the Apostles, and which since the Apostles' time has been handed down from generation to generation in the Church (Ware 2015: 190).

The Greek word for tradition, *paradosis*, literally means "to pass down". This is perhaps the dominant perception of the Orthodox tradition for the laity and clergy alike. But according to the theology, "Tradition means something more concrete and specific than this":

> It means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers, the Service Books, the Holy Icons…Orthodox Christians see themselves as heirs and guardians to a rich inheritance received from the past, and they believe that it is their duty to transmit this inheritance unimpaired to the future (ibid).

So the tradition is divided between a more general sense of 'passing down' and a more specific, and more closely monitored sense of a canon.

Ware indicates the division between these two in quoting a 3rd century bishop: "'The Lord said, I am truth. He did not say, I am custom'" (ibid: 191). In pointing this out, Ware expresses a concern shared by many theologians that left unchecked, practices from the past will become tradition just for being historical. If the Church accepts anything 'handed down' as tradition, it risks dangerously conflating the message of Christ with the human desire to be connected with it – or to claim special access to it (Lossky 1974, Yannaras 2013, Florovsky 1972: 47, 74-77).

Despite these reservations from theologians, this chapter (and the thesis in general) will not draw a strict dividing line between little and great traditions or between "passing down" in the general sense and the more specific, recognized forms of religious transmission. Instead it focuses on points of convergence between them.

In his work on Orthodoxy in Greece, Charles Stewart has argued that great and little traditions "are actually versions of each other", and that instead of focusing on one or the other, a more effective approach might be to highlight those elements which are shared by both (1991: 13-14).[16] In the context of Jerusalem, this approach is particularly helpful as the differences between the higher clergy and the laity are compounded by

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[16] Compare with the Catholic context in Orsi 2010: xxxi-xxxii.

national differences. As we will see, the Greek hierarchy distinguishes Orthodoxy from Palestinian customs shared with Muslims. There are obvious political reasons for this, as the Palestinian laity has been campaigning for greater influence in the Church for centuries; by claiming Palestinians are not fully or properly Orthodox, the Greeks establish their position as the protectors of tradition. But such political differences are more complicated than they first appear, and a greater degree of understanding depends on an analytical perspective which does more than describe "local" religion in comparison with Church doctrine. It needs rather to show how such practices emerge and under what circumstances they are accepted as tradition.

Stewart's case involves a distinction between demons, unrecognized by the Church but central to lay experience, and recognized Christian cosmology and ritual. An instructive example is the evil eye. The clergy condemns spells and healing practices used by the laity while also developing their own "prayer" as a substitute, drawing on the same symbolism and even some of the same semantic structures[17] (ibid: 235). The establishment of this prayer thus incorporates the customary or pagan spells to repel the evil eye into formal ritual, revealing how "great" traditions adapt in order to accommodate the needs and experiences of a particular community living in a particular time and place.

The practices I describe are slightly different. Apotropaic practices certainly exist in Palestinian society, but I focus instead on practices related to descent. Like Naxiote approaches to the evil eye, however, Palestinian discourses of descent are treated by the clergy as extending beyond the limits of tradition. As I will show, Palestinian Orthodoxy takes the paradigms of human reproduction on the one hand and divine presence on the other and unifies them. Doing so allows them to experience links to saints like George not only as receptacles of divine presence but also as indexes of their own history and genealogy. This in turn supports their claim to represent Orthodox history – for they depict the history of their community as being also the history of the Church.

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[17] He indicates that early writers like Origen used the Greek term for "spell" to mean "prayer" (ibid: 291), suggesting the distinction is more ideological than theological.

By contrast, the authority of the Greek hierarchy rests on the refutation or concealment of this claim as much as it does on more secular considerations, including its relationship to the state. The hierarchy has thus developed a powerful ideology to support its own historical claims and its own relationship to Church history. But when we look closely, it turns out that the two sets of claims and the practices that substantiate them are so similar that they appear to express a single, unified process through which individual Christians become bearers of history. History, I will argue, is the substance of Christianity for both Palestinians and Greeks, and the process of transforming custom into ritual is the mechanism through which new historical experiences are incorporated into the tradition.

Returning to the feast of St. George, we can see what looks like two parallel celebrations. On the one hand, there is the clergy along with a group of pilgrims and some lay Palestinians sitting or standing directly in front of the altar and following along with the liturgy. On the other hand, there is the space adjacent in which Palestinians freely move about the room lighting candles, passing the chains over their bodies, kissing icons, and chatting. These areas are separated spatially as well as liturgically, with the row of standing chairs serving as a border. The fact that Palestinians have ideas about George that extend beyond the discourse of the Church, symbolized by the Muslim and Christian term "al-Khader" (the green) and the close association with olive oil – not strictly part of George's life or hagiography – seems to further support a distinction between Palestinian and Greek traditions.

However, as Stewart argued above, I suggest these traditions are simply versions of one another. They are linked by a fundamental interest in historical continuity mediated through a unique understanding of descent. We can see traces of this in the reference to George's Palestinian mother and the protest signs claiming Church land as endowments from ancestors to "the grandchildren of our grandchildren". Similarly, we saw how parents dressed their children as George and taught them to pray with candles or chains. Finally we saw the emphasis on oil and the occasion of the feast after the olive

harvest. As we will now see, all of these are indexes of generation and continuity, albeit of a specific kind.

Land, descent, and "rootedness"

The first time I met Archbishop Aristarchos, the General Secretary of the Patriarchate, he gave me what I later learned was the general view of the Greek Brotherhood of their Palestinian parish. "Our local people," he told me, "were once Greeks. Understandably, they eventually learned Arabic and forgot their Greek heritage." He and the higher clergy thus consider the Palestinians to be not Arabs but Greek "arabophones" who "forgot" their Greek identity after centuries of Arab rule in Palestine.

When I first visited the Patriarchate, I was surprised to find Greek national flags outside, and again in front of numerous saints' shrines around the country and on the occasion of major feasts. The Patriarchate has its own flag, but it has been accompanied by the national flag since at least 1967 (Papastathis 2014/15: 38). Today, when I speak with monks about the Greekness of the Church, they equate modern Greece with the Greekness of the Byzantine Empire and even of biblical Palestine, and this attitude is repeated by the highest members of the clergy. As the Archbishop stated so succinctly, Arab rule transformed the character of the laity but not that of the monastics, who held on to their Greek and Orthodox heritage: "preserv[ing] unadulterated the Orthodox Faith [sic] of the Holy Apostles" (Patriarchate website 2015).

Orthodox Palestinians tell the story differently. Like the Greeks, they refer to the Orthodox Church as the original Christian tradition and they use the word indigenous to describe it (ibid). But the Palestinians point to the fact that the Greek presence in Jerusalem was broken when the monks were expelled from the country at various points in its history, while they, the laity, continued living in the land. They thus describe themselves as the true descendants of the first Christians. An Orthodox friend of mine works as a tour guide in Jerusalem for Western Christians visiting the holy sites. When he

tells them that he is Christian, they often ask him when he converted, assuming he was once a Muslim. "At Pentecost," he always responds.

Issa Boullata, a recently deceased professor of Arabic literature at McGill and a Jerusalemite from a prominent Orthodox family, presents a similar picture in his memoir:

> I am deeply rooted in Jerusalem. I don't mean by this to refer to my roots in the ancient Land of Canaan, and especially in the Canaanite tribe of the Jebusites who were the original Semitic inhabitants of Uru-Salem... Yet my family name is a constant reminder of such roots. In the middle of the 1940s, the Dominican linguist of Semitic languages, Father Augustine Marmarji…told me that Boullata was a Canaanite name (Boullata 2014: 1).

For Boullata, his family name is evidence of his ancestry, a line of descent connecting present Palestinians with ancient Canaanites. But descent for Boullata and for Orthodox Christians generally is more expansive than this.

A month before I first attended the St. George feast, I was invited to participate in the olive harvest at a friend's house in the Jerusalem suburbs. The extended family mostly lives in the Old City but one son lives outside. He has five olive trees, which by rural standards is nothing, but on a good year it is enough for a small family to produce olive oil for the year.

I set out from the Old City in early morning. When I arrived, the others were all already there: my friend and his parents, his sister and her husband along with their child. They were all sitting around the table while Su'ad, the grandmother, was putting breakfast out on the table. Labna[18], hummus, ka'ek bread, hard boiled eggs, *ful*[19], and lots of tea and coffee.

We ate well, and then sat slumped on the porch before Su'ad sent us out into the garden. We picked the olives, 'milking the branches' as it was described to me. Large plastic tarps had been laid out below to catch them, and when the tree was bare, we gathered up the tarp ends and poured the olives into buckets. The children – a neighbor's

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[18] A strained yoghurt eaten with bread and olive oil.
[19] Fava beans marinated with chilies and served in olive oil with crushed garlic and parsley.

kids joined in later – then sorted the green olives from the black, taking out the twigs and leaves. After a few hours we were all covered in olive dust.

At lunch, we ate a dish called *laban immo*: "mother's yogurt." Laban immo involves straining and heating a yogurt sauce for hours in a huge pot and then cooking large chunks of lamb in it. I rarely ate this type of dish in the Old City – they were reserved for special occasions when the whole family was present, and this is difficult to manage in the small urban space of the Quarter. The olive harvest, along with a name day, baptism, birthday, and even some normal Sundays often become the opportunity to bring the family together – especially when some of the family live in the suburbs, as they are often reluctant to find parking and hike down into the Quarter through tourists, pilgrims, and police.

But the olive harvest also carries a special additional quality to it that other occasions do not, which is the physical connection to the land. This family was never an agricultural one, but like many urban Palestinians – and urbanites anywhere – they keep gardens and produce their own fruits and vegetables. My friend who owns the house, Basil, is always tending to the garden, building some steps or a terrace to impede erosion, and planting cucumbers, cauliflower, and new varieties of mint and thyme.

Having this space and cultivating it can have the effect of 'rooting' someone in the land. As Boullata pointed out, one's roots are often described in terms of origins and ancestors, but it is also a personal connection.

> I am deeply rooted in Jerusalem…[but] I am not referring to [my] rootedness in ancient history, important and real as it is…I am *personally* rooted in Jerusalem (Boullata 2014: 1, emphasis mine).

As examples of these roots, Boullata describes his great-grandmother becoming pregnant after ritually circling the tree of Abraham in Hebron; her son was thus named Ibrahim (ibid: 3-4). Others describe the same process in relation to the milk grotto[20], the tomb, the

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[20] A shrine in Bethlehem on a spot where Mary's breastmilk apparently fell to the floor.

house, or the bath of Mary (See Stadler 2015). When Boullata's grandfather, a goldsmith, built a new house in West Jerusalem during the British Mandate, he took his best steel anvil and tossed it into the foundations "as a treasured token…for basic strength, with his future generations in mind" (ibid: 5). Though Boullata lived in Canada after 1967, these experiences "root" him in Jerusalem and provide an index of his deeper, Canaanite roots.

The same is true of Basil's family. But when we consider the olive harvest in relation to St. George, something else comes into view. The family brings its oil to George, after which it is distributed to Palestinians from all over the country who attend the feast. The family thus becomes linked to George and the Christian community; but just as the family plot links Palestinians to their roots, the shrine links them to generations of Christians who visited the shrine and shared their substance with the saint. The tomb in Lyd is an index of the saint but also of the land that produced both him and its inhabitants, the Palestinians.

Christianity, materiality, and totemism

One of the central currents in the anthropology of Christianity, and one which has influenced the study of religion in many other contexts as well, is the study of materiality: the material media through which human beings experience divine presence. Anthropologists have been studying religious media since the beginning of the discipline, particularly in linguistic anthropology and ritual anthropology, but it became a subfield of its own in the late 1990s/2000s. In the process, scholars began to pay closer attention to the ways in which religious experience was made public and recognizable to others through various material forms, including speech, objects, gesture, sound, and sensation (Keane 2007, Engelke 2011).

One of the benefits of studying Christianity through its material forms is that doing so provides a link between religious experience and broader social forces. It highlights how a religious tradition can influence members of a society who are not themselves religious, or who ascribe to some aspects of the tradition and not others. One can thus be

a Pentecostal and still practice spirit mediumship, or an atheist who still wants to be buried in a Church cemetery. The study of materiality can thus more easily and accurately address the way in which religious forms traverse the domains of social life.

This approach has been very successful and was arguably a major impetus for the dramatic rise in interest in the anthropology of Christianity during the 2000s. And while most of these studies have concerned Protestant contexts, some scholars of Orthodox and Catholic Christianity have also taken it up, for example in relation to Marian apparitions (De la Cruz 2015, Heo 2012), feasting and fasting (Boylston 2012, 2018), and shrines or relics (Shenoda 2010). Here we focus on olive oil, land, and shrines rooted in historically significant spaces. And I suggest that the domains these forms traverse are kinship and Christianity: whereas ideologically Arab descent is agnatic and Christian descent is sacramental or spiritual, I argue they are linked through idioms and materials of the land.

The specific character of Palestinian Orthodox materiality can be described in two ways: on the one hand, the objects, sounds, and bodily movements that occur in St. George's shrine mediate contact with the divine in much the same way as they do for Egyptian Copts (Heo 2012) Filipino Catholics (De la Cruz 2015), and many other kinds of Christian. The presence that is mediated is both divine and human, because the saint is himself a mediator between humanity and God.

On the other hand, the Palestinian Christians are claiming a relationship of descent between themselves and the mediator (i.e. the saint), and so the materiality of the shrine is also an index of a very different sort. What is normally described as "divine presence" is here also an ancestral presence.

Christianity is a religion requiring mediation in part because, according to the Bible, the Christian God is not of this world. However, for many Orthodox Palestinians, the carriers of God's presence – the saints, Jesus, and Mary – are indeed of this world and more than that, they are ancestors. Accommodating this aspect of Palestinian Orthodox materiality thus requires paying closer attention to the ways in which materiality is connected to kinship and descent.

For the last twenty years, Gillian Feeley-Harnik has been developing a theory of descent that seeks simultaneously to recover it from the dustbin of anthropological theory and to radically re-imagine its scope. Looking back at some of the founding figures of kinship theory, including Rivers, Morgan, and Radcliffe-Brown, Feeley-Harnik argues that functionalist theories of descent were not wrong because descent is less socially significant than idioms of kinship and relatedness (Schneider's critique). Rather, they were wrong because they abstracted descent from space, transforming it into a theory of temporal continuity.

For Feeley-Harnik, the problem was not descent but the conceptual separation between "the political domain of *lineages* [and] the domestic domain of *kinship*" (2019: 70, emphasis in original). Radcliffe Brown and Evans-Pritchard associated descent with time and kinship with space, with the consequence that domestic life appeared timeless, reproducing itself without change. Feeley-Harnik frames her project as a corrective to this attitude, but again not by dismissing descent but by expanding it. Writing with two co-authors, for example, she articulates this as an attempt to express the historical nature of kinship, families, and domestic life (Trautmann, Feeley-Harnik, & Mitani 2011).[21]

This is a particularly valuable corrective in the case of Palestinian society as the discussion of descent and segmentation has been particularly contentious in Middle East anthropology (See Abu Lughod 1989, Rothenberg 1998, Asad 1973, Dresch 1986, 1988). To take only one example, Asad has shown how models of kinship and descent became a tool for early Israeli anthropologists, a cohort of whom trained under Max Gluckman, to describe Palestinian villages as timeless and Palestinian society in general as lacking a national culture, which had profound implications for Palestinians' claims to the land (Rabinowitz 2002: 308, Asad 1975, Eyal 1996, Furani & Rabinowitz 2011). Today, this tradition continues in the Israeli court system, in which the 'nomadic' and 'clan' structure of Bedouin society is used as evidence to support their eviction and re-settlement to urban neighborhoods (Bishara forthcoming).

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[21] "[T]he family is not an institution that simply reproduces itself in biological fashion but instead has a history" (ibid: 160-161).

Anthropologists have debated the political implications of kinship studies in the Middle East for some time. I cannot not rehash these arguments here other than to indicate with Asad here and Abu-Lughod in the introduction that an analytical focus on descent is often criticized as de-historicizing and de-politicizing the context in which kinship systems operate. Feeley-Harnik is useful here because she suggests a way of transforming the study of descent and kinship while still maintaining their centrality to social life. What would be more productive than the focus on temporal continuity, she suggests, is a broader view of how societies reproduce themselves, a view that takes into account a larger set of factors, both temporal and spatial, social and spiritual, human and non-human.

In an essay titled "the Geography of Descent" (2004), Feeley-Harnik draws on Tim Ingold's work on totemism to emphasize the extent to which at least some societies identify the concept of generation with land as opposed simply to descent. She writes, "Ingold argues that what might be called 'totemism' in Australia should include 'linkages between people, land, and ancestral beings" (Feeley-Harnik 2004: 317), and uses his work alongside several others to push for a broader understanding of "the powers that bring forth life" (ibid).

Ingold defines totemism as a link between humans and non-humans through land:

When an Australian Aboriginal man proclaims himself to be a kangaroo, he means that he…partakes of the same substance of the kangaroo…[both] of whom derive the lineaments of their being from the same place in the landscape (2000: 114).

The man and the kangaroo are related because they share the same land, the substance of their being. This provides Feeley-Harnik with a model for human descent more generally. For where Ingold posits a stark contrast between totemism and western ideologies of descent, she connects them (ibid: 113, ch. 8).

Feeley-Harnik often draws this connection in relation to Christianity. In her research on both Charles Darwin and Lewis Henry Morgan, she emphasizes the imagery of nature in the book of Genesis and the way certain forms of Protestantism employ the idiom of creation to form inter-species relationships with animals and land (2001, 1999,

2017). But I think this connection could be applied more broadly. Perhaps Christianity, at least to some extent, is a form of totemism.

Feeley-Harnik is one of a few anthropologists who have become interested in Christian ideas about descent in recent years (e.g. Thomas et. al. 2017, McKinnon & Cannell 2013). In particular, though, Fenella Cannell's work on English genealogists (2011), Anglican cathedrals (forthcoming), and Mormon ideas about kinship and ancestry (2013, 2017) addresses the kinds of questions Feeley-Harnik has raised using historical materials in an ethnographically-grounded approach (see also Bear 2007, Delaney 2017, and Seeman 2017). The parallel with the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is clearest in her essay "Kinship in the cathedral" (forthcoming), which highlights the ways in which British Anglicans use idioms of kinship and descent to describe their relationship to Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral. Some use the cathedral as a medium to communicate with deceased relatives, but others feel kinship with the space itself, saying they have it "in [their] bones" or "in [their] DNA" (ibid).

The clergy often discourages such expressions of relatedness as un-Protestant and replace it with secular language, using "memory" and "history" rather than kinship to describe visiting a grave or feelings of closeness to church ruins. But like Feeley-Harnik, Cannell argues that much of the time, lay Christians do not see a conflict between these terms. On the contrary, the religious character of the cathedral and its connection to a broader communal memory is precisely what allows it to become such a strong mediator between them. This allows for a religious imagination in which human and divine relationality can be perceived together. As in the Orthodox case, Anglican sacred space links Christians to their recently deceased relatives and both to a deeper kind of kinship. The bones of St Edmund, indexed by the dust and stones of the ruins, become the very substance of human relatedness.

At the start of this chapter I described the feast of St. George and some of the traditions associated with it, including passing his chains around one's body and collecting oil from his tomb. I highlighted the extent to which such practices are framed by an interest in generational transmission, i.e. from Palestinian parents and their children to St.

George and his mother, and in the protest claiming the Church as the patrimony of Palestinian descendants.

Having now discussed how Feeley-Harnik's approach to descent explains one's relationship to an ancestor not only through filiation but also in relation to land, we can begin to view Palestinian Orthodox descent in a wider frame. In particular, the parallel between the feast of St. George and the family olive harvest highlights how relations of kinship and descent at the household level become linked to the deeper Christian past. The production of olive oil on a family plot is connected to broader kinship relations that "root" Palestinian Christians in Palestine, not merely because the property is transmitted through the male line (in this case, it was purchased by Basil himself) but because the land and the occasion of the harvest brought the family together. The oil is not just good to eat. Like blood, it is a vital substance.

When Palestinian Christians bring their oil to St. George, they donate it for the sake of the feast. They then reclaim a small portion of it in water bottles. By then, however, it is no longer "their" oil. It is mixed with the donations of other families and transformed through contact with the tomb. When it returns to the donor it has become a kind of totem, a link between the family, the land, the saint, and the ancestors.

Many anthropologists have written about the properties and meanings of olive oil, particularly in Mediterranean contexts.[22] Writing about Italian and Palestinian contexts, for example, Anne Meneley has described intending to study oil as a commodity and discovering how frequently her interlocutors in both places associated the substance with religious experiences (2008). Drawing on Keane's work on indexes and qualisigns, she outlines a number of ways in which the material characteristics of oil help to produce and condition certain kinds of experience. She describes, for example, the way oil appears to "seal" the body in ritual contexts, protecting it from evil (cf. Stewart 1991). An Orthodox Palestinian similarly told her that "olive oil opened people to God's love" (Meneley 2008: 316).

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[22] On ritual uses of olive oil in Mandate Palestine, see Canaan 1927: 143.

In another context, Meneley points out the divergence among Palestinian oil producers who target a local market and those who seek to export it abroad. The desire in the west for extra virgin oil contrasts with many Palestinians and Israelis who prefer the viscous, green oil that one finds in most Palestinian contexts. Refugee Palestinians abroad, for example, see oil as an index of home:

> The ex-pat Palestinian community [in Kuwait] valued what Trubek calls "the taste of place," especially as many of them had been forcibly displaced…The thick, dark green oil which Palestinians favor evokes what David Sutton called "xenetia" for Greek exiles, the taste of homeland (Meneley 2014: 50).

Following Meneley's interest in the material qualities of oil, it seems that olive oil is particularly effective as an index in part because it can be so easily "placed". Like wine, olive oil can be distinguished by the specific territory in which it is produced as well as how and when it is pressed, stored, and filtered. Unlike other Christian substances, like water, it carries traces of its donor, a kind of terroir DNA. This is partly reflected by the fact that my interlocutors do not just send "Palestinian" oil to their relatives abroad; where possible, they send it from Bethlehem, or Lyd, or Salfit, indexes not of the land in general, but of specific homes and villages.

Moreover, while oil can be used in a variety of religious settings, e.g. in a lamp or to infuse incense and perfume, it is also marked by its viscous touch. At the shrine of St. George, Christians experience the presence of the saint at least in part through touch: the oil touches the tomb, and then it touches their bodies. When I brought oil back to my landlady, I asked her what she would use it for. "I'm not going to eat it! It's dirty!" she said, "I put just a little on the skin, if I have a bruise or a headache, it helps." This explanation resonates with literature on how divine presence 'sticks' to certain objects. Matthew Engelke, for example, has described this phenomenon among Apostolic Christians in Zimbabwe, for whom "holy honey" and "prayer pebbles" have healing effects – even in a religious milieu that rejects divine materiality (Engelke 2005, 2007, 2012).

Here, however, the sticky substance does not just heal the individual who touches it. It also bridges a gap between two kinds of sign: the index of home, and the index of

God. Thus while Meneley distinguishes between religious contexts in which oil "seals" the body and a secular longing for the homeland, the two features seem to me intimately linked. When I went down to the crypt to collect some oil for my landlady, part of the oil's value seemed to derive from the fact that it was literally becoming a part of the building, the surfaces, and our bodies. Entering the feast of St. George meant getting covered in his substance, but also that of many Palestinian trees and villages. The oil thus represents the saint and the land that produced him.

Furthermore, the material qualities of oil were also linked, explicitly and implicitly, to motherhood. At the start of the chapter, I quoted a Palestinian layman who emphasized that St. George's mother was Palestinian, and that one's culture is transmitted through the mother. I have also mentioned the significance of Mary's milk grotto (along with Abraham's tree) as means of becoming "rooted" in the land, and the fact that olive picking was described to me as "milking" the tree. At Basil's house, we ate "mother's yoghurt" during the harvest. I will discuss the significance of maternal symbols in Chapter 3 but here it is worth pointing to the slippery steps and shared substance of George's crypt not only in relation to the male saint, but also to his female mother. Descending into the crypt, which – as Stadler suggests (2015) – invokes the womb and birthing metaphors, links Christians to George (partly) through his mother, who is infused in the land and its substances.[23]

At this point in the chapter we can see that a connection exists between the way Palestinian families reproduce themselves not only through procreation and social practices like naming, but also through practices linked to land. We can also see how these practices are visible both in domestic contexts and in the context of the saints' feast, which is salient not only because of George's martyrdom, but because he is a product of the land like contemporary Palestinians.

We now return to the problem posed at the start of the chapter: what counts as Christian and what it means to "pass down" a tradition. Looking at an example of a

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[23] This also has implications for how we understand the continuity of the Christian lineage, i.e in patrilineal or matrilineal terms (See Ch. 3).

Palestinian Christian genealogy, we will be able to examine how broad concepts of relatedness and rootedness are drawn into genealogical history and finally how that history is incorporated into the Greek hierarchy's understanding of descent.

Genealogies of place

Every time I tried to get George Baramki to give me his genealogy – a simple list of names, I thought – he told me about places instead. I knew George well because he regularly attended the parish liturgies, saints' feasts, and community events like weddings, funerals, and public lectures. Towards the end of my fieldwork, however, I wanted to record the genealogies of Jerusalemite families in order to see what they could tell me about historical and generational changes in the city. But as it turns out, perhaps especially for refugee Palestinians, Jerusalemite genealogies were as much about geography and social history as they were about specific ancestors.

"Our family is from Greece, from the island Rhodos," George began as we sat inside the Holy Sepulcher one day. It was the occasion of the Feast of the Cross and we were sitting on an auspicious perch past which the monks would pass in their annual procession. "A Greek monk told me the name means 'generous' in Greek…but originally we are from Persia, where they called us 'Barmakeh' without the 'alif' [the Arabic letter 'a']. In Kuwait [my paternal relative] was working and the Iranians there said 'we have a place called Baramki!'" This discovery led George to discern an ancestral connection to the Abbasid court, where according to him, his ancestors were once employed – but fell out of favor for opposing Caliph Harun al-Rashid and were killed.[24] "The rest went to Spain because it was Islamic… but later became Catholic, and then moved to Rhodos where they became Orthodox. Finally, they ended up in Jerusalem" where the family produced a number of clergymen. In the Jerusalem parish church, Mar Yacoub, George pointed out a framed list of former parish priests going back to 1826, when his ancestor Mikhali Baramki

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[24] Although George cannot prove the link, there was a Barmakeh/Barmakid family employed by the Abbasids.

was priest. He also showed me a plaque inside the church and an inscription above the "royal" or central door of the iconostasis (Fig. 8) recognizing the Baramki family for supporting the church in the 18th and 19th centuries.[25]

Fig. 6 – List of parish priests at Mar Yacoub

Fig. 7 – Plaque recognizing Baramki family (1887)

Fig. 8 – Inscription recognizing the Baramki family (1748)

These objects provide evidence not only of George's family history, but also its connection to the Church, its contribution to maintaining it over time. They do not provide evidence of his Persian, Spanish, or Greek roots, but the narrative powerfully demonstrates the same kind of relationship in the deeper, undocumented past. His family survived, persisted, by bearing the marks of history in their religious affiliation, their professions, and their name.

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[25] See Bear 2007 and Varghese 2004 for similar practices among Christians in India.

Thus today, while George is proud of his Greek and Persian heritage, he also emphasizes that he is an indigenous Palestinian Christian. In part, he traces his Palestinian ancestry through his mother's lineage – like his name saint, his father's ancestors were foreigners and his mother's were Palestinians. And as with the examples above, he punctuated his account of particular individuals with references to the feasts and substances. I first decided to ask George about his genealogy when we met at the St. George feast and he told me that years ago, the saint came to him in a dream when he was in a feud with a male relative, helping him to successfully resolve it. Ever since, he has returned every year to the feast to give thanks. One year, we took a bus back from Lyd to Jerusalem together and he told me about the uses of oil and other Christian substances. "Araq[26]," he said, "I use it for everything! When I was a boy, my grandmother would soak a towel in it and put in on my forehead for headaches."

But the identity of his ancestors and their links to material culture are only one part of George's genealogy. He also describes his indigeneity in terms of his family's experiences in the spaces and places of Palestine's political history. Mikhali Baramki, the priest mentioned above, was according to George the first to use an Arabic liturgy (instead of Greek) in the parish church. In highlighting this, George situated Mikhali as a representative of the Arab national movement of the 19th century. The same process is visible in George's immediate family history when they became refugees in 1948, their story representing the tragic experience of so many Palestinians.

His family moved to the cosmopolitan city of Jaffa in the late 19th century, as many Christians did. His father, Anton, was born there. In 1948, when the family was forced to evacuate and the city depopulated, Anton went to Amman because his father had business there but later returned to Jerusalem. His brother went to Jericho and two other siblings emigrated. Two of his sisters became nuns in Syria, as the Jerusalem monasteries would not accept Arabs.

George thus grew up in Jerusalem in a refugee family that had been close to the Church for generations but also an intrinsic part of Palestinian national history. He

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[26] An anise liquor, often produced by Christian families.

identifies as a Jerusalemite but also as a Palestinian with roots in many different parts of the land, from Jaffa to Jericho. As I have indicated, he often describes this identity in terms of a conjuncture between national and family histories: he describes with pride, for example, how Orthodox members of the Palestinian national movement occupied the monasteries of early 20th century Palestine. He told me that story in the biography of his own ancestor, a trustee of the Jerusalem parish church at the time, which was occupied for years by the local laity.[27]

This kind of conjuncture extends to his own biography as well. Explaining his own place in the family lineage, George described an experience at the Holy Fire procession for Easter in the 1990s. He recalled standing in the foyer of the church by the stone of unction[28] with the future Patriarch Irenaios, who at the time was just a monk. As usual, young Palestinian men processed through the doors in celebration, banging drums and chanting (see Ch. 7), knocking over a bystander. George went to help the person up and Irenaios blessed him for it, adding that he was against this raucous tradition. Later, George recalled, when Irenaios became patriarch, the Israeli police began blocking the streets and clearing the Holy Sepulcher courtyard, leading to a much smaller procession. This is a policy that continues today.

George positioned himself as a witness and contributor to history, and I believe it is in part this presence that he wished to express to me as much as the names of any individual ancestor or relative. The presence of his lineage in history, marked by cultural forms like the saint's feast and araq, or by links to religious institutions and political movements, is inseparable from his understanding of descent. It is not just the existence of the lineage that matters, but how its members carried their society and Church through time.

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[27] A major moment in the lay-clergy dispute during the Mandate (See Dierauff 2020: 190-196).
[28] Upon which Jesus' body was washed after crucifixion.

The Orthodox genos: the descent ideology of the Church hierarchy

Like Palestinians, the Greek monks of the Patriarchate also claim to have roots in the ancient past – although, as we will see, they imagine these roots in slightly different ways. As we will see in Chapter 4, Orthodox Palestinians understand Greek hegemony in political terms. They argue that during the early Ottoman period, a Greek patriarch supported by an elite class of Greek merchants in Istanbul called the Phanariots successfully ousted Arab members of the hierarchy from positions of authority.

Historians disagree whether there was a coherent anti-Arab policy in place by the 16th century, but not the fact that one did eventually form (e.g. Runciman 1968: 360-407, Papastathis 2014/15: 44). At least by the early 19th century, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that the higher clergy began identifying itself as Greek, using variations of the term *Hellene* instead of the more inclusive *Rum* or *Romaioi*[29] (Papastathis 2014/15, Roussos 2005). For centuries, the name of the Church was "Rum Orthodox," in reference to it being the Church of the former Roman Empire. "Rum," was a religious designation that encompassed all of the ethnic groups of the Church – from the Balkans to the Arab Middle East. Many Orthodox Palestinians continue to use the phrase "Rum" today, both because they refuse to recognize the Church as Greek and because they distinguish their "original" form of Orthodoxy from the 'schismatic' Oriental Orthodox: e.g. the Copts, Syriacs, & Ethiopians.

But in the 19th century, an older idiom called the *Megali Idea*, which expressed a desire to reclaim the former lands of the Byzantine Empire, was revived in the name of Greek nationalism. Greek writers like Pavlos Karolides created a lens through which the Orthodox Christians of Syria and Palestine could be regarded not as Arabs at all but as 'arabophones', the same term used by Aristarchos (Papastathis 2014/15: 43). Thus while much has changed since Greek independence, the nationalistic rhetoric of the Brotherhood remains much the same, as does that of the Ecumenical Patriarch,

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[29] As Livanios shows (2007: 36-38, 68-69; cf. Herzfeld 1986: 217-222), the meaning of these terms is variable: "Roman" can be exclusive and "Hellenic" inclusive. Here they represent a clear genealogical distinction between Greeks and Arabs.

Bartolomeo, the most powerful of the Orthodox patriarchs. In a 2018 speech (to a Greek audience), Bartolomeo described the Greek identity in revealing language:

> The Romiosyne [*Rum*] of the City [Istanbul] is a part, a section of world-Romiosyne, among which we are numbered. However, we are in no way simply a piece of world- Romiosyne. We are, I would say, even if we are speaking about ourselves, a select piece of world-Romiosyne, for here beats the heart of our *genos.* It is the womb of our people…[we] have passed these…years serving the Mother Church…the values common to all humanity, the particular ideals that we have as a *phyle* and as a *genos*, and thus we continue down the road of our fathers' destiny (OS 2018).[30]

The term *genos*[31] (race, offspring, people), and elsewhere the word *phyle,* (clan, tribe, race) are used instead of more general terms like community/minority (*omogeneia*) and nation (*ethnos*), which are used in other contexts. They carry a strong connotation of descent, which distinguishes the Greeks among the Orthodox by claiming a unique lineage going back to the Early Church. Archbishop Aristarchos echoed this sentiment in a speech given in English to an audience of Greek and Israeli officials:

> Greeks by origin [in Jerusalem]…consider themselves as descendants and successors of the Byzantines in the Holy Land. Here are meant the pagan Greeks who were engrafted to Christianity (Aristarchos 2003).

Greek monks also spoke to me of the Greek people as a distinct group in less formal settings, or they used the term Romiosyne to "include" Palestinians as arabophones. However, as with Palestinians, it was more common for them to express descent in relation to space and ritual. Unlike Palestinians, the Greeks who live and work at the Patriarchate were almost universally born in Greece and not Israel/Palestine, they draw on a different set of images, idioms, and practices than the Palestinians do. Moreover, as they do not generally have families in the country, their expressions of descent often take

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[30] See Demirtzoglou 2018 for audio in Greek, and OS 2018 for an English transcript and analysis.
[31] See Livanios on the variability of this term (2007: 49). See also Roudometof 2011: 99.

place in the context of formal ritual – but the manner in which they practice these rituals reveals strong parallels with Palestinian society.

After George and I had been sitting in the Holy Sepulcher awhile, chatting about his family history, we heard the sound of chants coming from upstairs. The liturgy for the Feast of the Cross had ended and the procession down into the lowest chamber of the church would begin. The Feast of the Cross is one of the central events of the Orthodox calendar. It originally marked the discovery of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified by Emperor Constantine's mother Helena. However, the same feast also marks an event that took place centuries later, when the cross was stolen by Persian invaders and subsequently recovered. As a result, the tradition changed to incorporate the cross' accumulation of history. As the story goes, when Emperor Heraclius returned from Persia with the cross, he attempted to carry it to Golgotha (inside the Holy Sepulcher Church) but fell. He took this as a sign that he must remove his imperial regalia before entering the shrine. Today, this is what the patriarch continues to do, carrying the cross on his head as he walks in simple clothes down into the cave where the cross was discovered and back up again.

George and I waited to see this procession in a chamber controlled by the Armenians between the main body of the church and the cave below. According to the law of the Status Quo (described in Ch. 2), the Greek patriarch has the right on this feast day to cense the icons in the Armenian shrine. On this occasion, however, the Armenians and Greeks were on bad terms and a group of young Armenian monks had set up a barricade of two benches stacked one over the other to prevent the Greeks from entering. Before the procession arrived, a weary police officer began debating the rules with these monks, trying to avoid a confrontation. But he was too late: the procession arrived and the Greek monks attempted to enter the shrine. Very quickly a dozen men were yelling, shoving, and punching each other while the officer attempted to intervene. Eventually the Armenians acquiesced. Two monks were allowed in, followed by the patriarch himself. This was relatively benign in comparison with the melees for which the monks have become infamous in Jerusalem, but it is telling nevertheless.

The Feast of the Cross does not only mark the discovery of the cross but also its protection. The Persians were a formidable foe to Byzantium and it was by sacking Jerusalem in the 7th century that they were able to capture the cross. Thus the feast marks a conquest of an external enemy as much as it marks the conquest of Jesus over death.[32] The monks embody this conquest when they fight with their Armenian neighbors, though in the ritual context, the threat has been removed – or rather, replaced.

I often asked monks what was different about their lives from those on Mt. Athos or Mar Saba in the Jordan Valley. They usually responded in one of two ways: first, that life on Mt. Athos is "better" in the sense that a monk may live the life of prayer in a way that he cannot inside a city – and not just any city, but one of the most contentious on earth. Second, they described their vocation as protecting the holy places. One monk I know well put it clearly:

> The difference is that we are not only monks; we are also soldiers, here to fight for the holy places.

He often repeated this phrase, saying that the brothers of the Holy Sepulcher – who call themselves the *spudaioi,* or the industrious/zealous ones – "have an existential responsibility to ward off threats."

The idea of being God's soldier obviously has many precedents, but here it raises an interesting question. For centuries, European observers in the Holy Land have described the Orthodox traditions of Palestine as backwards, violent, superstitious, and blasphemous.[33] The fighting I have just described is offered as evidence of this disposition, of monks who care more about control over territory than about faith and love.

The specifically Greek identity of the monks also resonates with ethnography of rural Greece in non-church settings, for example in Crete, where men challenge one another and steal each other's sheep in order to develop alliances (Herzfeld 1985; also Campbell 1964, Stewart 1994, Sarris 2000: 59-60). One might interpret this material as

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[32] The tradition of eating boiled wheat (*kollyva*) at feasts, and of singing the *Akathistos* hymn are also examples of figured against a foreign threat.
[33] E.g. Heyman 1759: 354-355.

suggesting that Greeks (or Greek men) are either not very religious or that their Christianity is somehow unusual. Though I disagree with the often negative valuation of Orthodox difference from Western Europe, Christianity in Greece and Israel/Palestine is distinct in some respects.

The aggression I have witnessed on several occasions between monks never seemed like a lapse in judgement or evidence of corrupt and sinful character. Rather, it seemed an explicit part of their understanding of what being a monk entails. After a different but similarly minor conflict, a monk told me that this is a necessary part of their work. They must "demonstrate" their rights, e.g. to cense the Armenian shrine, or else they will lose them. We will discuss the Status Quo regulations and the rights they afford in the next chapter, but we can already see a parallel between a ritual that celebrates the victory of Byzantium over Persia and a tradition of fighting between monks of different sects to force recognition of that victory in the present.

More than the question of violence and enemies, I view monastic brawling in terms of the ritual accumulation of history. Consider the Patriarchate's celebration of Greek Independence Day, an obviously modern addition to the ritual canon. During the service, the patriarch explicitly recognizes the Greek "ethnomartyrs" who died fighting against the Ottomans. In order to avoid ritually sanctifying war and the taking of life, the dead are called martyrs instead of saints and the service a doxology instead of a full liturgy, meaning it is celebrated in front of the iconostasis rather than at the altar and without the Eucharist. Nevertheless, it is an important event in the Church calendar and celebrated not inside the Patriarchate convent, which would suggest a localized affair for the Greeks of the Patriarchate, but in the Catholicon, the central chamber of the Holy Sepulcher Church.

Again, here the triumph of the Orthodox over an external threat is converted into ritual and in the process, incorporates historical change into the tradition. A theologian like Ware might object that such doxologies are not part of the capital "T" Tradition, but for the monks who make up the hierarchy of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the two are inseparable. This is because continuity is not traced through the rituals alone, but through

the person of the monk himself. He is carrying the divine presence forward, protecting it just as the monks of his order did in the 4th century and in every era since.

Slippages like that between doxology and liturgy are the mechanism through which contemporary Orthodox, whether Greek or Palestinian, are able to see saints and Christians of the past not only as mediators with the divine but also as forbears. To a certain extent, they *are* the tradition, a Church made up of people, objects, places, texts, and practices that reproduces itself in each generation. As the theologian Christos Yannaras has put it:

> [T]he fact of the Church is prior to any objective formulation of her truth. This order of precedence does not mean that Scripture is belittled or overlooked…But it is only through the experience of the Church, through being organically "grafted" into that experience, that we recognize the truths of Scripture (1996: 49).

In what follows, we shall see how Palestinians, like Greek monks, are "grafted into" the tradition and figured as part of the "organic" and continuous Church (cf. Cannell 2017).

Palestinians as bearers of history

As I describe further in the next chapter, the Status Quo is a set of laws originating in the Ottoman period which regulate the rights of the different Churches of the Holy Land. For our purposes here, however, it also represents the convergence of ritual act, ritual place, and ritual person in the Orthodox tradition of Jerusalem. In the Feast of the Cross example, it defines when the procession can take place, where it can take place (especially when this includes a shrine controlled by a different Church), and by whom. Not all members of the procession were permitted into the Armenian shrine, only the censer-bearers and the patriarch. The Status Quo regulates elements of the great tradition and ensures its proper performance; at the same time, it is only able to do so in relation to contemporary circumstances. Today, and I suspect always, this means that non-monastics necessarily become a part of the tradition in order to ensure its continuity over time.

Orthodox Palestinians often linked their family histories to the history of the Church, as we saw in George's case, or the political history of the country. Khaled, whom I mentioned in the introduction, often spoke about his great grandfather, who fought as an artillery commander for the Ottomans and has a street named after him to this day as a result. Another Orthodox whose family originated in Jordan described belonging to a clan exempt from paying the Ottoman *jizya* tax on minorities because of its reputation as an ally to the regional governor. But when it is the Church these families refer to, recognition is often established through the Status Quo.

At the Feast of Mary's Dormition[34], for example, two men carry her icon from the Old City to her tomb, where it is venerated by the public for nine days. One of these is a Greek bishop, and the other is a Palestinian layman. He has this right because, according to the tradition, his ancestor was a mukhtar (lay representative) during the Ottoman period when raiders attempted to rob the procession. He protected the icon and the Church and thus earned the right to become a material part of the procession, a ritual element intrinsic to its meaning. The right is passed from father to son and annually upheld by the Greek hierarchy. As with Greek Independence, we can see here a Palestinian individual transform into a representative of a unique historical moment and a link in the chain of those who protected the Church before him. And while it was only one man who protected the icon, his presence is transmitted to his descendants, who carry him inside of them.

Traditions like this fill the Orthodox Church. At the Holy Fire ceremony for Easter, the prominent – some say "original" – Palestinian Orthodox families of Jerusalem carry banners for their family in procession around Christ's tomb, just in front of the patriarch. The last time I attended, I met a Palestinian from a well-known family who said that he flew in all the way from Australia, where he now lives, just to carry his banner.

Examples of these traditions can be found around virtually every major Church feast – George, for example, says that his family was a part of the procession at Christmas in Jerusalem during times when it was too dangerous to travel to Bethlehem – but also in

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[34] In Orthodox theology, the Virgin Mary did not die but rather fell asleep (see Ch. 3).

relation to houses, churches, jobs, and neighborhoods (Ch. 4). A friend of mine is from the "Qawwas" family, for example, but this is not actually the original family name: it is a term referring to the Palestinian foreman who leads the procession of monks at religious events and feasts. The family changed its name in honor of the fact that members of the family traditionally held this position.

Such examples demonstrate that while Palestinian Christians draw on a wider range of material signs – especially those connected to land and domestic life – than celibate, foreign monks do, both are involved in essentially the same project of carrying the divine presence forward through a genealogical understanding of the connection between divinity and human history.[35] Chapter 4 describes the legal discourse through which monks treat each other as kin, but here we can see that descent is not only measured through filiation but also through the incorporation or embodiment of history in relation to land and ritual. St. George, Emperor Heraclius, and Mikhali Baramki are thus all ancestors – not because they all belong to the same lineage, but, following Feeley-Harnik, because they were produced out of the same land and the same tradition that produces contemporary Greeks and Palestinians.

Conclusion: "they have forgotten who they are"

In an essay on the meaning of Hellenism in Greek history, Dimitris Livanios recounts a story from the 1891 in which a Greek nationalist visited Asia Minor, where an Orthodox Greek defined himself not by sect or race but religion: "A Christian" he said. "All right", replied the nationalist, "but other people are Christians, the Armenians, the Franks, the Russians…" "Yes, these people believe in Christ but I am a Christian" (2007: 40).

Recall the Archbishop at the start of the chapter who told me that "our people were once Greeks" who have "forgotten" their roots after centuries of speaking Arabic. The idea of remembering one's lineage is a powerful one and has been a major part of the

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[35] See Michael Lambek's ethnography of Sakalava historicity (2002). The Sakalava differ from Palestinians in kinship system (bilateral & exogamous), ancestor relations, and religious practice but they too "imagine continuity" by speaking of "carrying", "bearing", and "enduring" history (ibid: 4-7).

literature on Islam and genealogy in other Arab countries (e.g. Vom Bruck 2005, Shryock 1997, Samin 2015). It has also been a major feature of writing on Palestinians, starting perhaps with Ted Swedenberg's *Memories of Revolt* (1995) but continuing well into the present (Slyomovics 1998, 2013, Sa'di & Abu Lughod 2007, Davis 2010, Furani 2012).

While memory has been an extremely important aspect of my interlocutors' experience of 1948 and the Israeli occupation, I have not described their relationship to the distant past in similar terms, even though the higher clergy sometimes does. This is because the central idiom Palestinians Christians use in speaking about Church history is not 'remembering' their history but just the opposite (cf. Stewart 2016: 89). They speak of *being* that history. "We are the living stones," they say, simultaneously comparing and contrasting themselves from the stones of the landscape. Like olive oil, stones represent a substance that the present shares with the past.

I began this chapter with the problem of determining what counts as Christian. In Orthodox Christianity, this problem often appears in relation to tradition, which is opposed to custom or superstition. In Jerusalem specifically, the category of custom carries not only a religious connotation but also an ethnic one: it is employed when something appears Palestinian rather than Greek, a product of Palestinian history – with the implication of Islamic influence – rather than Orthodox history. But as we have seen, Orthodox history in Palestine was always embedded in local history. More than that, it is the localness of history that allows each new generation of Orthodox, including members of the Church hierarchy, to view themselves as belonging to the same tradition as the saints.

As a result, the chapter undertook to trace some of the ways in which this process occurs, how custom becomes tradition and what this means for the relationship between Palestinian and Greek. I argued that both groups hold a view of tradition based on descent of a particular kind. In the St. George feast, the domestic life of the family and its understanding of reproduction through land is connected to a saint through the mediation of oil, iron chains, candles, and the depopulated town of Lyd. In the Feast of the Cross, the monks embody the struggles and sacrifices of previous generations by fighting to protect

their shrines and by incorporating new customs from their own experience – e.g. Greek independence – into the tradition through the institution of the Status Quo. The rest of the chapters in Part 1 of the thesis will explore the specific ways in which this view of tradition and history that Greeks and Palestinians share influences their relationship. The next chapter introduces the social life of the Old City, the center of gravity for the thesis, and continues to explore the significance of the Status Quo, this time as a form of legal discourse, alongside practices of domestic hospitality.

Chapter 2

Families of the Status Quo

This chapter discusses the domestic life of Jerusalem's Christian Quarter in the absence of extended kinship networks. It begins by describing the family compounds that characterized the Quarter at the turn of the 20th century, using the memoirs of a Palestinian Orthodox resident from that time.[36] It then contrasts the Old City depicted in those memoirs with my own observations of the contemporary city and uses the contrast as a jumping off point to explore the upheavals of the 20th century and the Christian community's response to them.

To that end, the ethnography describes a group of Orthodox women among whom an important historical trend can be detected. Christians whose family networks were destroyed during the war have extended the reach of both family and church. They do so first by describing their relationships to non-kin in the language of Church law, in a sense formalizing relations with what would normally be considered neighbors and co-sectarians. Second, they embody and enforce the law through acts of hospitality, a tradition central to both Palestinian society and the Orthodox Church.

In the final section of the chapter, I extend the analysis of the Palestinian Christian family to include the monastic hierarchy. By entering into hospitality relations with members of the Greek Brotherhood, Palestinians – and especially Palestinian women – become "like" them, a part of the same network. And in the process, some Palestinians have become not only guests of the patriarch, but also his hosts.

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[36] Published in Arabic (Tamari & Nassar 2004) alongside an abridged English version (Tamari & Nassar 2014). I use the original translations in all but one instance (fn. 39).

Jerusalem at the turn of the century

Wasif Jawhariyyeh was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1897 to a middle-class Orthodox family whose fortunes were rising. Like most Old City residents at the time, his grandfather was a tradesman but his father became a lawyer (as well as an icon painter, farmer, and amateur musician). Wasif himself worked as a clerk and a barber's apprentice but his great passion was music, and from early childhood he learned to play the *oud*[37] and made money performing at weddings.

He grew up in a typical Old City compound, albeit in better circumstances than most. It was a three-floor building linked to the road by a narrow corridor. This is where his family kept their donkey and stored charcoal and wood. At the end of the corridor was a communal well and several rooms belonging to the families living on the first floor, which they used as their kitchens and dining rooms. On the first floor was a spacious courtyard for hanging laundry and socializing. The courtyard was surrounded by the bedrooms and reception rooms of three or more families, which included parents and children but also sometimes a grandmother or unmarried aunt. There were also two pit toilets shared by all of the residents of the bottom two floors, perhaps two dozen people.

The second and third floors made up the residence of the Jawhariyyeh family. It too had a courtyard leading to a large hall which appears to have been covered but open to the wind. This hall was "elegantly decorated…[and] lined with wooden cupboards where clothes, copper utensils, glass, books, argilehs [water pipes] and coffee utensils were stored" (Tamari & Nassar 2014: 6). A dinner table used in summertime sat in the center of the room. The hall led to a kitchen, "modern" facilities (rather than pit toilets), and three rooms. It is worth quoting the text at length:

> One opened to a well-proportioned room lined with seashell-covered pots made by my father and containing all kinds of homegrown flowers. Under the arch of this room was a jasmine tree and a snail vine. The room faced south, so when my father sat on the wooden sofa, smoking his argileh, he could enjoy the view of Old Jerusalem, which was particularly dazzling at night. The room also had an extremely beautiful and elegant window overlooking the main hall.

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[37] A lute without frets.

The second door led to the marvelous reception room, which had large stone benches in the main area and smaller ones by the double bay window overlooking the southern side, too. At the front of the reception room, a small door led to my father's bedroom, a beautiful room set over a very high arch and overlooking the main street through its northside window. The bed had an elegant mosquito net, and in the corner a bookcase stood next to a built-in wardrobe that had a special compartment in the middle for sweets…

The third door opened to a large room which was a bedroom for my mother and all the children, male and female, including me. After spending some time together in the evening, we would take the mattresses from the corner where we kept them stacked, lay them one next to the other, and sleep, after drawing the large mosquito net which was hung by four rings in the corners of the room, to keep off mosquitoes and flies. I never stopped recalling with bitter nostalgia those beautiful nights and the sweet, natural sleep…. Every morning, particularly on winter days, my mother would bring [my father] coffee in his bedroom and drink it with him... In summer, he usually would smoke his argileh in the morning and evening in the flower room, which he used to call "the balcony," and enjoy the views of sacred Jerusalem (ibid: 6-7).

This was the main living space of the Jawhariyyeh family, but they also had a less furnished upper floor which they used for storage – "urns of chickpeas, beans, lentils… oils, olives, pickles, and cheese" – Jiryes's carpentry workshop, and a large pigeon cage with over forty mated pairs.

The Jawhariyyeh family's social life revolved around their building and the neighbors, whom Wasif describes as "one family" (ibid: 16).[38] For the saints' day marking the namesake of a particular household, the entire building would celebrate together in the courtyards. First, the families would gather to collectively sweep the common spaces. Then they would cook sweet and savory dishes and the families would eat lunch together. Later, the musicians of the group would form a band and play music, dance, and sing. "The ladies ululated and the celebration was worthy of a wedding" (ibid: 17). On carnival nights before Lent, men and women would dress up and mask, taking on the roles of a wedding party, often mixing gender roles.

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[38] "There was no difference between one neighbor and another and we were all one family [*kan al-jamiʿa aiʾila wahida*] because the friendship and loyalty [we had] at that time was chaste and pure" (2003: 18).

On these occasions, the families within a compound or group of houses called a *hosh* behaved as one family on religious occasions and the closeness among them was especially pronounced. Other neighbors from the area attended larger gatherings too, as the social network of the area was partly based on invitations to attend such parties or more intimate visits to a particular family's household. Wasif's father Jiryes, for example, grew up in the compound of another family. This experience bonded him closely to that family; so close, in fact, that when their father died, Jiryes provided for the family and eventually married the man's daughter.

Though Wasif does not provide us with an example of a marriage celebration, recent research in the Jerusalem parish archives shows that such ceremonies were often carried out not in a church but a family compound (Mack, Delachanis, & Lemire 2017). The same was true for baptisms. When Merav Mack and her colleagues published their findings about domestic marriages of the Mandate, I was in the field and asked my interlocutors about their memories of these events. They confirmed such practices and recalled as children watching the parish priest haul the baptismal font[39] over his shoulder and up the Quarter's hill to perform his duties.

Already in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, then, social life in the city was intimately connected to religious rites, representatives, and objects that entered their very homes and became a part of regular hospitality relations among the laity. We have seen that this was true of Christians living in a shared compound or neighborhood, but it also characterized the Jawhariyyeh family's links to the upper class of Jerusalem notables (*'ayan*), Muslim and Christian alike.

In particular, Jiryes was patronized by Salim Effendi al-Husseini, the mayor of Jerusalem and a member of the most prominent Palestinian family in the city.[40] Jiryes worked with Salim Effendi as his lawyer, in the administrative council of the city, and eventually as mukhtar of the Orthodox community. Their relationship was much more than a professional one, however. When Jiryes was struggling financially and could not

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[39] A large metal basin.

[40] Hajj Amin al-Husseini, leader of the Palestinian national movement, represented another branch of the same family (Pappé 2010). On the *'ayan*, see Tamari 2009, Hourani 1981.

afford gifts for his children at holy week or even provisions for the feast, his patron stepped in. Jiryes came home during Lent one day to find heaps of provisions sitting in the hall: "a large hamper of rice, a canister of ghee, a canister of oil, fifteen kilos of soap, fifteen kilos of sugar, nine kilos of semolina for making *m'amul* [the traditional sweet of Easter], as well as dates and walnuts for the fillings" (ibid: 25). In his bedroom he found a new suit with gold coins in the pocket. These were gifts from Salim Effendi.

When Jiryes died, his patron informally adopted Wasif; when Salim died, the patronage continued with Salim's son, Hussein al-Husseini. Hussein had a Greek mistress called Persephone, for whom Wasif played music and aided in her business pursuits. Later in life, when Persephone became ill, she moved into the Jawharriyeh compound and was taken care of by Wasif himself until her death.

As it was with the notables, so it was with the higher clergy. When Jiryes Jawharriyeh became mukhtar for the Orthodox laity, he developed close ties to the Patriarchate and indeed with the patriarch himself. He was for example chosen to hand deliver the patriarch's gifts to the Jerusalem notables.

> On festive occasions, [Jiryes] would join the archbishop and the patriarch's head translator… [to] visit the notables of Jerusalem on behalf of the patriarch, and hand each high official their allotted share of gold, packed in a small bag of pure white silk… in this way, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem had the sympathy of the entire government (ibid: 23).

These gifts of gold were not exactly bribes; they rather represented the power and status of the patriarchate, its ability to patronize the leading families and functionaries of the city. As we will see later in the chapter, this is a central characteristic of hospitality relations, the double effect of amity and hierarchy. And in this regard, the patriarchate appears no different from the Palestinian notables, cultivating patron-client relationships with friend and foe alike.

These relationships even extended to the Jawharriyeh family, who hosted Patriarch Damianos at their home. The family had a set of gold-incrusted coffee cups specifically for him (and for Salim Effendi, again indicating their similar status). Wasif does

not mention much else about the patriarch in his memoirs, but it is interesting that the higher clergy do not appear as an institution apart from society nor does Jawharriyeh fault it for this. For Wasif, it seems almost a point of pride that the Patriarchate was "a government within a government" (ibid), capable of leveraging its relationship with Palestinian families to enhance its authority.

The rich detail Jawhariyyeh provides in his memoirs reveals a society in which the religious and kinship networks are fully intertwined. As we will see, when the upper classes lost much of their property and political power in 1948 and families of all classes were torn apart while new ones came flooding in from around the country, these networks changed in fundamental ways. The traditional link between the laity and the clergy was broken. What should become clear, however, in the course of the chapter, is that the institutions of the family and the Church both have a deeper historical connection to the other, one that contemporary Palestinians and Greeks are constantly reproducing in creative ways.

The hosh and the hara: the Christian Quarter today

Over a century has passed since the early days of the Mandate, and domestic life in the Old City looks very different now. The contrast is visible in the same spaces described by Jawharriyeh: we might call these the house, the *hosh*, and the *hara*. We can begin with the last, the *hara* or quarter – the center of gravity for the thesis and home to about 4000 Palestinian Christians.[41]

Entering the Damascus Gate in the north of the city, one descends into the commercial center of the Palestinian quarters. One is confronted with two streets: al-Wad to the left, leading to al-Aqsa and the residential areas of the Muslim Quarter, and Khan al-Zeit to the right, the main "suq" or market street (Fig. 9). That is where many vegetable, meat, spice, and coffee vendors are located as well as J'afar Sweets, the setting of the

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[41] 3,580 in the Quarter, 6,858 in the Old City as a whole (CBS 2017a). The number of Orthodox Christians is unknown but likely about half the total.

next section's ethnography. Khan al-Zeit roughly follows the path of the old Roman Cardo, a wide columned boulevard that once ran through the center of the city.
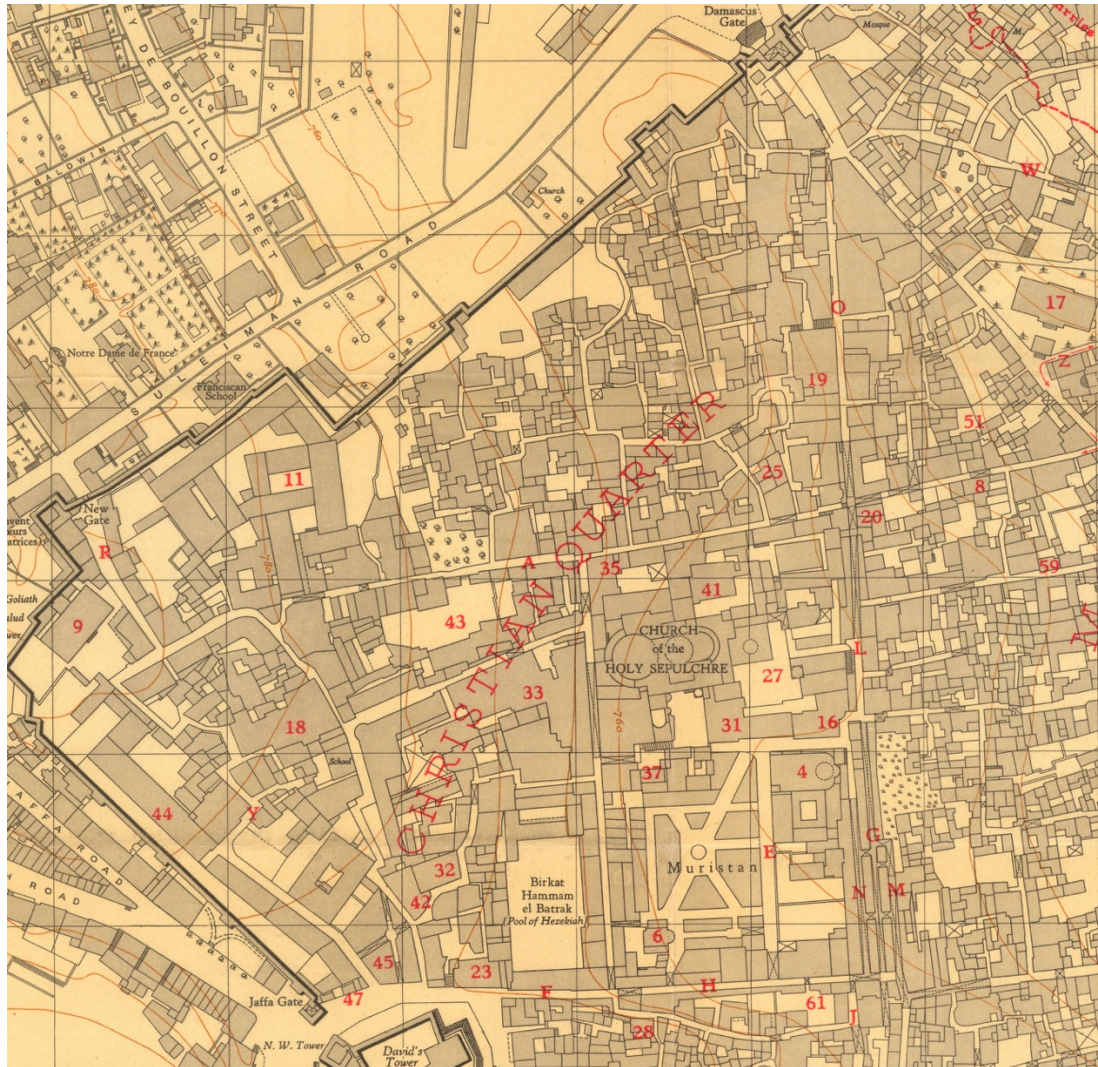
Fig. 9 - The Christian Quarter: Khan al-Zeit runs vertically from Damascus Gate (top) and intersects Via Dol. at #20. Map source: Survey of Palestine 1936/1945 (National Library of Israel, Eran Laor Collection)

Following Khan al-Zeit uphill one turns to the right to follow the Via Dolorosa, where Jesus is thought to have carried the cross on which he was crucified, into *harat al-Nasara*, the Christian Quarter. Here one finds a few large streets that, like the central market, are lined with shops, restaurants, and groceries, but some of these shops sell Christian-specific items like crucifixes, icons, incense, and candles, as well as items only Christians sell openly, like alcohol and pork. Beyond these commercial streets one finds

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the residential neighborhoods. There are still a few shops here and there, especially grocers and bakers, but for the most part the residential streets are lined with doorways to single houses or a complex of houses called a *hosh*. This more intimate area is often marked by signs of domesticity: crosses affixed in olive wood to the lintel, plants and trees lining the walls, icons or statues set up as small shrines in wall corners surrounded by candles and flowers.

Fig. 10 - An icon corner in a neighborhood hosh

The term *hosh* in Arabic can mean "courtyard" or "family compound" in the sense of an enclosed area that houses multiple families, related or unrelated. The archetype is a two or three-story building with many rooms facing a courtyard, as with the Jawharriyeh compound. The *hosh* does not always include a courtyard, however, and could refer to a

small alley or cul-de-sac which has a similarly domestic purpose. The alley is public in that no door separates it from the thoroughfare, but non-residents do not generally enter unless they are visiting a resident. The *hosh* thus occupies an intermediate space between the public *hara* and the more private house (*dar* or *bayt*). The latter is reserved for close kin, including the bedroom, kitchen, and sitting room belonging to one family in a shared *hosh*.[42]

In this chapter I focus not on the house but the somewhat more public spaces of the hosh and hara in order to show how idioms and practices of domestic life have become imbricated in broader social relations. Hospitality relations, for example, remain significant today but in different ways than they were in Jawharriyeh's lifetime. During my fieldwork, I attended many family meals on the occasion of a feast or a friend's name day. On those days I would arrive as the men were grilling skewers of minced lamb, marinated chicken, or turkey hearts. I would be offered a glass of coke, beer, or araq, and chat with the family. Eventually we would sit down to eat in the courtyard, where a variety of salads and mezze (hummus, muttabal, etc.) would have been placed at a long table along with bottles of juice and soft drinks. We would eat the mezze first, and then the meat, and much later we would be offered coffee and dessert, for example *layali lubnan* ["nights of Lebanon"], a semolina pudding with cream and pistachios. Afterwards, most of the relatives would leave but a few of us would go up to the roof and smoke argileh.

These are not the riotous affairs of cross-dressing and dancing until dawn described by Jawharriyeh – it seems such events today mostly occur outside the city, where there is more privacy. The exception would be family parties preceding a wedding, for example those typically held by the bride's parents in their home, days before the ceremony and reception (which virtually always take place outside the city). On those occasions, there can be music, dancing and drinking and they include neighbors and friends from around the city as well as family – even some clergy. At one of these events I found myself next to a parish priest known to the family, and even he availed himself of

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[42] On the *hosh*, see Vom Bruck 1997, Meneley 1996, Tamari 2009: 36-56, Zubaida 1987, Joseph 1997.

Taybeh[43] beer and araq without hesitation or judgement. Even these events, however, are increasingly held outside the Old City, either in the suburbs or in nearby Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jericho.

Reading Jawhariyyeh's memoirs today, I am struck by how much has changed. One does not often find extended family networks in Old City compounds today, and domestic spaces shared by unrelated families are not always spaces of fraternity and kinship. The new findings on home weddings and baptisms in Mandate Palestine point to this change: today, life-cycle rituals are almost universally held in churches and neighbors are not automatically invited as they were in Jawhariyyeh's lifetime.

An experience of my own illustrates the point. When I was first living in Jerusalem to study Arabic (before I began my doctoral studies), one of the highlights was the experience of visiting people's homes for a name day feast and celebrating in the courtyard, as I described above. I was always the guest, however, so at the end of my stay I thought I might invite some friends and neighbors to the *hosh* where I lived and have a barbecue there. On the night, some friends from the suburbs attended but not those living inside the Old City, which seemed odd at the time. It was a strange evening and several of the guests did not seem able to relax. The evening passed and I soon forgot about it, until I came back for fieldwork.

As I became increasingly interested in the changing dynamics of domestic space, I remembered my awkward barbecue and told a friend in the Old City about it. He responded:

"Well, to be honest, if you did it again I probably wouldn't come, either. If [a certain neighbor] saw me drinking beer and carrying on, I would never hear the end of it. Even the smell of meat [cooking], it's like showing off."

I was confused; this same friend had invited me to his family home for barbecues many times. Similarly, when I was about to finish my fieldwork, my landlady Abla and another neighbor from the compound decided to hold a barbecue in the courtyard to mark my

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[43] A Christian village and brewery near Ramallah.

departure. They invited some, though not all of the neighbors and we had a very nice time without any of the awkwardness of my previous experience. The atmosphere, it seems, depends less on how much we liked each other than on whom belonged in the space.

The intermediate spaces between public and private is a prominent theme in Middle East anthropology, but here I wish to highlight the changing dynamics of such spaces in moments of social and political upheaval. For the changing sense of privacy and publicness in Jerusalem is closely connected to the events of 1948, the most significant rupture in Palestinian society of the modern era. Of course, this date marks the war leading to the establishment of Israel and the forced dislocation and dispossession of 700,000 Palestinians – called the Nakba or "catastrophe" in Arabic. The experience of losing one's home was shared by Palestinians of all backgrounds, including villagers, farmers, merchants, and landowners, Muslims and Christians, established families and recent migrants.

When Israel took control of everything west of the 1949 armistice line (the so-called "Green Line" running north-south between Israel and the West Bank), the property of the Palestinians who had lived there was confiscated. The line abuts the western walls of the Old City, meaning that Jerusalemite families that built houses on the western side lost them. The social effects of this loss were enormous. Factories had to be relocated, families split up, heading to Lebanon, Jordan, and many other countries. One Orthodox family I know owned a house just outside the New Gate (on the west side of the city). During and after the war, they stayed with relatives just inside the same gate. They lived for years within two hundred meters of their house and never got to see it, and then one day, it was demolished.

Another Orthodox family owned a house in what is today an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood. The family had temporarily moved to Nazareth before the war and thus became citizens of Israel afterwards. After the first years of military rule (which lasted until 1966), the parents were granted a permit to visit Jerusalem. On this occasion they had the foresight to baptize their children in Jerusalem. The family fought to regain control of their house and decades later, after the family emigrated, one member

continues the legal battle. The only reason she even has a chance is that she is an Israeli citizen with a parish record of her residency in Jerusalem, which complicates the state's usual recourse to the Law of Absentee Property.[44] Still, in 2020 the house remains inhabited by an Israeli family.

In the years following the war, many families were forced to leave while others from all over the country crowded into the homes of relatives and friends, sometimes leading to multiple families living in a single small apartment. Over time, the social make-up of the city changed dramatically. Today there are still plenty of Jerusalemite families whose presence pre-dates the war, but many, many others are from elsewhere. The neighborhoods and family compounds are thus mostly inhabited by unrelated families and individuals from very different backgrounds.

Thus the picture of Old City life is necessarily different than it was in the time of Wasif Jawharriyeh and this chapter seeks to demonstrate one prominent vector of change by highlighting how social relations beyond the kin group and the house have been reconfigured by Old City residents in response to their collective experience of rupture and upheaval after the war.

The literature on domestic life in the face of extreme political change is instructive here. Similar transformations have been documented for example by Suad Joseph in Beirut, where urban neighborhoods were transformed by the influx of Palestinian refugees and the effects of civil war (1975, 1983, 1994). Joseph, for example, describes how despite the sectarian fault lines along which the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) was partially fought, individual neighborhoods have often been more closely organized according to a system of allegiances based on shared space and idioms of relatedness (1994). Muslims and Christians who lived together in the same building would work together in a crisis against families or individuals from outside, regardless of the latter's sectarian affiliation. Partly as a response to the historical experience of war, Joseph describes these neighbors as effectively becoming kin (1983, 1994).

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[44] The law states that any property owned by families who were "absent" after the war is deemed forfeit (even if those absent were forced out of their homes).

Similarly, Renée Hirschon's work describes the experience of Greek refugees from Asia Minor who fled to Piraeus (Athens) after the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) forced them to leave their homes (Hirschon 1989). As in Beirut, the urban neighborhoods these refugees moved into were marked by the domestic transformations of neighboring families. Hirschon describes how the concept of a neighborhood was upheld in ways that were atypical in other urban parts of Greece. For example, residents describe their neighborhood with the term *mahallá*,[45] a distinct word for neighborhood or quarter defined by ethnic group (though the refugees were ethnically Greek), in addition to the more typical *yeitoniá*, suggesting their difference from Greek society (ibid: 169)*.*

Hirschon also notes that refugee neighborhoods were unusually religious for urban environments. She shows how residents used religious icons and even stones from their former homes and villages to set up church tents dedicated to regional saints of Asia Minor (ibid, 2000; cf. Hammami 1994). These religious figures became a central mediating form for the diaspora community and helped residents to overcome both their regional differences and the competing interests of family and community. Religious forms enter virtually every aspect of domestic living, for example the dining table, which is treated less as an object than an act. One "makes" the table to provide hospitality in ritual contexts: the occasion of a meal on a name day or after a baptism (ibid: 139; 1981: 78).

The interpenetration of religious and family life is common in many Greek contexts, but here it has the special quality of helping to produce and maintain a diasporic community in the wake of social rupture. In what follows I explore a similar quality in the context of Jerusalem. There, acts of hospitality have taken on a new form that is both religious and legal in nature.

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[45] *Mahalla* is an Arabic word used throughout the Middle East to describe neighborhoods within the larger category of quarters. See Tamari 2014: xvii.

On the last Sunday before the Christmas fast of 2018, I was standing in the courtyard of Mar Yacoub Church when Im Yousef, an elderly widow I know well, grabbed my elbow. "Come, we're going to Ja'afar," a patisserie nearby and the place to go for kanafa. Prepared in a shallow, table-sized pan on a stove, kanafa consists of a base of soft white cheese covered in shredded wheat, syrup, rose water, and crushed pistachios. It is delicious, but more importantly, it contains dairy, from which one abstains during Church fasts. This makes it an appropriately indulgent way to mark the final Sunday before weeks of dry lentils and rice (*mujadara*).

I followed Im Yousef to the outer door of the church beyond the courtyard, which leads to the much larger courtyard of the Holy Sepulcher Church. Three other women were waiting in the foyer looking out at the rain. Seeing us approach, one complained to Im Yousef that it was too cold and rainy to walk all the way to the suq, the market street, and that she might slip on the way. Im Yousef waved her off: "No, it's Status Quo, we're going."

The Status Quo is an Ottoman legal arrangement from the 18th century determining the rights of the various Christian communities in the holy sites of historic Palestine. Three central communities, the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox, and the Roman Catholic, as well as several minor traditions, are guaranteed varying degrees of control and access to the sacred shrines that they share. After the Ottoman Empire fell, the British, Jordanian, and now Israeli governments have upheld the legal force of these arrangements, although many of the rules about exactly where and how one may approach the shrines are known only to the monks.

More broadly, the Status Quo represents the specific way in which the (mostly) official Orthodox tradition has been historically enacted, embodied, and changed in the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Many of the ritual traditions of the Church have changed out of necessity over centuries of Arab, Persian, Turkish, British, Jordanian, and Israeli rule. These changes are not always written down, but they are nevertheless rigidly followed

and directly inform the way Orthodox rituals and customs are performed. For example, the procession celebrating the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, one of the largest annual feasts of the year, once occurred during the daytime, as with most feasts. Today, however, it takes place at dawn. This is the result of an early Ottoman restriction on minorities demonstrating their religion in public. No such restriction exists today, and yet the Status Quo keeps the dawn tradition in force.

So the Status Quo organizes the way monks of different Churches interact with each other and with the holy sites they share. The Greeks are allowed into Christ's tomb at this hour, with the use of these lamps for this amount of time, after which the Franciscans take their turn. But the logic of the Status Quo pertains also to social relations within a single community. How and when the patriarch recognizes representatives of the laity, what a convent serves the laity to eat after a particular feast, and what rights are granted to different regional parishes are all determined by this unwritten, historically and geographically specific set of rules.

When Im Yousef invoked the Status Quo in the context of eating kanafa, she extended its logic to lay Christians amongst themselves. As soon as the five of us arrived at Jʿafar Sweets, she announced that she would host, despite the protests of the others. She ordered each of us two large slices (one of each kind), which is excessive, and paid for it all. She smiled as we stuffed ourselves, teasing that we ate "like little birds".

This type of outing was a regular feature of my fieldwork. The exact individuals varied but it always consisted of older women going out to eat before a fast or on the occasion of the feast that follows. These occasions were invariably, though sometimes jokingly, described as Status Quo meals.

They usually took place in restaurants. On Easter Friday the Orthodox generally eat fish, so we went to a new seafood restaurant in East Jerusalem next to the bus station. Nearby, a Greek monk from the Patriarchate ate fish with his family, visiting him from Greece for Easter. Sometimes individuals paid for their own meals but more often one person paid for all the others, or two people would pay for one or two others who had

hosted them previously. When doing so, they would say "*bidayfik*", "I take you as my guest".

On other occasions, we would eat at someone's house and one of the group would bring kanafa or some other food that one would not normally prepare at home. Again, usually the person who brought the kanafa or paid for it would become the host. This was not always the owner of the house; for example, when Im Yousef – who is the oldest of the group – visited someone, she usually insisted on paying or bringing the food.

I believe I was invited to these gatherings out of kindness but also because I was socially unattached. I was foreign, unmarried, and without family in the country. This was important because many of them either never married or were widows. Some did not have children and others had adult children living outside the city or abroad. Normally, one would spend many feast days and pre-fast meals with family, but in a population with such a history of displacement and migration, this is not always possible.

One of the women I know from these outings is called Sawsan. She is married and lives with her husband in the Old City while her adult children live in the suburbs. She has relatives in Amman, Jordan, but they rarely see one another. During my fieldwork her sister tried to come at Easter. She applied for a travel permit from the Israeli consulate and was denied. Another called Nancy lives in a flat adjacent to her sister, who is married with children, but her parents and the rest of her family live outside the country. Nancy never married, and while her sister's family treats her as a part of their household, she still seeks other forms of relatedness.

Many Jerusalemites have children or siblings abroad whom they see once or twice a year. They come for major feasts or a school holiday, but not for long. So some women of the Old City, unrelated but part of the same Church, do what they would with family – only with each other instead.

Family life in Jerusalem involves a lot more than sharing meals or tea and coffee, but such acts of hosting often serve as the interface between those inside and outside the family, and it is this interface that concerns me. As we have seen, the Old City population was heavily affected by the 1948 war and it continues to endure the occupation. In this

context, family life is contingent and malleable and determined by external conditions as well as internal ones. This means that in Jerusalem it would be impossible to simply study domestic relations and hospitality without including those aspects of domestic life that extend beyond the kin group and the home.

One might reasonably ask why the extension of the family should be called kinship and not friendship or neighborliness, and it may be a fine distinction. But I suggest this type of relationship should be understood in the context of the family as a legal category on the one hand and the religious traditions the women invoke on the other. The first point will be addressed in the next section on the Status Quo. The second we can begin to address here. All of these women are Orthodox; they all maintain good relations with Catholics and members of other denominations, but these relations are not organized in any formal or collective way. It is different among the Orthodox. They are able to get together for the 'Status Quo' outings because they live in the same neighborhood and share the same religious calendar.

To a large extent, Palestinians of every religious background share the same culture. Many traditions, like the wedding procession described in the next chapter, are shared across sectarian lines. The same is true for culinary traditions. A dish like mujadara, the lentil and rice dish I mentioned earlier, is eaten by all Palestinians. But within specific communities these common dishes take on a more specific character associated with particular times of the year and particular occasions. Mujadara is usually served with yoghurt, but Orthodox Christians eat it without dairy for fasting periods. Similarly, all Palestinians eat *qata'if*, a sweet pancake folded over and stuffed with cheese or walnuts, and it can be found in the market throughout the year, but it becomes a Muslim specialty at Ramadan, when vendors all over Jerusalem sell the pancakes on their own for people to take home and fill themselves.

The non-Orthodox Christians of Jerusalem use a different calendar than the Orthodox, whose Julian calendar is two weeks behind the western one. So the eve of a fast will occur on a different date for the two communities. Even when the dates for certain "movable" feasts align, the practices that different Christians associate with them

are not the same. So maintaining the Status Quo means maintaining a certain rhythm, composed of specific practices at specific times in specific places, very much like the monks of the Holy Sepulcher.

The suggestion of this chapter is that the similarity between these two groups, the monks who use the Status Quo to organize inter-Church relations and the lay women who do likewise, is not incidental. It represents the convergence of two important historical processes (the legal transformation of the Status Quo and the aftermath of 1948) and the unique way Orthodox religious traditions were redirected in response to them. At the most basic level, Palestinian hospitality practices normally reserved for family were extended to include members of the same Church. But that is not all: arguably, the Palestinian women I describe are not only reacting to difficult political conditions but also creating a way of making their new hospitality relations permanent by appealing to the language of law.

Toward the end of the chapter I will expand on this observation with a discussion of the anthropological literature on legalism. I argue that lay Orthodox hosting discourses are just that, a way of preserving hospitality arrangements that do not fit securely in the domains of kinship or religion. By invoking a legal order that applies equally to both domains, the Status Quo women give their relations a more durable form.

Family law and the British Mandate

Up to this point in the chapter, we have seen how social life in the Christian Quarter is mediated through spaces with varying degrees of intimacy, depending on who lives there: i.e. a *hosh* comprised of kin, a house composed of strangers, a mixed neighborhood of Catholics and Orthodox or a Church-owned building filled with families of the same sect. We also saw how demographic changes in the city that resulted from war and occupation have been accompanied by broader social changes. One of these is indicated by the brief description of women's hospitality provided above.

There are many different ways in which Palestinian Christian social life has changed but I focus here on women's hosting practices in order to show how Orthodox Christianity has influenced the social and political landscape of the city. I suggest the "Status Quo" meals are much more than examples of religious solidarity or piety. They are evidence of the way that individuals embody Orthodox tradition – in this case, Orthodox religious law – and use it to re-organize the way they define and structure their kinship relations.

There are two important aspects of these relations to keep in mind: first, the women I describe are typically in less frequent contact with their own families than others, either because they do not have family in the city (or country), or because their children have grown and left. Second, though they are not men – who in the anthropological literature usually represent the family to non-kin – they are nevertheless very interested in social structure, in establishing a system of mutual responsibility to solidify their relationships. Moreover, they have given it a name: the Status Quo.

To fully appreciate why Im Yusef and the others would want to take up this particular term, it is necessary to briefly trace its history. For this history, which recounts the transformation of the Palestinian legal system during the late Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate, demonstrates how religious institutions became the arbiters of the Palestinian family. As we will see, this shift played a major role in the reformation of Old City society after 1948.

In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire went through a series of major transformations called the Tanzimat reforms. In response to the growing influence of the Great Powers, the Ottomans initiated a series of changes to its system of governance including to its taxation and land registration schemes and its policies on minorities and foreigners. The famous Hatt-i-Humayun edict of 1856 raised the status of Christians and Jews, allowing them to become public employees and enhancing the autonomy of their communities, especially in their legal powers. Previously, Palestinian Christians had often gone to shariʿa courts to settle legal disputes but as time went on, the ecclesiastical courts became the first port of call for Christians on religious, family, and communal matters.

When the British established the Mandate for Palestine in 1919, they were keen to keep the Ottoman legal system in place. However, for reasons I will not go into here, they nevertheless ended up making substantial changes to the way both religion and family were defined as legal categories (See Robson 2011, Bowman 2011). For scholars of former European colonies, this is a common story. As Talal Asad has explained for Egypt, the British effectively invented something called "family law" which did not exist as such in the Islamic system, where shariʿa courts governed family matters alongside criminal and commercial ones. At the same time, the power of the shariʿa was significantly curtailed as a new civil code was established in order to arbitrate matters of public interest. Thus personal status courts were set up to deal with the private realm, in which customary or religious courts were allowed free reign to employ their own legal traditions (cf. Joseph 1997).

These changes appear to have occurred along the same lines in Egypt and in Palestine, and for Christians in both countries the effect was significant (Robson 2011, Mahmood 2016). Of course, Muslims experienced the relegation of the shariʿa from an all-encompassing legal system to the reformation of the family and private morals. But Christians experienced the opposite effect, with their Churches gaining a significant amount of legal authority that previously had been muted. This authority was restricted to matters of "personal status", but that was significantly more than they had held before, and the Church took advantage of it.

In a series of important articles on Christians in Jordan, Mohanna Haddad has shown how Orthodox and Catholic clergy took advantage of weakening kinship ties to establish themselves as representatives in the place of a clan leader (esp. 1992, 2000). The early 20th century was a period of rapid urbanization and social change, causing some traditional structures of authority to break down.[46]

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[46] As well as competition between the Catholic and Orthodox hierarchies. See Van der Leest 2008, Maggiolini 2011, 2013, Gandolfo 2008.

> [T]he churches…presented themselves as filling the social vacuum left by the decline of the clan system. No longer needing to approach individual families through their clan leaders, the clergy could now deal directly with the families themselves (Haddad 1992:87).

Haddad calls this process "retribalization", after the Christian community was somewhat "detribalized" by the effects of urbanization. In other words, in order to break the traditional authority of kinship representatives without in turn relinquishing that authority to secular institutions, the Church inserted itself into the Arab family as its representative.

This process was mirrored by the legal changes described above. To this day, the Orthodox Patriarchate holds significant power over families – for example by granting or denying marriage licenses or requests to baptize children in Jerusalem rather than a parish closer to their home.[47] But their influence amounts to more than just political power. It is also, as Asad has argued, a way of reforming the definition, shape, and value of the family.

In "Reconfigurations of law and ethics in Colonial Egypt" (2003: 205-256), Asad describes how the British changed the legal system in Egypt, but also how Islamic reformers like Muhammad Abduh embraced those changes.

> "It is obvious," Abduh goes on, "that a people (*sha'b*) is composed of households that are called families (*al-buyut allati tusamma 'a'ilat*) and that the basis of every nation (*umma*) is its families, because a totality is made up of its parts. Since the welfare of families is connected in its most detailed links with the *shariʿa* courts – as is the case today – the degree to which the nation needs the reform of these courts becomes clear." (ibid: 229)

Asad explains that for Abduh, the central role of the shari'a is in fact "the restoration of 'the family'" (ibid), which he sees as being under threat in the modern world. This was especially important, Abduh argued, among the lower classes, "most of [whom] have abandoned kinship and affinal sentiments, and so they resort to the shariʿa courts in matters of domestic relations" (ibid: 228-229). Asad shows how reframing shariʿa law as

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[47] E.g. residents of Kufr 'Aqab, a Jerusalem neighborhood on the West Bank side of the Separation Wall (p. xi), seek to baptize their children at Mar Yacoub rather than in Ramallah to reinforce their status as Jerusalemites.

"family law" fundamentally changed the meaning of both Islam and the family. To simplify the argument a great deal, where law constrains and governs the public realm, morality came to govern the private, and the shariʿa became the language of that private, family morality (ibid).

Some important objections to Asad's argument have been raised by other scholars, who question how this private morality operates in practice (Das 2006, Clarke 2015: 251-252). Some have investigated the question ethnographically, often in the context of religious courts (e.g., Clarke 2009, 2012, Agrama 2010, 2012, Bowen 2003). The Palestinian case adds another layer to these discussions, however, because while it follows the general logic described by Asad, the Status Quo is not confined to one religious institution or one context, i.e. clerics and families. It is rather designed to govern relations *between* institutions and *across* contexts. It applies a single logic to monks from different Churches, monks and laity of a single Church, and clergy of different religions altogether.

That logic is a product of the British Mandate. Against the common claim of colonial administrators that they were maintaining the Status Quo agreements set forward in Ottoman law, they made two important changes. As Glenn Bowman has pointed out, these are the expansion of the Status Quo from exclusively addressing Christian holy sites to include Muslim and Jewish ones, and the shift from a single sovereign authority as arbiter of disputes (i.e. the sultan) to the abstractions of international law (2011: 384).

These changes are significant because they divorce the idea of a "holy place" from the religious practices and rules of an actual religious community. The Mandate's advisory committee on holy sites made a distinction between "Holy Places" on the one hand and "religious buildings or sites" on the other:

> ...the Order [viz. the Status Quo] was limited in its application to those places and buildings in Palestine to which an almost universal tradition accords the veneration of humanity because of their connection with historic events in the story of the three great religions (Eordegian 2003:309-310).

Thus holy sites from all three religions that represent the Abrahamic "story" so central to the western world become something bigger than religion, something universal. As such, they can be maintained by the traditional custodians of the Ottoman period, but disputes between custodians cannot be decided by the government. They require a body that represents "the universal", which for the British meant international law.

In practice, this arrangement means that most disputes cannot be arbitrated at all. They are far too mundane to reach the attention of foreign powers through formal legal channels. As a result, a different sort of legal system developed on the ground. The Status Quo became a set of rules based on formal law (and records of how the law has been applied) that are largely enforced by the religious communities themselves. Because no one ecclesiastical court has authority over another, disputes must be negotiated in the reception halls of the patriarchs and the customs of the various monastic orders. So while the Status Quo is a formal legal charter, it is also a negotiated, informal system applied in many contexts beyond the court. The best way to describe how this system is enacted in practice is thus the rule of hospitality.

Lay-monastic hospitality

I was once walking through the suq when my landlady Abla called. I asked if she wanted something. "Chips", she said. "Theodora is coming". Theodora is a nun at a Greek convent in the neighborhood. She likes to come by Abla's to watch TV and chat. Sometimes she stays the night on a cot in Abla's bedroom.

"But not the ones you brought before. Bring the ones I like, that look like hats."
"Ok, I'm coming."

When I arrived at her place, Theodora was sitting on the sofa. I sat in a chair next to her. She only speaks Greek, but understands a bit when other people speak to her in Arabic. Similarly, Abla understands bits of Greek, so each speaks to the other in her own

language. There is a lot of repeating and gesticulating involved but they get the point across.

I asked how she was in Arabic, to which she responded "thank you" in Greek (*efkharistó*). Abla came over with tea and snacks – Laughing Cow cheese wedges with biscuits, apricots, and bitter local olives. Theodora waved her hand, "no."

"*btisthi* - She's shy," Abla said.

After some time, Abla took the snacks away and replaced them with little slices of pizza she got from the corner store. Theodora still did not want to eat.

"Yalla, it's okay, he lives here!"

We spoke briefly about Theodora's convent and then Abla turned on the news. Theodora said something in Greek and Abla understood. She switched the channel to a Greek soap opera.

After awhile, I got up to leave and said my goodbyes. I was out the door in the courtyard when I turned around to see Theodora in the window. She was holding a bowl of bugle chips on her lap, popping them into her mouth, one after the other, as she gazed at the television.

I mention this encounter, inconsequential though it was, to point out a simple fact: monastics and laypeople live in the same world. The ascetic view of monasticism prevails in popular culture and even among Palestinians outside the Old City, many people think that the proper place of monks and nuns is the cloister, protected from the corruptions of public life. But as I will repeat throughout this thesis, such a view of monasticism is, if not imaginary, at least exceedingly rare.

Theodora is an example of someone who leads a life of prayer and service but who is also in regular contact with Greek pilgrims, who visit and sleep in the convent, and local residents, who visit the convent and host them in their homes. Most Old City residents I know are in close contact with at least a few monks or nuns. And this contact does not only occur between individuals.

The feast marking Christ's ascension, for example, is located at a shrine on the Mount of Olives which is part of a larger compound attached to a mosque. The compound

is owned by the Islamic Waqf[48], but as a part of the Ottoman Status Quo, the Orthodox Church still has rights over the chapel of Ascension, where a stone is imprinted with the footprint of Jesus. Each year, the Waqf allows Christians to use the courtyard for the Divine Liturgy. When the service ends, the patriarch and a number of senior monks enter the Islamic part of the compound and take coffee with their Muslim hosts while the crowd waits outside. Afterwards, the monks proceed across the road to their monastery, where they host pilgrims and the local laity.

When I attended this event, I found several of the 'Status Quo' women in the monastery drinking juice in the shade. They asked if I wanted to come to the Russian liturgy with them. Loathe to stand in church for another several hours, I started to make excuses. "No, don't worry," one person said, "it will be almost over by now and then, they will host us." "And they have *good* food," said another. I laughed. A friend of mine, an Orthodox woman who is otherwise quite pious, joked that she decides which feasts to attend on the basis of what food is being served. As it turns out, she's not alone. We marched on down the road until we reached the Russian convent. A monk was leading a procession around the church, meaning the liturgy was ending.

After the procession, monastics and pilgrims alike walked to the far end of the compound for lunch. We sat on a low wall surrounded by olive trees and chatted while we waited for seats in the cafeteria to become available. Eventually, the group with whom I arrived along with half a dozen other Old City residents we found at the wall were ushered to a long wooden table inside. To my surprise, the nun who brought us in was Palestinian, and some of the others were Arabs from other countries. They spoke familiarly with the women who attend each year and gave us extra lemonade and bread, in addition to the soup and vegetables we were served for lunch. We remained long after the pilgrims had left and one of the nuns lingered to chat a bit before being hailed from the kitchen. We were served coffee and left, but not before wandering the grounds – an oasis of green, full of flowers and Cypress trees.

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[48] A trust controlled by Jordan that protects Islamic holy sites in Israel/Palestine.

Here, as in the Status Quo meals among laywomen, the encounter between monastics and lay Christians is mediated through forms of hospitality. The women seek to be guests of the monastery or convent, to be hosted by the monks and nuns themselves. But as I began to show with Theodora and Abla, the classic rule of returning the gift does in fact obtain, even with monastics. There is an important power dynamic at play, for the encounters are not equal in publicness or formality, but this is also the case with hospitality among lay families of different classes. The Jawharriyeh memoir, for example, a special tea set used exclusively to host two men: their patriarch, Damianos and their patron, Salim Effendi.

This picture contrasts somewhat with the literature on Christian monasticism, in which anthropologists have often observed an attempted separation between monastics and 'the world.' Convent ethnographies in particular demonstrate the ways in which nuns and monks attempt to cut themselves off from kinship ties and replace those ties with the spiritual kinship of their monastic sisters and brothers, spiritual fathers and mothers superior (e.g. Iossifides 1990, 1991, de la Cruz 2015, Sarris 2000, Dubisch 1995, Shenoda 2010, Heo 2013). Of course, much good ethnographic work shows how these boundaries are sometimes crossed, but there seems to be some consensus that monastic organizations are understood by monastics and laypeople alike to be functionally separate from society.

One way this separation is demonstrated in practice is through the monastic practice of hosting laypeople inside the cloister. Marina Iossifides' fascinating ethnography of two Greek convents and the adjacent villages describes this process in great detail. In the village, she writes, "relationships [among the laity] forged through hospitality are ideally depicted as relationships between equals" (Iossifides 1990: 283). If a rich man hosts a poor man, he is expected to provide hospitality commensurate with his rather than his guest's social status. She provides an example in which a mountain villager scolded a city merchant who hosted him for providing only what the merchant thought he would expect to receive in the village. On the contrary, the merchant was expected not just to reciprocate the hospitality offered to him in the village, but to exceed it. So there is

a sense of accountability levied on any host according to their means. This kind of equality, Iossifides argues, does not exist in the convent.

"Instead, all exchanges be they defined as hospitality or no, are hierarchical" (ibid: 285). Lay people visit the convent and are hosted by the nuns but they do not eat in the same room together. Rather, the nuns sit in an adjacent room with a window opened between them. Similarly, the nuns view the food they provide as a gift from God rather than a social act of hospitality that requires a return. Of course, lay people do not always agree and attempt to give gifts to the nuns. But these are accepted as gifts to the Church, not to individuals or even to the community as a group.

> [T]he nuns' hospitality… emphasizes their spiritual superiority. It can never be reciprocated for the nuns neither visit their lay donors nor accept cooked food from them. Depicting themselves as self-sufficient, they are able to portray themselves as distinct and separate from the lay world. And since this self-sufficiency is not due to their own efforts but to God's, they may further portray themselves as indebted to the divine, not to the lay donors who support them…The relationship between convent and laity, between human and divine, remains always unreciprocated… (ibid: 286)

This is of course a classic example of the "pure gift." Indeed, Iossifides uses Jonathan Parry's famous essay on the Indian gift (1986) to support her argument. The gift, she points out, creates an enduring relationship between donor and recipient through the requirement of return. This requirement is negated in the case of the pure gift, "whereby a disjunction is created between persons and objects…and there is no expectation of a return" (ibid.: 286-287).

She points to Parry's claim that the pure gift is likely to appear in capitalist societies with a marked division of labor, and his further suggestion that all salvation religions, including Christianity, put great stress on the gift without expectation of return, and she uses these to argue that the convent successfully manages a system of pure gifts (ibid: 286-287). The problem, which Iossifides acknowledges, is that she was never granted access to information concerning the convent's commercial and political activities. She mentions that the convent is a landholding institution that for years rented

out parcels to farmers to cultivate. But she could not find out what kind of arrangements had been in place. This appears to me to be a crucial element in the discussion of lay-monastic hospitality, suggesting at the very least that the convent is not self-sufficient, and that in some measure the nuns do need the labor of the neighboring villagers, which could imply a broader set of social relations.

In the anthropology of Christianity, many scholars have emphasized the importance of taking the religious perspectives of interlocutors seriously in order to avoid a kind of social, political, or economic determinism. In other words, when monastics and lay Christians say that the monastery is a world apart, and that pure gifts obtain there but not in society, we must believe them – at least to some degree. I myself agree with this position, and in Jerusalem there are also many lay Christians who say that the "good" monks of the Patriarchate remain inside the convent, separate from society, while only the corrupt ones make deals with politicians and power brokers.

However, the social position of the person who makes such claims and their behavior in non-obviously religious contexts also make a difference. This is a general point of interest for emic-etic debates in anthropology but is perhaps especially important in religious contexts, for as I described in the introduction, the discipline has historically defined "religion" as that which is not political, not economic. Thus the emic view of local Christians overlaps with the ideology of modern social domains. I would suggest instead that what appears in Iossifides' ethnography to be a system of pure gifts at saints' feasts can still be affected by forms of exchange in other domains like those between a monastic landowner and a village tenant farmer. This is of course a central part of the exchange of kula valuables in the Trobriands, where gift exchange occurs alongside commercial exchange, and relations of the latter type often foster those of the former (Malinowski 1922).

If we suppose with Parry that the pure gift is partly an ideological construct of modern capitalism, we can accept that it has a profound impact on social life without agreeing that monastic institutions – and their religious vocations – are independent of social and economic processes. In the context of Jerusalem, this position allows us to see

the hospitality afforded to and offered by monks and nuns in a different light. All hospitality is hierarchical; however, it is at the same time also a mechanism for bringing people closer – to each other, and to the divine.

Recently, a number of scholars have suggested that hospitality is a particularly useful concept when attempting to analyze practices that shift between different scales, from the individual household to the nation-state (Candea & da Col 2012). In the Palestinian context, it provides a tool for linking hosting practices at different scales and also in different domains. It operates among lay women and also between them and monastics. The latter scenario can occur in intimate settings, as in Abla's home, and in more formal settings, as when the patriarch hosts the laity for a feast. The latter example is both a shift from the mundane to the sacred, and a shift from the relative equality of individual lay women and nuns to the powerful higher clergy. But even there, hospitality is the rule.

The patriarch as a guest

In Jerusalem, it is not only individual Palestinians or families that host monastics but also organizations. During my fieldwork I worked at an organization called Wujoud, (see Ch. 4). Wujoud is a museum and cultural center designed to showcase Palestinian traditional culture and especially Palestinian domestic life, as the property in which it is located was once a large family compound in the Old City. The property is owned by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, having been donated to the Church by the family that lived there after its line of inheritance was extinguished. The patriarch allowed an Orthodox Palestinian women's organization called the "Arab Orthodox society of the myrrh-bearing women" (*hamilat al-teeb*) to renovate the property and convert it into a museum.

The women who work at Wujoud primarily host foreign tourists, pilgrims, and local organizations that use the space for meetings and special occasions. In each case, the staff plans and shops for the visits, prepares food and drinks, serves them to the visitors, and cleans up afterwards. Visiting groups pay for their lunch, usually through a guide or group

leader. However, the center is a charity and not a restaurant. Its few staff members do not wear uniforms, and the food they serve is described as home-cooked, traditional fare. The visitors treat the center and the women of Wujoud as hosts, and thank them for their hospitality. Many of the foreign group leaders return annually or more with different people, so they become well-acquainted with the staff over time, asking Nora, the former director, and her deputy about their families, their health, and "the situation" in Jerusalem. At the same time, they do not generally return the hospitality they receive in kind, but in cash.

Palestinian tour guides are familiar with the staff because they come all the time and usually live in the city. They are very used to the hospitality offered by Palestinian NGOs and some of them are quite jaded about it. After a typical lunch of maqluba[49] – a dish often served to tourists because it is marked as 'Palestinian' and involves a flipping demonstration – one guide exclaimed to me, "again with the maqluba, it's enough!"

Nevertheless, Palestinian guides and drivers who come with the groups also eat, and they, too, behave as guests. In their case, they really are guests, because while the groups do not always pay for their lunch, the staff always offers it to them anyway. The boundary between a guest and a customer or a host and a waiter is sometimes thin. Sometimes I felt like a waiter, and visitors periodically snapped their fingers at me or complained that we weren't clearing the plates efficiently. Mostly, though, the attitude of visitors was respectful. The political nature of the center plays a big part in this, as visitors are often either supportive of the Palestinian cause or pilgrims who want to patronize "the Middle East's disappearing Christians," a common media trope.

This relationship is acted out in the process of taking a meal. For while the staff is often out of view, at lunch they personally serve the visitors, describing how to eat the dish and insisting on giving each guest the 'right' amount of food. One staff member, Nadia, always serves the meat and rice, and although the foreigners tend to ask for small amounts of food, she always makes sure they get a big piece of meat, plenty of vegetables

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[49] Sometimes called the Palestinian national dish, it is oven-cooked in a pot with layers of chicken, vegetables, and rice; it is then flipped and served upside-down on a platter with savory yoghurt.

and a mountain of rice. In a sense, it is not for the guest to decide how much she receives. Some do not finish their plates, others come back for more, but initially, they are all served the same.

In an article on commercialized hospitality in Jordan, Andrew Shryock has pointed out some of the important ways in which the introduction of payment for hospitality at Bedouin heritage sites marks a transition from social practice to public symbol.

> Restaurants, shopping districts, [and] tourist sites… are filled with decorative objects that signify hospitality…when analyzed on this scale, however, *karam* [hospitality] loses its connection to the domestic structures of courtesy and mutual protection…and is now being rearticulated by means of allusion to something else – a national character, a Jordanian heritage (Shryock 2004: 38).

Shryock argues that the change of the referent to which hospitality refers has undermined the authority of true *karam*, and by extension, the Bedouin themselves (2004, 2012). Hospitality is now a heritage, a noble past that informs the national identity but has in practice been replaced with money and the logic of the market.

This is certainly also true for Palestinian culture. Projected in public by the Palestinian Authority and legions of NGOs, "traditional Palestinian culture" is sold to activists, tourists, aid workers, and pilgrims in the form of cross-stich embroidery on *fallahi* "peasant" clothing and pillow cases, olive wood carvings, ceramics, and Hebron glass. Wujoud sells these things, too. Copper coffee pots, the ubiquitous sign of hospitality, are encased in glass. But at Wujoud, money and a reified picture of Palestinian heritage also allow women to become hosts.

As many anthropologists have pointed out, it is not generally the person who serves the coffee or food who is accepted as a host but the head of the house. In rare instances when the patriarch and higher clergy visit lay Palestinians, their hosts are generally upper class and men. Wujoud thus accomplishes something as an institution that many families and women cannot: it becomes a mediator for that public image of Palestinian hospitality, ossified though it is. When tourist groups visit, it is the women who

are recognized as representatives of Palestinian culture, something a Greek patriarch could never be, even as the household 'head'.

In 2010, the patriarch and his retinue, the local mukhtar and church trustees, and the Jerusalem laity attended the grand opening of the Wujoud Center. At the time, I was studying Arabic in the West Bank and had recently met Nora, the former director, who asked if I would help out. The event did not include lunch but took the form of a reception following an Orthodox feast, as it was planned to coincide with the feast for the myrrh-bearing women (of the Bible), the Society's namesake. An anniversary celebration takes place every year on the same day, always following the Divine Liturgy.

Usually, a bishop presides over the liturgy in the patriarch's stead, but for the grand opening he made an exception. As usual, the lay community arrived at the center first and once the clergy had changed out of their vestments they were led in procession by the Qawwases[50] down the Christian Quarter Road and up the stairs into the center. The monks sat in the main room with the patriarch at the center. Members of staff and I went around with trays full of small glasses of cognac, serving the patriarch first, then the highest-ranking bishops, then the lay officials and everyone else. Twice I mistook a monk for a bishop and moved to serve him, only to be gently redirected by a staff member nearby.

After the cognac we served savory pastries, ghrayba (semolina sweets), juice and water, chocolates and candies, and finally coffee. With the coffee, Nora gave a speech about the center and thanked the patriarch and the donors for their support. This is technically her second speech, for during the church liturgy a speech she annually writes is read aloud to the congregation but not by her. Women are not allowed to address the parish, so a church trustee reads it instead. At the center, the circumstances are different and Nora uses the occasion to demonstrate her position, adding subtle political points in her speeches, including a reference to a dispute over the parish church using the space for its own purposes. That year, some of the trustees had taken their criticisms to the patriarch, so in front of the monks and the parish she defended herself, making it clear

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[50] Palestinian escorts adorned with Ottoman tarboushes (fezes) and iron scepters.

who founded (and funded) the operation. Hearing this, members of the community became irritated that she brought such issues out into the public, "and in front of the bishop!"

Such public performances are not mere spectacles but direct expressions of a relationship still being negotiated. And they have tangible results: *hamilat al-teeb*, like other lay Orthodox organizations – several of which are run by women – carries a vote for the appointment of new church trustees, who are all men. So the trustee speaks on behalf of Wujoud in church, but Wujoud has influence over who those men are. Again, this status is partly created with cash. The Wujoud staff recruited independent funds to renovate a heavily damaged property, saving the Patriarchate money and protecting it from state confiscation. In return, Wujoud is recognized as a host worthy of the patriarch.

Legalism and the families of the Status Quo

We have now explored Orthodox hospitality at three different levels: among the laity, between the laity and low-level nuns, and between the laity and the Church hierarchy. In the process, I have suggested that the contrast between hospitality in this world and in the otherworldly convent is often exaggerated. At least in Jerusalem, it appears instead that certain rules of hospitality pertain in both domains and that hierarchs and lay women alike recognize their indebtedness to one another, if not in equal terms. Finally, I have suggested that the link lay women establish between themselves and their Church is closely related to the Status Quo and its character as both formal law and (unwritten, but binding) tradition.

This brings us back to Asad's point that the collapse of "religious" law to the private sphere led to the conflation of religious and family ethics. The purpose of Islamic law was redefined as a way of reforming the family. As we saw, a very similar process occurred in Mandate Palestine. The Church was granted primary authority over personal status issues among Orthodox families. The Status Quo, though technically a form of

international law, was in practice treated as a local issue to be resolved among the Churches.

When viewed alongside the demographic changes occurring in Jerusalem at the start of the British Mandate (urbanization, growing inequality, and the emergence of new wealthy neighborhoods) and again in 1948 (mass dispossession, emigration, and influx of refugees to the Old City) we can see how the convergence of religious and family institutions led to a transformation of them both. In this chapter I have suggested that we can see this transformation particularly clearly in the context of hospitality, both among the laity and between them and their monastic neighbors.

As Shryock has argued in relation to the Bedouin, hospitality reaches for something beyond individual or even kinship relationships. It produces a social imaginary of its own, one that in some cases can rival that of the state (1997). Where the state produces laws, hospitality produces a parallel system of norms, ethics, and rules. In the Palestinian case, I suggest that the women who take each other out for meals at feast times, or visit with monastics at their convent homes, or host those monastics at their own organizations, are doing more than simply demonstrating their piety or developing affective ties with one another, though these are both important aspects of the process. They are also establishing a new set of social norms that links the domain of kinship ties to that of religious ties, creating something new.

In recent years, anthropologists and historians have put together a series of publications under the theme of legalism, a term used to describe the kinds of rules that exist alongside or in opposition to formal law but which similarly seek to imagine and order aspects of social life.[51] The project brings together scholars who use the term in very different ways, but one strong point of emphasis among them is their interlocutors' desire for universality.

Judith Scheele, one of the legalism architects, writes about religious law in southern Algeria as a universalizing discourse that serves to establish a set of general categories that govern a society outside the bounds of state law (2012). Its administrators

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[51] For a more precise definition, see Pirie 2019: 5.

do not have formal authority from Islamic institutions in the capital, but they nevertheless produce and meticulously document legal pronouncements on the basis of Islamic legal doctrine and the unique demands of life in the arid settlements of the Touat region. They do so because the universality of Islamic law lends stability and authority to pronouncements made on the basis of custom and the unique circumstances of Touat life. Jurists necessarily draw on local knowledge in order to adequately address the needs of the local population, but they then incorporate this knowledge into the discourse of the law. The law does not carry formal authority, but it nevertheless grants the decisions a degree of universality that the custom does not have, turning norms into socially enforceable rules (ibid: 198, 227).

In Jerusalem, as in Algeria, religious law helps transform the empirical reality of social experience into something universal. Recall the British definition of Holy Places: those sites that transcend a single religious tradition because a "universal tradition accords the veneration of humanity" (Eordegian 2003: 309-310). The British transfer of Status Quo law from the authority of the state to that of international law removed much of its legal force. Nevertheless, the discourse of the Status Quo is still extremely valuable to the ancient Churches, for without the intervention of foreign powers, the various monastic orders vying for position must demonstrate their Status Quo rights in public. Thus in the previous chapter we saw the Greek patriarch insisting on censing the Armenian-controlled chapel. His Church has the Status Quo right to enter the chapel on feast days, so he must enter even if it leads to a brawl (as it did). We also saw how lay men are incorporated into these traditions, as in the case of the Palestinian man who carries Mary's icon in the Dormition procession each year.

The same logic is at work among the lay women, only they are not preserving an already existing tradition but creating a new one with the language of the old. The hosting practices of Im Yousef and the other women among themselves do not require a great deal of social enforcement, but when the practices scale up to include monastics, they do. Hospitality has become the language of mutual responsibility between sectors of the

community that did not previously have any relationship at all: women, the lower classes, and the Church hierarchy.

Asad's work helps us to see how a series of historical conditions led to a situation in which religious law came to be directed specifically at the form and character of the family, suggesting that those conditions came to have significant effects on the development of both institutions. Scholars influenced by him have since taken that work into the present, looking at, for example, how the informal discussions between judges and families lead to the creation of new legal paradigms (Agrama 2010, 2012). The work of anthropologists like Scheele and Shryock adds to this trend by building it out, focusing less on ethical formation of the self and more on the social, on what happens when a series of encounters become publicly recognized as binding, even without sanction from the state.

The Status Quo accomplishes exactly that. It started out as a framework through which the monastic hierarchies of different Churches negotiate their position vis-à-vis the others. Over time, however, the monastic clergy became increasingly implicated in the social life of the laity. As a result, the Status Quo became also a framework through which the Palestinians and the Greeks became a single society, a family with its own unique set of rules and ethics.

To this day, monastics continue to maintain that their convents and monasteries are independent institutions with rules that only pertain to initiated members. However, I hope this chapter shows that there is also another, less recognized domain of Jerusalemite Orthodox society. In this domain, monks and Palestinians are not equal, just as Palestinians of different classes are not equal, but they nevertheless depend on one another and maintain regular social contact. This contact is not random or contingent on specific personalities, but relatively formal and publicly recognized. This formality is established through hospitality relations in which even the patriarch must engage. Inside the church his vestments, retinue, language, and sacred purpose separate him from his parish; in the reception hall, however, he becomes a host or a guest, speaking Arabic, exchanging gifts, following rules that transcend even him.

Chapter 3

Living with the dead

This chapter considers Palestinian Orthodox death rituals and the ways in which they influence the shape of the Palestinian family. The first half of the chapter presents two pieces of ethnography concerning ordinary death, i.e. of Palestinian Christians. Drawing on the anthropology of ritual death, I suggest that while in many ways Palestinian practices present a standard case of ritual overcoming death with themes of regeneration and rebirth, the strong association of women and domestic themes with the ritual process complicates the picture in interesting ways. The second half of the chapter describes rituals commemorating the extraordinary dead, or saints. Ritual practices performed during the feast of Mary's Dormition make the contradictions of ritual theory more salient, and I use literature on kinship and gender to help resolve them. I argue that death rituals help to establish a Palestinian ideology of descent, following Bloch and Parry (1982), but also that the themes of rebirth and domesticity are not simply inverted to serve this purpose as those authors claim. Rather, they seem also to provide the mediating forms necessary to identify the kinship network as uniquely Christian.

Maintaining kinship with the dead

On a cold and clear day in February, Abla and I went to the cemetery to feed the dead. Early that morning, I heard a vigorous knock on my door: "Cliinton!?" I raised myself from bed. "*Lahza shway* – just a minute!" I quickly dressed and tried to appear as if I had been awake for hours. This was a process I repeated innumerable times during my fieldwork: I read on the parish calendar that a liturgy starts at 9am, only to find out that

no one shows up until 11am, or to be awakened three hours early for an associated event not written down.

I opened the door; "*yalla*, we have to go to the convent," she said. Bleary-eyed, I followed Abla out of the house courtyard and into a small alley and the residential streets of the Christian Quarter to Deir as-Sida, a convent dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

We pushed through the iron door into a courtyard adorned with a large Cypress tree beside a chapel. Abla moved right past it into the residential part of the convent where the nuns live. As a man, a layperson, and a foreigner, I had never been to this part of the convent before and felt like I would be reproached by a nun at any moment. But no: around the corner, down some stairs, and into another courtyard we found a Romanian nun hanging laundry on the line. Seeing Abla, she went silently back inside and returned with what looked like a small cake. It was covered in white frosting with almonds and pomegranate seeds on top in the shape of a cross. This is *ameh* (wheat) in Arabic, or *kollyva* in Greek, a sweet cake made of boiled wheat for funerals, memorials, and saints' feasts. Abla paid the nun twenty shekels (five pounds), speaking to her in Arabic. The nun nodded with vague understanding and we left.

Fig. 11 – Dayr al-Sida with Marian icon on the lintel

Heading out of the residential neighborhood for the commercial center of the Christian Quarter, we walked past the juice vendors and grocers as they opened up their shops and brought in the day's inventory by tractor. We entered Ibn al-Khattab square by the Jaffa Gate and turned into another alley leading to a small florist's shop. An elderly woman sat reading a newspaper on a stool. She recognized Abla, who said, "I want to buy flowers for my sister and my mother," yellow and red. An Orthodox, the woman indicated she understood this meant flowers for the cemetery. As we were leaving, a mother and her daughter also heading to the cemetery approached the shop to pick up their own flowers. We greeted each other in passing and headed to Mount Zion, some 500 meters outside the Jaffa Gate, where a small cemetery protrudes from the western edge of the Old City walls.

As we entered, a groundskeeper greeted us and Abla paid him to clean the headstones of her family graves after we left, as the wax from numerous candles had stained the unvarnished stone. The graveyard is enclosed by a ten-foot stone wall. It is full

of tombs, with few empty spaces remaining save for the paths dividing the space into sections. Abla directed me to her family plot near a small almond tree just beginning to bloom. There we found individual graves in a row, raised above-ground in Orthodox fashion. They were mostly the same style, a rectangular block with the writing engraved on top, except for one that was more ornate. This was for Abla's mother, whose tomb featured a miniature garden on the top of the block with four pillars at the corners holding up a roof, upon which her name was engraved. The garden was filled with pebbles and a patch of soil and at its head was a small jar filled with water and wilted flowers. Next to this was a small statue of the Virgin Mary, a small icon of Mary with child, and a candle.

When we arrived, we set about preparing the space. Abla handed me the jar to refill with fresh water and flowers and she did the same for the other grave. She then pointed out the various members of the family represented, all from her mother's side of the family. Her father was also deceased, but he died before 1967 when the cemetery was still inaccessible to Palestinians, so he was buried in a secondary cemetery set up behind the tomb of the Virgin Mary on the city's east side.

Eventually, Abuna Farah, the parish priest, approached us wearing purple and gold vestments and carrying a censer and a small cross. Standing with us facing the mother's grave, he performed the (shortened) memorial liturgy. Abla joined in the chant when it came to the Lord's Prayer. At the end of the prayer, he chanted the name of the deceased and asked God to remember her. We then did the same for the sister. Abla paid him and then insisted that he stay and have some *ameh* before moving on to the next grave. She opened up the plastic bag and got out the *ameh* tin, some napkins and a spoon. She spooned out the *ameh* onto napkins using the tombstone as a table, and we ate it out of our hands. Because the wheat is boiled, the *ameh* falls apart into little sugary balls when you cut it so it is usually eaten with a spoon or out of a small cup.

After Farah left, we sat down on a low wall and had some juice. A group of women and children arrived to pray for their relatives buried next to Abla's, whom she said were distant relatives. They greeted each other and Abla offered them *ameh*. When Farah came

back to perform the prayer for them, we left to give them space. Abla took me farther into the cemetery where friends of hers were buried, and sprinkled *ameh* on their tombstones. We came to a row of monks who were buried near the wall, and she stopped in front of one of them. She said he was a good man, very well-liked by the [Palestinian] community, and she sprinkled *ameh* on his grave too.

After this we left the cemetery and Abla said we should have tea at the Dormition Abbey opposite the cemetery, a [Catholic] Benedictine convent built on the site where the Virgin Mary is said to have died – or in theological terms, fallen asleep. Entering the church, we descended into the crypt where a statue of Mary lying in repose sits beneath a rotunda depicting female saints of the Old Testament. We lit candles in front of the statue and then Abla went and lit them in front of all of the peripheral shrines around the central one. Then we returned to the surface and crossed to the guest house and coffee shop.

Sitting over tea and sweets, Abla told me that when her sister Dima died suddenly and relatively young, she was left alone in the house for the first time in her life. Her other sister is married and lives with her own family. She converted to marry her Anglican husband, and thus does not see her sister at church or religious events and activities. Abla and Dima were inseparable. They used to go out into Jerusalem to restaurants and cafes or to see movies and concerts, sometimes with their mother and sometimes on their own. The winter after her Dima died, Abla said, it snowed and was very beautiful in Jerusalem. At Christmas, she booked a room at the same guest house with a window overlooking the cemetery so that she could look out at her sister and '*asallam alayha*,' – to greet her, and to wish her peace.

Fig. 12 – The Orthodox cemetery

This term of greeting is usually reserved for a living person. Whenever I leave Jerusalem, Abla tells me to "*sallam ala Elsa,*" my partner. Of course, Abla is well-aware of what she is doing when she speaks of her deceased sister and mother in this way, but to her it is warranted because they are still present in her life. I believe this is also why we took coffee at the Catholic guest house after visiting the cemetery: it is a way of keeping the social relationship going even in the absence of its second half. The cemetery as a place indexes the experience of death and mourning, but also the continuing presence of Abla's relatives in her life.

This was a tradition Abla and I repeated many times over the course of my fieldwork. After Easter Saturday and the miracle of holy fire takes place inside the Holy Sepulcher Church, Palestinian families take candles ignited with the flame from Jesus' tomb and bring them to the cemetery. On this occasion, the mood is lighter and there are

significantly more people in the cemetery. Everyone seems happy and there are more children present. Families place the candles at the head of the tombstones or on their sides, so that the sacred flame touches the stone. Others build small glass houses and place the candles inside so that they will burn long after the family has departed. One year when Abla and I returned to the cemetery for this occasion, a man lit a large fallen branch with the holy fire and waved it all over the tombs of his relatives. (He got carried away, however, and ended up setting the grass under his feet on fire, to the great amusement of those nearby).

Fig. 13 - An Orthodox tomb with the holy fire at the head and food at the foot

Abla's cemetery neighbors, her distant relatives, gave us *ajwa*, date-filled pastries shaped like Jesus' crown of thorns, always eaten at Easter. We visited with a number of friends from the Old City and chatted around the tombs of their ancestors. Abla placed candles on her mother and sister's graves as well as boiled Easter eggs she made for the occasion, painted red for her sister, green for her mother. She also placed a single loquat[52] on her sister's grave, explaining to me that she had loved them, and then handing me one.

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[52] The loquat is called *azkadinia* in Arabic: literally, "the most delicious [fruit] in the world."

As before, we waited for the parish priest to perform the memorial ritual, only with so many people he proceeded more quickly than before. Abla chastised him for not speaking her relatives' names clearly; he said he did, and that he would say them again at church in the morning. We continued talking with others, exchanging sweets, eggs, and a bread often given at funerals called *rahma* (mercy). Abla handed a loaf to a child standing at a nearby tomb with a large, well-dressed family that looked like they were visiting from abroad. The girl made a face in protest but her mother told her and the others, "this is *rahma*, take it, yalla."

When receiving food, Palestinian friends and strangers responded by saying "*kul sana wa inti saalma*" (with each year be well), a phrase used at religious feasts, or "*al-masih qam*" (Christ is risen), which should technically be uttered after Easter Sunday but is also widely used at the Holy Fire on Saturday. Others will say "peace be upon your hands," a common phrase when someone serves you food in a home or restaurant, or "*allah yarhamu*," may God give [the deceased] mercy, which is conventional at funerals. In other words, there were a range of registers through which Orthodox Palestinians expressed their experience of an event that brings together the miracle of Christ's resurrection and the holy fire that symbolizes it on the one hand, and the commemoration of the local dead on the other.

As before, Abla and I went to have a meal after we left the cemetery. "I want fries and mutabbal," she said, "It's Status Quo [for me] after *Sebt al-nur* [Holy Fire]." She was referring to the Status Quo regulations described in the last chapter, extending the customs before fasts and after feasts to those for the dead. We went to a local restaurant near the cemetery to eat and rest after the intense activity of Holy Saturday, and then returned home.

Such memorial practices include some elements of formal ritual. The priest celebrates the memorial liturgy on *Sebt al-amwat* (Saturday of the dead), Easter Saturday, and ordinary Saturdays. In an important sense, the ritual provides the necessary distance between the living and the dead for the liaison to be acceptable by the Church, invoking Christ and the saints as mediators on behalf of someone's ancestors. The holy fire blesses

the tomb and the souls of the departed with the spirit of Christ, who becomes a mediator in both senses of the word: he communicates the blessing on behalf of the living, but also ensures that the blessing is not carried out by the living themselves, that the relationship is not direct.

On the other hand, Abla's behavior at the cemetery seems to undermine some of the mediating functions of formal ritual. She spoke of her relatives in the present tense, obviously aware they were dead but also insisting on their continued presence. She "feeds" the dead, both with the blessed *ameh* and with unsanctioned loquats. Moreover, she and I ate at (and on) the tomb, sharing the same foods we offered at the grave with each other and others at the cemetery. Finally, our post-ritual coffee at the guest house indexed Abla's direct relationship with her sister (greeting her from the window), a way of bringing me into relation with her, as I can now do the same thing, and a way of continuing the tradition shared by the two sisters. Considered together, the ritualized acts performed for the dead all invoke themes of respect, hospitality, and care, but they seem to do so in contrasting ways.

Tracing descent: Abuna ʿIssa's funeral

The formality of the priest's memorial liturgy is mirrored in larger scale rituals such as funerals and collective memorial services. Early in my fieldwork I had my first experience of such an event, though I came to learn that they are a regular part of daily life in Jerusalem. On this occasion, however, the deceased was Abuna (our father) ʿIssa, a beloved priest of Mar Yacoub, the parish church for the Old City. His name was ʿIssa Touma and he was from a well-known family in Beit Jala (near Bethlehem). His grandfather had been a priest but he was himself trained as a pharmacist, only later taking his vows and moving to a parish in Iraq. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, he fled to Jerusalem and remained there with his wife, living in an Old City convent where a number of Palestinian families live.

When he died, the funeral took place in Beit Jala, his home town. The liturgy was performed with a large number of clergy present, presided over by the deputy patriarch, Archbishop Isychios, wearing purple and gold vestments. However, the parish priest from Beit Jala, who knew Fr. ʿIssa's family, delivered the sermon in a formal, heavily vowelled Arabic which addressed the deceased's virtues and several references to the "glorious Orthodox Patriarchate" and its representative, the Archbishop. The sermon and the liturgy more generally placed the ʿIssa in the narrative of Christ's resurrection, anticipating the end times, when the faithful will be resurrected in body and spirit. The phrase 'falling asleep' is invoked to signal the transitory nature of death and to draw a parallel with those saints – particularly the Virgin Mary – thought to have been assumed bodily into heaven. This is why Mary's death is referred to as her Dormition (falling asleep), for her purity prevented her from ever truly dying.

Throughout the service, lay members of the congregation approached the open casket in the center aisle facing the altar. The body was covered with flowers and linen of different colors, with the exception of Abuna ʿIssa's hand, which was placed over an icon on his stomach. When the laity approached, they kissed the icon and often either the hand or the covered forehead. At the end of the service, the priests raised the casket and carried it to the garden in front of the church, where only the clergy are buried. A group of young men placed ropes beneath the casket and lowered it into a hole, pulling the ropes out from one end once it reached the bottom. A large group of men crowded around the hole with Fr. ʿIssa's widow and the priests. The Archbishop poured wine over the body in the form of a cross and then dropped a handful of dirt, repeating a version of the same prayer, taken from the Psalms and the Book of Genesis, that Christians repeat worldwide:

> The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein…for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return.

After the burial, the priests and the laity retreated to the reception halls for the *ʿazza*, the offering of condolences: one for women, one for men. I sat with friends who were close with the priest and his wife, and we chatted about the service, commenting on

how stiff the sermon was. We were served unsweetened Arabic coffee and waited an indeterminate amount of time before standing to give condolences to the family. This tends to be five or ten minutes but can last much longer in some cases, after which one approaches the front of the room where the male members of the family, often agnates, stand in a line, sometimes in order of relation to the deceased, i.e. with descendants last. It is a standardized convention in which one shakes the hand of each person and says "*allah yarhamu*," may God have mercy on him.

On this occasion, I followed my friends in greeting the men and then we went to the women's hall, where the widow and female relatives of her husband also stood in a line, with the widow last. Here some people say "*allah yarhamu*" or "*yadull ʿumrek*," may your years continue. This separation of men and women varies from place to place, and I have attended other funerals or memorials where the men and women were in the same hall, although even here the male and female relatives sat or stood in separate lines. In those cases, male and female visitors would give condolences to both male and female representatives, but at Fr. ʿIssa's funeral only the men entered the women's hall, not the other way around.

The term *ʿazza*, which means consolation, composure, or solace, derives from the root "to trace back," and a different form of the word means to trace one's descent. Thus, while most people giving condolences are concerned to offer comfort to the bereaved, there is also an element of the social being enacted in these encounters. In shaking the hands of agnates, one recognizes their position in the line of descent, and the continuation of that line. Moreover, while some relatives are visibly distraught in such moments, others can be quite distant relatives for whom presence is more a duty than an intimate experience. This is even more the case for memorials, which take place on the third and ninth day after the funeral, and then three months, six months, and one year afterwards.

Memorials usually take place on Sundays after the normal Divine Liturgy is finished. A small table is moved to the center of the church with a photograph of the deceased, often adorned with flowers, a candle, and a glass of wine. The memorial liturgy

is performed by the priest and lay members of the chorus who chant passages from the Psalms, the Gospel, and prayers of remembrance. At the end of the memorial, which lasts around fifteen minutes, the priest says "*allah yarhamu*," may God have mercy on him, and blows out the candle. The head trustee of the church, a Palestinian layman, then brings the glass of wine to the widow to drink, a reference of the wine of the Eucharist but also of that which the bride and groom drink during the Orthodox wedding service. This is a ritual exclusively practiced by the Palestinians, for the Greeks do not offer wine at such occasions, though they accept the Palestinian practice as it does not contradict their theology in any major way. Once the memorial is finished, the same procedure is followed as after the funeral. One shakes the hands of the male relatives – no longer the women in the case of Jerusalem, though it may be different elsewhere – and is served coffee and *ameh* in the courtyard.

Death and regeneration among the Orthodox

The literature on Orthodox Christianity is replete with death rituals, and much of it follows the broader anthropological literature on death and social cohesion following Durkheim and Robert Hertz. Loring Danforth's classic *Death rituals in rural Greece* (1982), for example, examines the formal characteristics of death rituals in conversation with Robert Hertz's work (1960) to show how Orthodox Greeks attempt to overcome the social effects of death in ritual through an emphasis on spiritual regeneration.

This is a central concern for Hertz, who argued that while resurrection is often seen as a peculiarly Christian preoccupation, in fact death is everywhere associated with resurrection, often through symbols of life-cycle events including birth, majority, and marriage (Hertz 1960: 208). This process differs somewhat in each society and for each ritual setting but an overriding theme cuts across them all. This is the ritual process of transforming the deceased person from an ordinary, individual human being into a representative of the group. This often requires a separation of men – as representatives

of the descent group – from women and children, who represent 'natural' reproduction, and the enforcement of strict taboos.

This point echoes Maurice Bloch's work on ritual and his dual-system theory of the social (1977, 1989, 2008) but its relation to death is clearest in his collaboration with Jonathan Parry, *Death and the regeneration of life* (1982), where together they argue that the experience of regeneration is made possible through a process enacted in formal death rituals that distinguishes and opposes spiritual regeneration to natural forms of reproduction and domestic life (cf. Huntington & Metcalf 1979, Goody 1962). Like Hertz, Bloch and Parry point out that death rituals are often paired with themes of marriage and childbirth, but they argue that such events in the lifecycle are not employed as a metaphor for what happens after death. Rather, they are processes that must be conceptually overcome if true regeneration is to take place. In their introduction, the authors point to a number of social settings in which women are isolated, chastised, or physically attacked in the period of ritual transition during which a person has died but not yet entered the realm of the ancestors. These rituals allow those in power to establish a social order in which "women are associated with sexuality, and sexuality with death" (Bloch & Parry 1982: 22).

> Victory over death – its conversion into rebirth – is symbolically achieved by a victory over sexuality and the world of women, who are made to bear the ultimate responsibility for the negative aspects of death (ibid).

In this process, male elders establish their deceased relatives as having conquered death and become ancestors. In turn, they establish themselves as the proper medium through which ancestral power can influence their society (ibid; Bloch 1989).

Ritual alienation of "the world of women" is evident among Christians as much as it is among the Lugbara or the Merina. For example, Pamela Klassen's American Catholic informants describe not being able to attend their child's christening in church because of their impurity after birth (2001: 121). Similarly, João de Pina-Cabral observes that Portuguese Catholic death rituals associate bodily corruption with female sexuality (1980).

Themes of ritual regeneration also characterize the Palestinian case, and while the Bloch and Parry volume does not include ethnography from Arab or Orthodox Christian contexts, the authors refer in their introduction to several aspects of Orthodoxy that support their perspective. In particular, they discuss the widely-known myth that in Jerusalem, Christ was crucified directly above the buried skull of Adam, and that his blood seeped down into the earth to touch the bone, redeeming the original sin of humankind. They also refer to the Christian view of the Golgotha being the center of the world, just as the cremation ground of Manikarnika is called the 'navel' of the cosmos (Bloch & Parry 1982: 14). The overlap is even greater than they recognized: the Greek term for the central part of the Holy Sepulcher Church is "*umphalos*," which means navel. This term is still used by Greek monks today, and Palestinians use the term "*nus al-dinya*," the center of the world, in accordance with the myth that Adam was buried at the center of the world.

The ritual distinction between spiritual regeneration, 'natural' reproduction, and the 'world of women' goes beyond cosmology as well. Thus in Fr. ʿIssa's funeral the clergy described his life and death in the narrative of Christ's resurrection, which transforms the meaning of death into one of sleep, a temporary state of being that will be overcome upon his return. He does not become a saint, a status usually only achieved by monastics and even then only long after death, when one's ability to perform miracles has been demonstrated. And yet, he is described as having joined the heavenly host, including both the saints and his own ancestors. Here it is significant that ʿIssa was brought home to be buried and not interred in Jerusalem, where his church and parish are located. Similarly, it was the bishop from his hometown who gave the eulogy, while the representatives of his parish and adopted home spoke at his memorial services.

After the funeral, the separation of men and women in the condolences hall – which is repeated in the parish churches during subsequent memorial liturgies – emphasized the continuity of ʿIssa's lineage rather than his own absence. The death of a man (in particular) is portrayed as a succession event, with male relatives standing at the door of the hall in a literal 'agnatic line' to receive the recognition of the community. In

the process, the end of a conjugal union between a living man and woman is transcended by the emphasis on spiritual union with the saints on the one hand, and the children of the deceased who succeed their father on the other (cf. Lambek 2011, Shryock 1997).

Further support for this point can be found in exceptional cases of early or otherwise 'bad' death. There were a few of these cases during my fieldwork and one in my immediate neighborhood. On that occasion, posters with the portrait of a young, unmarried man were put up all over the Christian Quarter announcing his death and impending funeral. On the appointed day, the young men of the Christian Quarter led a procession through the residential streets with the coffin on their shoulders. They played drums and chanted in joyous tones, calling the deceased the "groom of heaven." When I asked the men what this was, they called it a *zaffa*. This term either applies to a wedding procession – among Muslims it is only used for this purpose – or the processions marking the deaths of Jesus and Mary, respectively (cf. Danforth 2004, Rushton 1982: 181). In Chapter 7 I describe the origins and uses of the *zaffa* in relation to the Holy Fire ceremony, but here we can see the logical extension of Christ's defeat of death into the lay community. The funeral, normally a somber affair, is inverted and celebrated instead as a wedding.

Therefore, just as Bloch and Parry describe, much of Palestinian Orthodox ritual practice related to death is structured to emphasize renewal over and against loss and absence, and this is accomplished at least in part by distinguishing heavenly marriage from social marriage. After a funeral, the memorials continue to enact this process over the course of a year, providing the crucial link between the recently deceased and the saints. After a year, the final memorial is usually the largest and the hospitality given to guests is often more extensive, possibly including a full meal instead of simply coffee and *ameh*.

The Palestinian memorials appear closely related to those performed in Greece in this regard. During his fieldwork in rural Greece, Danforth describes his interlocutors among the relatives of the deceased as being extremely worried for the soul of their loved one. As in the Palestinian case, the Greeks would hold memorial services at regular

intervals for the first year after the funeral (and sometimes longer) to pray for the person's soul (Danforth 1982:45). He was told that when a person dies and the soul is separated from the body, it "sets out on the road to God," and they pray it gets there (ibid). Another anthropologist of Greece, Margaret Kenna, confirms this attitude. She was told that the prayers are necessary to unburden the soul of its sins and help it to reach heaven:

> For each good deed done during life the soul takes one step toward heaven, for each sin it takes a step toward hell…In order to counteract the sins…relatives and fellow villagers, must say "God forgive him" …Every time this is said a sin drops off the soul and takes a step nearer heaven (Kenna 1976: 31).

This phrase is repeated after the funeral and at every subsequent memorial service, during which time the deceased is generally considered to be accepted in heaven. This bit of ethnography is remarkable for the direct relationship Greeks perceive between their prayers and the departed soul. My interlocutors also assumed the soul reached heaven after a year, and maintained their prayers helped the dead, but only in a very general sense. This may be in part due to the fact that Orthodox Greeks practice secondary burial whereas Orthodox Palestinians do not (despite being part of the same tradition). For Greeks, the exhumed bones to be moved to the ossuary provide material evidence that the process has been successful – as long as they are white and not blackened or insufficiently decomposed (1982: 50). No such evidence exists for Palestinians and they appear somewhat less concerned about determining whether or when a relative reaches heaven than Danforth's interlocutors do.

There are thus some strong lines of continuity between the Bloch and Parry theory and Palestinian experience, helping to establish their ideology of descent in practice. With ʿIssa's funeral one can see both the emphasis on the succession of living descendants and the transformation of the deceased into a new status alongside the saints. There are also significant differences, however. As the lack of secondary burial practices suggests, these differences are related to the idea of transcendence, upon which Bloch and Parry place significant theoretical weight.

I will discuss this further below, but Bloch and Parry argue that the "Judaeo-Christian tradition" provides an example of a female sexuality symbolically associated with death that is opposed to and transcended by a divine power, the true source of regeneration (Bloch & Parry 1982: 18-19). As I pointed out in the Introduction, the authors here again rely on scripture to make this claim: the Fall reveals Eve as the source of evil, the power of reproduction as her punishment, and the virgin (non-sexual) birth as the source of humanity's redemption (ibid.).[53]

As many scholars have pointed out, the Orthodox tradition does not place a strong emphasis on the idea of original sin, even in contexts where women are associated with Eve (e.g. Kenna 1995: 43, Du Boulay 1986). More broadly, Orthodox theology does not generally view God in the transcendental terms that Bloch and Parry suggest. For our purposes here, among Orthodox Christians it is not only the saints but also the ordinary dead who may serve as mediators with God.[54] They do not have the same status, but are nevertheless perceived to be closer to God in death in the same way that Mary is closer to God than other human beings. Bloch and Parry correctly point out that Mary's status is associated with her virginity and moral purity; however, their narrow focus on symbolism forces them to ignore Mary's primary significance to actual Christians: her role as a mediator.

This brings us back to Abla and how she interacts with the tombs of her family members. It is important to point out that praying in Orthodox societies does not always look like it does in western and especially Protestant contexts. It does not necessarily involve speaking or sending a message directly to God or a saint (cf. Orsi 2016). Sometimes it can take the form of a vow, usually at the shrine of a particular saint (e.g. Dubisch 1995, Canaan 1927), but in other circumstances it looks much like social relations with living relatives.

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[53] Following Leach 1966; see also 1972.

[54] "It would be perfectly normal for an Orthodox child, if orphaned, to end his evening prayers by asking for the intercessions not only of the Mother of God and the saints, but of his own mother and father" (Ware 2015: 249).

Like many Orthodox Christians, Abla has an icon 'window' in her house with a number of icons of varying sizes along with pictures of family members and a single candle. Her mother's photograph is prominently placed next to the Virgin Mary, whose icon is blackened from candle smoke, its frame and materials dulled and frayed from touch (cf. Luehrmann 2010, 2018). Susan Harding (2000) once described the bibles of her evangelical informants being dog-eared and worn, full of highlights and smudge marks: traces of use and devotion. For the Orthodox, a domestic icon can have a similar appearance, only here the scripture is treated more like a memory than a text, and prayer does not always have a single recipient (Herzfeld 1990).

When Abla brought food to the cemetery and left loquats and *ameh* there with flowers, one might say she was remembering the dead, that there was no attempt to reach beyond the grave into another world, as one might see in possession events, for example. This is a reasonable objection but I would invert its premise. There is nothing special about bringing food to the dead because its purpose is to include dead relatives in the world of their living family. As far as I am aware, Orthodox and Catholic priests everywhere describe the Eucharistic table as a communion of the living and the dead, and the church as the place in which the entire Christian community, which includes the dead, can meet. The clergy make stipulations about how one can communicate with the deceased, but the possibility is never denied. This was of course the point made by Igor Kopytoff, who famously argued that African ancestor worship actually treats ancestors and living elders the same way – that there was no great distinction between them (1971). The same might be said for Orthodoxy: the great chasm created in death between this world and the other is an ideological one to which not everyone, not even all Christians, ascribe (cf. Leach 1964: 39).

I will elaborate on this point at the end of the chapter but for now we might recall from Chapter 2 the way in which acts of hospitality extend the boundaries of the household to include those outside the kinship network, including Palestinians from different families but also monks and nuns and the sacred spaces associated with them. More specifically, the older women I accompanied to church, religious feasts, and each

other's homes, established a connection between the ritual celebration of a feast and the people who lived at the shrine – especially nuns. The nuns hosted them and chatted with them, and on other occasions the laywomen would do the same. Similarly, when Abla's sister was alive, the two of them would attend feasts together and then go out for a meal. Now that she has passed, Abla takes me out for a meal, or she goes out with her friends. They eat specific foods on specific occasions and treat each other. For me, this looks like a way of keeping the dead alive, not just in the individual memory, but in the living family and the wider social network of Orthodox society.

So we are seemingly left with a contradiction: on the one hand, the ideology of descent is clear and follows the model created by Bloch and Parry remarkably well. On the other hand, the antagonism between regeneration and 'the world of women' is not nearly as strong as in other cases, for example the Lugbara or the Merina. Men and women are separated in many ritual contexts, as we have seen, but this separation does not always appear to function the same way.[55] In Abla's case, eating at the grave, leaving fruits and sweets on the tombstones, and visiting the church and guest house nearby suggest a different kind of relationship with the dead that is not predicated on entrenching the authority of the lineage and its male representatives. Similarly, the fact that it is mostly women who perform these acts (as well as the Status Quo outings after saints' feasts) seems to imply that the distinctions between men and women are only one part of the ritual process.

It is necessary to investigate the relationship between these two seemingly opposed domains further. The next section will attempt to do this by bringing the last major feature of Orthodox death ritual, and the one in which women and families feature most prominently, into the discussion: the memorial rites for the death of saints.

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[55] Bloch & Parry are criticized along these lines in Huntington & Metcalf 1999. See also Dubisch 1983, Engelke 2019.

Womb-tombs and domesticated saints: the feast of Mary's Dormition

After the Holy Fire ceremony at Easter, the feast celebrating Mary's death, or dormition, is probably the most popular religious event of the year for Jerusalemite Christians. As with the Holy Fire, it is an Orthodox feast but attracts Palestinians from all Christian denominations. The Catholic feast for Mary, which takes place earlier, is not nearly as widely attended.

Devotion to Mary in Palestine/Israel is very strong, as it is in so much of the Christian world. Mary's death marks the end of the ritual calendar, and her birth marks the beginning of a new one. In Jerusalem and the Holy Land more generally, these events carry a special valence as the actual places where Mary is thought to have lived and died are marked by ancient shrines which are all in the same immediate area. The Orthodox Church over the home of Anna and Joachim, Mary's parents, is located just inside the Old City on its northeastern edge. A steep staircase leading underground into a cramped and humid grotto marks the place where the Orthodox believe Mary was born. Outside the house there is a fountain where Mary is thought to have bathed, and for generations Christian and Muslim women would bathe in its waters to be healed of their afflictions (Canaan 1927). The famous Milk Grotto in Bethlehem, some fifteen kilometers away, marks the spot where Mary's breastmilk fell to the ground, blessing it, and this too has been a site visited for centuries. Even the Arabic term for sage, which is widely consumed by Muslims and Christians alike with black tea, refers to the Virgin Mary: it is called *maramiyya (*as in "Maryam-ia").

Outside the Old City, just down the hill from her mother's home, sits Mary's tomb, simply called "Sitna Maryam" (our lady Mary) in Arabic. The Dormition feast marking her death occurs in August every year over the course of nine days. The central event of the feast is a dawn procession in which monks of the Greek Brotherhood along with a number of nuns, the Palestinian parish priest, and several lay Palestinian representatives, carry the icon of Mary from its home in a convent opposite the Holy Sepulcher to the tomb, where the patriarch later performs the Divine Liturgy.

When I attended the procession, I was shocked by the number of Palestinians that appeared at the Holy Sepulcher courtyard in the pre-dawn darkness. After attending so many minor feasts and liturgies in the early morning I had become used to seeing the same handful of Palestinian faces alongside slightly larger numbers of Russian, Romanian, and Georgian pilgrims and a dozen or so monks led by a bishop. The feast for Saint George in Lyd is big, and of course Easter and Christmas attract large numbers of locals but this was different. For one thing, there were young people everywhere: teenagers in small groups, men smoking cigarettes against the wall, young women taking pictures and videos, parents with small children. I also saw members of the professional class who very rarely come to church: doctors, lawyers, business people. In short, this was a completely different demographic than I was used to seeing.

Of course, there were also many, many pilgrims. A week before the feast the Christian Quarter began to swell with Europeans, many of them women. (My landlady took in a Russian woman who awoke each morning at 3am to scrub the floors of Sitna Maryam and visit with the nuns in nearby convents). By the morning of the procession, the Sepulcher courtyard and the entire Dabbagah market next-door were packed with people.

The procession began with Brotherhood monks and Orthodox nuns lining the road out of the Christian Quarter. Eventually the Bishop of Sitna Maryam, who, according to the Status Quo, always carries the icon, emerged from the convent. Next to him was a Palestinian man (described in Ch. 1) who has the distinction of helping the bishop carry the icon. Together they entered the dark street illuminated at the edges by onlookers carrying candles.

The procession moved slowly through the narrow streets of the Old City, clergy at the front and laity in the back. Some of the pilgrims and Palestinians ran ahead to catch the Bishop passing, at which point they rushed the icon and kissed it before being waved off by the monks. Perhaps an hour after beginning, the procession reached St. Stephen's gate and the wider roads outside the city, where more lay Christians stood waiting.

Sitna Maryam is at the bottom of the valley, and when the Bishop reached it, he descended underground into the cave where the tomb is located. Inside he deposited the icon on a small bed astride the stone thought to be the empty tomb of the Virgin. At this point, pilgrims crowded in to venerate the icon while representatives of the Patriarchate kept them moving to let more people in. Pilgrims attempted to lie on the floor near the icon, to crawl towards it and kiss it, but the massive crowds made this difficult.

On that particular day, I walked the streets with a Palestinian friend and listened to the pilgrims singing in their own languages. Some of the Palestinians sang in Arabic as well, but many just chatted normally and greeted friends and acquaintances along the way. When we reached the Old City gates, we walked down the driveway to the street and peered over the walls into the gardens below, owned by the Armenians, Greeks, and Franciscans, respectively. Sitting on a bench, we chatted and munched on biscuits. After that, many of the Palestinians I know departed, saying it would be too crowded down below.

The next morning, Sunday, the patriarch held the Divine Liturgy. As usual, it was packed with people. Like the grotto of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, the Sitna Maryam church-crypt is cramped and dimly lit, and such large numbers in an already humid space led to very hot and uncomfortable conditions. By the end, it was mostly pilgrims and monks inside the tomb while crowds of Palestinians and others waited outside for the patriarch to emerge so they could enter and see the icon for themselves. Eventually the patriarch and his retinue emerged, ragged and sweaty, and they climbed the stairs towards the monastery above the church where the customary cognac, sweets, and coffee were offered to anyone who wished to join – although the clergy ate in a separate room.

The central ritual involved in the Dormition feast is the liturgical blessing offered during the patriarch's service, and the individual blessings granted to worshippers who come into contact with Mary's tomb and icon. The process for the latter involves approaching the tomb, enclosed in a small shrine with enough space for only a few people to stand or kneel, through a low door on the right side. The tomb is open, empty except

for a few articles of clothing meant to be Mary's, which lie at the bottom. It is covered in glass so those who enter kiss or touch the glass and slide coins or written prayers inside through the cracks. After a few moments a monk or nun will motion for those inside to exit. To do so, they must turn around and exit through the low door on the left side of the shrine, backwards. After exiting, one proceeds past the tomb into a small chamber with a shrine filled with icons on one side, a stand for candles in the middle, and a bench for sitting along the wall. Upon entering the room, as one turns around back towards the tomb one finds another shrine with the bed of Mary at its base, the icon inside and exposed to touch. This is where pilgrims, especially women, prostrate themselves and lie, kneel, or crawl towards the icon and kiss it (under supervision from monk or nun).

Here Nurit Stadler's work is very helpful. Stadler conducted fieldwork at Sitna Maryam and several other shrines for female saints, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, over the course of several years. The salient point for her with these shrines and particularly Mary's tomb was the overwhelming themes of childbirth they evoked. As already described, the tomb is underground in a dark cave with little natural light and a warm, humid atmosphere. She thus describes it as womb-like, following what pilgrims and Palestinians alike told her about their experiences of feeling reborn inside. They often spoke of Mary as their mother, for example:

> "I visit Mary, Mary the Holy Mother. She is a mother…I go to visit my Mother [Mary] when I'm ill…When I suffer from pain, when I pray for a child – where should I go? I shall go to my Mother or to my Father" (Stadler 2015: 307).

Another Palestinian told her "I will *defiantly* go to my Mother for help…I will visit her in her cave to make it my own, my home, in order to protect my territory" (ibid., emphasis in original). These comments are supported by the customs and behavior at the shrine, the way pilgrims are forced to walk backwards out of the shrine as a symbolic breach pregnancy, and the lying and crawling near the icon similarly indexes of birth (ibid). Stadler points out the frequency with which women approach Mary's tomb and the Milk

Grotto as sites not only for healing but specifically for a safe pregnancy or for the protection of children.

These observations provide further evidence of the Orthodox emphasis on ritual regeneration but Stadler's ethnography presents a very porous boundary between symbols of 'natural' reproduction and spiritual regeneration. Her term for these shrines, "womb-tombs," certainly carries with it the theme of resurrection and rebirth described by Hertz, Bloch and Parry, and many others, but here it is directly associated with living women and 'natural' childbirth rather than a regenerating line of ancestral descent mediated by men. My own fieldwork confirms Stadler's interpretation, but with some differences.

Several days after the initial feast-day for the Dormition, Abla told me she wanted to go in and visit Mary's icon again before it was returned. We waited for midday heat to pass and then we walked down. On the way, we ran into two Palestinian families from the Old City and saw others we didn't recognize taking photos. I was surprised. It was dusk on a weekday in August: I expected to find only a few pilgrims.

The stairs were dry and free of melted wax, thanks to our Russian friend, but filled with hundreds of newly burning candles. As we descended, the air became dramatically cooler. The atmosphere was also very different from the feast day. There were no pilgrims in sight and no clergy. A monk at the bottom of the stairs sold Abla a small bunch of candles, which we lit in each corner of the central chamber and on the stairs.

Fig. 14 – Inside Sitna Maryam shrine

Then we entered the shrine. A young monk half slept in the corner and periodically looked up to make sure no one was making off with the icon; otherwise he paid little attention. Abla took on the role of minder. She directed me where to look and what to touch, and told me to follow her exactly as she turned around and exited backwards as Stadler described. We entered the chamber with the icon in its bed and found another several Palestinian families there. The children were playing on the floor and the women sitting on the bench by the wall. The only man, a father of one of the children, was standing behind the bed, which I had not previously realized was possible. He then kneeled down, crawled onto his stomach, and shimmied underneath the icon on a rug apparently laid out for this purpose. The children watched and then went around and followed their father.

Abla lit her candles and then walked around the icon three times, a ritual echoing Orthodox marriage ceremonies in which the couple circles the altar three times. She said this is the custom in the community. Then she crawled underneath the icon as well,

kissing it as she stood up before it. Afterwards, we sat on the bench next to the other women. There were icons lining the upper reaches of the chamber and above them, the bare walls of the cave. Abla chatted with me, in a somewhat lower tone than usual but about everyday issues. The others did the same. The children ran around as normal. After awhile, one of the families got up to leave and we followed. Once we left the church, we encountered more Jerusalemites coming down from the Old City. The mother of the parish priest appeared, saying she wanted to get some air. We sat on a low wall in the church courtyard with another group and chatted as the sun set. One woman said she preferred coming at such times [as opposed to the feast day] because it was quieter and felt more comfortable. They mentioned that in the past, families would camp out in the gardens behind the church and hold feasts, and others would come out in the evenings to picnic. I later read about these campouts in memoirs: huge tents would be set up and large meals shared, complete with music and dancing and drinking (Tamari 2009, Canaan 1927). On that night, however, it became dark and we headed back up the hill.

Even without the festival activity, I was quite struck by the contrast in atmosphere between this scene and the formal setting of the patriarch's liturgy or even the visitation of shrines in say, the Holy Sepulcher. Over the course of the nine days during which the icon was left in the tomb I returned several times, and each time, this was the atmosphere I encountered. This was also the appearance of the final procession to take the icon back into the Old City at the end of the ritual process.

In particular, the return procession lacked the solemnity and circumstance of the first. It also took a different path back to the Holy Sepulcher: instead of heading up Khan al-Zeit, the central market street of the city, it passed through the Christian Quarter (*al-Khanqa* road), where Palestinian residents lined the streets and waited for the procession to pass. As had been the case with the dawn procession, they kissed Mary's icon as it passed, but this did not seem to carry the central significance it did before. Rather, Palestinians had brought their own icons out of their homes which they decorated and set out by the roadside. As the monks, nuns, Palestinians, and foreign pilgrims passed, they stopped to kiss these icons before continuing onwards. At the dawn procession nine days

prior, nuns had held out the icons of their churches for pilgrims to kiss as they passed; on the return procession, families did the same.

At the head of the procession the young men from the Quarter performed their *zaffa*, as they did for the young man's funeral and as they annually do for Easter Saturday. As always, there is a masculine ethos to it, the chanting and drumming mostly carried out by men crowded around each other and jostling for position. But unlike those other occasions, here the focus was on Mary and the icon that followed them. And rather than culminating with a moment of effervescence outside the Holy Sepulcher, many of the Palestinians remained behind after the procession turned towards the Church, as if the aim for them had been merely to bless their neighborhood and welcome Mary home.

The church as a home

This last piece of ethnography confirms what Stadler observed and further suggests the parallel with childbirth, as here people are crawling head-first beneath Mary's icon.[56] But even with this, there are problems with a straightforward reading of such ritual action along gender lines. When I asked Orthodox Palestinians about the practices associated with the Dormition, several pointed out the fact that the same practice of crawling beneath the icon is performed on Great Friday (Good Friday), marking Christ's crucifixion. Later, when I attended that ceremony, I saw it for myself. A large icon in a box shaped like a coffin was raised up in the center of the parish church and the members of the church crawled beneath it and kissed it in the same fashion as in Sitna Maryam.

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[56] Cf. Huntington & Metcalf on the Bara: "[T]he deceased enter[s] the world of the ancestors head first like a fetus" (1979: 116).

Fig. 15 – Procession of Christ's icon/bier on Easter Friday

Similarly, Palestinians explained the need to back out of the shrine for Mary's tomb as a matter of always facing the altar in an Orthodox Church. Once, I left a church through the center aisle, walking away from the altar. A friend waylaid me in the foyer, whispering (for my sake) that in the Orthodox tradition, "we do not turn our back on God." So backing out of the shrine could be seen in a similar light, as a sign of respect for Mary but also for God the Father, and the sacred more generally.

These qualifications lend credence to the Bloch and Parry thesis, suggesting that even with the womb-like atmosphere, the birthing metaphors, and the discourse of re-birth among pilgrims and Palestinians experiencing the Dormition rituals, the source for such regeneration is not in fact Mary's human, motherly qualities, but once again the more transcendent power of Christ, to whom she gave birth. However, I would still argue with Stadler that the link between Mary and living women – through their experiences of childbirth and their experiences with their families inside the shrine – is doing more than just pointing to a more distant, male authority. The reasons for this are methodological and material.

As I described in Chapter 1, the study of ritual has been inundated with questions about its boundaries. One of the most important of these boundaries for this thesis is that between ritual, kinship, and gender. On the one hand, since the 1970s anthropologists

have questioned the extent to which kinship relations are based on gender roles, suggesting instead that kinship creates such roles (Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974, Collier & Yanagisako 1987, Yanagisako & Delaney 1995). Ritual, as one of the processes that formalizes kinship relations, came to be seen either as a form of male authority, as in Bloch's theories, or a path for subverting that authority. The latter was the emphasis for a number of anthropologists of Greece who sought to complicate theories of the honor and shame complex often associated with Mediterranean societies (Peristiany 1965, Gilmore 1987, Pitt Rivers 2012). The new generation took up classic subjects including secondary burial, life-cycle events, and the ritual alienation of women, but demonstrated the various ways in which women played a dominant role, for example in funeral laments (Caraveli-Chavez 1980, Seremetakis 1991) and ritual dance (Cowan 1990). This body of literature successfully complicated the picture of 'traditional' Greek society, but it also shifted analytical focus away from concepts of descent, transmission, and the past.

As I argued in the Introduction, this seems to have occurred in kinship theory generally, following the interventions of David Schneider (cf. Delaney 1991, Yanagisako & Delaney 1995: 6-8). For while kinship theory has expanded significantly since that time, alternatives to the regeneration theory are few and far between. Huntington and Metcalf (1979, 1991) provide a more flexible view, in which life "depends on a balance between male and female aspects" rather than an opposition between them (1991: 8). However, they do not so much establish an alternative theory as a revival and extension of Hertz. Which brings us back to Bloch and Parry.

Looking at Bloch's treatment of Merina circumcision ritual, Cannell has suggested that his view of ritual as a form of traditional authority may be distorted as a result of not paying enough attention to the historical experiences of the Merina (Cannell 2007, Bloch 1986). In particular, she argues that the persistence of circumcision rituals, which reinforced the authority of the ancestors even after the Merina converted to Protestantism, may not be evidence of the ritual's enduring power after all. Instead, it could be the result of a specifically Protestant understanding of transcendence that has

changed the way Merina perceive their ancestors and the rituals used to communicate with them (Cannell 2007: 121-124; cf. Huntington & Metcalf 1991: 8-10).

We cannot know without further information about Merina Christianity what the ritual means to them, but the notion of a transcendent "other world" is fundamental to the regeneration thesis and also to Leach (1966, 1972), whom Bloch and Parry use to support their argument. Moreover, as we have seen, Bloch and Parry view Christianity as being a paradigm case of a transcendent divine overcoming the reproductive process of human beings, both in the doctrine of the Fall and in the Virgin Birth. But in the Palestinian case, and perhaps for Orthodoxy generally, these mythical elements of the scripture do not easily translate to social experience.

In Jerusalem, as in Imerina, mystery and formality are a part of every sacrament and every minor tradition and yet they coexist with another aspect of ritual life that is intimate and informal and which bleeds into the everyday practice of kinship. In Chapter 6, I describe how Catholics criticize the Orthodox for rushing the altar at communion, or for speaking during the priest's sermon. As I learned, these are not incidental details or signs of impiety. On the contrary, as the Archbishop and theologian Timothy (Kallistos) Ware points out, Orthodoxy is "a family affair."

> There is in Orthodox worship a flexibility, an unself-conscious informality... Western worshippers, ranged in their neat rows… cannot move about during the service without causing a disturbance; a western congregation is generally expected to arrive at the beginning and to stay to the end. But in Orthodox worship people can come and go far more freely, and nobody is greatly surprised if they move about during the service. The same informality and freedom also characterizes the behavior of the clergy: ceremonial movements are not so minutely prescribed as in the west, priestly gestures are less stylized and more natural. This informality, while it can lead at times to irreverence, is in the end a precious quality which Orthodox would be most sorry to lose. They are at home in their church – not troops on a parade ground, but children in their Father's house. Orthodox worship is often termed 'otherworldly', but could more truly be described as 'homely': it is a family affair (Ware 2015: 262-263).

Perhaps Ware overstates the contrast with 'Western' Christianity, which is more diverse than he admits here. Moreover, today one can find many Orthodox churches that have

pews. But the informality of movement and attitude mixed with the formality and traditionalism of Orthodox theology – its longer services, larger number of fast days, its tendency towards physicality – are elements I encountered daily in the field, and which Palestinians regularly commented upon. This more general attitude raises the possibility that it is not just the relationship to Mary or the ordinary dead that conveys an Orthodox emphasis on 'natural' processes of the lifecycle and family life. It seems rather that at least in the Palestinian case, the ritual treatment of death is merely the arena in which a much larger feature of Palestinian Orthodoxy is played out.

The picture of devotion we saw in the evening visit to Mary's tomb was different from the patriarch's liturgy because it very clearly did not divorce the ritual process from the everyday social life of lay Palestinians. It looked like someone's living room, with children on the floor and the adults chatting leisurely on the bench. It was also the site of a relatively dramatic form of piety, one that requires lowering oneself to the floor in full public view and crawling on one's stomach beneath a saint's icon. The mystery and grace embodied by the icon is powerfully present, and yet those present did not see any contradiction between that and the home or womb-like environment in which it takes place.

Looked at from the wider view of death rituals in general, behavior at the shrine makes more sense: Abla behaved the same way at her mother's tomb. The practices mediated through the eating and serving of food were indexes of home and family as much as they were specific tokens of the deceased. One eats at funerals and memorial services as well, and while I have emphasized the ways in which these services establish a sense of continuity for the agnatic lineage, the sharing of food seems to accomplish something else as well. As I discussed in Chapter 2, acts of hospitality and feasting set social boundaries and remind those people recognized as part of the kinship network of their obligations. But as Bloch, defending his teacher Meyer Fortes points out, there is also a strong moral element involved in fulfilling such obligations (1973). They are not just socially required; they also create a sense of closeness among kinsfolk, what Fortes calls the "axiom of amity."

Abla is doing for the dead the same thing women who host each other after feasts do for the living: keeping them in the family. Or, one might say, she is extending the family. She is remembering them, of course, and she was kind enough to share her memories with me. But she is also treating them as she would, and does, her living relations. More than that, performing small acts of hospitality for the dead and among the living on their behalf widens the social network. Christianity here allows consanguineous kin to share something of their family's vitality with others from the same Church. The holy fire brought to the cemetery after Easter Saturday links the deceased person beneath the tombstone with Christ and the promise of resurrection, but it also links the deceased to one another, which by extension also links their living families.

The Dormition feast and other similarly large saints' feasts demonstrate this extension of kinship on a larger scale. Places like Mary's tomb are associated with themes of kinship, rebirth, and domestic life not just for the individual who exits the tomb feeling transformed, but for the Christian community more generally. The Dormition is a clear case because it takes place over many days, the clergy are not always present, and the event brings large numbers of people whose practices can be compared and contrasted. But the same behavior characterizes nearly every Orthodox feast in a less pronounced way, as well as the ordinary Sunday liturgies of the parish church.

These events do more than just link a community to God, but they cannot be explained away as the enforcement or subversion of authority, either. The chapter thus builds on work by Stadler and others who show how this extension of the family is mediated through the space of shrines, cemeteries, and homes. But it diverges from such accounts by demonstrating that the relationship between the living and the dead is not merely a momentary exchange in the present but also backwards and forwards in time. Death rituals and the Dormition create the sense among Palestinians that despite their different lineages, they are a single body with a common ancestry. Shaking hands at the memorial service helps cement the individual family lineage through the mediation of men, but it does nothing to establish the Palestinian Orthodox community as a group that is related, as a whole, to the Early Christians.

I would argue that acts of domesticity accomplish just this. They do not make a direct connection between Mary's family lineage and that of a particular Palestinian family – and I never heard descent claims of that kind – but rather a general claim of being comfortable living in the same house with her, having a claim on that space by virtue of knowing how to behave, how a member of the family should act. Thus the idiom of family and domesticity that runs through the ritual practices surrounding death move beyond the single lineage and connect Christians as a collective group to the saints. This is particularly salient in the ritual process surrounding death, in which the dead are linked to the living through practices of hospitality: of visiting with the saint, of feeding the dead and one's cemetery neighbors. So it is not so much that "natural" and "spiritual" reproduction are complimentary (Huntington & Metcalf 1979) or opposed (Bloch & Parry 1982), but that they were never separate in the first place.

Igor Kopytoff pointed out in his critique of ancestor worship that living elders are generally treated in exactly the same manner as dead ancestors (Kopytoff 1971; cf. Bloch 2008). Here as well the dead are included in the affairs of the living in exactly the same way that non-kin are marked as 'inside' the kinship network by belonging to the same Church. Thus while it is true that some aspects of Orthodox death ritual re-enforce the authority of male clergy and men of the patrilineage, the form of continuity that matters most, and which is reproduced in death, is not that of filial authority. As we will see even more clearly in the next chapter, ritual descent is maintained in relation to space, and space must be continuously inhabited to be preserved. At least in Jerusalem, both "natural" and ancestral/spiritual reproduction serve this purpose.

Chapter 4

Custodians of descent: continuity, authority, and the family waqf

On Christmas Eve of 2018, the Patriarch of Jerusalem arrived by motorcade at the Nativity Church in Bethlehem. Under normal circumstances he would be publicly greeted by a member of the Palestinian Authority and they would proceed with great pageantry into the church, Greek bishops and priests at his side and Palestinian foremen leading the way in Ottoman tarboushes,[57] iron scepters clattering in unison on the pavement.

This year, the patriarch was met instead by Palestinian protestors who lined the streets to hurl eggs and garbage at his car and strike it with their shoes. They shouted "spy" and "shame", and waved flags with the patriarchate's symbol embossed over a Palestinian kaffiyah design. Palestinian police cleared the streets in riot gear but the protestors continued chanting, demanding the ouster of the patriarch and his executive synod. They carried banners and placards that read *ghayr mustahiqq*: "unworthy."

The national committees of lay Palestinian Christians and the local Orthodox clubs across the country issued statements demanding accountability. These bodies have decided to boycott the Patriarchate and have launched investigations into the Church's finances, examining court documents and disseminating them online and at public events. They registered a formal complaint with a Palestinian court in the West Bank and are lobbying the Palestinian Authority to withdraw formal recognition of Patriarch Theophilos.

These events occurred in the wake of the discovery by Israeli journalists that the Patriarchate had been selling and leasing valuable real estate to unnamed investors registered in a Caribbean tax haven. This was scandalous in itself, but news of property deals coincided with the decision of a Jerusalem District Court on a decade-long case between the Patriarchate and Ateret Cohanim, the largest Israeli settler organization in Jerusalem. The case concerned a similar lease from 2005 involving the previous patriarch,

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[57] The Arabic term for 'fez'

Irenaios, in which the settler organization acquired the lease on property in the center of the Old City, the tenants of which are mostly Palestinian businesses.

The court ruled in favor of the settlers. In June of 2019, the Supreme Court upheld the decision. Patriarch Theophilos was not in office when that deal was made, but the news that he has continued in the tradition of his predecessor, coming in the same month as the court decision, sparked protests of a scale not seen since Irenaios was deposed fourteen years prior.

Ownership and the power of the progenitor

The scandal over selling church property is only the most recent iteration of a longstanding structural contradiction in the Patriarchate: it is both a private landowner, one of the largest in the country, and a monastic institution defined as a custodian of Orthodoxy and its holy places. As we will see, the tension between these roles is further complicated by a unique legal history which transformed the Church into a family.

The fact that the Orthodox Church is mostly composed of Palestinians but run by a small number of Greek monks means that ownership is not only a question of lay-monastic rivalry but also of sovereignty and self-determination. The Palestinian experience thus resonates with many other contexts in which an indigenous society has attempted to gain autonomy for itself through claims of autochthony and ownership over land. It also speaks to a number of other Orthodox contexts in which indigeneity was not in question but the authority of the Church in society was. Most broadly, the Jerusalem scandal speaks to enduring anthropological interest in property and ownership as vectors of all sorts of social, economic, and political transformations.

The material this chapter raises could speak to any number of these issues. It exposes in important ways how the hierarchy of the Church maintains its authority not only over the Palestinian laity but also in relation to the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches and the state. To a large extent, the power of the Patriarchate is its ownership of land. Famously, the Knesset, or Israeli parliament, along with the Prime Minister's

residence are located on land leased by the Patriarchate. The central Jerusalem neighborhoods of Rehavia, Talbieh, and Qatamon (from the Greek 'kata-monos', or 'near the monastery') are partly located on Orthodox land, as are major portions of the Jaffa downtown area, Caesarea, Haifa, Nazareth, and Lake Tiberias.

This aspect of the Patriarchate's land regime has been discussed at length in historical and political studies. What has not been discussed is the extent to which property politics are incorporated into the Patriarchate's larger religious and social structure, and how alternative claims of ownership reflect broader Palestinian and Greek notions of personhood and Orthodox heritage. Thus, following Verdery & Humphrey (2004) I seek to examine "notions of 'person' and 'thing' inherent in a view of property as relations among persons by means of, or with respect to, things" (ibid: 6). I ask both what kinds of person are produced in relation to church property of a particular kind.

Specifically, in this chapter the question of personhood is put in conversation with the feminist critique of descent (through filiation) described in the Introduction. There I mentioned Carol Delaney, whose work has been central to this this critique since the 1980s and continues to animate more recent discussions (e.g. 1986, 2017). Delaney has long argued that Abrahamic monotheism has historically corresponded with a monogenetic theory of procreation. This theory holds that creation, be it divine creation or human procreation, is always attributed to a symbolically masculine power.

I have already described how Delaney's theory provided theoretical support for the feminist critique of kinship. Delaney showed that anthropologists have long operated under the assumption that "procreation is always and everywhere the stuff out of which the genealogical web of kinship is spun", that paternity "has meant begetting" while maternity merely meant carrying, nurturing, and protecting (ibid: 9-11). Creation was the preserve of men. She argues that even after scientific advances revealed the fact that women contributed half of the genetic makeup of a child, that they were creators just as much as their partners were, the earlier perception was "suffused throughout the culture" (ibid: 13), and so it has remained.

While I do not doubt the truth of these claims, in this chapter I seek to show how Abrahamic ideas about preserving a patrilineage play out in relation to one of the main institutions that made lineage continuity possible: the waqf. The waqf is interesting for many reasons but here it shows how the power endowed in a progenitor is perhaps not as clear-cut as the cosmological discourses of these religions might suggest. As a religious endowment, waqf property draws the lineage of the family (and especially its men) into continuity with the divine, just as Delaney describes. But rather than endowing the heads of families with power, in many ways the waqf vitiates that power by devolving ownership onto custodianship. One cannot own a religious endowment, only inhabit it, care for it, and protect it. This condition reveals a whole new set of affective and political relationships and in turn a different view of "Abrahamic" patriarchy.

Domesticating the Church: converting Church property into a family waqf

The image of the solitary desert monk has always carried a certain allure in the public imagination, the individual cut off from society. But from the earliest days of the Byzantine Empire, monasteries have also been centers of political and economic power (see Rapp 2005, Sterk 2004, Charanis 1948, Van Leeuwen 1994, Papademetriou 2015, Forbess 2005). They were landowning institutions, diplomatic outposts, and the main sources of recruitment for the higher clergy. This was certainly true of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century when monks of the Orthodox Church sent word to the government that they would have to abandon their lands if it did not reform its property regime.

This presented a problem for the authorities. They received a significant amount of tax revenue from the Church, revenue that would be lost if the monasteries could not sustain themselves. The state thus had an incentive to keep the Churches economically viable, but within the existing legal framework it was impossible for the Church to hold onto its property without risking its alienation. According to Ottoman law, Churches could not hold property as institutions, although its members could hold property as individuals.

Thus the monasteries would register property in the name of an individual priest or monk (Papastathis 2018, Katz & Kark 2007). This was a widely-used strategy but a problematic one, as the land accumulated by individuals, or simply registered in their name, would be subject to shari'a laws of inheritance, which allowed a wide range of descendants and agnates to make claims on it, even if it was the Church that in fact bought the property in the first place. Finding a way to secure the land for the Church without alienating it became a major obstacle.

However, Muslim families had been dealing with the problem of shari'a inheritance for centuries before the Church got involved, and over the years Islamic jurists had developed a number of methods by which families could limit the number of potential inheritors for a given claim. Perhaps the most significant of these was the waqf, or religious endowment. There are two types of waqf (pl. *awqaf*) relevant to this discussion: the "*khayri*" or religious type, and the "*dhirri/ahli*" or family type. The original condition for all *awqaf* is that they please God, either by serving a religious (Islamic) purpose, or indirectly by serving the poor or providing a public function, for example building a fountain, a road, or a soup kitchen (Khayat 1962, Hennigan 1999, Suleiman & Home 2009).

The family waqf served its religious function first and foremost by safeguarding the welfare of the founder's progeny, an act highly valued in the Qur'an and the hadith (Anderson 1951, Moumtaz 2018: 65), and second by designating the ultimate beneficiaries of the usufruct to the indigent. The second condition exists not because investing in one's family is insufficient as a religious condition, but because the family line will likely become extinct at some point and the good performed by the waqf must always continue (Hennigan 1999: 71). Singer thus calls the waqf "an investment in eternity," an association between the continuity of the family line and the more sublime continuity of the divine (2002; cf. Vom Bruck 2005).

Individuals have endowed their property as a family waqf for many different reasons, and the economic and political circumstances of a particular time and place may lend themselves to certain strategies over others. However, regardless of whatever other

considerations a founder made when establishing a new waqf, it always had an effect on kinship: in other words, the kind of family that it would help shape. In 18th century Nablus and Tripoli, for example, this meant consolidating conjugal ties at the expense of wider agnatic relations (Doumani 2017). These specific effects varied from place to place, but wherever it was used, the waqf retained its potential to mediate the shape and significance of a particular family structure, and it is this quality that concerns us here.

As described above, the Orthodox Church owned property under Ottoman rule largely through the agency of individuals, but this caused a number of problems. If a monk bought property as an individual, when he died he would have to pass it on to another. If he had relatives who made a claim on the property, or if he bequeathed it to another monk who was not loyal to the patriarch, the property could be easily lost. The force of the law was thus on the side of individuals and families, not the Church.

However, as Eugenia Kermeli has shown, judicial authorities in Istanbul eventually came to recognize the problem and established a clever way of integrating monasteries into the legal system without breaching the restrictions against non-Muslim religious institutions. Kermeli explains that one problem with the current framework was that as an organization, each new generation of monks had to pay the *tapu* or registration fee for lands that were not actually changing hands, but because of Ottoman restrictions on churches, needed to be registered with monks who would die and have to be replaced by another. According to the law, the fee could be waived if a family member inherited the property, but the monks are celibate and must pass the land to another monk for it to remain under the control of the monastery. Furthermore, the monks complained that certain of their brethren refused to keep the property among the brothers, causing political rifts between them and encouraging monks to leave the monastery altogether.

According to Kermeli, Ebu's Suʿud, the head of the Ottoman judiciary, solved this problem by changing the definition of a monastery in order to create a waqf in its name. He could not allow the creation of religious awqaf because, by definition, a Christian institution could not be pleasing to the God. This left him with the family waqf. He started by arguing that a monastic brotherhood could inherit property from a deceased monk

only if the members of the latter's family decided to forego their own inheritance rights. This was a nearly insurmountable problem for the monastery, as shari'a law provides such a wide range of relatives with potential claims, and convincing them all to relinquish their rights was unlikely (Kermeli 1997: 148-149).

Finally, Ebu's Suʿud made two key decisions to strengthen the position of the monasteries: first, he waived the *tapu* fee so that a new name on the property registration would not signify a new owner when the original registered owner died. Second, he mitigated the conflicts caused by having individually-registered property by describing those who take over the property of the deceased as the rightful "offspring" of the latter, over and against the deceased's biological kin. Thus the individual monks became the primary legal 'relatives' of the landholding monk, so that even an individual inclined to transmit property to biological kin would not be able to do so.

As a result, while the monastery still could not be recognized as a landholder itself, a new collective identity was formed in its stead.

> This amounts to the treatment of monks in a monastery as a family. Like in a family trust they can make vakfs for the benefit of their poor members as well as for the indigent, travellers, the dependants of the monastery *and their offspring*, which means, in practice, the remaining monks (ibid: 151; emphasis mine).

Thus the brotherhood of Greek monks came to be defined as a legal family. The consequences of this shift in Ottoman jurisprudence for the Church were significant, not least for our understanding of the ownership dispute between the Greek clergy and the Palestinian laity. As Papastathis and Kark have shown, drawing on Kermeli's work, the legal and administrative changes in the late Ottoman period – especially the 1858 Land Code – confirmed and clarified this legal status, "making the procedure of registering the land possession and usufruct much easier for the Jerusalem Brotherhood" and paving the way for property accumulation on a much greater scale (2016: 268-271). It also affected the growth of the Palestinian national movement, some of the earliest manifestations of which came from Palestinian Orthodox Christians seeking to nationalize their Church.

"They cannot speak": dependence, class, and ethics

When the scandal over the Patriarchate land deals broke in 2018, anger and frustration was widespread in the Palestinian community, including both the Old City neighborhoods and the wealthier, suburban ones to the north and south. The activists mobilizing against the patriarch and the higher clergy lived almost universally outside the Old City, however. The activists readily admit a discrepancy between the two areas, explaining to me that Old City Palestinians live and work on Patriarchate property, which means "they cannot speak out" for fear of losing their homes and businesses.

Indeed, Old City Christians do mostly live on waqf property. According to a survey conducted by Samer Bagaeen, in Jerusalem's Palestinian and Armenian quarters, 25.8% of properties are Christian waqf, 19.6% are Islamic waqf, and 33.3% are family waqf. In the Christian Quarter, 68.5% of properties are Christian waqf and 12% are family waqf (Bagaeeen 2006: 135-150; see also Tamari 2018). But the relationship between residence on a waqf and political behavior needs to be investigated further. Moreover, because the Christian waqf is structured in such a peculiar way, the investigation needs to follow a rather specific set of conditions.

In a typical Islamic waqf, there is a distinction between a religious endowment, e.g. for a mosque, and a family endowment. As we have seen, no such distinction exists in the Jerusalem patriarchate. Church property is classified as family property, and the ability of the hierarchy to control its property is tied to it being structured as a family. Thus rather than focusing on the economic or political position of Old City residents in general, we must look at the different kinds of 'family' the waqf helps to produce.

Asad's work on the confluence of religious and legal discourses in colonial Egypt, discussed in Chapter 2, emphasized the extent to which Islamic legal scholars came to see their role in terms of reforming the institution of the family – especially the lower-class family (Asad 2003: 205-256). Thinking along similar lines, a number of scholars interested in the waqf have recently begun to study not only its economic and political structure but also its ethical character (Van Leeuwen 1994, Doumani 1998, 2017, Moumtaz 2018). In

particular, Beshara Doumani has argued that creating and maintaining a family waqf is not simply a process of registering a legal or economic transaction but a "pious act of subject formation" that "embodied specific ideals about the self and the family in relation to God and the shari'a… a family charter that governs not only property relations between kin, but also the moral-disciplinary order of kinship" (Doumani 2017: xv).

In other words, the waqf is not simply a record of a family's property relations but a way of enacting a particular view of what the family should look like. This chapter diverges both from the waqf literature and literature on religious ethics in the Middle East in that it focuses on Christians instead of Muslims and a church instead of a traditional family. Nevertheless, the premise is the same: to some extent, I argue, the particular way in which the waqf was institutionalized in the Orthodox Church transformed the political and kinship relations between its laity and its hierarchy.

In this section I describe how the Orthodox reform movement, beginning at the end of the Ottoman period and continuing through the British Mandate, drew on both on the idiom of secular nationalism and on a more specific idiom of religious continuity deriving from the waqf. The rest of the chapter shifts to my own ethnography to show how after 1948, Old City residents developed new forms of kinship (*qaraba,* lit. "closeness") with the Church. This sense of closeness became strong enough that today some families, threatened by the Israeli settlement movement, even bequeath property to the Church instead of to extended relatives. I show that while these are responses to political pressure, the residents choose to support the patriarchate in particular – rather than an NGO or another church because the Church is defined as a family whose lineage never becomes extinct. It provides continuity for families when they cannot provide it for themselves.

Thus Old City Christians mostly live on waqf property whereas the central activists of the reform movement do not. And while Old City residents often do criticize their hierarchy, they maintain a much more complicated relationship with the Greeks resulting from their mutual proximity and the former's dependence on property owned by the latter. Despite the many transformations of Palestinian society that have occurred since

the creation of the Israeli state, this was largely also true when the Orthodox movement began.

As the sociologist Salim Tamari has shown, the movement against the patriarchate was shaped by a "mercantile bourgeoisie that freed itself from dependency on Orthodox charity" (Tamari 2014: 24). Christians in the Old City, by contrast, were materially tied to the Church:

> The most effective weapon in the hands of the [Greek] Brotherhood…was the Church's dispensation of charity and services to the poorer members of the Arab community. These included subsidized housing on Church property, the provision of schooling, and daily distribution of free bread (*talami*). *Talami* was not only a symbolic feature of class division within the Christian community, but a real material instrument in the allocation of influence within the community (ibid: 23).

Tamari adds that even more than *talami* bread, Church housing provided the most significant material influence over Old City residents, constituting a major form of class difference between them and the rest of the lay population. In the words of today's activists, the Old City residents "cannot speak out," but those who broke away believed they could.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a cohort of Orthodox Christians demanded a greater role in the Church, especially in relation to its property. Most commentators have pointed out the extent to which the early manifestations of Orthodox nationalism were secular and "constitutional" in nature, claiming ownership and representation in the language of human rights and the rule of law. There is plenty of evidence for such claims, as from the beginning the Orthodox renaissance (*al-nahda al-urthudhuksiyya)* was closely connected to Arab nationalism. In 1911, 'Isa al-'Isa founded the newspaper *Filastin*, which for years played a central role in the national movement. But al-'Isa founded it largely to support the Orthodox cause (Tadros Khalaf 2009: 134). And while the paper's scope grew into something much larger, it continued to articulate a powerful vision for Palestinian Orthodoxy throughout its tenure. A 1935 issue provides an example:

> I…an Arab Orthodox Christian Palestinian (or Jordanian) believe that I have a historical right to the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, a large share of its membership, and an active contribution to its identity and being. I believe that the spiritual hierarchy of this patriarchate has usurped this right and denied it to me for 400 years. I pledge to God to boycott this hierarchy to the best of my ability until it recognizes this right (*Filastin* 1935, transl. mine).

This charter, publicly recited at a youth conference in Ramleh, refers to a historical narrative that explains Greek hegemony as a national betrayal. In 1534, when the patriarchate had become thoroughly Arabized, the Arab Patriarch Atallah died. He was replaced by an Arabic-speaking Greek called Germanos who undertook to rid the patriarchate of its Arab presence in favor of Greeks (Khuri & Khuri 1925, Farah 2014, Sabbagh 2016).

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, there is some disagreement among scholars about exactly when and how this process occurred, but it is clear that by the 19th century, the Greek hierarchy had shifted from an inclusive definition of the Rum millet, a religious distinction that originally included all "Roman" or Eastern Orthodox Christians regardless of ethnicity, to an exclusive one that equated "Rum" with the Greek nation. Arabs were described as Greek "arabophones" who had lost the Greek language and culture over time (Papastathis 2014/15: 37-54).

Palestinian reformers have been contesting this narrative for over a century, usually through idioms of indigeneity and secular nationalism (Tamari 2017: 165). On the one hand, they emphasized the Palestinian character of the Church: "The Patriarchate is an Orthodox institution in Palestine," reads a 1931 memorandum, "The Patriarch and the Fraternity are Palestinians. The Community is Palestinian and the Shrines are Palestinian" (Robson 2011: 89). On the other hand, they emphasized their right, as indigenous Christians, to religious autonomy:

> The aim of the Orthodox cause is the independence of the community in its communal affairs and in the supervision of its property so as to become a strong community with a clear Arab influence, and so as to be able to deliver its national message in a full and suitable manner (Robson 2011: 75).

This rhetoric was especially employed in public, when addressing a national audience, the government, or the international community. But in the register of religion (and personal status law, over which the Church has authority), the idea of indigeneity was more complicated.

There, the distinction between Hellenic and "arabophone" Greeks was (and is) used by the hierarchy to demonstrate its universality and authority. Greekness is equated with the eastern tradition and Byzantium. The monks describe themselves as preserving the liturgy and traditions of the early Christians, passing them on unchanged. Their vocation is to protect the holy sites of Christendom for all Orthodox, and therefore they believe they must not add or remove any element of their monastic identity. They thus agree with Palestinian claims of indigeneity, only they add the term "now": Palestinians have *become* indigenous, local, and fixed to Palestine in its "Arab-Islamic" milieu.[58] Therefore, the Greeks claim, Palestinians cannot represent the interests of global Orthodoxy.

I argue it was for this reason that there was also another way Orthodox Palestinians contested Greek authority which was especially evident in relation to church housing. Here Evelin Dierauff's discussion of events surrounding the establishment of the Mixed Council in 1911, composed of Palestinians and Greeks, is illuminating.

> At the core of the intra-Orthodox conflict that overshadowed the debates between the laity and the clergy in the Mixed Council on all issues regarding Orthodox reforms, was the ambiguous definition of Orthodox institutions in the Patriarchate (schools, hospitals, holy sites, endowments, etc.) as *communal* or *universal* property (Dierauff 2020: 208).

The Mixed Council was set up to jointly administer properties that were primarily communal or local in character, for example schools for lay children. According to the Ottoman decree, Palestinians had a claim to the management of such property, whereas if

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[58] Dalachanis & Tselikas (2018: 134) describe Ottoman documents in which Greeks refer to the laity as "indigenous" (*imeteroi ithageneis*) in this sense.

it was universal, e.g. the Holy Sepulcher Church, it fell under monastic control. For the laity, this was a problem.

In 1910, the Church hierarchy attempted to reduce the rents it traditionally paid to the local families of Jerusalem. In response, the city's laity launched large scale protests. They claimed – as they still do – that the Church owes them these rents because generations earlier they registered their homes in the name of the patriarchate as endowments to protect them from state confiscation (ibid: 229). This is a different kind of claim from those described above.

It is rather like that of the *fellahin* or peasants described by Rashid Khalidi who registered land in the name of village shaykhs and urban notables. When these notables attempted to sell the land the *fellahin* often refused to leave, claiming their usufruct rights were inalienable (Khalidi 1997: 95, 102). So it was with Jerusalemite Christians who claimed the property of the Greeks was not sold but merely entrusted to them.

This is different than saying "the Church is Palestinian" because the basis for the claim is not its location or national character but its identity as a waqf – in which usufruct rights are eternal. This is important because it allows Jerusalemites to claim not only 'local' institutions but also 'universal' ones. Their claim is thus not based on legal ownership or the ethnic character of the institution but on continuous use: it is not the Greeks who have maintained the continuity of the Church, they appear to argue, but the Palestinians who always remained in the land and preserved the Christian presence there. In a sense, they do not own the Church; they *belong* to it.

For activists during the Mandate and indeed also today, this claim has rarely superseded the idiom of Palestinian nationalism. However, the idea that the property of the Church and the Palestinian community were one and the same remained a significant if subordinate discourse. This discourse has usually been underemphasized in the scholarship, which focuses on Palestinian national claims. But it is visible even among the activists, though in somewhat hidden ways. For example, at the St. George protest described in Chapter 1, protesters carried signs criticizing the land deals. Some of these were straightforward, e.g. "depose the patriarch" or "unworthy." Others, however,

referred specifically to the character of the land as a waqf, linking this to the Arabic "roots of the Church".

Fig. 16 - St. George protest banner

Another banner with no English translation read "the awqaf of our forefathers [is] for the grandchildren of our grandchildren." Thus the overt criticism of the land deals was accompanied by more genealogical claims which were somewhat muted in the English translations. Likely aimed at the media and an international audience, the latter referred more generally to Church "land" and monastic corruption.

As we will now see, however, the discourse of genealogical continuity has become more salient in recent years, especially in the Old City. There, expressions of ownership take form not only in the language of justice and rights, but also in that of protection, transmission, and care; in other words, the language of kinship and descent.

The convent neighborhood: war and migration to Jerusalem

In 1948, the cities and neighborhoods of the Orthodox bourgeoisie were all but emptied of their inhabitants. The property of these Palestinians was confiscated and they were forced to flee, like so many others. Refugees from the coast and other parts of the country travelled to Jerusalem and many Christians ended up in the Old City. The Church offered them food and housing, often inside convents.

During this period, many families found themselves living alongside monks and nuns. Like residential neighborhoods, the convents typically have a small door leading from the street to a courtyard and a chapel, followed by smaller alleyways leading to more intimate courtyards surrounded by houses and former monastic cells. After the war, many of these were inhabited by unrelated families, in addition to monastics and clergy. This arrangement led Palestinian Christians to relate with the Church in new ways. Monks and nuns became a part of their daily life as friends, neighbors, and full participants in their social life.

Monasticism in the patriarchate is idiorhythmic, which is to say monks are not required to live and eat together and they can own property – which the Church inherits when they die (Papastathis & Kark 2016: 270). They are provided a basic stipend but also remunerated for any specific job they perform, for example working in the kitchen or bakery. Nuns take payment for baking *kollyva*, a cake of boiled wheat served at funerals and feasts, and Palestinian women go to their cells to purchase the cakes in person. Greek monks who own property lease it to Palestinians to open a shop or raise a family, and the parties establish regular debt relations characteristic of lay society. This is common in the Old City but not in other parts of Jerusalem or indeed other cities. I was surprised to find out when travelling to Nazareth or Ramallah how little interaction the laity has there with the Greek Brotherhood. Even Jerusalem suburbs like Beit Hanina can feel a world away from the lay-monastic life of the Quarter.

The experience of the Haddad family illustrates this distinction particularly well. The Haddads came to Jerusalem as refugees from Haifa with no extended family in the country. They moved into an Old City convent after 1948 and despite having had little contact with Jerusalem before, become rooted in the Old City. This is both a result of their connection to the convent space and to certain monastics and clergy. According to Nicola Haddad, "the isolation and confinement [of the convent] resulted in a relationship which is stronger than any regular neighbor-neighbor relationship…we were always there for one another." The family connects this solidarity to the convent chapel, in which couples of the convent sometimes marry and the younger members of the Haddad family were all

baptized. "It is important to attach the children to the convent and make it their home," Nicola's grandfather said. Baptism achieves this, for Nicola, because it has a sacred and a domestic character:

> It goes back to the sense of family in the convent, that this church belongs to us, as if it were a family church. Like you know in Europe they have this church that belongs to a family only. Mar Yacoub is for everyone… but [the convent church] is for us. It is ours, as if we have some share in it, because it belongs to our house.

The word "our" refers to the Haddad family but also to the convent as a whole. Those who live inside have a claim on the chapel, and by "placing" children or married couples there, they create a kind of kinship that blurs the boundary between domestic and religious space (Mack et al. 2017: 443-463).

The same can be said of family relationships to non-kin like the priest who performs convent baptisms, who is himself either a convent resident or the chapel's custodian. The Haddads treat these figures as neighbors, and more: one nun called Latina from a nearby convent has taken part in the affairs of the family for decades. The children speak of her as a second mother; "she helped raise us," Nicola once told me. This relationship is reflected in the family's regular routine. For example, when Latina's convent holds afternoon prayers during Lent conventionally called "*Rab al-quwat*" (Lord of hosts), the family goes to pray there rather than at Mar Yacoub, their parish church. Similarly, when the convent undergoes renovations or needs help transporting materials of some sort, Nicola or his father will often go and help out.

Once, I went with Nicola to pull nails out of wood boards that had been removed from the convent ceiling so they could be safely reused. We sat in the chapel doing this for several hours and then when we finished, we went up to the roof to have coffee with two of the nuns and chat. When we left, they gave Nicola a couple of icons they had painted with small imperfections. Like so many convents, this one survives in part by selling goods made by the nuns in a gift shop, but because it carries divine presence, when an icon has even minor imperfections, it cannot be sold. The Haddad family thus has a number of such items in their household, their faults even adding a degree of intimacy to their quality as

gifts, as the individuals who painted them appear more prominently than perhaps they should. Thus we left with two such icons after our coffee. As we were heading out, Latina told Nicola to also take some of the excess wood. We did, hauling chapel foundations through congested Old City streets. He later used it to make furniture for his own house.

I found this kind of relationship was common among other families as well. During my fieldwork I accompanied residents to services at a convent chapel for Lent, watched TV with nuns in a layperson's house – or in the case of Abla, from Chapter 2, Greek soap operas – and helped residents and monks with various menial tasks. In each case, the connection was personal rather than formal, not a bishop using his authority to recruit free labor but friends and neighbors visiting and participating in each other's lives.

To some extent, the "closeness" Old City residents feel for the Church is reciprocated by the monastic hierarchy itself. Though it is rarely publicized, these representatives also speak of admitting the laity into their monastic "family." At a recent funeral, a senior monk eulogized a beloved Palestinian layman from the Quarter as a "child of them, the [Greek] Brotherhood." As in the funerals described in Chapter 3, a reception or 'azza was held on behalf of the deceased. Only in this case, because the Palestinian man did not have relatives in the city, the reception was held at the Greek monastery and the monks themselves received the condolences of visitors as one's agnates would normally do. In other words, the brotherhood agreed to represent the lineage of the Palestinian layman. This was an exceptional case and that I never saw repeated, but I believe it shows the extent to which the spatial and sectarian closeness of non-relatives can become "real" kinship.

It is important not to gloss over the tensions between laity and clergy in referring to these more positive relationships. Such tensions are very present in the Old City as they are throughout the country. Nevertheless, there is no reason why hostility cannot exist among kin, for kinship everywhere is both a relationship of amity *and* hostility (Lambek 2011, Sahlins 2013). Moreover, these intimate relations complicate the apparent dependence of Old City Christians on the Church. They suggest to the contrary that for

many people, association with the Church may in fact be a positive ethic, a relationship they actively cultivate rather than one they are forced to accept.

This possibility becomes clearer when we consider the fact that to a large extent, 1948 refugee Christians in the Old City became protected tenants. In other words, they were granted hereditary rights to the usufruct of their homes for as long as they had descendants to succeed them. These are not the same as ownership rights, but in the context of the occupation some residents prefer it that way. Nadia, another resident of the Quarter, said that she "prefer[s] that the Church owns the houses…as long as they try to help the locals":

> If people in need do not get access then I will go to the streets [in protest], but if a Palestinian comes and says the Church does not have the right to own…I will stand against him, even though the Greeks are mismanaging their properties. I feel it is important for the Church to keep these homes as they are tangible evidence that Christian Arabs are here…and have something to relate to the land.

To reformers, such views may sound submissive. But the point hinges on the continuity of Palestinian "access." Protected tenancy is unique in this regard because the distinction between ownership and residency in waqf properties can dissolve over time. It is well known that after 1967, disputes between trustees and tenants could not be successfully arbitrated. Islamic court decisions could not be enforced and Palestinians mostly boycott the Israeli courts, so the disputes had to be dealt with informally or simply left to rest (Suleiman & Home 2009, Bagaeen 2006). According to Bagaeen, this allowed some tenants to become de facto owners.

Protected tenancy thus bestows certain rights that are difficult to deny, but Nadia's point was broader than this: Church ownership grants Christian Arabs a relation to the land. This resonates with Nicola Haddad's comment when he described the inhabitants of the convent taking care of one another as family and their mutual belonging to the convent "house." Convent-based families, in other words, maintain a continuous presence in one place because the Church maintains ownership.

Like the monks who hold property, take care of it, and transmit it to the Church when they die, Old City Palestinians carry the Church's usufruct within their families and pass it on. Following the logic of the waqf, when the family line becomes extinct, the property reverts back to the Church. But unlike the waqf of a single family, when the Church inherits the property it then transmits the usufruct to a new family and the process begins again.

Because the convent is described as a house, and the neighbors as a kind of extended family network, the waqf has become the element that preserves continuity by incorporating individual families into a larger Orthodox one. If Doumani observed that the 17th century family waqf often had the effect of consolidating the nuclear family at the expense of agnatic relations, here we see the opposite occurring. In a context where there are too few potential inheritors rather than too many, the waqf helps create them, linking unrelated families together through shared space and a shared religious tradition.

This set of relationships between convent space, families, and monastics, inspires some Palestinians to describe themselves as protecting their families by protecting the Church. This is especially clear in Jerusalem, where the threat posed to Palestinian property is extremely high. There, even families who do own property will give it to the Church rather than risk it falling into the wrong hands.

Donating property to the Church in the context of occupation

In the late 1990s, the last member of a Palestinian Orthodox family still resident in the Old City passed away. The descendants debated what to do with their large and dilapidated family house. At first, they thought they would build a museum, but soon a number of interested parties approached them seeking to buy the property. Interest became pressure from Israeli parties, which eventually overwhelmed the family. "They wanted to take [the house]", one family member said in an interview. "There was a lot of pressure on me, and when it became too much I felt we needed to give it to the monastery" (AICS 2014).

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This gift occurred before the scandal I described at the outset, when the settler organization Ateret Cohanim apparently bought a hotel from the patriarchate for a song. But many other controversies were already underway by the 1990s and the family was almost certainly aware of the conflict that had plagued the Orthodox community for the better part of a century. Nevertheless, they gave their property to the Church.

Over the past several years I have met a number of other families that have made the same decision, even recently when activism against the patriarchate has been strong. According to them, this happens in large part because of the enormous pressure they experience from potential buyers when there is no obvious descendant to inherit and use the property.

The influence of settlers and the government on housing is highly opaque but the leaking of confidential documents related to the Church's land deals provides some important details. In a number of the recent Church leases, settler organizations like Ateret Cohanim and private developers bid on property through intermediaries. In some cases, as with the Jaffa Gate deal, the settlers negotiated with individual Church representatives or tenants in an attempt to bypass the official decision-making mechanisms of the patriarchate.

This is what happened in 1990 when settlers took over St. John's Hospice in the Old City. Rather than attempt to purchase the property outright, Ateret Cohanim made a deal with the tenant, an Armenian layman, to take over his lease. The Church sued the tenant, arguing that he never had the right to make the deal. In the meantime, settlers occupied the hospice. Several eviction notices were ordered by District and Magistrate Court judges but each time the eviction was set to be carried out, a stay was ordered and the eviction delayed (Levy & Cohen 1997: 201-238). Eventually the Panamanian holding company representing the Ateret Cohanim managed to purchase the lease. It was later discovered that it was the Ministry of Housing and Construction that provided $1.8 million to fund the purchase (ibid; see also Dumper 2002). Part of this case is still being litigated today, but settlers continue to occupy the building.

It is rare for lay individuals to make such deals but it does happen. As a result, many elderly Christians without direct descendants consider donating the property to the Church rather than transmitting it to distant relatives, especially those who live outside the country. Such experiences are common, and while they do not normally lead to the creation of settlements, the law is on the side of the settlers. As Bagaeen notes, the law stipulates that a landlord can dispute the decision of a tenant to sell her tenancy if there is good reason, but "this cannot include refusal to rent to a Jewish settler" (Bagaeen 2006: 146). In fact, in the St. John's case, Israeli officials accused the Church of anti-Semitism for its refusal to rent to settlers, and the state maintained the right of Israeli Jews to settle the city as justification for purchasing the lease with state funds (Levy & Cohen 1997). It is in this context that Palestinian Christians decide to donate property to the Church rather than sell it themselves.

The interesting question is thus not why people give property away: clearly the settler threat presents a clear incentive to avoid selling to individuals or investors. The question is, why give to the Church in particular, rather than an NGO, the Palestinian Orthodox Club, or a more trustworthy church? Here security is not the only explanation. Palestinian donors do not blindly trust the Patriarchate. Rather, they usually have a longstanding relationship with it, to the extent that donating their property may not feel like giving it away at all.

In the case I described, the property was initially owned by the Patriarchate during the British Mandate. The usufruct was granted to the widows of two men who died defending the Patriarchate in an inter-Church conflict. In other words, the hierarchy was in the debt of these men and gave their family the usufruct out of gratitude for their sacrifice. Later, a member of the family purchased the property outright – in the 1930s, a time when the Church was in significant debt and in need of cash. So when decades later the family decided to give the house to the Church, they were fulfilling a longstanding reciprocal relationship in addition to protecting the house from settlers.

This case suggests that the form of property transmission produced by the Patriarchate's unique structure is not so much a shift in ownership from family to

monastery, but as conflation of the two, a way of preserving the "Orthodox family" over time by materially linking the limited continuity of a family lineage to the more durable lineage of the Church.

This at least seems to be the view of the donating family, as well as that of the new tenants. Initially the property was left untouched and began to ruin, but in 2010, the patriarch turned the usufruct over to an Orthodox women's organization called *hamilat al-teeb*, "the myrrh bearers". Led at the time by prominent Jerusalemite Nora Kort, the organization raised funds for renovations and eventually opened a museum dedicated to the Jerusalemite family (*al-usra al-maqdasiyya*) demonstrating the historical perseverance of Palestinians in the Old City. It is called Wujoud, meaning "existence."

Wujoud's mission is partly to preserve the cultural heritage of Old City Palestinians going back centuries, highlighting the building's Roman, Mamluk and Ottoman architecture. But it is also intimately tied to the experience of refugee families. When I asked about her motivation for creating the museum, Nora described the story of her family home in West Jerusalem, which was confiscated in 1948. Among the possessions her family was able to take with them was a handwritten family bible and an iron cross, both now on display. Other families also donated furniture and possessions from their former homes and their names are recorded on the wall. The rooms, courtyards, and halls are arranged and decorated like a house and the staff cook and serve traditional dishes to visitors. So for Nora, Wujoud is a monument to the Palestinian family, marking both an ancient connection to the past and its disruption by the Nakba.

After some time, a member of the original donor family came for a visit. She wrote in the guestbook, "It's been thirty years since I've been here. I grew up every summer in this house of my grandmother…I am touched by how beautiful this place is…the history of this home lives on."

The discourse of continuity

Above I described how, after 1948, the Church granted Palestinian families hereditary usufruct rights to houses in the Old City. Today, however, the hierarchy is reluctant to grant new residents the same rights. This seems partly an effort to keep power in the hands of Greeks, and partly to ward off the settler threat.[59]

This state of affairs has hit the Old City community especially hard. Refugee families that moved into Church houses in 1948 often did not have relatives in the city and the conditions of the occupation caused many of them to emigrate. This means that some families gave up their protected tenancies for lack of descendants while others struggled to find housing at a reasonable rate. Such concerns have encouraged the Christian community to organize in a number of different ways. One, of course, has been the movement to reform the Patriarchate. But there are also others.

Chapter 7 addresses these changes in more detail. In particular, it describes an organization called Seeds of a better life, *"budhur al-hayat al-afdal",* which is politically divisive both for its conservative, anti-nationalist rhetoric and for accepting funds from controversial evangelical organizations and the Jerusalem Municipality – which many Palestinians boycott. The organization's leaders, young Christians in the Old City from Orthodox and Catholic backgrounds, describe themselves as "guardians" of the Orthodox faith. They position themselves as children adopted into the Patriarchate family – even when they are not themselves Orthodox – and claim a duty to protect it.

Unlike Seeds of Life, most Old City Christians support reforming the Church. But they too speak of protecting it and maintaining its continuity. Nicola Haddad, for example, supports reform but not the leadership of the reformers: "Ussama [an Orthodox activist leader] is not involved in the daily life of the Church", he said:

> I would respect him more if he would come and be one of the *wukala* (church trustees) and start cleaning the church and preparing coffee, you know? It would make a difference…

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[59] e.g. as Ateret Cohanim took St. John's Hospice by convincing the tenant to give up the usufruct.

This is a common sentiment in the Old City: that claiming ownership of the Church requires being part of it, of a tradition embodied by Orthodox space and the people living in it. "The Christians in the Old City took for themselves to be the protector (*hami*) of the Church" he continued. "[They] need to protect [it], to gather the Church together." The leadership, he said, do not feel the same way and thus isolate themselves from Old City residents, who make up a large portion of the city's lay population. This is not the combative rhetoric of defense against threats employed by Seeds of Life; nevertheless, like such organizations, Nicola describes a concern for continuity, for keeping people together and persevering through time. He connects this to simple acts of maintenance and care, such as serving coffee and cleaning the church.

Each of the chapters thus far has described this kind of relationship in one way or another. The Old City families who treat saint shrines as domestic spaces or the "Status Quo" women who establish kinship with unrelated Orthodox others are both examples of protecting the Church, of "gathering" it together. But the context of this chapter, of property and ownership, gives off the impression that something else is occurring. It appears that Orthodox reformers are the protectors, "defending" the rights of the indigenous against foreign Greeks, while Old City residents remain dependent on Greek charity and thus remain silent.

In fact, this is not the case. Old City residents are very active in the Church and acutely aware of the stakes involved in patriarchal land deals. It is they, after all, who will have to live in a Christian Quarter filled with settlements if the land deals proceed. But the point is not that one group is fundamentally different or opposed to the other but that they both embody the same genealogical relationship to the Church but express it according to the discursive framework of their class. On the one hand, we have the experience of George Baramki, described in Chapter 1. For George, continuity is expressed through his family history and the material indexes of their experiences in the land: the plaque thanking his ancestors for renovating Mar Yacoub church; the story of his Persian and Greek roots. His relationship to the Church is embodied in the personal history of his

own genealogical forbears. This, I believe, is what the St. George protestors meant with their banner claiming the waqf for their grandchildren's grandchildren.

As Michael Gilsenan has argued for Lebanon, to have a genealogy is to have power (1986). History becomes a kind of property and peasants (in his case) cannot "have" it. Beyond such arguments, however, I have tried to show that even those with genealogies attempt to embed them in the larger genealogy of the Church because, ultimately, the genealogy is not their own but God's. In the process of imagining this corporate genealogy, Orthodox Christians do not necessarily become God's representative on earth, as Delaney has suggested. Rather, their privilege as established families is to carry and pass on the presence of the Church within their own lineages and in relation to land, property, and other Christians.

Refugee families in the Old City were mostly cut off from their families in 1948 and to some extent also their ability to "have" family history. But here as well, the idiom of continuity has emerged in new ways: through Status Quo relationships, convent neighborhoods, saints' shrines, and relationships to monks and nuns. Residents do not claim to have long genealogies rooting them in Jerusalem, but they claim to be related to the Church, and as residents of the Old City, to be related to those "ancestors" who donated property to the Patriarchate many years ago for their sake.

This brings us back to Delaney and the question of custodianship. What changes in the discussion of descent and continuity when the central model of Christian authority is not the progenitor but the custodian? Not the creator of life but its protector and caregiver? Quite a lot, I think. Rather than being structures of extreme patriarchy that privilege the position of men through association with the divine, descent-based lineages might now also appear to reject the image of the seed-bearing man. This was the problem with which the thesis began, that the Gospel of Matthew opens with an extensive genealogy of Jesus through his adoptive father when in fact he is the son of God. Perhaps this is because it isn't the transmission of seed that matters, but of tradition.

This is not to say that patriarchy is not still a central part of Palestinian Christian society (or any other), but that patriarchal authority is only one form of authority

competing against a number of others. In this case, the most influential of these is the waqf, an institution that bestows on all Christians a custodial role Delaney describes as stereotypically female.

Within a discourse of continuity based on custodianship (rather than generation or ownership), power relationships take on new forms. One establishes authority not by emphasizing sovereignty and control over property, law, and tradition – though again, within other registers, e.g. nationalism, one may do so – but by demonstrating "closeness" to the established media of the Church: its rites and processions, its spaces, its history, etc. This discursive arena is of course both gendered and classed, but not by nature of it being a discourse of descent.

Rather, the Patriarchate family authorizes not a particular ethnic lineage, though some Greek monks claim it does, but a genealogical association with Church history and a discourse of custodianship. One the one hand, this family structure allows unrelated Palestinian refugees to "inherit" property rights from previous Palestinian families. In other words, it widens the social network for a political context in which the existing network cannot reproduce itself. On the other hand, the same structure restricts the rights of those "family members" who do not ascribe to its implicit charter. In other words, if they do not wish to hold and pass on property but rather to own it, they are rejected.

We will see in Chapter 7 how this system converges with the national loyalties of Greeks and Palestinians and how the inequality within the Patriarchate is reflected through that convergence. Here, however, the central point is to describe the system itself and how the creation of the Israeli state, which caused the dispossession and dislocation of so many Palestinians, led working-class residents of the Old City to align themselves more strongly with the Church and the discourse of custodianship while middle and upper-class Christians align themselves – publicly, at least – with the larger national movement and the discourse of ownership and rights.

Part 2

Orthodoxy from the outside

Chapter 5

Secular time and the Palestinian ecumenical movement

> When I was young, I used to imagine that I was a
> small bird…My grandfather, who used to feel he was
> a tree planted in the land, always told me: "Become
> a planted tree because the land is everything for the
> human being. The person who doesn't have land is
> not a human being. If I were a tree, I would have
> stayed in Palestine"
>
> - Mona Zaaroura[60]

This chapter marks a shift in the focus of the thesis from the internal dynamics of the Orthodox Patriarchate to the Palestinian Christian community as a whole. Each chapter in Part 2 thus follows a movement within this broader community, exploring how Orthodoxy is being shaped by forces beyond its borders. Though the influence of these movements touches many aspects of social life, I focus on how they complicate the central premise of the thesis, the idea that Palestinian Orthodoxy is a tradition of carrying the divine presence through time, and that the process of doing so is articulated through idioms of descent.

We begin with the rise of a powerful ecumenical movement led by Protestants and Catholics but which has influenced Christians of every kind. The chapter shows how changes in the political economy of Israel/Palestine since the 1970s have corresponded with a change in Christian temporality and especially the Orthodox view of the past. In particular, Israeli neoliberalism coincided with the rise of a national Christian idiom that views Jesus in primarily nationalist terms. I suggest that in the process of developing such an idiom, the ecumenical movement indirectly challenged many of the central tenets of Orthodox theology and tradition, including the latter's genealogical approach to history.

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[60] Sabeel 2005: 9

The chapter opens with ethnography from an ecumenical organization called Sabeel, highlighting the emphasis that its theology, programming, and participants place on the present and the material means through which that temporal frame is established. This provides a platform from which to engage recent debates in anthropology on the nature of Christian time. Following the arguments of the Introduction and Chapter 1, I suggest that the Palestinian case reveals the pitfalls of using time as a measure of Christianity's influence on the social. At Sabeel, "Christian temporality" is an ideological construct that depends on a secular distinction between religion and culture.

As we see in the ethnography, the media of Church history and Palestinian descent do not disappear. The epigraph is a testament to the extent to which Palestinians continue to view their own genealogical continuity in relation to the land. But these media are assimilated into a new frame: a concept of indigenous culture as something constant, perpetuating itself without change, a sign of the nation.

Founding Sabeel

Fr. Naim Ateek is an Anglican priest and theologian from Beisan, a small village on the east side of the Galilee near the Jordan River. His father, an Orthodox Christian and goldsmith, was from Nablus but moved to Galilee for economic reasons. When he arrived, he was able to buy a plot of land with three houses for his ten children and the families of several extended relatives. There, he met several English missionaries with whom he became close. Eventually he decided to convert and built the first Anglican church in the town. In the process, his children also became Anglicans.

In 1948, the family was evicted from their homes at gunpoint. Muslims and Christians were divided into separate groups, the former dropped off at the border with Jordan and the latter at the outskirts of Nazareth (a mostly Christian town). Young Naim grew up in Nazareth and went to the United States to study during the military occupation of Galilee, first at an evangelical university in Texas, then at an Anglican seminary where he was ordained, and finally at the Presbyterian-affiliated San Francisco Theological

Seminary for his doctorate. These institutions exposed him to the biblical studies tradition of American evangelicalism which would become an important part of his own theology.

Equally important to his education, however, were the liberation theology movements in Latin American, African-American, and South African contexts. These movements were widespread during his student years and afterwards and made a lasting impact. The library at Sabeel is full of books by Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo, James Cone, Desmond Tutu, and other luminaries of the liberationist tradition. Archbishop Tutu (an Anglican) eventually became the patron of Sabeel, and often spoke at its conferences in the early decades. These two traditions formed the cornerstones of Fr. Ateek's religious vision, but they have always been expressed, first and foremost, through his experience as a Palestinian.

In 1987, Fr. Ateek was the parish priest at St. George's Anglican Church in Jerusalem. When the First Intifada broke out that year, he organized a weekly bible study with members of the parish in order to collectively articulate a form of resistance that resonated with the teachings of Jesus. Two years later, when he and several other local Christians founded Sabeel, this became the centerpiece of their weekly service.[61]

The Thursday service and the Palestinian Bible

The Sabeel service takes place on Thursdays at its offices in East Jerusalem. What was once a collection of Anglican Christians discussing the Bible has become an unaffiliated ecumenical organization with a board and staff of Palestinian Christians from all denominations, including a number of Orthodox Christians. I will discuss the rise of the ecumenical movement in more depth later in the chapter, so it should suffice to say here that there are no such things as "ecumenical Christians", only Christians from particular Churches who attend ecumenical events and programs: Sabeel runs a youth program, a women's program, a program for clergy, and annual conferences for foreign and local Christians together. However, as we will see, despite not having a flock of their own,

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[61] See Ateek 1989:7-12, 2017, Hammond 2008: 165-167.

Sabeel and the other ecumenical organizations have become very influential in the Christian community because the message they provide is part of a much broader shift in Palestinian society. We can see traces of this shift in the spaces they create for their work.

The Sabeel building was originally constructed as a house. The office is on the ground floor. At its center is a kitchen which is flanked on either side by a large rectangular room followed by two smaller rooms and a bathroom with a full bath. It was set up for an extended family, with nuclear families living on either side of a shared kitchen. Sabeel uses one floor but families continue to live on the others. As one passes the threshold to the office, the neighbor's dogs lie splayed out on the floor below. The first time I visited, the offices covered the entire space, with one room reserved for group meetings and the communion services, one room for the director's office, one for smaller meetings, and the rest used as workspace for local employees and foreign volunteers. Since then, Fr. Ateek has retired as active director and the organization has downsized to just one side of the property. In both periods, however, the space resembled a typical office, albeit with traces of domesticity.

What the building does not resemble is a church. Nor does Sabeel claim to be one; in fact, the staff encourage those Palestinian Christians who attend their services to worship at their own churches on Sundays, which is why the Sabeel service occurs during the week. Similarly, the activities of the organization far exceed those of a typical church, particularly in its political activism. Nevertheless, the organization is run by an Anglican priest and holds communion services during which Fr. Ateek or an invited pastor performs the sacrament.

Normally, the Eucharist is a ritual only performed in a church for members of a single denomination, and for which purity requirements – which vary according to denomination – are often enforced. Sabeel requires no prior physical or spiritual preparation of its worshippers, encouraging everyone to take part whatever their circumstances. Occasionally, this includes Jews and Muslims as well. This makes the services held by an ecumenical organization slightly tricky, as Orthodox and Catholic priests usually refuse invitations to perform the Sabeel liturgy. This means that the service

has a distinctly Protestant feel, though there are very few Palestinian Protestants in Israel/Palestine.

On Thursdays, Sabeel staff rearrange the central hall. Chairs are placed in a circle around a small table for an altar covered with an embroidered cloth, upon which the elements are placed: pita bread on a small plate and a ceramic chalice with wine, both covered. A Bible and a small candle are also placed on the table and a cross made of two branches from an olive tree is placed on a side-table nearby. Each participant is given a Bible, with Palestinians reading in Arabic and foreign visitors or volunteers in English, as well as two pamphlets. One contains the hymns for that day and one is the program, the order of the liturgy designed by Sabeel. These are also printed in English and in Arabic. A typical service will include 10-40 participants and nearly always includes both Palestinians and visitors, mostly from Europe and North America.

Once everyone is seated with their Bibles and pamphlets in hand, Fr. Ateek opens with a prayer in Arabic: "Blessed are the father, the son, and the holy spirit - the one god." The group responds in Arabic and English simultaneously: "And blessed is his kingdom now and forever, amen." This prayer and the service in general follow the Anglian Book of Common Prayer, its liturgical bone structure. Upon this structure there are three movements: a collective sermon, an ecumenical communion, and a "wave of prayer", each Sabeel innovations.

The Epistle and the Gospel are read aloud, the former in English, the latter in Arabic, and then the group sits. At this point, Fr. Ateek introduces Sabeel's concept of the collective sermon. In keeping with his background, the sermon reflects both the Protestant emphasis on the authority of the Bible (as opposed to a Church tradition) and the emphasis in liberation theology on egalitarianism. The priest or pastor thus only introduces the texts with a few preliminary thoughts and then opens the floor for everyone present to reflect in conversation. The aim is to relate the Gospel to the lived experience of Palestinians under occupation.

I volunteered at Sabeel throughout my fieldwork and attended the Thursday service often. Here is a typical example of a collective sermon, beginning with the set text:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (NIV, Matthew 7:15-23).

Fr. Ateek was leading that week, and he discussed the passage with reference to the Oslo Accords, using the metaphor of bad fruit to criticize the Israeli government's policies in the West Bank, which have allowed and encouraged the building of illegal Jewish settlements while claiming to promote peace and an autonomous Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. In other words, he said, the politicians who are praised as peacemakers should be judged not by what they say – because they appear to be 'good trees' – but by what policies they allow to pass in parliament – the fruit they have actually produced.

After he finished his comments, several other people spoke. During the conversation, some people looked at the speaker while others scrutinized the text in their leaflets. At one point, a young Palestinian visitor shared his interpretation:

This story is just like the life out in the country here, the *fellahin*, the farmers with the olive groves. Every part of the tree is used: we pick the olives and then when the tree doesn't bear fruit anymore it is cut down and we use it for firewood. So it's not just close to the Palestinians because of the meaning but also the story is ours. It's like in the settlements…the settlers plant pine trees that turn the earth to acid and kill everything else that grows near them. They don't bear fruit…they aren't natural here.

These two views are both ways of contextualizing the Bible in light of contemporary Palestinian experience and the occupation, but they do so in slightly different ways. The comparison between the parable of bad fruit and the behavior of Israeli leaders is straightforward enough, and similar metaphors are employed for many texts, variations on the common trope among the ecumenical organizations that Christ was a Palestinian under Roman occupation as contemporary Palestinians are under Israeli occupation. Fr. Ateek's comment asks us to see the Israel-Palestine conflict through a different frame: not a chosen people surrounded by enemies or an age-old conflict over holy land, but as a

straightforward case of oppression and injustice that defies the principles of Christian faith.

Every Sabeel service I have ever attended has included this kind of interpretation, in which one form of occupation or oppression was compared with and transformed into the other. On another occasion, we read the parable of the landowner who pays all workers the same despite some working longer and harder than others. Then, a Palestinian staff member compared the parable to the experience of day workers from the West Bank going through the Bethlehem checkpoint to be selected for construction jobs. The first person picked is often the one who shoved his way through the queue, the staff member said. The Bible is thus used to reflect on the meaning of justice in the present.

But this interpretive paradigm is not only one of justice. It is rather both universalizing and particularizing: while the injustices of occupation can be compared with those in South Africa, and the presence of foreign visitors encourages this kind of comparison, those injustices are always expressed in relation to the unique position of Palestinian Christians as the indigenous Christians of ancient Palestine.

This second element comes out in the comment above about bad trees being "ours." The participant commented that Palestinian farmers behave like biblical farmers by using every part of the olive tree. If the tree produces bad fruit, it is used for firewood. He contrasted that with the behavior of Israeli settlers who plant pine, a species that is foreign to the country's natural ecology. The story is important to him not only for its message but because it is "our story", a way of connecting present Palestinians with those of the biblical past.

Thabat: the roots of Sabeel

One of the defining features of the ecumenical movement is its insistence that Palestinians are indigenous descendants of the first Christians – along with the Aramaens, Samaritans, Hebrews, and Canaanites who preceded them (Ateek 1989: 16, 103-105,

Raheb 1995, 2011). Jesus was thus a Palestinian living under Roman occupation. As a result, the movement argues that his message of liberation is intrinsically linked to his indigeneity.

As we will see, this indigeneity is meant to enhance the solidarity of Christians beyond their different Church hierarchies, and to strengthen a national discourse that sees Christians and Muslims as equally indigenous within parallel religious traditions. Of course, talk of Christian ancestors is also closely linked to the Orthodox tradition, but it breaks from that tradition in an important respect.

When ecumenical leaders say that Palestinians are descendants of the first Christians, they do so without the mediation of either the family or the Church. Instead, these institutions are replaced with indexes of a Palestinian culture that transcends them. The Bible is a record of that culture. We saw one example of this in the Thursday service, when the Palestinian participant commented that the Palestinian *fellahin* (peasant farmers) behave like the people in the Bible, using every part of the olive tree. In that case, the Bible is valuable because it is "our story." This is an example of biblical reading that creates a substantive relationship with the apostles (and the Samaritans, Jews, and Canaanites – all people of that time and place) through indigenous material culture.

The emphasis on a trans-historical Palestinian culture is visible all over the ecumenical movement. The word *al-sabeel*, means 'the way', with obvious religious connotations, but also a spring of water, which appears on the Sabeel logo. The books, murals, websites, and posters of the ecumenical movement depict olive trees (and their roots), pomegranates, and rustic village scenes. The cross next to Sabeel's makeshift altar is made of olive branches and the communion bread is Palestinian *kmaj* (pita). The wine comes from Christian wineries in the Bethlehem.

Other ecumenical organizations sell olive oil and traditional Palestinian embroidery in their gift shops. The embroidery is stitched with symbols of the peasant life: the *tahouna* (mill), *khayma* (Bedouin tent), *rish* (bird feathers), *ameh* (wheat stalks), and *saru* (Cypress trees). The colors correspond with regions of the country: earth tones for Hebron and red and black for Ramallah. The meals at Sabeel are similarly traditional. Palestinians

are as likely as anyone to enjoy pizza or drink Nescafe, but at the center it's rice with *sh'ariya* (vermicelli), and yoghurt; "Arabic" salad, "Arabic" coffee.

This is not an incidental part of Sabeel's program but a fundamental means through which its liberation theology is communicated. Fr. Ateek expresses this in relation to the ubiquitous olive tree symbol:

> Thabaat (Arabic for 'being grounded') is used when people stand firm, withstanding the injustice, resolute in their determination, entrenched and rooted in the land. Although it is possible to use Sumood and Thabaat interchangeably, thabaat implies a deeper sense of firmness and groundedness. For Palestinians, the olive tree symbolizes the notion of Thabaat and for this reason has become the symbol of Palestine... Every part of it contributes to the well-being of people. No part goes to waste. Even the olive seeds are compressed for winter and burned to give warmth and heat. Obviously, the most important gift that the olive tree gives to people is its olives and oil. With homemade bread it can be food and sustenance to people. During times of Israeli curfews, sieges, and raids, many Palestinians have survived by eating the fruit of this wonderful tree... It stands also for the resilience of the Palestinian community that continues to resist the injustice and struggles to stay rooted and grounded in its homeland. This is Thabaat. (2017: 149)

Here Fr. Ateek emphasizes the political context of occupation but uses *thabat* instead of the ubiquitous political slogan *sumoud* ("steadfastness"), which lacks the link to land.

This distinction marks an important shift in the way Palestinian Christian experience is mediated and articulated as history. On the one hand, the Bible is claimed as the Palestinian past, its events recognized as having occurred at fixed points in history, but the land and the material culture associated with them are described as being part of the present. Land, as the substance of the Bible, exists equally in both times.

Communion, occupation, and the present

This spatialization of the biblical past and temporal emphasis on the present emerges throughout the Sabeel service. After the collective sermon concludes, the service returns to a liturgical mode, culminating with the Eucharist. This is another Sabeel

invention: whereas a normal church communion, including in Protestant contexts, involves a priest or pastor communicating each member of the parish in turn, at Sabeel the participants communicate one another. This is a riff on Latin American liberation theology and the "base communities" in which it first emerged in the 1960s (Cardenal 1976, Gutiérrez 1972, Segundo 1976). But whereas in those contexts the emphasis was on the dignity and rights of the poor, here the transgression of ritual convention serves to highlight the individual and the present moment, to see one occupation in another.

Fr. Ateek, standing at the front of the room, consecrates the bread and wine. He breaks the bread into pieces to match the number of people in front of him. He then communicates the person directly to his right, using the Anglican words in Arabic: "take, eat, this is my body". After the communicant receives the sacrament, he takes the bread plate, turns, and communicates his neighbor using his own language and the ritual words of his own denomination, be it Catholic, Orthodox, Methodist, etc. Then he turns back to Fr. Ateek to receive the consecrated wine, and the process repeats.

The ritual of the Eucharist here appears a unique reflection of the individuals in the room. If they are all Catholic, the rite appears Catholic. Usually, they are mixed, which means one hears multiple languages and variations of the ritual terms at the same time. This endows the service with a spontaneous quality, as the success of the ritual depends on the participation of each member of the congregation. Thinking back to the collective sermon, we can see the same logic at work: each person carries a Bible and is expected to share her own interpretations, feelings, prayers, and thoughts with the group. If they do not, there is no sermon. Interestingly, this means that the extent to which participants view the experience as a meaningful one is highly variable. Occasionally, a group discussion becomes heated or falls flat. Sometimes it finishes early or runs late, when we can smell lunch cooking in the other room. But it is always spontaneous.

This community of the present is given final form with Sabeel's last innovation, which it calls the Wave of Prayer. This consists of a summary of important news from the week in four or five points, each paired with a prayer. These are usually read aloud by a staff member in English and then the prayer is uttered by everyone, each in her own

language. It is called a "wave" because it is circulated online to partner organizations around the world. Each performs the prayer at noon, creating a wave following the different time zones. Here is an example:

> Wednesday, the 14th of November a Palestinian fisherman, Nawwaf al Attar, was shot and killed by the Israeli occupation forces off the coast of northern Gaza...
>
> Lord, we pray for the people of Gaza trying to earn a livelihood and feed their families. We pray for the family of Nawwaf al Attar as they grieve their loss.
>
> *[Celebrant] Lord, in your mercy... [congregation] hear our prayer* (Sabeel 2018)

After it concludes, Fr. Ateek asks the group if they have any personal prayers to add. Again, each finishes with the phrase, "Lord in your mercy," to which the group responds, "hear our prayer."

Taken together, the Wave of Prayer, the Eucharist, and the collective sermon establish a form of Christian temporality focused on the present. The sermon brings out the experience of injustice described in the Bible and carries them into the present without historical mediation. The land and culture of Palestine provide that link, a history embodied in the contemporary Palestinian people, whom the ecumenical movement call "the living stones" of the Holy Land. The communion then sanctifies this link, recognizing the specific experience and background of each participant in his or her own language and tradition. Finally, the Wave of Prayer takes the scripture, as it exists on that day for these Christians, and brings it to bear on specific injustices of the present.

The movements of the Sabeel service thus juxtapose the biblical text with personal and social context, producing a unique view of both. It then pitches the product to the current political moment, in this case the death of a Gazan fisherman. Each ecumenical organization operates in a different way, some focusing on education, some on worship, some on advocacy and activism. But they all embody this temporal perspective and connect it with the idea of Palestinian Christians as sharing substance with the original inhabitants of the land.

Given the constraints of space, I can only indicate how widely this perspective is shared by reference to the umbrella organization that represents all of the major ecumenical organizations. It is called Kairos, which is Greek for "time" but of course, unlike *chronos*, refers to a single, significant moment in the present.[62]

Kairos and the Palestinian past

In many ways, Sabeel represents a broader trend within Christian communities around the world that has occurred in response to widespread economic change in the 1970s. As we will see in the next section, the emergence of the ecumenical movement was closely linked to Israel's embrace of neoliberalism, and the former's emphasis on the present is in many ways connected to that broader context. Before we turn to that context, however, it is important to point out how the Sabeel service departs from the Orthodox view of the Palestinian past that we have discussed up until this chapter.

In Chapter 1, we saw how Palestinian Orthodoxy draws together two lineages: that of the individual family – descended from Arabs and Greeks, Ottomans and Persians – and that of the Church. Over the centuries, Palestinians became a part of the Church's lineage, even representatives of it. I demonstrated three examples of these convergences, through the traditions of the Status Quo, lay-monastic property relations, and Palestinian engagements with the ordinary and extraordinary dead.

Following from these observations, I argued that descent is not only recorded in the blood or even written and oral genealogies, but also in the landscape and Palestinian domestic life. In fact, the land and practices associated with it help to reproduce the Palestinian Orthodox community as much as mothers and fathers or priests and monks do. Continuity is maintained and perpetuated in both time and space, history and genealogy, house and shrine.

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[62] Named after the South African Kairos Document (1985), it began with a document called "a moment of truth" pledging support for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Sabeel also presents a picture of continuity with the Palestinian past. This is not, however, the past of the Ottoman and Byzantine Empires, but the biblical past. The events of the Bible are treated as unrepeatable moments in time. As a result, the history of the Church after Christ is not treated, following the Orthodox tradition, as a mechanism for carrying forward the divine presence that emerged in the biblical period. The spirit of Christ is treated as timeless, a *kairos* capable of entering one's life at any moment regardless of the context. Church history is thus decentralized in favor of personal experience in the present.

History does not disappear, however, but it is naturalized, spatialized as part of the land. The Church and the Palestinians continued to exist in Palestine after Christ and while both changed over time, they remained linked to the land as its indigenous representatives. In an important sense, then, the Church and the Palestinian family alike became the customs and traditions that make up Palestinian culture. They matter as culture but are separated from the true spirit of Christianity, which is a link to the biblical past through the intervention of the Bible text on the one hand, and contemporary political experience on the other. Culture appears in both domains as blood in the veins, vital but embodied, and therefore invisible in religious discourse.

In the early chapters of the thesis I drew on Gillian Feeley-Harnik's work on totemism (2004) to suggest that Christianity, like filial descent, has suffered from too narrow a definition of continuity. Palestinian Orthodoxy draws on a range of descent idioms, but now with Sabeel it is possible to see how these have collapsed into one. The mediation of the Church has disappeared along with that of the family. Both remain part of social life but they have become ideologically dissociated from Christianity, which stands apart.

Consider the example of the olive tree: at the shrine of St. George, Palestinians donate olive oil from their groves before the feast. Priests and church trustees administer the oil to the bodies of Palestinians and pilgrims. It is also poured over George's tomb and then gathered up in bottles and administered inside the home to heal a wide variety of ailments, physical, psychological, and spiritual. After the liturgy, families use their olive

groves for picnics, inviting family, friends, and even monastics to join them for the feast. In a very real sense, the land – here indexed by the olive tree – is helping families and the Church to reproduce the Orthodox tradition and generations of Palestinians.

At Sabeel, the olive tree is an image and a symbol. At its offices, two olive branches are joined together in the shape of a cross and mounted next to the altar. At other organizations, it appears as a poster, painting, mural, or a wall of donors – each name depicted as a leaf. Often the roots are depicted as well, along with words like *thabaat*. Palestinian embroidery, ceramics, and glass are sold to support local industry but also to index the peasant life on the land, often with the use of trees: especially olive and cypress. Finally, the tree is a symbol of the occupation. One of the most famous photographs of modern Palestinian history shows a farmer hugging a tree as an Israeli tractor uproots it. Settlers are constantly setting fire to olive groves while the military confiscates land for future settlement.

Put simply, the ecumenical movement does not use the olive tree and its substances to reproduce the family or the church, but to point to something else. This is a larger political reality: the occupation, and Christ's resistance to it. This is accomplished through a process described by Talal Asad in an essay on the sacred:

> [Hugh St. Victor] proposes…: "A sacrament is a corporeal or material element [sounds, gestures, vestments, instruments] set before the senses without, representing by similitude and signifying by institution and containing by sanctification some invisible and spiritual grace." For example, the water of baptism represents the washing of impurities from the body, signifies it for the believer because of Christ's inaugurating practice, and conveys – by virtue of the words and actions of the officiating priest who performs the baptism – spiritual grace. The three functions are not self-evident but must be identified by those in authority… Thus according to Hugh, a sacrament…was a complex network of signifiers and signifieds." (Asad 2003: 34)

A sanctified object for Hugh is more than an object endowed with divine power for all people and in all circumstances equally. On the contrary, it requires the mediation of a priest, the bodily discipline of the parson performing or experiencing the ritual, and the

lexical power of the sign, which represents the invisible thing it will provide – as water does for purity.

For Asad, this contingent view of sacredness is replaced in the modern period with a more radical view. The sacred became "a universal quality hidden in things...a mysterious, mythic thing" the power of which could transcend the conditions of its creation (ibid: 33). It is this transcendent sense of the sacred, he argues, that allows the secular to emerge in European thought. The two concepts became inextricably tied, the one always defined in relation to the other.

We can see this tension between sacredness and secularity at work in the Sabeel communion. By stripping the Eucharistic ritual – as well as the sermon and the wave of prayer – of its church, and therefore its embeddedness in the disciplinary, lexical, and social contingencies of a denomination, Sabeel is able to establish a more general kind of symbol and a more diffuse kind of solidarity. This has powerful political implications, helping to create a Palestinian vision of Christianity that transcends Church boundaries and crystallizes the Gospel message as a resistance of injustice and occupation.

But there is an important qualification to make in applying Asad's work on medieval Europe to the Palestinian situation. The piece on Hugh St. Victor addressed the formation of the sacred and its correlate, the secular before the advent of political secularism. The latter led to a very specific deployment of the secular in the governance of nation states. In the contemporary context, these two points need to be understood together. Secularism is basically a process of separating the elements of modern life which we normally experience as being inextricably connected into distinct domains (Asad 2003: 5; also Yanagisako 2007, McKinnon & Cannell 2013: 3-38). Sabeel represents a particular reflection of that process, whereby the abstraction of the symbol – e.g. the olive tree or the Eucharist – feeds into a larger political framework that marks disciplinary, indexical, and material contingencies as outside the religious domain.

In the Eucharist example, Asad focuses on indexical and disciplinary factors and how they are routinely interpreted out of religious discourse and displaced onto medical or psychological ones (e.g. 1993: 27-55, 83-125; cf. Keane 2007: 1-37). To these I would

add ritual elements that originate in kinship relations and domestic life. The political value of a modern, Palestinian Christianity depends on it being experienced as universal, and thus traditions historically associated with the Orthodox Church are re-imagined as culture. The olive tree, though central in both contexts, now represents continuity of a very different kind.

The anthropology of Christian time: the expansive present

The ecumenical movement, as represented above by Sabeel, is characterized in part by its intervention into the Palestinian past. This intervention has a spatial or material aspect, in that the historical development of the Orthodox Church, the oldest and largest Palestinian Church for centuries, has been subsumed into the category of culture. But it also has an obvious temporal aspect in that it has led Palestinian Christians from a variety of Church backgrounds to emphasize the present moment, to see the value of Christianity in the way it brings Christ's lessons of justice and hope to bear on the circumstances of Israeli occupation today.

This second aspect speaks directly to anthropological discussions of Christian temporality. For me, one of the analytical values of focusing on time has been the establishment of clear links between religious experience and political economy without one domain being reduced into the other. This has been a priority for anthropologists of Christianity since the subfield came into its own in the early 2000s. We saw in the Introduction how the concept of Christian time has been complicated by the tendency among anthropologists towards continuity thinking, especially in postcolonial contexts. I suggested that this move created problems of its own, however, particularly in relation to kinship and descent. Here I will elaborate on these problems, asking what thinking about Christian difference in terms of time affords and what it occludes.

Recently, developing a line of thinking initiated by Jane Guyer, Joel Robbins,[63] and others, Naomi Haynes has argued that attention to Christian temporality is especially

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[63] See esp. Robbins 2018: no. 2.

useful in understanding how Christian experience resonates with the cultural forms of late capitalism (2020). Following Guyer, she describes neoliberalism in terms of a loss of focus on the near future that corresponds with policies of economic monetarism that lead governments to avoid short-term interventions in the market – e.g. through taxes, regulations, and subsidies. (Guyer 2007: 410-412). In other words, the disappearance of the state encourages individuals to think less about the immediate future.

This is precisely what Haynes found in her own fieldwork among Zambian Pentecostals. The retreat of the state led her interlocutors to feel pressure to wait for a better future, a change in the market that would lead to better living conditions. The Christian discourse of the prosperity gospel, however, encouraged them to reject the imperative to wait and focus on the present instead. For Haynes' interlocutors, figures from the Bible left their place in the past to become part of an "expansive present" (ibid). By inserting their own names in verses of scripture in place of the biblical prophets, the latter became "effectively re-incarnated in the present" (ibid: 60). One man called Calvin posted a verse on social media in which Isaac blesses his son, Jacob:

> "…he blessed him and said, 'Ah, the smell of my son (Calvin) is like the smell of a field the LORD has blessed'" (ibid: 59).

The effect of this substitution, Haynes argues, is to draw figures of the sacred past into the narrative of the present. Thus Calvin's use of the past is marked by its non-historical character: Jacob is not so much a historical person as a presence that can inhabit anyone at any time. Haynes argues that this spatialization of time sits uncomfortably with "one of capitalist time's core features": its ability to demand "a period of indefinite submission" in the near future for the sake of long-term prosperity (ibid: 64). Her interlocutors demand prosperity now and refuse to wait for a better future that may never come. This refusal, she argues, represents a Christian critique of capitalism. There is a clear ethnographic parallel with the Palestinian case.[64] Like Calvin, Palestinians at the Sabeel service are

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[64] See also Harding 1992, Palmié & Stewart 2019: 12.

encouraged to "re-incarnate" biblical figures in order to challenge the status quo and to act (now) in resistance of the occupation. And like the Zambian Christians more generally, the Palestinian critique emerged in direct relation to neoliberal capitalism.

Neoliberalism, occupation, and the Palestinian ecumenical movement

During the British Mandate, the Jewish proto-state called the Yishuv was closely connected to the flows of European capitalism but defined itself in terms of Zionism and socialism (Asad 1976, Cohen 1987). When the state was formed, the Labor party held power for over twenty years. It maintained high tariffs, strong regulations on trade, and focused on building its domestic economy, much of which was controlled by the state (Shafir & Peled 2002). Palestinian citizens in the new state were largely excluded from this economy, remaining under military rule until 1966.

In the 1970s, a series of major political and economic transformations took place. In 1973, Menachem Begin was elected Prime Minister and in 1977 his conservative Likud Party achieved a majority in parliament. Coming off the back of victories in both 1967 and 1973 wars against the Arab states, this change in government represented a sea change in Israeli economic and political ideology (Ravitzky 1996). Israel, which had become an export economy, shifted towards policies of liberalization: reducing tariffs, dismantling state-run services, and opening the economy to foreign investment – which came flooding in (Shafir & Peled 2002). As the Bank of Israel gained more autonomy in the 1980s, Israel pivoted to a fiscal policy dictated increasingly by monetarism (ibid: 240-243).[65] The ecumenical movement grew out of this environment, albeit indirectly.

Palestinians were generally united in their condemnation of Likud's political ideology, but their economic changes involved some ironic effects. One of these was the opening up of the Israeli economy to Palestinian labor, which had been previously excluded by the Labor-run unions (See Zreik 2011). When these institutions were

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[65] Israel also built economic ties with the U.S., e.g. with the American-Israeli Free Trade Agreement (1985), becoming the largest recipient of US foreign aid (over $3 billion annually) (CBO 2018).

dismantled in the 1970s-80s, Palestinians were recruited at lower than usual wages to cut costs (Tamari 1981). Moreover, as foreign investment increased, so did tourism and interest in the Palestinian NGO economy, both of which exploded in the 1980s-90s (Allen 2013, Hayat et. al. 2013, Maltz 2018). Palestinian NGOs have become arbiters of political and economic power in Palestinian society (and markers of class status for employees).

Ecumenism converged with these political and economic changes when the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) caused a significant shift towards a renewal of interest in inter-church collaboration. After 1967, many Western evangelicals interpreted Israel's annexation of the West Bank as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In response, Palestinian clergy and theologians took up the banner of ecumenism to build a coalition of Churches, organizations, and activists and articulate a cogent response to Jewish and Christian Zionist claims about the exclusively Jewish character of Israel (Raheb 2011). This process culminated with the Palestinian Intifada in 1987, which generated a new kind of Christian organization.

Sabeel was among half a dozen other ecumenical organizations that emerged during this period. As I mentioned above, they pitch their work in different directions but share the central message expressed in the Sabeel service: the idea of Jesus as a Palestinian under occupation, a theology of the Bible as a tool of liberation, and the aim of unifying Palestinian Christians across Church boundaries through an emphasis on a shared culture and history.

So Palestinian Christians are both employing the same idiom as Zambian Pentecostals and living under similar circumstances, at least from the perspective of monetary policy and neoliberal economics. But in Palestine/Israel, as in the Arab Middle East more broadly, the retreat of the state in economic matters was accompanied by increasing levels of state-led political activity. The most salient example was the growth of the Israeli settlement movement (Ravitzky 1996, Peri 2000). The movement illegally settled the mountaintops of Nablus, Hebron, and many other areas and was allowed to remain by successive Likud governments, which later spent millions developing infrastructure to "protect" the security of the settlers and incorporate them into the

transportation and commercial networks of Israel. The system of highways, apartment complexes, walls, fences, and military outposts were all incorporated into the Israeli economy, and in many ways facilitated its growth (Weizman 2007).

Thus while Israel became a paradigm case of neoliberalism, recognized today as a global leader in the tech industry and military exports, this process occurred alongside enormous increases in military and defense spending and the radicalization of the Israeli public. Political events such as the wars of 1967, 1973, and 1977 or the Intifadas of 1987 and 2001 were used by the government to justify not only its political control over the Palestinians, but also its economic policies. Economics, in other words, became a national security issue.[66]

As a result of the politicization of economic change, many of the effects of neoliberal economics play out in the political arena. In the Palestinian context, this means they are experienced an extension of the occupation. This is a hallmark of settler colonialism in many contexts but also of neoliberalism: not a retreat of the state, but a shift in state resources from social security to military security. And this shift is reflected in the experience of time.

The anthropology of Christian time: repetition and return

A Christian shop owner in the Old City named Fadi once told me that Israel is like an abusive father:

> "Every night, you know he will come home drunk and beat you. When he doesn't come, you become uneasy, because you know eventually he will return. Israel did this in 1948, he said, and then again in 1967 and '73 with the Arab-Israeli wars, then again with the 1977 invasion of Lebanon, and again with the First and Second Intifadas. Now [in 2018] we get Trump's embassy and the protests in Gaza".

Fadi also spoke of the media portrayal of protests, for example over Israel's decision to install metal detectors and cameras outside the Aqsa mosque. "They made it sound like

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[66] See Mitchell 1999: 32, 2002, Beinin 1999, Owen 1982.

there was blood in the streets! Where is this blood? Look! [points outside] There is nothing. And we're still going on." These protests went on for weeks, involved the police setting up checkpoints throughout the Old City, and often meant soldiers beating and shooting protestors. But it is true, the shops often remained open, and those outside the immediate vicinity of the mosque continued about their day.

This is not to say it has been business as usual. The shops remain open and locals continue to live their lives. But news of "blood in the streets" has its effect on tourism, which many of these shop owners depend on to survive. Memoirs of Jerusalem before 1967 indicate that the shops of the Christian Quarter mostly targeted a local market (esp. Tleel 2000). After the Six-Day War, Israel annexed the West Bank and the border between East and West Jerusalem was breached. Israeli Jews and, eventually, foreign tourists and pilgrims flooded into the city and began buying Palestinian products and services. This led to a shift in orientation: Palestinian businesses began to market their wares to tourists, which raised revenues until the flow of tourists stopped, as it often has in Jerusalem during periods of actual or perceived violence.

Fadi's shop is one of many that suffered from Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem and the protests and media attention that ensued. His is a successful shop in comparison to many others but when I stopped in one afternoon during the protests, it was empty. One person bought a ceramic bowl, he said. "I had the opportunity to live abroad, you know. My cousins live in Germany and I could have too. I spent one year there, but decided not to stay. This is my home." As such, he continued, though he knows his business will suffer because of the occupation, he will remain.

The point of recounting this stories is not to fill the "suffering slot" (Robbins 2013) by dwelling on the mal-effects of capitalism or occupation. It is rather to indicate how the temporality of monetary capitalism is related to that associated with the occupation. The temporal experience these shop owners express is cyclical and repetitive. "Israel did this in 1948" Fadi said, and again in '67, '73, and again today. He said he becomes anxious after a period of peace, waiting for the next conflict – or, as he put it, the next "beating."

This brings us to another intervention in the anthropology of Christian time by Andreas Bandak and Simon Coleman (2018). Like Haynes, they focus on Christian temporality in relation to broader social processes. But following Judith Butler, they argue that signification is itself only useful because it is repeated; the power to signify comes from the ability to repeat or re-iterate a word or phrase and thereby change its meaning in incremental ways (cf. Mahmood 2005). As such, they suggest that rather than emphasizing specific moments of rupture or presence, it may be more helpful to focus on how Christian temporality produces repeated moments, and thus a sense of repetition and return.

Bandak's essay on Syrian Armenian refugees in Beirut (2018) provides a good example of this approach. Like Palestinians with the 1948 war, Armenians remember with horror the genocide of 1915, which caused so many to flee to Syria and Lebanon (among other countries). And just as Fadi spoke about history in terms of a never-ending cycle of Israeli violence, Bandak's interlocutors see the war in Syria as a repetition of the genocide, albeit on a smaller scale. As one of them put it, "[The Armenians] came a hundred years ago barefooted, and will leave now barefooted":

> It was such a century! First camps, building a community, building a church…then the 30s came to replace the camps with buildings, 40s Aleppo is the center of Armenian new diaspora…prosperous 60s and 70s…stable 80s and 90s, and the golden years of the twenty-first century…Then comes the second decade, with all its terror…The history of a community in [a] rough 4-5 lines. What now? What next? (ibid: 9).

Throughout his fieldwork, Bandak encountered people telling him in anguish that "it is happening again" (ibid: 11). This experience is reflected in Armenian religious practice. Bandak describes a religious feast in which crowds of refugees from Aleppo watched as the Archbishop from Aleppo, who travelled to Lebanon for the occasion, celebrated the liturgy with them before returning himself back to Syria. In that moment, Bandak writes, "[the Archbishop] did not merely represent Aleppo and the resilience of the Armenian community…he was Aleppo" (ibid: 11). Unable to visit their homeland, the refugees

experienced the land and their own homes through the body of their priest who stayed behind. This experience appears closer to the Palestinian Orthodox of Part 1 than it does the ecumenical movement.

At the centennial march for the Armenian genocide in 2015, Bandak describes a memorial in which a transparent case was filled with the bones of the deceased. A caption (from Ezekiel) read: "these bones will live" (ibid: 16). Clearly, the ancient text speaks to both to the traumatic events of 1915 and the current moment, in line with Haynes, but they do so in the context of a saint's feast and formal liturgy – which is Orthodox (like most Armenians). Moreover, the text facilitates contact with human bodies – both dead and alive – which remain powerfully connected to the land. Thus the priest and the bones are not just carriers of divine presence but also the presence of the community back in Syria: a place from the past.

The Armenian sense of political history repeating itself is shared by Fadi and many other Palestinians for whom history is an eternal return of occupation and persecution. But what we have seen of Sabeel so far appears at odds with that view. It seems to be intervening in that cyclical temporality of state politics by isolating and "expanding" the present. As we saw earlier, the Sabeel service encourages participants to view the past in terms of the present, spatializing post-biblical history in symbolic terms detached from their context. But Sabeel, too, draws on themes of return.

Figures of return in the Contemporary Way of the Cross

In addition to the Thursday communion, Sabeel runs another program called the Contemporary Way of the Cross (CWOTC) both for the local laity and international visitors. It basically involves re-creating the stations of the cross (*via dolorosa*), which record Jesus' forced march from the Old City to Calvary, the hill on which he was crucified. Noting the centrality of the way of the cross for pilgrims, Sabeel developed a contemporary version that links each traditional station to an aspect of Palestinian experience since 1948. In doing so, the staff hoped they would encourage pilgrims and Palestinians alike to reflect

not only on the 'dead' stones of Christian history, but the living ones too, the Palestinians themselves and their history. Thus the first traditional station, "Jesus is condemned to die," corresponds with the Nakba (or catastrophe) of 1948, while the third station, "Jesus falls for the first time," is linked to the 1967 war, and so on.

In each case, the liturgy is composed of an opening meditation on the parallel between the traditional and contemporary stations, a passage from scripture, and personal testimony or prose poetry from Palestinians. The program usually involves visiting only one or two stations at a time (rather than all fourteen) as they involve travelling to specific sites around the country. If it's the station on the Separation Wall, they might go to Bethlehem next to the wall; if it's refugees, they might go to *al-ʿAroub* refugee camp in Hebron. I attended one on the Nakba in Lifta, for example, a depopulated village in the Jerusalem area built into the walls of a steep valley. Visitors took turns reading the passages while the others listened, peering down over the cliffside at a cluster of small homes, smashed but still standing.

Every element of the liturgy builds a parallel between the path of Jesus and the path of Palestinians, often by employing the language of repetition and return. "Just as Jesus was condemned to die, so the actions of 1948 passed a death sentence on more than 400 historic Palestinian villages that were completely destroyed" (Sabeel 2005: 6). Below is the poem for the Nakba station, called "Death sentence":

> At night, orders came to the soldiers
> to destroy our lovely village, Zeita.
> Zeita! Bride of trees,
> of blooming tulips,
> spark of the winds!
>
> The soldiers came in the dark
> while the sons of the village
> the trees and fields and flowerbuds
> clung to Zeita
> hugging her for shelter…
>
> "Orders demand that all of you depart
> Zeita will be destroyed before the night ends"

But we held tight, chanting:
Zeita is the land, the heart of the land,
And we her people are its branches.

That's how people fall—
A few moments of resistance,
so Zeita remains an eternal embrace across the nights
In moments she was rubble,
not a single bread oven remained.
Men and stones
were pasted and powdered by enemy tractors,
scattered forever in the light of the impossible.

Now in the evenings
In the song of our wind,
Zeita arises, igniting its scarlet spark
Upon the plains
And by morning
Zeita returns to the fields
As tulips do.

Night is morning in Zeita,
Night is morning.[67]

Here we can clearly see how the event, the Nakba, is juxtaposed with images of Palestinians and nature: "bride of trees", "her people are its branches", "Men and stones…scattered". In the same manner, references to individual events or "moments" are juxtaposed with images of repetition and return, as one stanza describing "moments of resistance" is followed by the image of repeated mornings and evenings, with Zeita rising each night. This shift culminates with the prayer that follows Hijjawi's poem: "Although the dark night of oppression has been long, the dawn of justice will soon shine" (Sabeel 2005: 7). The village context is replaced with the figure of the dawn.

Another testimony from a station called "bureaucratic oppression" elicits the same tension. In it, a man recounts how his family's land was confiscated to make way for the Separation Barrier.

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[67] Sulafa Hijjawi in Sabeel 2005: 7

I fear that my children may face the same situation as adults that we do now (of continually losing land). Had you asked my father what he expected regarding my future, he would have replied similarly. Since land was taken from people in 1948, it has been the same thing. (Saleh Qademi in ibid: 25, parenthesis in original).

As in the poem, Qademi's testimony is full of references to his family life before they lost their land. He describes being the eighth of ten children, his wedding ceremony, and finally his fears for his own children. These generational experiences are highlighted in the CWOTC program but framed not in terms of one generation's experience in relation to another, but in terms of bureaucratic oppression, past and present: Jesus before Pilate and Palestinians before the Ministry of Interior.

As the Bible study did, the CWOTC liturgy uses the imagery of Palestinians in the land to elicit the Palestinian connection to Christ and to overcome the temporal distance between the two occupations. What becomes more visible here, however, is the extent to which it is the family and the experience of generations that informs the program's temporality. Qademi's father experienced the war, he the Wall, and now he anticipates a new injustice for his children. But the CWOTC program does not remark upon this aspect of his text. Instead, the program draws out the comparison between the testimonies of the present and the Biblical passages from the past. Each contemporary station is "filled" with biblical resonance so that 1948 and 1967, or father and son, do not refer to one another in either chronological or filial terms. Rather, they appear as contemporaneous moments that Palestinians experience in the present, all of which refer back to the biblical original.

The affective power of the testimonies comes from each participant identifying with the sense that lives are being disrupted by the occupation, and this power is enhanced by physical presence at the site. An empty, broken village on the cliffside evokes a life: a place, a people, and a history disappearing into the landscape. But in the process of making all Palestinian experience a reflection of the biblical one, one loses the sense that this life is not merely a Palestinian collectivity but individual families for whom

continuity is measured in generations. The lack of context helps to produce the temporality of repetition.

In the testimonies themselves, repetition appears in genealogical and geological terms. In the chapter's epigraph, taken from another CWOTC testimony, describes a grandfather as tree, a granddaughter as a bird; "the person who doesn't have land is not a human being," the grandfather said (Sabeel 2005: 9). In the poem we see a village of "men and stones" rising with the sun. In those examples, the people and substances of the family have a history of their own. In the Sabeel program, this element does not disappear but it is transformed: it has become a universal symbol (in Asad's terms) of the life that was lost. In the process, descent, land, and family life became an index of that which does not change, which persists and remains.

Crossing domains: between temporality and kinship

Fr. Ateek's theology does not mention kinship, descent, or any of the kinds of ritual transmission we saw among the Orthodox in Part 1. On the contrary, during my fieldwork he sometimes spoke of Sabeel's approach in terms of a "universal" theology, to which he opposed "tribal" or "exclusive" theologies.[68] "In the Middle East," he writes, "theologies tend to be imprisoned within liturgies, rites, and ceremonies" (2008: 12). These theologies are "stagnant" and "dormant" and in need of liberation (ibid: 13).

In the context of the chapter, such language is significant because it links Church traditions associated with specific places, languages, and histories with Palestinian heritage: the original Arab tribes that became Christian in the Early Church (Ateek 1989). Ateek adopts this heritage, and even asserts his own family claim as one of the original families of Nablus, but separates it from his theology – which, if linked to descent, appears stagnant.

But while Sabeel's discourse focuses on justice and the Bible, programs like the CWOTC reveal another, less explicit side of its work. In addition to instilling a sense of

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[68] Including Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. See Ateek 1989, 2008, 2017.

political urgency in its participants, it also re-incarnates the individual and collective lives that were lost in the war. It keeps Zeita alive so that its residents can one day return.

I found small glimpses of this other aspect throughout my time with Sabeel. I remember the office, built as a house, and the meals we shared after the Thursday service. The birthday celebrations and special meals after a child's baptism. The volunteers would come from abroad to work for a few months, but some keep coming back even decades later. One such volunteer told me that she now feels at home in Jerusalem and like a visitor in the US. A widow with adult children, she said most of the people she cares for today are in Palestine/Israel.

Similar sentiments arose among Palestinians. A Palestinian staff member once joked that the Sabeel youth program was "really just a dating service" for Christians. He quickly became serious and said that this is not such a bad thing. The Christian population is tiny and many people are emigrating, but their Churches only provide clubs and activities for their own members. As a result, while Sabeel's youth program is designed to educate and activate young people, it also affords them with a chance to socialize. And apparently they do: between the time I left Jerusalem as an Arabic student in 2010 and the time I returned for fieldwork in 2016, half a dozen Palestinians I knew had married people they met through the organization.

So Sabeel is more than just a theological center. A part of its work is to rebuild Palestinian society, starting with Palestinian Christians. I do not think anyone working there would disagree, but the more domestic side of its work is always muted and never featured in official publications or the theology. For me, that is because the problem lies not with Sabeel or the ecumenical movement but with the secular frame.

Like Fr. Ateek, many anthropological accounts of Christianity separate Christianity from "the tribal". This leads me to wonder if understanding Palestinian Christian temporality is not a question of two poles, the expansive present on one end and repetition or return on the other, but a question of categories. As Feeley-Harnik has argued, the sense of temporal rupture and change often depends on the prior separation of politics from kinship (2019; also Trautmann, Feeley-Harnik, & Mitani 2011). Men are

associated with politics and temporal change and women with natural reproduction, the element of social life that reproduces itself without changing (2019: 70). We can see the same process occurring here: the ecumenical movement does not control the experiences of Palestinian Christians or restrict them from maintaining strong relationships of descent. Nevertheless, it places a frame over those experiences that characterizes some of them as political and some as familial and natural.

At Sabeel, this frame has a clear political value. The state defines the land as the ancestral homeland of Jews, so Palestinian Christians and Muslims are forced to publicly demonstrate their own historical and cultural links to the land. Sabeel does so in a way that powerfully combines claims of indigeneity with a structural critique of occupation rooted in a religious history that Christians and Jews share (e.g., Roman persecution). This strategy works in part because its emphasis on the present provides an alternative to both the neoliberal moment, which asks Palestinians to wait for a better future, and the repetitive cycles of state violence. In anthropology, however, the value of making the same connection may be very different.

Birgit Meyer once pointed out that the Christian imperative to make a "'complete break with the past' often boils down to a break with one's family" (Meyer 1998: 329; also in Engelke 2004: 98). The family *is* the past, and modern Christianity is the present. The idea of Christian temporality is thus extremely closely tied to the subordination of kinship as a social category, which is a product of secularism and modernity.

It seems that the extent to which certain temporalities register as Christian or not depends on our willingness to separate religion from the rest of social life. I argued with Stewart in Chapter 1 that the great and little traditions of Orthodoxy are not mutually opposed but rather aspects of the same tradition expressed through different people, histories, and media. Here as well, while I support the anthropology of Christianity's stated goal of highlighting how Christian forms inspire cultural change, that goal should not come at the expense of effacing domestic life, spatial relationships, and competing temporalities. They are intrinsically linked. Instead, we might pay closer attention to how

Christian communities incorporate seemingly "non-religious" temporalities into their more explicit concepts, theologies, and ritual practices.

Conclusion: Christianity and the saeculum

Scholars of Christianity often comment on the fact that the secular was originally a term associated with time (e.g. Taylor 2007: 55-56). The Latin *saeculum* referred to the current age, this human world, which was opposed to the Church and the divine. Sacred time pertained to a distant past and a promised future but it could be glimpsed, e.g. in the context of the Eucharist.

Perhaps less known is that this Latin term also referred to a "generation", "race", or "breed" (Glare 2016: 1848). In fact, many of the definitions for *saeculum* do not refer to a general sense of time evoked in the English "age" or the French "siècle", but rather to the succession of generations and the lifespan of human families.[69] This meaning appears to have been lost in contemporary studies of secularism but it affords an interesting interpretation of the problem at hand. Anthropologists of religion often address the secular in temporal terms, arguing that we do not live in a disenchanted age after all.[70] But perhaps we could extend the discussion to include a response to the disappearance of descent. Perhaps we could respond that we have not in fact separated ourselves from "the tribal" after all, either.

The anthropological discussion on Christian time has been extremely fruitful, especially in establishing links to political economy without reducing religious experience to economic and political forces. Nevertheless, I suggest that greater attention needs to be paid to how temporalities not obviously marked as "Christian" continue to animate much of contemporary Christian discourse. Not doing so leads the study of Christianity to accept secular categories at face value and thereby distort how the religion is actually practiced and experienced cross-culturally. Thus while the expansive present and the

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[69] See Glare 2016: 1848, transl. in Lucretius 1921: 2.995.
[70] E.g. Lara Deeb's *An Enchanted Modern* (2006). Also Mahmood 2005, Starrett 1998, Harding 2000.

ritual return are both registers Palestinians use and which speak to their experiences, I have argued that the significant factor in this case is how a Christian temporality is formed out of the separation of religion and kinship. Furthermore, I suggest that the study of Christian time could benefit from paying closer attention to how figures of descent re-emerge inside such registers, often in unmarked but significant and unexpected ways.

This chapter has argued that Israeli neoliberalism has not primarily affected how Palestinian Christians viewed the state – for this was always mediated through the politics of occupation – but how they viewed Christianity. Foreign money did not necessarily mean better labor conditions, but it did change the source and language of Christian authority. Now, more than ever, the Protestant emphasis on the Bible is the language of justice.

The way that language materialized in the ecumenical movement, however, was contingent on the fact that most Palestinian Christians are Orthodox (or Catholic). The temporal register, be it a repetitive past or an expansive present, provides a means through which the experience of Orthodox descent can be incorporated into the ecumenical movement without marking it as Christian. Saint shrines, liturgical tradition, ritual substances; all are still powerful elements of social life, but they are now framed as a distinct domain. This process is intrinsic to the operation of secularism, and neoliberalism, in this instance, provided it with a new form: the ecumenical NGO. In that form, repetition became the temporal consequence of secularizing descent.

Chapter 6

Conversion as affinity: evangelicalism in Jerusalem

During my fieldwork I often visited with an Orthodox woman in her sixties called Yvette whose nephew, Ra'id, had converted to an evangelical church. Sometimes he would pass by when I was present and chat about religion. Other times we could hear him passing in the street, whistling and singing church hymns on his way home.

Ra'id's relationship with his aunt was cordial but awkward. He would often attempt to evangelize her, raising thorny theological questions and criticizing the Orthodox. You should visit my church, he would suggest. But she would only roll her eyes: "I live next to the tomb of Christ and I'm going to pray in some house?"

To Yvette, theological differences were less important than her nephew's behavior, which she felt changed after his conversion. When I asked how, she couldn't put her finger on it, but their encounters provided some indication. One day, for example, Ra'id brought her groceries from the market. He knocked on the screen door:

> "Yvette!! Open the door!"
> "…Who is it?"
> "Open the door!"
> "Oh," she said, observing him through the screen. "What do you have with you?"
> "Carrots." She unlatched the door and he brushed past her into the kitchen.

She watched as he set the bag down. They exchanged greetings: "How are you? Praise God. You? Thank the Lord."[71] And with that, he started out; he had to get back to work. "Do you need anything?" "Just your peace." As she closed the door he turned around, already halfway down the steps. He called out:

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[71] Orthodox Christians, like Muslims, generally use the former (*hamd'illah*) while evangelicals use the latter (*nushkur al-rab*) to distinguish 'believers' from 'nominal' Christians.

"Yvette! I love you" [in English]
"What?" [Arabic] She returned to the screen.
"I..love..you" [English]
"...Okay,"[Arabic] she said, turning back inside. He left.

Mostly this was an ordinary encounter but Ra'id's impromptu "I love you" appeared out of place. They do not speak this way to one another and the fact that he said it in English only highlighted the miss. Yvette said that this love-talk was something he picked up "over there", at his church in the Quarter. And indeed, as I came to find out, this phrase is central to the wider ethos of the evangelical movement, which emphasizes the transformative and transgressive power of religious love. For among evangelicals, love is not just a feeling. It is also a powerful vehicle for a unique form of religious and social change.

One of the first evangelical leaders I met was Yohanna Katanacho, a prominent Palestinian evangelical pastor and theologian. It was 2013 and I had been in Bethlehem conducting interviews for my Masters thesis. I ended up staying too late and the buses stopped running. I had to spend the night in town, so I found a small hostel run by a middle-aged couple, essentially a family home with rooms for rent. When I arrived, I noticed a Bible in the room, which was unusual even for Christian families. Then the next morning, when I was getting ready to leave, my host asked me where I was heading.

"Bethlehem Bible College", I told her. "Do you know it?"
"Yes! We are born again! Who are you meeting there?"
"Yohanna Katanacho"
"Yohanna!" I know him since he was this tall, five years old. He is a good man."

As it turns out, she volunteers every week for an evangelical church and holds worship meetings in her basement. Eager to help me, she called her son and asked him to deliver me.

When I interviewed "Yohanna", he was working as the academic dean for the Bible College. We met at the College, a large complex with an office building, a hostel and gift shop, and a new academic building. I had seen him at Sabeel events in the past, and found

his criticisms of both traditional and ecumenical Christianity perplexing. He openly condemned the occupation, which some evangelicals avoid doing, but he also vehemently criticized his Palestinian colleagues for privileging politics over the Bible. So, once in his office, I asked him what was distinct about his philosophy. "I will answer your question with a story," he said:

> I was invited to go to a conference in Sweden with several Israeli Jewish colleagues. During the conference one speaker after the other went up and talked about the terrible Palestinians, how awful and unwilling to compromise they are. I waited for a long time and then finally I raised my hand and stood up and said, "I am a Palestinian and a Christian and I love you." And I sat down. And they were shocked.

He went on to say that evangelicals subscribe to an ethics of love that the Orthodox and other traditional Churches do not. Evangelicals confront every problem with the love that appears in the Bible. "Love for Jesus is my spiritual bank account", he said, the measure by which everything in this world must be weighed.

Between genetic descent and religious affinity

Though my fieldwork was focused on the Orthodox Church, the evangelical presence in the Old City was impossible to miss. At first, I made little effort to meet evangelicals. I was already getting drawn into the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox communities and was worried about spreading myself too thin. Nevertheless, evangelicals kept entering my field of vision, becoming relevant to themes, people, and social situations I was already engaging. I found myself needing to learn more about them.

What I found surprised me. The literature on evangelical Christianity, though vast and varied, tends not to emphasize continuity with the past, and certainly not a continuity based on decent from ancestral saints. Ironically, this is what many Palestinian evangelicals wanted to talk about. But their views on descent were very different from those I had become accustomed to hearing among the Orthodox, and they were paired

with a parallel discourse on love. This discourse initially appeared completely opposed to the first: love-talk places all the emphasis on the present. It foregrounds a personal relationship to Christ, the power of which is unencumbered by the history and authority of any Church. One does not need a saint or an index of an ancient miracle to speak to Christ, only oneself. This discourse pitches faith against family, divine love against romantic love. This is not to say evangelicals are opposed to family or romance, but that love for Jesus produces and transforms the love of others. I have no doubt that Ra'id loves his aunt, but his declaration expressed more than kinship. He wanted to change Yvette, to bring her close to him by bringing her close to Christ.

This thesis began with the idea that many Orthodox Christians describe their relationship to the tradition and the land of Palestine/Israel in genealogical terms. As a result of Ottoman and British legal reforms, economic and political changes, and the calamity of the Nakba, the Church and Palestinian society changed in dramatic ways. But these changes occurred within a discursive framework that identifies divine presence with historical continuity and the transmission of Orthodoxy across generations. This is the essence of Orthodox descent: not only a way of organizing of kinship relations, but also a way of imagining them in relation to the Church. As I have shown, this can take a number of different forms, from waqf property and the veneration of saint shrines to Church law and family genealogies.

This chapter suggests that Palestinian evangelical conversion might be productively viewed as a way of transposing the substance of Christian belonging from descent into affinity. I use the term loosely, to include formal marriage but also broader idioms of alliance and love. As I argued in the Introduction, affinity does not include feelings of 'closeness' or 'relatedness' that the colloquial meaning of the term implies, but rather the element of transformation, the shift from one social position to another. This could be a move from one's natal family to a family in-law, certainly, but also from one Church 'family' to another.

The shift from descent to affinity matters for the purposes of this thesis for two reasons. On one hand, as I trace the influence of Orthodoxy in the Palestinian Christian

community, evangelicals represent a break with the Orthodox view of history. And because evangelical influence is not primarily expressed through churches and worship but through NGOs and educational institutions, its historical discourse is public in a manner far exceeding that of every other Christian tradition (cf. Engelke 2012a: 156).

This brings us to the second reason: the Palestinian evangelical movement helps to explain how religious change occurs in Jerusalem. This speaks both to the literature on Christian conversion and discontinuity in Christian discussed in the previous chapter but also to the political context of Palestine/Israel, upon which I focus here. In particular, the chapter suggests this change is connected to a broader discourse propagated by the Israeli state about the relationship between ancestry and religion.

Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, but since the 1990s it has done so in a very specific way.[72] Since the state was established, it has encouraged Jewish immigration from around the world through the Right of Return, a law that grants all Jews (defined within specific parameters) a claim to Israeli citizenship. As immigrants came flooding in, however, a stark separation appeared between the Ashkenazi, or European-affiliated population, and the Jews who migrated from Arab and African countries. The latter have been discriminated against for decades (Shohat 1988, Dahan-Kalev 2001).

The diversity of Israeli Jewish society and the existence of Jews who appeared to be in some ways culturally closer to Arabs than to the Ashkenazi appeared as a problem to the state. As Nadia Abu El-Haj has argued, state officials wanted to demonstrate that, on the one hand, Ashkenazi Jews were in fact "*of* the Middle East" rather than Europe, and on the other hand that Mizrahi Jews were not Arabs but had in fact always remained distinct from Arab peoples and unified with world Jewry (2012: 17-18, emphasis in original). In the 1990s, genetic ancestry testing provided a pathway for doing just that.

In *The genealogical science* (2012), Abu El-Haj shows how genetic scientists were able to use Y-chromosome and mitochondrial DNA tests to identify members of the Cohanim, the Jewish priestly class, and thereby provide a biological basis for the state's

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[72] The term "Jewish and democratic state" only appeared in Israel's Basic Laws in 1992/1994 (Zreik 2011: 32).

claim that all Jewish people are descendants of the original inhabitants of Israel (ibid: 2). In the process, Abu El-Haj argues, the idea of Jewish DNA came to conflate genetic descent with religious identity in a unique way.

Genetically speaking, the "truth" of one's identity was located in the body, i.e. in one's genes. But genetic continuity is also based on the collective religious and social rules of Jewish society (2012: 23-24). The impetus to continue practicing endogamous marriage came from the religious tradition, which kept the Jewish community together and distinguished it from non-Jewish others (ibid). Conflating these two processes, the biological and the religious, also means that those who never get their DNA tested or have no genetic link to the Cohanim can still be brought into the community by adopting its rituals and customs.[73] But for our purposes, the key point is that biology and religion are understood as mutually re-enforcing. Religious practices are evidence of one's DNA, and DNA is evidence that one's ancestors practiced the religion.

Keeping in mind that Palestinian evangelicalism started to gain a public profile in the 2000s, when the discourse of genetic Jewishness had become widespread, I want to suggest that we view the evangelical emphasis on love and affinity in relation to wider discourses on DNA and ancestry. Doing so will highlight something important about the evangelical break with Orthodoxy: as a religious idiom, descent has been replaced by affinity. But continuity does not disappear. It is displaced: onto biology, ethnicity, and race.

As we saw with Ra'id and Katanacho, a new register of love and immediacy has emerged as the dominant theme in evangelical Christianity and it is framed against Orthodox ideas of ritual, space, and history. As I mentioned above, however, a parallel register has also emerged. In that register, evangelicals speak of belonging to the seed of Abraham, of the presence of Arabs in his lineage, and of the unique position of Arab Christians in *Jewish* genealogical history.

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[73] Jewish converts receive "a new ancestral lineage, binding him or her to the Jewish people...as a common descent group" (Leite 2017: 247).

The second register is important because it defines the belonging of both Jews and non-Jews to Israel/Palestine in ethnic rather than religious terms, which opens the door to a new notion of faith and conversion. The Bible is treated as a genealogy. It records the marriages of Old Testament prophets and kings and thus provides evidence that the Abrahamic religions are in fact not religions but lineages, markers of an ancient heritage. Descent is thus treated as nature, that which reproduces itself over time without change. Affinity, by contrast, represents change. Framed this way, evangelicalism appears distinct from heritages from the past. It is a faith that can apply equally to any ethnic identity. One can be Jewish, Muslim, or Orthodox, and also a believer, a "lover" of Christ.

In what follows I examine these two themes together, demonstrating how evangelical love-talk is framed around concepts of identity based on Old Testament lineages and modern notions of biology and ancestry. The chapter begins by introducing the evangelical community in relation to the broader Christian population. It then provides further ethnography of evangelical love-talk and concludes with a discussion of evangelical views on descent and their relationship to genetics and Judaism.

Palestinian evangelicals and the critique of social justice

In 2018, Katanacho wrote a review of a recent book published by Sabeel's founder, Naim Ateek (2017), in an evangelical blog. After praising Ateek's dedication to peace and justice, he levelled a charge at Ateek and, by extension, the ecumenical movement. The problem, as Katanacho sees it, is that the ecumenical movement puts nationalism above scripture. While Ateek "rightly points out the injustices done against Palestinians and the importance of seeking justice by confronting the… structures of oppression", he could not agree with Ateek's view of the Old Testament (Katanacho 2018).

Certain passages in the Old Testament are notoriously violent, for example the Book of Joshua, in which the Israelites "destroyed with the sword every living thing in [Jericho] – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys" (NIV 6:21). Ateek

responds to such passages with the argument that such passages are not "morally edifying":

> [T]hey do not contain a word from God to us. Rather, they reflect…the prejudice, bigotry, and racism of tribal societies…They must be rejected" (in Katanacho 2018).

Like other evangelicals, Katanacho maintains that the Bible must be taken as a whole or not at all; that while violent passages may be read allegorically or in context, they cannot be dismissed as they represent "the word of God" (ibid). More generally, Katanacho views Palestinian liberation theology as privileging a secular notion of social justice above the divine presence. His theology, by contrast, recognizes the primacy of the text. "We have lost our land because of Zionism," he wrote, "and now Ateek wants us to lose our Bibles in the name of de-Zionizing it" (ibid).

The previous chapter described the emergence of the ecumenical movement in the 1980s and the way it shifted focus away from church institutions in favor of the Bible text to develop a Palestinian liberation theology. Organizations like Sabeel describe Jesus as a Palestinian living under Roman occupation to empower contemporary Palestinians to read the Bible through the lens of their own occupation experiences. They continue to speak in terms of descent, but it is a descent measured in land, material culture, and a shared substance with Jesus. The mediating element is thus not the objects, saints, and Church practices of the past but elements of contemporary culture that never changed.

The ecumenical organizations are still very much a part of Palestinian Christian society today, but in the early 2000s, a community of evangelicals emerged among Palestinians that had grown up in Orthodox and Catholic families, converted, and become pastors and youth activists after the First Intifada. Importantly, rising levels of activism during this period did not correspond with rising levels of membership in evangelical churches. Evangelical parishes are generally small. Their churches are sometimes built for purpose but can also be former houses, hostels, or shopfronts. There is no centralized hierarchy in most denominations and the style of worship is distinct from other Christian

traditions, including mainline forms of Protestantism.[74] Part of this is contextual: during fieldwork I was invited to Bible studies in people's homes, formal Sunday services, informal discussion groups for young people, one-on-one meetings with a pastor, deacon, or activist, and online debate platforms. Interlocutors spoke about worship in an expansive way, including any time they prayed, felt the spirit, or "met Jesus". This could be an experience that occurred while walking in the street or a dream. The divine can enter one's life at any time or place.

Formal worship services are also less liturgical than in the traditional Churches. Usually parishioners are seated with a pastor and different kinds of volunteers or assistants, one of whom may be the pastor's wife, at the front. A screen is often projected against the wall to indicate the lyrics of songs, passages from scripture, and relevant videos or photos. Unlike the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, a variety of musical instruments and styles are used: keyboard, guitar, recorded melodies, drums. The pastor leads the service but he rotates various other people to the podium or stage as well. Repetition and formal ritual are avoided, along with ritual substances like incense, candles, and icons. The highlight of the service is not the Eucharist, which many evangelical churches do not perform regularly (or at all). It is the sermon, which is much longer than at Orthodox services and delivered in a more personal and vernacular style. Without a strict order of events, the service thus does not "build" towards ritual high point but rather alternates between moments of excitement and quiet reflection.

Residents of the Christian Quarter have mixed feelings about all of this. On the one hand, as we will see in the next chapter, residents respect evangelicals for their strong faith and their youth work. On the other hand, they are mostly critical of evangelical styles of worship. Many of my Orthodox and Catholic interlocutors call evangelicals "the hallelujahs" and make fun of how they raise their hands and heads in worship. But unease with evangelicalism runs deeper than this. Many are profoundly uncomfortable with the

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[74] Local deployment of the Arabic term "Protestant" is generally reserved for evangelicals, regardless of denomination, whereas Anglicans and Lutherans are referred to by denomination considered to be "traditional Churches".

way evangelical services treat Israel on the one hand and Muslims on the other. This is apparent in their services, where references to ancient Israel the Jewish elect are much more common than in any other Palestinian tradition. The same services also address the importance of evangelizing Muslims, which most Palestinian Christians find politically intolerable.

Evangelicalism is thus tainted in the eyes of many Palestinian Christians for the way its religious emphasis on spreading the Word converges with the realities of occupation. This convergence is compounded by the influence of foreign evangelicals. All Palestinian Churches are connected to international networks of authority and funding but for the traditional Churches, those are often critical or at least ambivalent about Israeli occupation. For evangelicals, the amount of funding is far greater, and the politics more closely aligned with the Israeli state.

For two centuries, Protestant missionaries struggled in vain to win converts from Islam, Judaism, and the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.[75] Today, Palestinian Christians continue to resist formal conversion to evangelicalism. In recent decades, however, evangelical influence has grown through the establishment of NGOs. Even more than ecumenical organizations, evangelicals benefited from Israel's economic transformations in the 1980s and the increasing links with western Christians that came along with them. With the advent of the Christian NGO, it became possible for evangelicals to reach Palestinians uninterested in conversion by offering educational and political programs to Christians of any background. But influence came at a price, and support from abroad affected evangelical theology and politics in important ways.

In the 1990s, Palestinian evangelicals educated in the UK and the US began to develop a new approach to Palestinian Christianity. At first, some of their writings and programs looked a lot like the ecumenical movement, only couched within a more charismatic style. Even today, there are a number of people, Palestinians and western

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[75] See van der Leest 2008, Kark 2004, Frantzman et. al. 2011, Richter 1910, Rubeiz 2020. Compare with the Catholic mission in Maggiolini 2013, Colak 2013, Kildani 2010.

volunteers and supporters, who move easily from the one movement to the other. But more recently this has started to change.

One of the signs that the evangelical presence was growing came from the emergence of the Bethlehem Bible College's annual conference, "Christ at the Checkpoint" in 2010. As Lena Rose has shown, the conference provides a forum for Palestinian evangelicals to articulate a response to the widespread support that evangelicals worldwide express for the State of Israel (Rose 2020). This support, as the conference organizers and speakers often point out, is generally expressed through the theology of the Abrahamic covenant. Many schools of thought exist on the covenant, but there seems to be at least some level of consensus among western evangelicals the modern state of Israel is fulfilling the biblical covenant – in which God promises the land of Israel (*Ha'aretz*) to Abraham and his descendants (Katanacho 2005). They thus argue that Israel deserves ownership over the land of their ancestors at the expense of Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians (ibid., cf. Engberg 2019).

The evangelical response to this position has been different from that of the traditional Churches and mainstream ecumenical organizations (whose supporters tend to oppose the occupation). Whereas Christians like Ateek dismiss modern covenantal claims as bogus, racist, and anachronistic, Palestinian evangelicals often feel they need to engage them more directly. Some agree with them.

Powerful Christian Zionist organizations like the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem condemn the ecumenical movement as "replacement theology", for seeing the Gospel as replacing or superseding the Old Testament.[76] As a result, "Christ at the Checkpoint" and Palestinian evangelicals generally seek to make a new kind of intervention by engaging the covenant and the Old Testament in the language Christian Zionists themselves use. In doing so, they receive much more international publicity than any Sabeel conference does (Morgan 2014, Bailey 2014, Parsons 2012). Palestinian evangelicals now have a voice that reaches politically conservative audiences abroad, but

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[76] An ICEJ statement on its "core beliefs" calls out Ateek on the same point Katanacho does (Hedding ND).

obtaining it has meant taking up theological positions that are deeply unsettling to other Palestinians.

We will return to this political context later in the chapter, but now turn to the content and context of the evangelical intervention. As I described in the chapter's introduction, it has two parts: a discourse of religious love-talk and a discourse of ethnicity and the Abrahamic lineage. We begin with the former, looking at an example of one Palestinian's conversion and how that conversion transformed his views on love and kinship.

Conversion, marriage, and kinship

At the start of the chapter, Rai'd asked his aunt Yvette to join his church and become a believer, only to be rebuffed. Yvette, an Orthodox Christian, said "I live next to the tomb of Christ and I'm going to pray in some house?" She was referring to the Alliance Church in the Christian Quarter, which is located in a house leased from an elderly Orthodox couple, who for years kept the upper floors for their family and allowed the Alliance pastor to use the ground floor. After the couple passed away, the church took over the upper floors as well. One member of the Church is Salim, an Old City resident from a large Orthodox family that runs a small business in the neighborhood.

Salim had a relatively typical conversion experience for the area: after years of struggling with "moral problems" and life in the Old City, he was walking out of the Holy Sepulcher Church – for evangelicals, a symbol of moral corruption – when he felt drawn to the sounds of Protestant hymns nearby. Wandering over, he heard a pastor speaking about a personal relationship to God, which made him curious.

> I started wanting to know more. I went to a Bible study group and I discovered that the Bible tells us a lot of things we don't know…[Previously] I thought, faith in Christ I take it from my father and mother. If my father is Christian, *khalas*, I'm a Christian [too]. I discovered that [this isn't true]… every person has the responsibility to request Christ to be in his life. I requested Christ, began my life in

personal faith…and I started speaking to others on the importance of a personal relationship with the lord, because we cannot inherit it.

Evangelicals around the world speak as Salim does about the need to testify, about maintaining a personal relationship to God; but here Salim situates true faith in Old City society specifically in opposition to descent, against thinking of Christianity as something one "inherits."

And in his case, the challenges of conversion were definitively framed in these terms. When he first converted, he caused a major split in his family. His uncles and cousins threatened to take his children to the Orthodox Church and baptize them while he was at work. For them, conversion was not about him as an individual but the family as a whole. This is because evangelical or not, his children will follow his own Church affiliation rather than that of his agnates. Thus it was not him they threatened to force back to Orthodoxy, but his children.

As we saw in the first part of the thesis, leaving the Orthodox Church is complicated by the fact that it is not only a 'religious' institution. Rather it is also legally, historically, and socially tied to the organization and life of the family. Thus baptism is not just a symbol of belonging, of an implicit affinity between members of the same faith. On the contrary, as Orthodox Palestinians told me over and over, "no one cares what you believe; that is up to you." Instead, baptism determines things like which school or scout group a child will join, which influences whom will become her friends, whom she will marry. Because of their conservative politics and apparently 'western' style of worship, evangelicalism is stigmatized. Thus when Salim's relatives sought to baptize his children, they were likely much less concerned about his desire to study the Bible than about the social implications of doing so for his children and the family as a whole.

Salim was fortunate in that he eventually reconciled with his cousins and uncles. His story is illustrative of the social weight of evangelical conversion and it provides some indication of how rare the result was. He was able to formally convert and to keep his children out of the Orthodox Church – without being cut off from his extended family. The process is not usually so smooth; in general, conversion requires concessions to kinship.

Bassem Adranly, for example, was perhaps the most outspoken critic of the traditional Churches that I met. A local optician in the Old City and a pastor in a small evangelical church, Bassem writes articles on theology and shares videos of biblical exegesis on social media. "I don't buy anything from any church" he once told me. "I examine everything, and I choose what to believe and what to reject." Nevertheless, though he married an evangelical (and a foreigner), he did so in the Orthodox Church to please his Orthodox father. Many evangelicals tell similar stories: they maintain a strong interior faith consonant with the evangelical tradition but agree to get married and buried in their natal church.

The experiences of Salim and Bassem raise an important issue in the anthropology of Christian conversion. In the previous chapter, I argued that the anthropological association between conversion and temporality could benefit from greater attention to how temporal experience is defined against space. Often, the former is labelled as Christian and the latter as culture or kinship. I pointed to Birgit Meyer's famous dictum about Pentecostal conversion, that "you have to make a complete break with the past," and how for her interlocutors this "often boils down to a break with one's family" (Meyer 1998: 329). Here I wish to explore this association a bit more closely. The next section of the chapter will look at evangelical love-talk in detail, picking up on the way evangelicals use love, affinity, and marriage as metaphors for faith. But it is important to show how conversion and marriage are tied together in the Orthodox tradition, the main social and religious context for any Palestinian evangelical.

Conversion in Palestinian Christian society generally takes the form of a wedding. When a man and woman from different Churches wish to marry, the woman will convert. This does not mean such women do not continue to feel Catholic or Lutheran at heart, or even that they stop attending the liturgy in the church of their birth. But it does signify entering a new family and a new communal structure. In the case of an Orthodox wedding, the couple's children will be baptized in the Orthodox Church, disputes will be arbitrated in the Orthodox ecclesiastical court, and records will be held by the Orthodox lay council of *wukala'* (trustees).

Marriages involving conversion from one Church to another are common. In most cases the procedure has been streamlined and the significance of spiritual change diminished. The bride's original baptism is accepted by the new Church; before the wedding day, she is merely blessed with holy oil to signal her new allegiance.

In the Orthodox Church, the wedding ceremony recognizes the Christian couple in a new way. At baptism, or a convert's christening, individuals are embraced by the Church and adopted by godparents. At marriage, however, the couple becomes linked to what theologians call the "chain of generations." The priest invokes the great couples of Jewish history starting with Abraham and Sarah and positions the new couple as their spiritual successors.

> The genealogy of Christ, going back to Abraham…or Adam…witnesses to the fact that the chain of generations was leading to a goal: the coming of Christ, the Messiah…In Biblical history, marriage was…leading to a point when God "from the root of Jesse according to the flesh, didst bud forth from the ever-virgin one…" The [wedding prayer] asks god to place the bridegroom and the bride in the company of…holy couples, the ancestors of Christ, to bestow upon them the same blessing (Meyendorff 2000: 36).

John Meyendorff, a well-known Orthodox theologian, stresses that generation is not an end in itself, as he claims it was in Judaism, but rather serves an eschatological purpose (ibid). But note that whereas evangelicals – like Meyer's Pentecostals – describe Christ as the breaker of lineages, the Orthodox theologian merely emphasizes the fact that the lineage looks both backwards and forwards. Thus the chain of generations leads the Orthodox faithful forward towards the second coming of Christ, just as it originates in the holy couples of the past.

For our purposes, this point highlights the fact that when a Catholic woman marries an Orthodox man, the value of her conversion is understood in relation to the reproduction of generations. In other words, conversion serves the purpose of protecting the Orthodox lineage, just as marriage among two born Orthodox does. In such cases, then, conversion and marriage merge – each being ritually assimilated into the other.

At Palestinian Orthodox weddings, this emphasis on continuity is marked, for example, by the queue of relatives representing bride and groom. These men and women stand in the courtyard or hall of the Church and greet all who attend the service after it is finished. Later that evening, when guests arrive at the reception hall, the same relatives queue again at the entrance. The guests enter, shake each person's hand, and present their wedding gift, usually an envelope of money. Recall from Chapter 3 that this custom is also performed at funerals, only then the queues are separated by gender, with men and women sitting in adjacent halls. Both occasions, however, serve to establish generational continuity: in one case by bringing a bride into the family – and a Catholic into the Orthodox Church – and in the other by recognizing the succession of a father by a son (or brother, cousin, etc.).

The climax of the Orthodox wedding is the crowning ceremony, sometimes called the 'dance of Isaiah,' during which crowns of metal or garland are placed on the heads of the bride and groom. They then circle the altar three times, "a symbol of eternity [that] emphasizes marriage as a permanent commitment" (ibid: 41). The tradition appears to have both Jewish and ancient Greek roots, but as a sacrament, the crown represents the divine personhood within the bride and groom which they share with their ancestors, and which their descendants will carry to the end of history (ibid: 42).

This ritual and Meyendorff's interpretation of it reflect the views of the Orthodox establishment but I think it resonates with the views of Palestinian Christians as well, in general terms. My Orthodox friends and interlocutors did not speak about being descendants of Abraham specifically. Rather, as we saw in Chapter 1, they spoke of their relationship to such figures by connecting the ritual to their own history. In the context of marriage, the crowning tradition was described to me as something ancient, a practice which gained significance through repeated historical use. They also spoke of it as being unique among the Christian denominations, something that set Orthodoxy apart from the other, newer traditions.

Similarly, where Meyendorff writes of a chain of generations in an abstract sense, Orthodox Palestinians speak about inter-Church marriage in terms of communal solidarity

and survival. The sense of continuity is present in both but for Palestinians it is much more practical and immediately important. Virtually every family I know includes relatives from different Church traditions. Even the proudest or most activist Orthodox were married to Catholics or mainline Protestants and had non-Orthodox among their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. They did not see this as a problem. When I asked women in these families who converted for marriage, or their children, who grew up with parents from different Churches, they spoke above all of unity.

A Jerusalemite woman called Rima, for example, grew up in the Latin Catholic Church but married an Orthodox man. Following tradition, they married in the Orthodox Church and Rima accepts her new status; nevertheless, she does not love the Orthodox Church. She finds the Greek-speaking priests aloof and unkind, the services long, arduous, and difficult to follow. When I visited her and her husband she would complain about their parish:

> "It's like the suq!"[77] she said. At the Catholic church, there is a queue for the Eucharist, it's organized, not a crowd."

Hearing this, her husband smiled:

> "The Orthodox are simply eager to receive the true body of Christ," he quipped. "Catholics stand patiently because secretly they know: only the Orthodox receive the true body, so they are in no hurry to eat wafers."

Rima and her husband joke about these differences but I heard serious criticisms along the same lines all the time. "The Orthodox arrive late to the Divine Liturgy [mass]", their critics say. They talk during the service and walk in and out of the church as they please. After the liturgy, they rush the altar to shake the priest's hand and then decamp to the courtyard for coffee.

Rima sometimes slips and tells strangers she's Catholic. She still occasionally attends the Catholic Church with her parents, and even though she baptized her daughter

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[77] An open-air market

Orthodox, she also makes sure to bring her to Catholic feasts and parades. She says that in the future, if her daughter grows up and marries either an Orthodox or a Catholic, she will be comfortable. But keeping her mother Church close clearly means a lot to her.

Individuals like Rima accept that conversion for marriage marks a transition into a new family. They accept entering into a new Church community because there is a certain sense that the traditional Churches are fundamentally similar, and that the Palestinian Christian population is so small that the various parishes – which are linked socially, religiously, and historically – comprise a single community. One example of this is the religious calendar. The Orthodox Patriarchate uses the older Julian calendar, so its feast days occur on different days than the Catholic and Protestant ones. As a solution, Palestinian and Jordanian Christians celebrate Easter on the Orthodox date and Christmas on the Catholic one. The higher clergy of the respective Churches does not follow this custom, but lay Orthodox families generally celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December and Catholics take part in the Holy Fire ceremony, a primarily Orthodox ceremony.

This arrangement reflects broader sentiments about relations among the established Churches. We saw in Chapters 2 & 3 that Palestinians maintain relations with nuns or monks in a particular convent and attend the feasts there even if they do not care for the liturgy. This is also true of lay Christians visiting other Church communities. For a particular feast, they will attend the service without taking communion and then join their friends for the food, cognac, and coffee afterwards. Many of my Orthodox neighbors and friends would even attend services at other churches for religious reasons, for example if they liked the Christmas hymns at the Lutheran Church or the Lenten chants at the Catholic one.

Beneath all of these cases, however, is a sense that the Churches are connected horizontally – i.e. through wedding conversions and shared holidays – because they are also connected vertically, as a community persisting through time. For Christians of the traditional Churches, then, conversion is a form of alliance with a new family and a new Church more than it is a break with one's past affiliations. Without doubt, there is a clear

change involved, but one's relationship to the past and to unconverted relatives is not usually broken in the process.

Among the Orthodox in particular, alliance is also framed by the idea of perpetuating a lineage, as we have seen throughout the thesis. This is important to keep in mind for the current chapter, for as we will now see, Palestinian evangelicals have begun to frame conversion in a surprisingly similar way, but to a very different end. Taking up this traditional link between conversion and marriage, they connect metaphors of marriage and love with a claim to Jewish ancestry.

An ethnography of evangelical love

Bruno Latour once made a comparison between religion and what he called love-talk. Religion, he argued, does not seek to provide information but to inspire transformation.

> "Do you love me?" is not assessed by the originality of the sentence – none are more banal, trivial, boring, re-hashed – but by the transformation it generates in the listener, as well as in the speaker (Latour 2010: 102).

Latour is writing about religion in general (though from a Catholic perspective) and for him, love-talk is an analogy for religious talk. It has many parallels in linguistic anthropology and the study of illocutionary speech acts, for which words and utterances matter less for their semantic value than for the social force they impose on the listener (Austin 1975, Keane 2008). For Palestinian evangelicals, however, love-talk is quite literally the medium of religious transformation.

In the previous section, I suggested that conversion in the Palestinian Christian community is often tied to marriage and that both rituals are linked to a sense of past and future generations, both of the Church and the family. The conversions of Salim and Bassem reveal the difference of evangelicalism – its emphasis on an individual and

immediate relationship to God – and the resistance evangelicals face when they try to extend their conversion to their children. The problem is once again one of continuity.

Some evangelicals are attempting to make this process easier by gaining the right for their churches to grant marriage licenses and by buying cemeteries to bury their members. Such efforts are complicated, however, by the fact that evangelical churches have few official members and therefore few people to marry or bury. But evangelical leaders have also changed their priorities. Instead of encouraging people to convert formally, many now say they prefer for converts to remain inside their denominations and change them from within. Jack Sara, president of the Bethlehem Bible College, made this clear to me:

> [T]his is an evangelical institution but at the same time…we want to work with all the Churches. And we never encourage someone to leave their Church; we want to have him or her experience the faith, and the spirit, and the word of God. To change their minds, fill their minds with the word of God, change their heart, and then your actions, your ministry could [fill] any Church.

For Sara, conversion doesn't require a formal change of affiliation, only a change of heart. There are important historical and political conditions affecting this position, as we will see, in addition to the widely recognized evangelical emphasis on interiority. For Sara, Orthodox and Catholic clergy "are not helping people discover God":

> They're helping them discover the Church…The priest wants to encourage their faith [but] he doesn't tell them "come closer to God". [He says] 'come closer to the Church.' So the Church is the end, not God."

This is why, for Sara, it is possible to remain Orthodox or Catholic while also becoming a born-again believer. I met him through his work with young men of the Christian Quarter when he was a local pastor there, and for which he is still respected. He grew up in the Old City in a Catholic but not particularly pious family. His transformation occurred after years of activism during the First Intifada landed him in jail. He became disillusioned with the Communist Party, in which he was active, and when he returned home he started

searching for a new path. After encountering an evangelical youth minister, he had a powerful conversion experience. He attempted to remain Catholic at first, attending youth meetings and Bible study sessions with his fellow Catholics. Eventually, however, he felt rejected by his fellows for his evangelical ideas and ended up moving to the Alliance Church.

Now, Sara says, institutions like the Bible College have fostered an environment in which remaining Catholic or Orthodox is possible while still maintaining a strong evangelical faith. Other organizations like the Palestinian Bible Society have followed the same model, partnering with traditional Churches for specific projects, e.g. Arabic translations of the Bible or youth training programs, while distinguishing their members – which they call "nominal" Christians – from true believers (*mu'minin*).

It is in this context that I suggest evangelical love-talk gains special significance. It indexes a form of religious conversion that produces a radical change in one's faith but nevertheless does not require leaving one's natal church or extended family network. Such a discourse allows someone in Salim's position to convert at heart without breaking from their family and the risks such a break entails. But it also opens up an entirely new field of potential converts.

I once asked Katanacho why evangelicals are so reluctant to engage with political issues. The Orthodox Church has been historically connected to Arab nationalism, Palestinian resistance, and socialist political parties. The ecumenical organizations constantly write about the occupation and engage in civil disobedience. What are the evangelicals doing?

Again he spoke of love. He told me about a youth project he organized in Upper Nazareth, a Jewish enclave built in the 1950s on the hilltops around the historic Palestinian town to slow the latter's expansion (Rabinowitz 1997). They put on t-shirts with the phrase "I love you" printed on the front and went around the Jewish neighborhoods cleaning the streets. The idea was to show Israelis that Palestinians are not dangerous or threatening but willing to be good neighbors. Compared with non-

evangelical organizations, for which youth activity often means civil disobedience, this type of behavior seems ludicrous. But for Katanacho, it is radical.

This is in part because the message of love and reconciliation is also a message of conversion. Just as Orthodox Christians who have become 'believers' are encouraged not to leave their churches, Muslims and Jews are encouraged to "love" without necessarily leaving their traditions. Here, however, the scale of evangelical discourse changes to fit the national categories of Israel/Palestine and its three religions. Love is still the leitmotif but it is joined by marriage and reconciliation.

Since the 1990s, a large Messianic Jewish population has emerged in Israel[78] (Posner 2012, Johnson & Zurlo 2017). Messianic Jews identify as Jews but also believe that Jesus is their messiah. Palestinian evangelicals spend a considerable amount of energy attempting to link their own community with the Messianic one. Salim Munayyer, a Palestinian evangelical, founded an organization with a Messianic Jew called *Musalaha*, or "reconciliation". In an interview Munayer explained the impetus for founding it:

> I realized that our identity in Jesus is a bridge not only to God but between our [Israeli and Palestinian] communities. The identity issue is one of the biggest issues [we face]…as long as the Palestinians and Jews are not going to embrace their neighbors in their identity we're not going to see a solution… (Fisher 2014).

Musalaha thus attempts to "build bridges among Muslims, Christians, and Jews," but it does so primarily by building a link between Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews, framing them not as distinct or opposed religious groups but as a single, united faith with different "identities".

Some people attend programs at Musalaha as they would a secular organization like Seeds of Peace, a well-known American initiative that gathers Palestinians and Israeli students for a summer camp in the US where they bond over sports and leisure activities and discuss some political issues. But the "reconciliation stories" Musalaha disseminates as evidence of its success make clear that for them, 'real' reconciliation – like 'real' belief –

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[78] 20,000, which is large in terms of Christians, not the general population (Johnson & Zurlo 2017).

requires conversion.   In one such story, a Palestinian participant wrote: "When I first met with an Israeli, I didn't know what I was doing, but slowly Jesus opened my heart and I saw that this woman was human" (Musalaha ND). Another Palestinian wrote in similar terms:

> I have learned so much about God in meeting [Israelis]. When I first went away with Musalaha, I had so much hate inside me. I didn't go to church. I was so angry…[but] [w]hen we were rowing on a lake…I heard from God. I cannot describe it. I felt so much love. I had this big hate inside me, and it all vanished (ibid).

In these stories, mutual understanding between two national groups is expressed as a relationship with divinity: God-love leads to love of neighbor. But Musalaha's "theology of reconciliation" describes this process of human and divine love in an interesting way: as a marriage. The organization's theological primer for participants reads, "Jesus is able to take us and create 'one new humanity,':

> This does not mean that our unique identities should fade away, or blend into one colorless, bland uniformity. We retain our distinctiveness, even as we become one body. We can think of it like marriage between a man and a woman. Through sacred bonds of marriage, they are joined together and become one, but they still retain their distinctive qualities as male and female (Musalaha 2017).

The text identifies "marriage" as joining Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews while also retaining certain differences. "[A]s Israeli Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians", it goes on, "we both have a rich heritage to draw on…We must retain our identities, but remember that our primary identity is in God" (ibid).

The key term is "identity." Just as Sara spoke of love connecting Christians while maintaining their denominational differences, Musalaha speaks of love uniting people from different "heritages" that "must" remain distinct. Katanacho spoke in a similar vein about Jewish residents of Upper Nazareth, to whom Palestinian evangelicals expressed their love. An employee of the Bible Society put it even more clearly:

I read the other day…that one in every three Jews in the United States believes that believing in Jesus is an extension to the Jewish identity. There is a shift happening…we are loving people and we are telling them…you need to consider Jesus Christ (Fisher 2014).

Clearly loving and evangelizing are conflated here, but the language of identity is also being paired with the language of believing. As we will now see, this is not accidental. It speaks to a well-developed theology in the evangelical community that distinguishes between faith and identity, and religion and kinship, in order to turn the three Abrahamic religions into separate ethnic groups with one faith. This is accomplished by translating descent into affinity.

The seed of Abraham

As I mentioned at the start of the chapter, the increasing visibility of Palestinian evangelism resulted from the same historical conditions that produced the ecumenical organizations. The evangelicals, however, became increasingly critical of the social justice paradigm. Their own answer to the problem of injustice, I suggested, was the paradigm of love. I thus explored the two contexts in which love-talk appears most prominently: first from evangelicals to other Christians, who are encouraged to convert at heart without leaving their families or churches, and second from evangelicals to Jews and Muslims. Peace between religion is envisioned as a marriage of peoples who are separate in heritage but united in Christ.

This is all rooted in an evangelical theology of the Abrahamic covenant which goes back to Saint Paul. Just as Orthodox Christians do, many evangelicals speak and write about the place of Arab Christians in the Bible and in the history of the Church. But unlike the Orthodox, the argument they make often focuses on the relatedness of Arabs to the ancestors and descendants of Abraham. Katanacho, for example, describes how the Abrahamic lineage is reckoned in various contradictory ways in different parts of the Bible text, and how these variations often end up including Arabs and other non-Jewish, non-Hebrew, non-Israelite peoples within the lineage.

Although the descendants of Jacob preferred tribal intermarriages, they were not a closed group…Judah married a Canaanite wife…Joseph married an Egyptian (Gen. 41:45)…we have children who belong to a certain pedigree but are partially foreign to that lineage…We see it not only in the story of Abraham and his son Ishmael (Gen. 16), but also in the story of Judah…In short, borrowing [the prophet] Ezra's language, we can see that the "holy seed" has mingled with many nations (Katanacho 2005: 432)

For Katanacho, the existence of Arabs and other 'nations' within the lineage of Abraham does not serve as evidence of the Jewish roots of Palestinians but rather of their persistence through time as the Jewish other: related, but distinct.[79] With the appearance of Christ, this relationship changes. Following Paul's letter to the Galatians, Katanacho claims that Jesus broke the barrier between Jewish and Gentile lineages:

In Paul's words, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). Paul is here refuting the Judaizers' claim that becoming part of the physical seed of Abraham through circumcision secures becoming part of the Abrahamic promises. Christ alone is the legitimate seed of Abraham in whom the promises will be fulfilled (Gal. 3:16). To be associated with Him is the only legitimate means for belonging to the seed of Abraham (2005: 440).

With Christ, in other words, the Abrahamic lineage is no longer measured in terms of descent but faith, or "belonging to Christ."

This argument comes very close to one of the dominant narratives of western modernity: the idea that with Christ, the Jewish religion ceased being a 'closed' religious and system and transformed into a 'universal' one built on evangelism. That idea has been closely examined by historians, theologians, and social scientists alike. In anthropology, for example, it influenced Dumont's thesis on Christian individualism (1983), Leach's theory on the egalitarianism of the Early Church (1972), and Goody's work on the

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[79] Specifically, they are agnates: "the first [biblical] scene of emergence of the Arabs was one linking them to Yaqtan [Joktan] and 'Aaber (Eber), from whom Abraham descended. Thus Abraham and the Arabs were born from the same ancestor, i.e. 'Aaber, from the seed [nasal] of Sam [Shem]." (Katanacho 2017, transl. mine).

development of the European family (1983). All three arguments developed out of an analytic division between the kinship system of Christianity, which banned close-kin marriage, and that of Judaism and Islam, which seemingly clung to religious law, endogamy and agnatic descent (cf. Seeman 2017).

In an important critique of this division, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin trace its origins to the Pauline tradition, "the fountainhead of Christendom" (Boyarin & Boyarin 1993: 694; cf. Abu El-Haj 2012: 175-176). They begin the essay with the assertion that "group identity has been constructed…on the one hand as the product of a common genealogical origin and, on the other, as produced by a common geographical origin" (ibid: 693). The first of these forms, they argue, has been maligned in modern scholarship as racist while the latter has become normative (ibid), for example as discourses of indigeneity linked to land have been enshrined in human rights law.

The Boyarins see the origins of the western distaste for genealogy and descent in Paul's letter to the Galations, quoted by Katanacho above. For them, Paul represents an ideological shift. When he wrote "there is neither Jew nor Greek," the ritual of baptism "substitute[ed] an allegorical genealogy for a literal one" (ibid: 695).

> In Christ, that is, in baptism, all the differences that mark off one body from another as Jew or Greek (circumcision is considered a 'natural' mark of the Jew [Rom. 2:27]), male or female, slave or free are effaced, for in the Spirit such marks do not exist. Accordingly, if one belongs to Christ, then one participates in the allegorical meaning of the promise of the 'seed of Abraham,' an allegorical meaning of genealogy…The individual body itself is replaced by its allegorical referent, the body of Christ… (ibid).

In response to this view, the authors attempt to resuscitate the notion of a genealogical identity in the Jewish diaspora, showing that it is only with the joining of genealogy and land in Israel that the Jewish lineage discourse becomes exclusionary.

What interests me about this argument is the claim that modern social theory is based on the "Christian" view of genealogy: as anathema to progress, equality, and justice. As I have argued throughout this thesis, that view in incomplete and does not represent a large proportion of Christians, neither contemporary Christians nor those in

early modern Europe, Byzantium, or Late Antiquity. By contrast, at least among the Orthodox, the link between religious faith and social descent is central and broadly similar to Jewish contexts. Among Palestinians, it is not Christianity but evangelicalism that produces a change in the way genealogy is viewed, and even there the concept does not disappear so much as it is transposed into a new register.

The evangelical way of reckoning with the Pauline legacy speaks directly to the problem the Boyarins raise. Mirroring their characterization of Paul almost verbatim, Katanacho writes, "Christ alone is the legitimate seed of Abraham in whom the promises [of the covenant] will be fulfilled" (Katanacho 2005). As much western scholarship has done, he claims a universality for Christianity that overcomes the allegedly narrow scope of Judaism. However, the genealogical vision of Palestinian evangelicals also diverges from this tradition in a crucial way.

Being and believing: DNA, descent, and race

The most instructive encounters I had with evangelicals during fieldwork were those that involved Christians from other denominations. One such example involved a meal I shared with my landlady Abla and her friend. As I described in Chapter 3, Abla and I often went out to eat with other Orthodox for religious feasts. On one such Sunday, however, Abla knocked on my door and asked me to come out with her and a friend called Rana from Nazareth, whom she introduced as being from a well-known Orthodox family.

Sitting at lunch, Rana, who was unmarried and in her late forties, asked us to pray over the food before we ate. "As you like," Abla said, "but that isn't Orthodox". Rana responded bashfully that she didn't know what was correct, but personally, she liked to do it. We waited while she prayed aloud, head bowed, thanking God for the meal and the presence of friends.

During the meal, Rana spoke about moving to Be'er Sheva (*Bir Seba'a* in Arabic), a city in the southern Israel. She left Nazareth for work, she said, but enjoys living there in

part for the spiritual life. She was born Orthodox, she said, but in Be'er Sheva came to prefer what she called "praying by the spirit, not by conventions". "I'm someone who doesn't like regulations and structure. Some people need structure but I don't." She still attends life cycle rituals at the Orthodox Church in Nazareth, is fascinated by the tradition and enjoys reading about the early saints. She continues to *be* Orthodox, she said, but her faith is now guided by evangelical principles: the spirit, not conventions. What matters most, she stressed, is one's personal relationship with God and other believers.

In practice, this means that Rana does not attend one church but a wide variety of evangelical parishes. But she singled out one tradition in particular: Messianic Judaism. Be'er Sheva is home to a small Messianic population, a significant proportion of which appears to be Russian-Israelis who immigrated in the 1990s. I cannot describe this population here except to note that while many of the 1.6 million Russian-Israelis who immigrated from the former Soviet Union fully identify as Jews, the population is also known for retaining elements of Christianity in their forms of self-identification and worship. They also rarely keep *kashrut* dietary laws, particularly with regards to pork (Remennick & Prashitzky 2012). In a few cases, Russian-Israelis have even taken over old Orthodox churches and begun celebrating the liturgy (Svetlova 2010).

Others have joined Messianic congregations with a much more evangelical style of worship but which also allow them to retain Christian and Jewish elements of their identity. Rana feels at home in these congregations, despite being a Palestinian with no Jewish background, because she too identifies as *being* one thing and *believing* something else. As someone who grew up inside the 1948 borders of Israel, she speaks both Arabic and Hebrew fluently. Her Orthodoxy is a part of her identity as an Arab Palestinian, and associates life-cycle rituals and seasonal feasts with the maintenance of that identity. However, when framed in terms of "religion", Rana saw conventions as tying Orthodoxy to the past, whereas praying by the spirit freed her of such structures. I would suggest that this separation from the past is what encouraged her to join a Messianic community.

Separating one's ethnic identity from one's faith resonates powerfully with recent scholarship on Messianic Judaism and the relationship between evangelicals and Israel

more broadly. Hillary Kaell's research on Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land was an important landmark for the latter because it demonstrates, in contrast to so many studies of Christian Zionism, how this relationship forms through the religious experience of the evangelicals themselves. Particularly important for this discussion is her finding that many of those who might be called Christian Zionists do not speak of their support for Israel in primarily political or eschatological terms, as previous scholars had suggested, but in terms of a discovery of Jewish "roots" (Kaell 2014: 144-146; cf. Engberg 2019: 117).[80]

Similarly, in an article on Messianic Jews and Jewish-affinity Christians in the US, Kaell and Sarah Imhoff argue that the rediscovery of Jewish roots often emerges through "gene talk", the ascription of lineage links to Jewish ancestors through websites that trace DNA linked to the Jewish priestly class, as I described in the introduction (Imhoff & Kaell 2017: 100, Abu El-Haj 2012: 2). What makes these Messianic Jews unique, the authors argue, is the extent to which they highlight the racial or ethnic character of Jesus:

> [F]or Messianics contemporary 'ethnic' Jews will play a unique role in the coming apocalypse and, just as important, are also understood to be genetically related to Jesus. The latter idea is especially crucial for the heirs of pietistic Christianity – such as North American charismatics and many evangelicals – who prize an intimate relationship with Jesus. To feel this closeness…takes on a radically new meaning if one thinks of [Jesus] as raced, that is as an ethnic Jew… [Messianics] strongly embrace this view. For them, it means that having Jewish 'blood,' or at least being in close contact with Jews…is a tangible way to propel the coming End Times and to nurture closeness with the incarnated Son of God" (ibid: 105).

For Messianics, the ethnically Jewish character of Jesus is significant because it allows them to draw closer to him not only through faith but also through his physical substance. Ethnic Jews talk about genes as "a way to talk about the distinctiveness or peoplehood, even the specialness of Jews and Jewish history, without the hubris of biblical chosenness" (ibid: 108). Messianics, on the other hand, insist on the chosenness of the

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[80] See also Cannell on American Mormons who are given lineage ascriptions to one of the lost tribes of Israel (2013a: 84-85). Converts are also "grafted" into the Abrahamic line, their blood transformed into Abraham's (2017: 159-166).

Jewish people because it gives them the feeling of uncovering their hidden Jewish roots without having to change their Christian faith.

Imhoff and Kaell emphasize the extent to which studies of gene talk ignore its religious dimensions, which, in both the Messianic and Mormon cases, are central. They also emphasize the centrality of gene-talk's racial element, which helps produce a hierarchy that privileges the European-associated Ashkenazi over African American or Iberian/Middle-Eastern-associated Sephardics. This combination of factors affords a valuable point of comparison.

As we have seen, Palestinian evangelicals do not trace their lineages through family genealogy or DNA technologies, but through the Bible: through Eber, Joktan, Shem, and Ezra. The Bible provides a kind of group or tribal genealogy, but only until the time of Jesus. After that, only love for the messiah can make one a member of the elect. But this raises the question, "why?": if Jesus unites all, what difference does it make which pre-Christian lineage one represents?

Palestinian evangelicals seek to establish difference from Jews on theological grounds – that is, Paul's "universal" genealogy – rather than racial ones. Nevertheless, they continue to uphold genealogical differences because doing so allows them to claim that Jewishness is a culture, not a faith. A Messianic Jew, according to this logic, is someone who is utterly Christian at heart, but also continues to "be" Jewish – including practicing Jewish customs and rituals – in his or her ethnic identity, which is associated with descent. Palestinian evangelicals, by comparison, do not want to claim Jewishness but do support an ethnic view of Judaism (or Orthodox Christianity, or Islam) that opens the door for a "Jewish" faith in Christ.

As a result, following Imhoff and Kaell, I argue that race and ethnicity provide evangelical discourse with something that "religion", in the modern sense of the word, cannot. One is either a believer or not in the evangelical worldview. Palestinian evangelicals thus appear to be replacing the descent rhetoric of Orthodox Christians (and 'ethnic' Jews), which conflates religious tradition and communal continuity, with a rhetoric of *ethnic* descent and *religious* affinity: Jewish roots and Christian faith. If a

person carries her ancestors in her blood, there is no need for a theology of mediation so central to the Catholic and Orthodox traditions (ibid: 112). Instead, lineage continuity is inscribed in the blood.

Conclusion: recognizing descent

In the previous chapter, I argued that the ecumenical movement was both a product of neoliberalism and of secularism. In order to establish a religious discourse that was autonomous and spoke directly to the conditions of occupation, ecumenical leaders created two domains for family and Church where the Orthodox tradition only has one. These domains largely correspond with the domains of secular modernity: kinship and descent appear in relation to the land, indexes of a Palestinian culture that remains steadfast and rooted. Christianity, by contrast, speaks to the present political moment.

Here we see how evangelicals engaged these same themes but with a different result. What appears most saliently is not a Palestinian Jesus under occupation but a stark distinction between Jesus, who represents love, and the Old Testament, which represents Arab and Jewish ethnicities. What I have attempted to do in this chapter is to connect two themes that evangelicals often raise but generally keep separate: love-talk in the present, lineages in the past. Re-connecting these alternative registers demonstrates that evangelicals do not so much "make a complete break with the past" as they translate that past into non-religious terms. By developing a theory of descent based on ethnic identity, their emphasis on love becomes more powerful as it does not require a change of identity. One can "practice" Judaism or Islam as elements of one's lineage identity, while remaining a committed "believer."

This complicates the prevailing understanding of both evangelical conversion and modern descent in powerful ways. In the introduction, I quoted Abu El-Haj arguing that genetic ancestry technologies have allowed the Israeli state to characterize the religious and biological elements of Jewishness as essentially equivalent. Both are inscribed in a Jewish person's DNA. In this chapter we see that as in the Jewish case, practices deemed

"religious" by the Orthodox – like attending a baptism or a wedding – are described by evangelicals as preserving a Palestinian Christian identity. Conversion, then, appears as a process of conflating belief with affinity. This of course requires establishing a secular split between the domains of religion and biology, as we saw in the last chapter. But even more importantly, it means that descent remains as central as ever but is merely described in ethnic and biological terms rather than religious ones. For the immediate aims of this chapter, this shows how the Orthodox emphasis on genealogy and history has persisted even in evangelical discourse but has changed its form. The rupture occurs not at the level of experience but in the way Christians make category distinctions between religion and non-religion. For anthropologists studying conversion, this means that it is not satisfactory to found arguments of religious rupture on the basis of religious experience alone.

Finally, as I have framed the chapter around the definition of Israel as a Jewish state based on the common descent of Jews worldwide, I will conclude with the relationship between evangelical discourse on the Abrahamic seed and that of the state. There is a marked similarity between these two, as we have seen, and the evangelical discourse emerged in the wake of the changes to Israel's Basic Laws, its public effort to demonstrate genetic Jewishness, and the emergence of Messianic Judaism in Israel. The references Rana and Musalaha make to Messianic Judaism indicate that a direct link between these historical forces is likely, but my central aim in suggesting this is not to argue that the state's emphasis on genetic ancestry caused the rupture anthropologists of Christianity normally associate with evangelical faith. Instead I wish to propose that the relevant question is not whether the change occurs from religion or outside it, but how the forms through which the change occurs transcend those boundaries in specific and historically contingent ways.

Chapter 7

Men of the feast: a return to Orthodoxy

The previous two chapters showed how two religious movements have addressed new ways of relating to the Palestinian Christian past on the one hand and the Orthodox tradition on the other. I argued that these movements are secular in the sense that they seek to discursively distinguish Christianity from descent while continuing to draw on images and idioms of continuity that appear separate from the Church. These include Palestinian material culture, e.g. in depictions of the olive tree and its roots. They also include references to descent, both in relation to the seed of Abraham and in relation to historical sources documenting the presence of indigenous Christians in Palestine.

This chapter builds on the preceding ones by taking up a third movement, this time localized in the Old City. It describes how a number of young Christians from Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant backgrounds became influenced by the evangelical churches but did not fully convert. Instead, they founded a Christian organization of their own around the ideas of continuity, community, and festivity. They called it "Seeds of a better life" (*markaz budhur al-haya al-afdal*).

As in the previous two chapters, their religious vision is eclectic and cannot be confined to the principles of a single Christian denomination. Nevertheless, their connection to Orthodoxy is surprisingly strong and, given their evangelical origins, impossible to ignore. For like the convent residents of Chapter 4, the Seeds youths feel a strong connection to the Orthodox Church even when they are not themselves members. Also like those residents, the connection is described in terms of care. Perhaps more than anything else, the Old City's Christian youth speak of themselves as children of the Church who have a duty to protect it and care for it.

Chapter 4 opened with a protest in Bethlehem against the Orthodox patriarch and the sale of Church property to Israeli settlers and developers. Palestinian Orthodox activists conducted research on the property deals, held conferences to mobilize support, and issued a number of formal complaints to the Church hierarchy, Palestinian and Jordanian government authorities, and the media. But in Bethlehem, the reaction was more direct, popular, and personal. People were angry and took to the streets outside the Nativity Church to call for the ouster of the patriarch and his governing Synod.

What I did not mention in that chapter was that days after the protest, a group of Christians from Jerusalem's Old City led by Seeds of life came out against it to support the patriarch instead. It began at the Patriarchate's celebration of the New Year in the central monastery of the Old City. There, in a large reception hall, the patriarch listened from his perch at the front of the room as a young Orthodox man read out a prepared statement on behalf of the group.

He condemned the protests, describing them as "an attack on our celebration of the Holy Nativity…the attack of Belial". The speaker positioned the local Christians against this image, using a famous verse from Galatians:

> But when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (KJV, Gal 4:4-5).

Of course, this passage refers to the Nativity, but in the speech it also framed the responsibilities of Christians as "adopted sons" of the Church. The speaker used the passage to situate local Christians as "not slaves, but children." Since the time of Adam and Eve, he said, Satan has attempted to keep human beings as slaves to sin, but with the Incarnation they have gained the possibility of becoming, like him, partly divine. In order to "earn" their status as God's children, "we [must] crave peace and become tolerant and merciful." "The attack on our celebration of the Nativity", he argued, breached that

mandate. It represented an attempt to block the worship of the lord on his birthday, illustrating instead the devil's desire to keep humankind "under the rule of eternal death."

The speech concluded with a pledge of support for the patriarch: "we, your beatitude, trust in you and your ability to protect our Church and…*our* Orthodox faith". It is important to point out that the members of Seeds of life are not all Orthodox. At least half of them are from Catholic backgrounds but, interestingly, this did not stop them from expressing their allegiance to the patriarch or the Orthodox faith.

A few months later, Seeds of life moved into a new building in the Christian Quarter owned by the Orthodox Patriarchate. To mark the occasion, they announced a grand opening and invited the local Christian community along with the patriarch and members of the Church hierarchy. The father of the Seeds director, a Catholic, gave a speech welcoming the patriarch. As at New Year's, again here he claimed the Orthodox heritage and pledged his support – in even more explicit language:

> We consider ourselves guardians [*hamat*] of the patriarchate… We reject what happened in Bethlehem…and deny the names [of the protestors]. That behavior is unethical and unacceptable for us. We will be careful to ensure it does not repeat itself in Jerusalem at the Holy Fire ceremony… we will strike with an iron first anyone who attempts to tamper with our feasts and celebrations.

The gauntlet thrown, the Seeds of Life established themselves as the Patriarchate's unlikely defenders.

As we will see, the Holy Fire ceremony at Easter, which came soon after this event, provided the young men of the Old City with an opportunity to prove themselves. But before we get to that, it is important to explain how this organization emerged and why, given the changes to Palestinian Christianity I described in the last two chapters, it has done so largely through the revival of Orthodox traditions.

Almost converts

Seeds of life was created in the years after the Second Intifada (2001-2005) when the Old City was suffering economically, politically, and socially. Unemployment in the city rose from 11.4% in 2000 (among Palestinians over fifteen) to 27.8% in 2002 and it remained in the twenties for years before declining to 11.9% in 2010 (PCBS 2005: 204, 2011: 85). For Old City Christians, the problem was made worse by the fact that they have often been employed in the service and tourism industries, which rise and fall with the political environment.

Housing was also a problem. Between 1990 and 2000, only 3441 houses were built in Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem, making up 11.4% of the total (i.e. in relation to Jewish neighborhoods) despite making up nearly half the city's population (Dumper 1997). In the Old City, where population density is higher than most "new" neighborhoods, economic pressure was more keenly felt (Bagaeen 2004). Drug and alcohol addiction rose dramatically in the Christian Quarter, and Palestinian residents widely believe the police turned a blind eye to the sale of drugs in Palestinian neighborhoods in order to encourage them to emigrate and sell their property to settlers (Hassanein 1992, Hass 2003, Massad et. al. 2016).[81]

My neighbors in the Old City often spoke about problems in the Quarter related to drugs and alcohol. Of course, this is a relatively conservative area and to some extent what is considered dangerous or improper behavior would not be considered as such in other contexts. But beyond this general consideration, there were also many stories of clinical addiction and a number of people told me about how drugs and alcohol affected their lives in significant and negative ways. What turned things around, I was repeatedly told, was the work of Caritas, a Catholic NGO that ran a rehabilitation clinic in the city, and especially the evangelicals.

In the previous chapter, I described the conversion story of Salim, a member of the Alliance evangelical church in the Christian Quarter. His was primarily a spiritual journey in

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[81] On drug politics, see Hasson 2015, Al-Mezan 2009.

that he was seeking a new relationship to God and the process of doing so was mostly mediated through his readings of the Bible and interaction with an evangelical pastor. But the circumstances that led him to begin his search were what he described as "moral problems" in the city, including drugs and alcohol, gambling, fighting, and carousing. His conversion was accompanied by a rejection of such behavior, as it is in many evangelical contexts (e.g. James 2002: 132-149, Harding 1987, Fox 2004, O'Neill 2019).

Before he converted, Salim lived in Eilat, a resort city on the Red Sea. He would come back to visit his family every so often in Jerusalem, and on one occasion he witnessed an extraordinary event. "A movement [had] started in the Quarter", he said, and the local people were starting to reject the influence drugs were having on the neighborhood. "People came [to the square] with their drugs, all of them, and burned them".

To Salim, this was evidence of the power of evangelical faith. The Alliance Church and other evangelical organizations had been working with the young people of the Quarter for years, trying to bring them out of the street and into the church. Salim saw the burning event as evidence of their success: "I was very happy. The Gospel, it's role in the life of those people…it made the movement." This had a powerful effect on him and contributed to his desire to convert, which he did.

As it turns out, however, the bonfire of drugs was premature. According to the literature and my own conversations with officials and volunteers at Caritas, drug and alcohol dependency only increased during and immediately after the Intifada. But the event Salim described indicates the internal struggle within the community to respond to the political situation and its effect on social life in the Quarter. Evangelical leaders were an important part of this process. Orthodox and Catholics often acknowledge that the evangelicals accepted people into their churches and programs without judgement when their own clergy did not. This attitude has conferred evangelical leaders with a certain amount respect and trust among younger Jerusalemites.

The Alliance Church was an important part of this process as the main local evangelical presence in the Quarter, but another was the Bible Society. Though based in

Beit Hanina (a northern suburb), the youth coordinator is a Jerusalemite with strong ties to the Old City. At first, I approached the Society to ask about their Arabic translations of the Bible, which are used by many churches, but quickly became more interested in their programs aimed at the Old City youth. One of the most popular of these is their trips to Galilee, in which the Society pays for youths and sometimes their families to stay in a hotel, for example on Lake Tiberias. There they attend worship services and bible studies but also go to the beach, socialize, and enjoy time away from Jerusalem.

But while many Old City Christians attended the programs and events of evangelical institutions, they ended up taking what they learned in a rather different direction. The attitude I encountered most often is well-represented by a Catholic man in his thirties called Hanna. I met Hanna at an event for Sabeel in Bethlehem, where he had been hired to help out with a group of Euro-American activists and pilgrims. I had been asked to fill in for a staff member at the last minute.

On this occasion, the Palestinian leader took the group to speak to activists in the Aida refugee camp while Hanna and I took the van around to the other side of the camp to meet them where they would finish. As we sat there waiting, we started to chat. As it turns out, Hanna was from the Old City (of Jerusalem). He recently married and moved to a suburb but had lived in the Quarter his entire life. He asked where I was living. When I told him, he started laughing. "Are you serious?" he asked, "Why?" Life in the Quarter is hard, he said, which is why he left.

We started talking about people we both knew, most of whom were members of Seeds of life. I started asking about the evangelicals Hanna told me his own experience of when they tried to bring him into the church, which I later found many others shared. Several years earlier, Hanna had been invited to one of the trips to Tiberias and he agreed to go because it was a good opportunity to escape Jerusalem. But it wasn't the experience he had hoped for. They had to attend lectures, collective worship, private prayer and meals, which left them with only an hour of pool time. "Okay," he said, "you bring us out here and I can't go down to the pool?" He was also uncomfortable with the worship services and remained outside the room, praying alone to avoid the "hand-waving". The

pastor on the trip, who grew up with him, approached him later in the day and criticized his Catholic habits, arguing that the Virgin Mary cannot heal him.

> "You Latins are wrong to say this," he reportedly said. "And you're taking it too far with the relationship to St. George, the Virgin, and Mar Charbel [a Lebanese saint]".

> Hanna responded, "'what, you yell I don't know what in church, banging drums, shaking your hands [he gestures like a zombie], putting your head all the way back, and I'm taking it to far, me?'…And he kept quiet."

Not everyone put it quite so bluntly or rejected evangelical styles of worship wholesale. Some attended bible study session in Jerusalem with Bassem Adranly (from the last chapter), for example, and a number of the youths who attended the evangelical trips and programs have since become leaders of Seeds of life. They never actually converted to evangelical churches, however, and did not end up defining the goals of their organization in explicitly Christian terms. Born Catholics and Orthodox largely expressed similar views as Hanna did. Evangelical religion seemed too different, too foreign, but they respected the evangelicals for their social work and above all, their presence in the community.

It this emphasis on presence and moral change that their influence came to be most strongly felt. Against the backdrop of the depressed economic conditions of the Old City, the political persecution of Palestinians during the Intifada years, and an increase in drug and alcohol abuse, the evangelical intervention was powerful. Where the political parties and the established churches spoke of justice, of ending the occupation, the evangelicals focused on the moral life of individuals and families, and set about changing it. What the evangelicals probably did not anticipate was that a group of disaffected, unconverted youth would become the vehicle for such a change.

Founding Seeds of life

Towards the end of the Second Intifada, a group of young men who wanted to strengthen communal bonds in the Christian Quarter founded "Seeds of a better life" (often shortened to "Seeds of life", *budhur al-haya*). As I mentioned, some had been strongly influenced by evangelical ideas but their charter focuses not on love and conversion, as in the last chapter, but themes of community and continuity.

> The Seeds for a Better Life Center was founded in the beginning of 2004 by a group of youth from the Christian Quarter who believe in *tawasul*[82] as the basis for work on behalf of the society in which we live…with support and fundraising from all who desire our continuity (*istimrarna*) and survival (*baqa'ina*) (SBL ND, transl. mine).

It goes on to point out that the center comprises Christians from all denominations and desires to support all members of society from the youngest to the oldest. It then lists ten objectives, some of which are general e.g. "the social, cultural, and religious development of young men and women" or "to strengthen social bonds".

Three objectives stand out, however: first, they specifically mention the need to create a "clean Christian existence far from drugs and alcohol" (ibid). This, along with a commitment to help the unemployed and encourage Christian perseverance (*thabat*), are the only references to the conditions of 2004 Jerusalem. The Intifada is not mentioned. Second, they claim they will set about performing maintenance work in the Quarter to improve living conditions, albeit without clarifying how. Finally, and most importantly for this chapter, they wish "to revitalize the Christian feasts and create an atmosphere that befits them and adheres to their heritage" (ibid).

Revitalizing the feasts is the first goal of the charter and the activity for which the organization is known. In fact, while some refer to them as "Seeds of life", many people know them simply as "the guys who lead the holy fire procession" at Easter and who "put up the Christmas tree" in December. Before major feasts, young men of the organization set up banners, lights, illuminated crosses, and bunting flags all over the Quarter. The

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[82] Lit. "communication" but implying bringing people together.

process of setting these things up is an important part of the celebration; in some ways it is the most important part, as it involves many of the young kids of the neighborhood and illuminates the otherwise dark alleys of the Old City for the whole month of December and well into January. Even those residents who do not approve of the Seeds men, for reasons I discuss later, admit that the lights and festive atmosphere makes Jerusalem's cold winters much more cheerful.

At Christmas, Seeds of life recruits funding to set up an enormous Christmas tree on the rooftops just inside the New Gate, which is the only entrance to the Old City that leads exclusively into the Christian Quarter. In the past, these funds have come from controversial sources. These include the Jerusalem Municipality, which many Palestinians boycott, but also the Orthodox Patriarchate, which Palestinian Orthodox activists claim provides funds in order to gain Palestinian allies in the Old City against them. Nevertheless, every year the Seeds youths set up the tree and announce a time and date on social media when they will turn on the lights. Hundreds of people attend, including Muslims and Jews, taking videos on their phones and exploring the Christmas market.

Setting up Christmas lights, decorations, and the tree are meant to make the Old City a more joyful place while also providing employment for some of the young men, though Seeds is not the main employer for any of them. For the organizers, it provides a basis for a sense of community that is not connected to a single Church, much like the ecumenical organizations do but in everyday life. Anyone who walks through the New Gate or the streets of the Quarter can enjoy the lights. This is not accidental. For Seeds of life, unity among the Christian denominations is an explicit part of their mission and like the evangelicals, they often blame the Church hierarchies for failing to achieve it.

Residents of the Old City often express the view that it doesn't matter what Church one belongs to. They point to Amman, Jordan, where the whole Christian population apparently celebrates Christmas together on the western/Catholic calendar date, December 25th, and Easter on the Julian calendar date. Seeds of life and its supporters regularly bring this up on social media, for example in a post about competition between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions (Fig. 17).

Fig. 17 - Facebook post: Church unity

The graphic depicts symbols representing the Catholic (left) and Orthodox (right) churches with the word "or" in between and the following text below:

> We want to celebrate the feast together. We don't care about any ritual or its scheduled time; the important thing is that we unify and celebrate together.

Dispensing with the niceties of church ritual, affiliates of Seeds articulate a vision of unity based on public celebrations of feasts shared by all Jerusalemites. This is interesting because it adopts the evangelical critique of church ritual as mere adornments of the faith without adopting the evangelical solution, the turn to individual prayer, evangelism, and charismatic experience.

This position can be seen all over the work of Seeds of life. When I first came to Jerusalem in 2009 as an Arabic student, I noticed a series of signs that had been bolted to the stone walls of the Quarter with one side in Arabic and the other in English. Each carried a text from the Bible, often from the Old Testament:

> All we like sheep have gone astray;
> we have turned every one to his own way;
> and the LORD hath laid on him

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the iniquity of us all (KJV Isaiah 53:6)

Such heavy-handed language made me curious, and when I found out that Seeds had put up the signs, I came to see how important it was to them to correct what they saw as the deep disunity of their community. To that end they employed some evangelical language, e.g. of love, in their public-facing discourse. One year at the Holy Fire ceremony, for example, the t-shirts Seeds annually produces for the occasion contained a graphic of Jesus wearing the crown of thorns and the English text: "Jesus loves you".

But even in such cases the focus is on fraternity and festivity rather than conversion or faith. This festivity is meant to include all Christians but it tends to attract young men, who make up the most active part of the organization. This is partly the result of the negative stereotypes which, as I have mentioned in previous chapters, are associated with the Old City. In some ways, the Seeds of life youth represent the worst of these stereotypes. Their members are often described as thugs, drunks, and trouble makers. They hang out in the open squares of the Quarter, go out drinking in West Jerusalem (where they can be more anonymous), and get into fights. Throughout my fieldwork, I was told stories about how this or that person's father is a drunk or a drug dealer and that he's following in the same path. Now that the Quarter has organized, the criticism has transferred to Seeds, which is criticized for being unscrupulous and seeking an easy payout from any institution, whatever the political consequences.

Old City residents, however, are more willing to recognize changes in behavior and often pointed out to me how someone had turned themselves around. One of my neighbors, Bassem, is a kind but sometimes prickly middle-aged man who enjoys the occasional bender. Sometimes I would come home from Bethlehem or Ramallah late at night and pass his house on the way. I would find him there, standing on his stoop, smoking. The door was always open behind him, music blaring, and he would smile and raise a hand. "Clinton! How are you? Where are you coming from?"

We would chat a bit and he would sometimes invite me in. Bassem used to have a reputation for getting drunk and causing problems in the neighborhood. Some people said that he would intimidate them in disputes over construction, communal space, and his

nocturnal amusements. One of the other neighbors used to get into shouting matches with him over the music he played late at night. Around Easter it is still bad: he plays the same song on repeat until two or three in the morning while he sings along. In the past few years, however, he became more active with Seeds of life and has gained a reputation for mediating conflicts instead of causing them. Abla, my landlady, captured the transformation with characteristic pith: "*kan hashhash bas… sar gentleman, yanni*" – "he was a pothead but…he became a gentleman, sort of."

Some years ago, Bassem set up an icon corner near his front door with flowers, candles, and large potted plants. In the Orthodox world, such corners are usually set up inside homes, with icons of Mary, Jesus, and favorite saints alongside family photos and a variety of other objects, from holy oil to flowers blessed in church and candles of varying shapes, sizes, and places of origin. But there are some icons or statues set up in public spaces around the Christian Quarter streets as well (Ch. 2). These are usually set up by churches, however, rather than individuals. So when Bassem set up his icon corner outside in the street, he was in a way both domesticating a public space and sanctifying it. In the evenings he lights the candles in front of the icon for the sake of whomever walks past, and in the mornings one can find him watering his plants, humming to himself.

Bassem's brashness still irritates some, but he is seen as a member of the community and makes an effort to help out. When, for example, the young kids of the Quarter make too much noise at night, or use the street near his house for drinking bouts, or do not clean up after themselves, he scolds them. And unlike when Abla or others in the neighborhood do so, they listen – partly, I think, because of his reputation as a bully.

Bassem's story represents a big part of what Seeds of life is all about. Many of the young men of the Christian Quarter had "moral problems" in the past, as Salim put it, and like him they attempted to turn away from drugs and alcohol. But rather than becoming born again, they channeled their energy towards the idea of neighborhood solidarity. They do this in part through the public processions at religious feasts, which I discuss later. But for most of the year when it is not time for a feast, they focus on symbolic acts of maintenance and care.

One such act is the delivery of home-cooked food for residents of the Quarter in need. The economic conditions in the Old City have been written about extensively elsewhere so I will only add that in the Christian Quarter, one common problem is that elderly Palestinians living alone struggle to get around the hills, stairs, and stone streets of the city to get groceries and supplies. They become marooned in small apartments while their children, married with kids of their own, often live elsewhere – either abroad or in other parts of the city. Many times, relatives and neighbors do come by with food and help them get to church or the market, but inevitably there are gaps. So women associated with the organization, often relatives of the young men who run it, prepare the food and then the youths deliver it, sometimes with blankets. I should point out that this work pales in comparison to what other local organizations do – the Arab Orthodox Society, for example, runs a medical clinic in the Quarter and another organization operates a residential hospice. Nevertheless, local residents appreciate the gesture.

Another project is the maintenance of the Quarter's physical environment. Seeds asks residents to inform them of problems, e.g. a street light that went out or a broken road tile causing minor flooding in an alley. Mostly they do not fix these problems themselves but rather serve as a go-between with the municipality, which then sends maintenance workers. They also encourage local residents to change their behavior for the sake of broader community life.

For example, they urge people to use the garbage bins located in larger streets and squares of the Quarter. The Christian Quarter, like the Muslim Quarter, has a very high population density but very narrow and slippery roads, making garbage pickup complicated. Typically, in residential areas, people have to leave their garbage bags outside the door of their house or compound – at a street corner or on the floor of an infrequently used alleyway. The garbage collectors come with dumpster hitched to a tractor at regular intervals but bags still pile up, causing problems with the city's notorious feral cats. There is thus great pressure on residents who must share small public spaces, and Seeds and its supporters occasionally attempt to change patterns of local behavior via social media.

Fig. 18 - Facebook post: beautifying the city before Easter

This kind of maintenance work is piecemeal, but it picks up in the weeks before a feast. During these periods, the Seeds youths can be seen all over the Quarter in matching khaki vests. They get on ladders and set up strings of lights, large crosses, and flags representing the different communities – churches, scout groups, clubs, etc. They also bring in plants and flowers and place them throughout the residential neighborhoods. The photos above accompanied a post describing a desire "to maintain (*muhafatha*) the cleanliness of the Quarter for the sake of our Lord Christ at the feast of his glorious resurrection". Caring for the community thus becomes a way of caring for Christ.

In both formal and informal settings, Seeds employs epithets of locality and rootedness alongside affectionate praise to describe one another's work for the feast. When they undertake a project, they post it on social media and identify the individuals who carried out different tasks, praising their service and referring to them as "*jadhra al-markaz*" (root of the center) "*ibn al-balad*" (son of the city) or "*ibn al-hara*" (son of the Quarter).

This, it seems to me, adds another dimension to the kind of beautification and sanctification work that Bassem and others do in the spaces around their homes. For one is not just extending the space of the home or the sacred to the public street. One is also claiming the street as local, as Christian but a social sense: the Christian community. This

resonates with recent scholarship on how men think about and express their own masculinity. Nefissa Naguib's work on Egyptian Muslim men is particularly helpful in this regard (2015). Her interlocutors perceive themselves as providers of food not just in the financial sense but as literally providing the sustenance that allows their children to grow and develop. She calls this a "nurturing" masculinity, which of course exists alongside many other forms.

Naguib's interlocutors are always referring to themselves as "ibn al-balad". Above I translated this as "son of the city" but it is more specific than that. The term "Old City" in Palestinian Arabic is "*balada al-qadima*", so the term distinguishes the old quarters from the new. Similarly, in Naguib's case, it refers to urban Cairo and used to distinguish residents of the historic quarters from newer, wealthier areas. As in Jerusalem, the Egyptian term mostly refers to working-class residents (ibid: 102, El-Messiri 1978).

It is unclear to what extent Egyptians think about their roots in the city in terms of descent, i.e. whether it matters that a family became "local" recently or over generations, but they refer to it as a lifestyle that is "*asil*", which carries descent connotations. Naguib translates this as "authentic" or "old stock" (ibid: 104) but the root of the word means "origin" and is often used to describe genealogical, religious, or national roots.

Naguib focuses on how the adjective *asil* modifies *balad*, making it an authentic neighborhood, an old neighborhood with venerable roots. But I think the symbolism is even richer than that, hinted at with the term "old stock". For the authenticity and history of the place seems to rub off on the people themselves. Naguib describes how to be a son of the neighborhood one must remain loyal to it. "[W]e stay in our place (hetta)", one man told her. "Even if I am a couple of times a week in my other shop in a chic part of town, I still have to be here in my original shop…I cannot leave" (ibid: 105).

Being baladi, then, means more than local residency. It is a lifestyle, one that is often defined and acted out in relation to food and festivity. "Food invitations and food gifts were social calibrators among my interlocutors, each being *ibn al-balad* and concerned that feasts be flamboyant displays of their generosity and enthusiasm" (ibid: 101). As in so many other parts of the region, "meat at a meal signals affluence or

festivity", a necessary part of social life – not only for status but also to create an atmosphere of joy and festivity consonant with the baladi image (ibid: 104).

There are obvious parallels in Jerusalem with what Naguib is describing (esp. Chs. 1 & 2). Here, however, I wish to extend the focus on food and hospitality to broader idioms of festivity and care among men. In Jerusalem, I often heard terms like *ibn al-balad* or *ibn al-hara* among the young men associated with Seeds of life, but not among Jerusalemites generally. Even the families living in the convents I described in Chapter 4 were more likely to speak about being Orthodox than being "locals", though there is a significant overlap between them.

Like the Egyptian men, Seeds of life youths associate their local identities with festivity. This will be clearest when I describe the Easter procession below, but it is also part of their everyday life. The space of Seeds is the square and the street, however, rather than the home. As such, though Palestinians also associate meat – or, more specifically, *tabikh*, traditional cooking – with festive occasions, it is actually the less formal meals that characterize male sociality most clearly.

Walking through the Old City around 10am one always finds men in grocery stores and shops taking a break from work to eat together, usually around a plate of hummus or *ful* – a dish made of fava beans, smashed garlic, olive oil, and lemon juice. Though one is not really expected to accept the invitation to join them, it is quite literally always given, especially if one greets those eating. Moreover, these men prepare the food and serve one another in the way that women do inside family homes.

I experienced this many times myself. When I went go to the West Bank to see friends or track down an elusive monk, I often spent the night as buses stop running rather early. Usually, I would leave in the morning, but never before eating something with my host. When I stayed in a village, it was often a man who prepared and shared breakfast with me. This same man would not prepare *tabikh*, but he was happy to serve me breakfast.

Similarly, in a neighborhood of the Quarter near where I lived, there was a small falafel and sandwich shop. Often residents from the Quarter would stop by and take a

sandwich home with them, men and women alike. But only men would actually stay there and eat "in the street". The place is not actually in the street but it has no door so those sitting "inside" converse easily with those outside, sitting on plastic chairs against the stone walls of the street. At the start of my fieldwork I would sometimes grab a sandwich on my way to this or that appointment but rarely stayed. But after some time I got to know the owner so I would sit with him or read the newspaper. Sometimes the younger men who liked to hang out in the street invited me to join them for lunch.

The owner would remain in his chair while one young man would go behind the counter to make his friends sandwiches, calling out to them when each one was ready. Then they would sit and eat. It was not a meal per se, but still a way of providing hospitality and indeed care for the others present. At the same time, the young man who went behind the counter established himself as a local, a son of the Quarter. Not just anyone was permitted to serve; he needed to be trusted, and needed to be close with both the owner and those he was serving. If I attempted to serve the kids of the Quarter I would not be allowed. I was a guest, with all the ambivalence that entailed (see Ch. 2).

Care among men, then, is associated with public spaces but within the confines of the Quarter, which is somewhat shielded from the commerce of the market streets. It is affective, certainly, and creates bonds among young men, but it also creates bonds between them and the space: they are sons, *and* they are of the Quarter.

Early in its history, Seeds of life went by the moniker "*ibna' al-[q]iyama*" (sons of the resurrection), which compounds this double identification further still. It refers both to the event of Christ's resurrection and the physical place, the Holy Sepulcher Church of the Old City. This adds an element of local identity to the Christian resurrection that the evangelicals, for example, would not make. But it is at the very center of the Seeds mission. In what follows, I will further illustrate this point with ethnography from the Holy Fire procession at Easter, the perfect convergence of people and place. In doing so, I attempt to show how young from the Quarter have appropriated an Orthodox tradition for the entire Christian community. Emphasizing its pedigree, they turn the festive nature of a Christian feast into a symbol of local continuity.

The procession of holy fire

The miracle of holy fire is celebrated annually on the Saturday before Easter: *Sebt al-Nur*, the Saturday of light. Many Christians around the world have heard of this miracle, and for them it consists of a single moment. With pilgrims, clergy, and local laity crowded in the thousands inside the church and throughout the Old City streets, the patriarch of Jerusalem enters the tomb of Christ. At the threshold of the tomb he is stripped of his vestments and mitre and enters, carrying only two bunches of thirty-three candles in each hand to mark the mortal age of Christ. He drops to his knees to pray, and according to tradition, the holy spirit appears and ignites the candles. The patriarch rises to pass the flame to the Palestinian parish priest and the other clergy through a hole in the wall. He then exits the tomb, arms outstretched in exultation. Within seconds the entire church is full of light. Pilgrims flood into the streets. Delegations wait in Ramallah and Bethlehem for a representative to bring it to them, and a plane waits in Tel Aviv to take it back to Greece.

The flame is a powerful symbol, and for most people it is the center of the feast. For Jerusalemites, however, the miraculous moment occurs several hours earlier in the residential streets of the Christian Quarter. There, the significance of Holy Saturday is not the flame, but their own role in carrying it.

On Easter Saturday of 2017, I left home early to attend the Divine Liturgy at Mar Yacoub hours before the main ceremony was to start. All night, young men of the Quarter had been drinking and singing and playing music in the square, and another group started chanting again at 6:30 AM. When I passed through the square on the way to the church, Seeds of life members had opened up a storage unit and were tossing out the t-shirts for that year's procession to local residents.

As I left, the police checkpoints had already been set up. Since the time of the previous patriarch, Irenaios, the police have had a larger presence at Easter than they used to; today they set up barricades at all of the intersections of the Quarter early in the

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morning and do not dismantle them until well after the holy fire ceremony has finished. I was let through one but when I arrived at the top of the stairs outside the Holy Sepulcher courtyard, the police refused to let me pass. I was turned away again at the foot of the street leading to the Patriarchate, but after looping all the way around the Quarter through the residential roads, I was allowed inside the central monastery. Mounting the stairs to the roof, I found a group of Palestinians and foreigners wearing lanyards displaying their permits to watch the ceremony from the rooftop. One can apply in advance for such permits, though many Jerusalemites refuse as they believe it is their right to enter the church without permission from the police.[83] A young man in a Seeds of life t-shirt sat off to the side selling popcorn, soda, and bottles of water.

At one end of the rooftop there is a stairway leading down into Mar Yacoub church. This is how the patriarch and his retinue get around the Quarter during feasts without passing through the busy streets below. Again I encountered police officers but they let me through. The liturgy was not as well-attended as it was for Palm Sunday or Great Friday or as it would be on Easter Sunday, in large part due to the checkpoints. Throughout the service, the police tramped through the courtyard, escorting European pilgrims into the Holy Sepulcher, though the ceremony would not start for several hours. At the end of the liturgy, the parish priest gave out sprigs of rosemary for us to take with us. I left the way I had come, but by now the rooftop was teeming with people. Heads of Palestinian Christian organizations, prominent Orthodox from Ramallah and the Jerusalem suburbs, and representatives from western organizations chatted as they waited for the ceremony to start.

I returned to the Quarter, where a small group of locals had become a sea of red shirts. Many of these people were not from the Quarter: they came from other neighborhoods of Jerusalem, from cities and towns in Israel, from the West Bank, and from the Palestinian diaspora flown in for the feast. There were also a few foreigners, including some NGO workers and a group of young Russian men who heard they could get into the church without permits this way. The Seeds of life members distinguished

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[83] West Bank residents need a permit to enter Jerusalem.

themselves from the rest with arm bands, headbands, and vests. They formed a cordon around the storage closet, from which they were still throwing out shirts, carefully discerning whether someone was local, or at least a Palestinian Christian, or not.

After a few minutes, some of the leaders started chanting and beating the *tabla*, a hand drum. A large man lifted another carrying a samurai sword onto his shoulders. Waving the sword, he chanted: "*Diyya, diyya, diyya!!! Shabiba messihiyya*!"[84]. This invocation marks the beginning of the procession. It is repeated over and over again as a kind of rallying cry that sets the tone of the event: festive, celebratory, and defiant. The chants alternate between those invoking Jesus and Mary and those directed at the Christians themselves. Some of the most frequent were:

> "*taghayeruuu, taghayeruuu, ahl al-[q]uds ma taghayaru*"
> (they change, they change, but the people of Jerusalem do not change)
>
> "*sayedna issa al-massih…mala'un illi ma bisih*"
> (our lord is Jesus Christ…cursed be him who does not chant)
>
> "*Laki laki laki laki…hadha nur jay a'laki*"
> (For you, for you, for you, for you [Virgin Mary]…this light comes for you)

One man would chant out three or four refrains, waving the sword while being carried back and forth through the square by his fellows. Then he would come down and another would take his place, changing the tenor of the chants and identifying the leaders of the procession. Some of these are not active with Seeds of life; one, for example, is an Orthodox man with no organizational affiliations but who has always led the holy fire procession, at least since I started attending in 2010. Similarly, the Syriac Orthodox presence is strong every year despite their small numbers, their youths carrying flags with the iconic red and gold eagle design of their community.

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[84] *Shabiba messihiyya* means "Christian youth"; "*diyya*" can mean a payment to an offended party in a dispute, implying that Christians are claiming 'payment' or recognition from unnamed others. Most, though, saw it as a generic call to attention.

Whatever their sectarian affiliation, the participants in the procession called it a "*zaffa*". In general, this term refers to a wedding procession and is a longstanding tradition in many Arab societies.[85] In Chapter 3, I showed how Seeds of life now performs a zaffa at funerals for those who die a "bad" death, i.e. because they were young, they died suddenly, as a result of violence, etc. In the case I described, the deceased young man had been unmarried, and was thus described as the "groom of heaven". His coffin was carried through the streets of the Christian Quarter to the parish church, borne and followed by young men who chanted and played the tabla, just like at a wedding.

Fig. 19 – Holy Fire zaffa

Fig. 20 – Zaffa reaches Holy Sepulcher

Here we see the culmination of the zaffa symbolism as Jesus, the husband of the Church, conquers death. After the Vespers service on Easter Friday, the parishioners of Mar Yacoub carry a "coffin" holding the icon of Christ around the Holy Sepulcher courtyard while hundreds of local Christians watch and sing the hymns along with the choir and toss rose petals on those in procession.[86] When the coffin is returned to the

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[85] On the wedding zaffa in historical perspective, see Zubaida 1987, Frenkel 2010, Rogers 1862: 90-92.
[86] Inside, the Greeks perform the same ritual at the same time using a white shroud covered in rose petals.

church, the lay trustees (*wukala'*) hold it up while the parishioners ritually pass beneath it. Here, however, the sword and the triumphant, boisterous tone of the chants accomplish something different. They link the ability of Jesus to overcome death, marked by the eternal flame of Easter Saturday, with the ability of Palestinian Christians to overcome the vicissitudes of history and persist.

Of course, when I asked the participants of the zaffa what they thought of it, they provided a range of answers. Some focused on the holy fire as a miracle, while others spoke of it as good fun. Some clearly enjoyed the opportunity to push past police barricades in a relatively safe environment. But by far the most common response was the conviction that the procession was a *Jerusalemite* tradition, and as such the participants were protecting (*nihmi*) or preserving (*nakhfaz*) that tradition and its local character.[87]

Fig. 21 – Procession of Christ's icon/bier on Easter Friday

For nearly an hour the chanting was contained inside the residential streets of the Quarter with the commercial streets, al-Khanqa and Christian Quarter Road, blocked off

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[87] Bernard Sabella, a Palestinian Christian sociologist, describes the Holy Fire as "a reflection of the community's determination to maintain itself as a viable entity" (2000: 392).

by the police. At a certain point, the crowd began moving towards the first barricade. As always, the Seeds men started arguing with the police about removing the barricades and letting them through. As if choreographed in advance, the police refuse to budge, the Palestinian leaders insist, while at the same time trying to hold back the crowd. The police know they will eventually have to let it through, but still they push back, waiting until the last minute. But the crowd cannot be held back: smashed into the narrow space of an alleyway, hundreds of people push forwards and try to keep from getting knocked over. It was like waiting to collect the oil at St. George's tomb: sweating bodies smashed against one another, hands up in the air taking photos, clapping, chanting, and chatting.

All three times I have attended the procession the result has been the same, albeit in rather different circumstances. One year was somewhat more violent than the others, with police hitting and arresting people, while in 2017 Seeds of life mostly kept things under control. Nevertheless, even then the police were eventually overpowered by the crowd. There was never a moment when someone yelled "push!" or decided to ignore the order to wait. Rather, all of the hundreds of little steps forwards forced those at the front up against the metal, to the point that the barricades eventually toppled like a broken dam – even with the police pushing back – sending people spilling into the street.

For another forty minutes or so, the group continued chanting as they waited to pass through the next barricade, and then a final one. Each time the crowd rushed forwards beyond a barrier, the Seeds youths linked arms and formed a wall at various points in the street to stop people from pushing (and also to separate the locals from the foreigners not wearing shirts). At the final stop, the parish priest and the mukhtar, the Orthodox lay representative for Jerusalem, approached the crowd from behind the barricade, as they do each year, so that when the barricade is removed they can lead the procession into the church. All along the way, Christian shop owners and their friends stand within the threshold of their shops, watching and chanting along. When we were eventually allowed to pass, the tension was released, we were able to walk without touching anyone, and those inside the shops – including more women, older men, and children – joined the procession. A friend, Sawsan, saw me passing and accompanied me

with her sons into the church. Just before we entered, however, the Seeds of life men stopped right outside the door of the Holy Sepulcher. They turned to face the crowd, including those in the procession but also the hundreds watching from the rooftops, from tents around the courtyard, and on television. "This house…it is our house," they chanted, over and over.

We entered the church through the main entrance, passing the stone of unction, upon which Jesus' body was washed after it came off the cross, and the stairs up to the Golgotha shrine to enter the Catholicon, the central chapel of the church, which is controlled by the Greek Brotherhood. The Jerusalemite youths streamed in still playing the drums and chanting exuberantly as they walked down a narrow aisle, passing hundreds of pilgrims and locals in cordoned-off areas to the left and right. They exited the Catholicon into the rotunda beneath which is the tomb of Christ, housed in a small limestone structure called the Edicule. The procession continued around the Edicule, and with Palestinian Christians filling the space, it paused. Young people climbed the pillars and steps – and one year, the scaffolding fixed to the Edicule itself – and from these perched positions they sang out, their voices amplified by the vaulted ceiling. The pilgrims, many of whom were taken by surprise at this spectacle, watched on from behind the barricades and rows of stoic police officers. Some scowled at the drums; others smiled and clapped along; but everyone paid attention.

Finally, the majority of the red-shirted men decamped to the rooftop of Mar Yacoub to await the fire. A few leaders remained to greet the monks, police, and Palestinian onlookers they knew while one youth stationed himself with a candle near the Edicule to convey the flame to the roof. I did not join the procession inside the rotunda but remained at the door of the Catholicon, where a different procession took its place. After the youths passed through the room, members of the established Orthodox families of Jerusalem each took up a banner or *sanjaq*[88] and stood two abreast in the center aisle.

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[88] Lit. an administrative district of the Ottoman Empire, i.e. the sanjaq of Jerusalem. The term *bayraq* or "standard" is also used.

The banners each depict a different saint's icon, colored in gold for Christ against a dark red background for Lent.

Fig. 22 – Bannermen of Jerusalemite families

A signal was given and the procession began. The bannermen and the local mukhtar, George Qamar, exited the Catholicon and began their tour of the Edicule. At this point, the patriarch emerged from behind the iconostasis at the back of the Catholicon in full regalia, flanked by members of the monastic hierarchy. As he passed, pilgrims shout out "Axios" or "worthy" and kissed his vestments. The train slowly circled the Edicule three times, after which the Palestinians returned to the Catholicon while the patriarch halted directly in front of the tomb, sealed shut since morning. The lights of the church were extinguished, silencing the crowd. And the holy fire ritual began.

When the patriarch emerged from the tomb, candles lit, the runner from Seeds of Life took the flame up to the roof, where the youths join with the church scout groups, lined up outside the Patriarchate with bagpipes and drums, and together they carried the flame back to the Christian Quarter. They passed through the residential neighborhoods unimpeded by police and the residents watched and clapped. But already the energy had dissipated. People started to peel off as the procession passed their streets. It comes to an

end in a residential square, where the scouts and the Seeds made their last stand – before returning, exhausted and hungry, to their homes.

Fig. 23 – Carrying the Holy Fire

Festivity, masculinity, and care

In what follows I wish to compare the defiant masculinity displayed during the Holy Fire procession with the more custodial attitude exhibited the same young men in the residential spaces of the Quarter. Despite the apparent contrast, I suggest that both elements reflect an overarching desire to build a more positive and secure environment for Old City residents in the face of occupation, unemployment, and social stigma.

As in Chapter 4, the two aspects of what we might call "festive Christianity" are held together through the discourse of continuity and guardianship.[89] However, where previously we saw families speaking of their connection to Church property, monastics, and unrelated Palestinian neighbors in terms of kinship, here the discourse refers to space and tradition. It has also been politicized, becoming a question of survival, of defense, and of persisting through time in the face of external threats.

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[89] E.g. as the Haddad family did for the convent, the youths here make a claim to the Holy Sepulcher as "their house".

We saw something similar at Sabeel in relation to the occupation and the need for Palestinian Christians to resist it. Here the impulse to resist, (or rather, to persist) remains but the national horizon has receded. The young men of the Quarter do not speak of national solidarity; they criticize the Palestinian leadership for being corrupt, ineffectual, and for ignoring their struggle as a minority. Instead they speak of Christian continuity articulated in exclusively religious terms. Both the lines of family descent and the indexes of Palestinian culture (Jesus as a Palestinian) have dropped out of view. What has come to replace them, ironically, is Orthodox ritual.

But not all Orthodox ritual: we certainly do not see Seeds of life youths converting *en masse* back to the Orthodox Church. Nor do we see them attending Sunday liturgies in great numbers. No, it is rather the idea of the feast that has captured their imagination, and specifically the public celebration of the feast outside the walls of the church.

Many scholars of the Middle East have pointed out the significance of saints' shrines to the religious traditions of both Muslims and Christians. These discussions have been fruitful, providing insight into the nature of religious authority, oral and textual cultures, the nationalization of religious symbols, and the emergence of ascetic movements (Hammami 1994, Heo 2018, Bandak 2012). Studies of Sufism and especially *mulid* celebrations of a saint's birthday, for example, provide an interesting parallel to what we see in Jerusalem (e.g. Schielke 2012, Mittermaier 2014).

Samuli Schielke studied Egyptian mulid festivals in which the opening procession around the saint's shrine is similarly called a zaffa (2012: 55). Though the sword imagery and explicit descriptors like "the groom of heaven" are absent, women organize henna celebrations as they would for a bride; similarly, the term *farah* – lit. joy or happiness – refers colloquially to both a mulid and a wedding (ibid). But perhaps most interesting is the fact that the mulid example is the way Schielke's interlocutors appear to conflate the joy of the festival with the display of masculinity.

One such interlocutor describes mulids as "really a conspiracy to create joy…an expression of joy and suppressed feelings in an otherwise very closed society…a moment of breaking the order" (ibid: 56). Breaking the order takes many forms, from relaxed

gender norms to drinking alcohol, but it also provides an opportunity to be loud and merry in public. This was less the case inside the tents where Qur'anic recitation takes place, but outside in the streets people dance and fight and young men run through the crowd in a train, holding each other's shoulders. They share the meal served on behalf of the saint, as at other religious festivals, but for many people, the mulid is about transgression (ibid: 41-42).

This sounds a lot like the Holy Fire ceremony. Before Easter Saturday, Seeds of life often sends out notices admonishing those who participate not to spend Friday evening drinking and celebrating in the streets. This, they say, is "not an authentic custom" but rather something people made up as an excuse to become openly inebriated. Of course, the fact that such notices have to be sent out indicates the extent to which it is done, whether or not anyone believes it is an ancient tradition. For much of the night young men drank and sang and some were still drunk when the procession began the following day. This is part of the procession's appeal, because for once, the church authorities do not have complete control. It is the young, without any well-defined leader, who "own" this tradition.[90]

Schielke distinguishes mulids from celebrations associated with Ramadan, for example, by saying that the latter is mostly a family affair while the former is much more diverse – including the very pious and the profane, men and women, young and old. A similar contrast can be drawn between the procession for Mary's Dormition feast (Ch. 3), in which the presence of families predominates, and the Holy Fire procession. Seeds of life performs its zaffa at both events but at the Dormition feast they are not the focus of the event and this fact diminishes its electric effect. The main focus is rather the return of the Virgin's icon to the Old City after nine days in her tomb outside the city walls. The young men lead the procession in their usual style but the residents lined up along the streets of the Christian Quarter look past them, so to speak, waiting for the icon to appear. When it

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[90] A Church official confirmed this: He said that the Brotherhood opposes playing drums inside the church that the historical precedent means "we cannot do anything about it."

does, they rush out to kiss it. Others, carrying their own household icons, hold them out for pilgrims to kiss as they pass.

So the atmosphere at the Holy Fire is distinct from other occasions even though it is associated with them. Before turning onto the descending street leading to the Holy Sepulcher courtyard, the procession is met by the local parish priest and the mukhtar, symbols of traditional authority. The Seeds of life members see this as recognition of their own authority and welcome it, but the crowd largely ignore the presence of formal representatives. Many of them may well leave the procession never knowing that the mukhtar was there. One year, a large young man from the Quarter managed to accidentally punch the parish priest as the latter attempted to join the procession. The priest appeared in church the following week casted and smarting.

Other anthropologists have noted a similar use of festivals and processions to publicly exhibit a particular kind of masculine subjectivity. Julie Peteet emphasized that for young Palestinians, being beaten and even tortured by Israeli soldiers in prison became a kind of rite of passage through which boys were recognized as men (1994). Interestingly, in those cases, what was emphasized was not usually the ability to respond to violence, to resist, but the ability to withstand the pain, to persevere.

Funeral and memorial processions for martyrs similarly establish the suffering and death of an individual in social and moral terms, though the meaning people associate with these terms varies considerably (Allen 2006). Carolyn Ramzy writes about the efforts of Egyptian Copts to use the history of violence against their community as a galvanizing force. In particular their use of hymns, Christian songs, and processions demonstrate their desire to reclaim a public identity for Christian Egyptians, an identity they feel has been lost since the Islamic revival began in the 1980s (2014). In her case, the processions of a Cairene choir attempting to extend Christian mulid festivals into Muslim spaces involve participants proselytizing villagers, handing out pamphlets and cassettes while walking in a military-like formation in anticipation of a negative response (ibid: 214, 221-223). These processions are not so much designed to bring Muslims into the faith as they are to

reclaim a place for Christians in the national imagination (cf. Bandak 2014). "Our saints are *Egyptian*," they seem to be saying, and should be appreciated by all Egyptians.

The historical experience of Egyptian Copts is very different from that of Palestinian Christians and violence between Christians and Muslims is rare in modern Palestinian history. But the centrality of suffering, martyrdom, and remembrance of events like the Maspero massacre[91] through ritual procession resonates powerfully with the Old City of Jerusalem. Indeed, a week before the holy fire procession described above, the annual Palm Sunday parade took place on the day of two Da'esh (ISIS)-claimed church bombings in Egypt.

That day, the atmosphere was of both festivity and mourning. On the one hand, Seeds had set up a sound stage with the cousin of one of the leaders singing traditional hymns accompanied by an ambitious techno baseline. Enormous banners hung from the ramparts and palm fronds from the street lights. Kids passed out bottles of water with the Seeds logo printed on them. At the same time, the Seeds members wore their matching vests along with shoulder-mounted radios. A couple of them even wore secret service-style plastic coils fixed to an earpiece so they could coordinate with police in manning the barricades that separate the crowd from the street. They stood at the entrance of the Old City carrying black and white banners:

> The sons of the resurrection cry out for truth and for justice, and demand that the international community respond to the killing of innocents. We are a people that dies [but] our cross does not die.

Similar messages directed at Da'esh could be seen elsewhere in the procession, including among the Egyptian Copts who joined the Palm Sunday procession as pilgrims, and they reflect a concern for Christians as a regional minority that has become more strident in recent years. Friends and informants in the Quarter regularly criticized the American stance on Russia, which they saw as an Orthodox nation protecting minority Christians in

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[91] When the Egyptian army opened fire on Coptic protestors after the 2011 revolution, killing 28 (Ramzy 2015).

Syria. Posts online showed Putin entering a pool at Epiphany, bare-chested with monks standing all around holding crosses and icons, or the Russian military marching into Syria carrying standards of the Virgin Mary. One of the leaders of the Holy Fire procession decided to forego the typical Christ t-shirt for one depicting Vladimir Putin's face.

This minoritarian sensibility appears in other guises as well. Old City Christians often for example add a final phrase to the Lord's Prayer and other prayers that refer to the Holy Trinity. Where every Christian church would normally say "the father, the son, and the holy spirit," the trend reflected by Seeds of Life is to add "the one God" at the end. This is a response to criticism Christians sometimes hear from Muslim friends and acquaintances, that they worship Mary or Jesus as separate gods, which sometimes makes them feel it necessary to emphasize their monotheism publicly.

Feelings of insecurity about being a minority also manifest themselves in everyday acts of boundary maintenance in the Quarter. For example, I was often encouraged by the young men of the Quarter to patronize Christian shops rather than Muslim ones. Once, I went out into the street to hail the gas man, who walks around yelling "gaaas, gaaas, gaaas" with a cart full of stove tanks. I found the cart and waited for the man to return from a house nearby. Two Seeds members from the neighborhood approached me. "Why do you take [gas] from him? Let me call Tony…he has a business now, for the Quarter, and his stuff is better." I told them I bought from this guy because he sells older model West Bank tanks, which is what I had. Tony sells newer model ones from Israel that are not compatible and cost more. They weren't listening and eventually Tony came over with his morning coffee. After seeing for himself that his tanks were incompatible, he said, "You really should upgrade. With this, you'll have to get a new one every month," implying the tanks I buy are only filled halfway (because the vendor is untrustworthy). Tony left and I went back to the other vendor, who is a Muslim.

The young men who called Tony for me clearly wanted to send business to their friend, but they were also saying that he is from here, the Christian Quarter, and therefore a Christian. Not because he's a cousin or a Catholic or because he's cheap; he's just "better." This is a solidarity among Christians in the Old City who increasingly see

themselves as Christians, rather than as either Latins and Orthodox or Palestinians and Arabs. It is reflected in the rash of new businesses opening in the Quarter during and after my fieldwork, hummus and sandwich shops and a new barber, all run by young local Christians. This would be unremarkable except for the fact that the street already hosts the two most famous hummus shops in the Old City and two barber shops, but they are run by Muslims. When the new places open, Seeds and its supporters inevitably post about them using the euphemistic language of "our" friend, and "our" community.

This is a complicated problem that is not the subject of this chapter or the thesis, but the sense of being a beleaguered minority partly informs the masculine atmosphere of the Holy Fire ceremony. It was not the kind of normative authority one sees in a formal setting, for example a dinner in which the men are served before the women, and the old before the young. It is a marked masculinity, a way of specifically drawing attention to the body, of taking up space and being recognized for it.

The sword waved in wedding processions is said to be an old Bedouin tradition in which the bride is symbolically "taken" from her natal family, though in reality the whole thing was arranged in advance (cf. Bloch 1992). In the context of Easter, there is no bride but still a need for a show of force, for demanding a presence in the church's most famous feast. The drums, the chants, the climbing on pillars and scaffolding, all add to this sense of physical presence.

But as in the Coptic example, it is not masculinity alone but a specific way of relating to Christianity that the Seeds of life youths articulate with their bodies and voices. In a way, just as a man who dies young is called the "groom of heaven" in his funeral zaffa, so the youths as a group become the symbolic partner of Christ, a "bride" in the sense of the Church (which is often described as a bride in scripture). If we wish to push the metaphor further, one could point out that the Seeds men often relinquish their swords to Israeli police before crossing the threshold of the church. This parallels the zaffa tradition in Yemen, for example, where upon the arrival of the bridal party at his home, the groom's father relinquishes his dagger to his wife, who holds it below the door so that the bride may step over it (Dresch 1989: 45).

These links to Palestinian and Arab marriage customs are significant for our understanding of the procession and its relationship to broader Palestinian society. However, it is also important to recognize how the context of the Christian feast changes the meaning of the zaffa. For here the idea of marriage between Christ and the Church is largely implicit. At funerals, the term "groom" is chanted out loud, but here it is not. The emphasis is rather on a different continuity between the community, the city, and the collective past.

We can see the signs of this continuity marked on their very bodies. In recent decades, young men have started to wear overt signs of Christianity in a way that, according to Old City residents, they did not before the Second Intifada. This includes crucifixes, Orthodox prayer bracelets[92] (*komboskini* in Greek), tattoos, and even crosses shaved into a haircut.
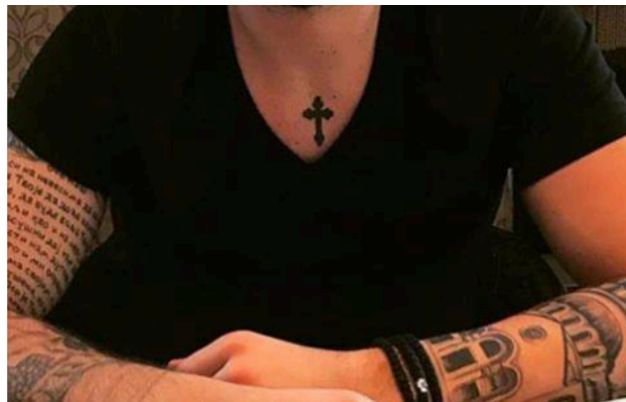
Fig. 24 – Facebook post: iconography of the body

The above post expresses a desire to look past the physical cross to the spiritual one, but the photo provides a view of faith's physicality. The young man has a cross tattoo on his chest, as well as tattoos of a domed church on one arm and what looks like Syriac script – the liturgical language of the Syriac Orthodox Church – on the other. He also wears three Orthodox prayer bracelets on his wrist. Clearly, his embodiment of Christian symbolism is shared as an example of the external sign reflecting movement of the spirit within.

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[92] Typically made of knotted wool by monks.

This kind of embodiment can mean many things to different people, but in the context of the Holy Fire it takes on a rather specific connotation. The chants emphasize continuity: one of them literally states that "the people of Jerusalem will not change", while another emphasizes that "we will not change our feasts". These chants, clearly describing the residents of the Old City themselves, alternate with praise for Christ and the Virgin Mary who are invoked as protectors and mediators. Finally, when we consider the minoritarian attitude of Seeds of life and the sense of being a persecuted minority, the physical nature of the procession makes more sense. It is not only a feast, a joyous occasion marking the descent of the holy spirit upon the empty tomb. It is the descent of the holy spirit on Jerusalem and the people who live there. As the Seeds of life spokesman stated in his speech to the patriarch: "we will become guardians...and strike with an iron fist anyone who attempts to tamper with our feasts." The physicality and marked masculinity of the procession thus brings us back to the idiom of guardianship raised earlier in the thesis – the idea that Old City Christians are a part of the Church who must take care of it, protect it, and keep it going.

Nurturing Christianity

Towards the end of Chapter 4 I described a resident of an Old City convent who criticized the Palestinian Orthodox who lead the campaign against the Patriarchate. They are not "involved in the daily life of the Church", he said; he would respect them more if they started "cleaning the church and preparing coffee...it would make a difference." He contrasted the activists with residents in the Old City who are ambivalent about the Church hierarchy, who feel it incumbent upon them to "protect" the Church and "gather it together."

The families I described in that chapter are not unequivocal fans of Seeds of life. Many Orthodox who are active in church life are wary of individuals they see hanging around in the streets, and as I mentioned earlier, they tell stories about the family

members of various young people as a metric of how he or she will turn out. In the case of Seeds of life, the reputation of the families and individuals involved is often negative.

When Seeds was being criticized for taking money from the Jerusalem municipality and the Patriarchate, many people saw its members as unscrupulous, using the premise of helping the Old City in order to line their pockets. They were also accused of collaborating with the police. At one Holy Fire procession, an Orthodox activist and strong critic of the Patriarchate turned to me as we watched the Seeds of life leaders attempting to hold back the crowd. "This is what the occupation has come to," he said. "The police stand by while Palestinians do their job for them."

This is an important and valid criticism, but it also expresses the activist's class position – middle-class, from outside the Old City. Inside the walls, the attitude about Seeds is more ambivalent. A good example comes from a young Orthodox resident who is critical of Seeds taking municipal and Patriarchate funds but still participates in some of its programs:

> Until now [the activists believe] that these people, all they are doing is just for the hundred dollars that they are getting from the Patriarchate… [but] it is not about the money. It has never been about the money. For them their duty is holy…I respect them in a way because they are very involved in the life of the Old City. Although they are not very religious and not very smart [for taking money] I still respect them because they do what they think is the right thing to do.

One will not see Seeds of life holding a candlelight vigil or a protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza, for example, or even home demolitions in East Jerusalem. When on rare occasions they do launch some kind of protest, it is always for something immediately affecting the Christian Quarter. During the 2020 Covid lockdown, for example, the Seeds youths refused to remain in their homes for Easter. They held their zaffa against the orders of the police (and were heavily fined for it).

This takes us back to a central point of Chapter 4, that Old City families are connected to the Orthodox Church in a way that makes them feel responsible for protecting it. In a sense, they see themselves as its custodians, inhabiting its houses,

praying at its shrines, and maintaining its traditions so that they can all be passed on to the next generation. Seeds of life appears in that context as an imperfect but useful intervention to that end. Maintaining the Quarter makes people less inclined to emigrate, and more inclined to participate in social life. These positive effects exist alongside the negative ones, and for Old City residents the benefit appears to be worth the cost, at least for the moment.

Earlier I described Naguib's study of Egyptian men as highlighting the extent to which masculinity is tied to male conceptions of care. As Suad Joseph has pointed out, such desires are certainly compatible with gender hierarchies and should not be seen to subvert them or ignore forms of patriarchy (Joseph 1999). Such desires do complicate those hierarchies in interesting ways, however, and add a level of depth to our understanding that has not always been provided in studies of Arab kinship and gender relations.

Naguib's book focuses on individual men as well as families, but it also provides an interesting analysis of young male activists in the Muslim Brotherhood who deliver food to Egyptians in Cairo struggling with the rising price of staple foods. The young activists see this work as an extension of the male duty to provide for one's family, a way of helping those who struggle to remain providers. But they do not just give food; they also intervene in wider social relations related to food and subsistence. On one occasion, Naguib watched as a bread line started to devolve as the large trays began to appear.

> The crowd got loud; people pushed and shoved…Desperate faces. It was a painful sight…Out of nowhere, young men with trimmed beards walked over. One walked into the store; the others stood outside and graciously greeted the shopkeeper. The crowd calmed down (Naguib 2015: 65).

When Naguib asked who these men were, someone responded "Muslim Brotherhood food vigilantes". The Brotherhood has a negative reputation among many Egyptians, but when she asked the activists themselves what they were doing they argued that they did not want to incite violence but rather to "calm down people" (ibid). They attempt to keep

food in the hands of families and away from the traders who bribe shopkeepers in order to sell bread in the streets at higher prices (ibid).

The Brotherhood activists thus attempt to facilitate direct access to bread for people who need it, and to keep people from fighting in the process. They "watch over" Egyptian society and attempt to win people to their cause not by proselytizing but by providing food and security (ibid: 66; see also Davis & Robinson 2012). "When people see that we care," one brother told Naguib, "they join the Brotherhood" (ibid: 70).

The Seeds of life men also deliver food to residents in need, who are often the elderly. But the discourse of "watching over" extends the notion of providing food to many other aspects of social life, including the garbage pickup and street maintenance, planting trees, installing lights and ornaments on the city's walls and archways, and encouraging young people to participate in religious festivals. They are also viewed with ambivalence, as the Muslim Brothers are, but residents still appreciate them.

Seeds of life differs from the Muslim Brotherhood in that communal survival, not piety, is their central concern. But the discourse of becoming guardians, of putting themselves in between the community and the threats to its continuity is a major part of their narrative. And it helps us to discern the connection between the somewhat aggressive masculinity of the Holy Fire ceremony and the more "nurturing" aspect we see within the Quarter.

Blue bones and holy fire: descent and continuity

At the start of the thesis, I described a young Orthodox man called Khaled from a prominent Jerusalemite family. Looking at an Israeli checkpoint outside the Old City, he told me that Orthodox Christians were called the "blue-boned" during the Ottoman era because the iron shackles they wore in prison stained their skin. The history of persecution and perseverance is something Orthodox Palestinians often spoke about, both in relation to their own family histories and in relation to the Church as a whole. In Chapters 1 and 2, I showed how these histories are embedded into the liturgical structure

of the Orthodox tradition and the legal framework of the Ottoman Status Quo. In both cases, the idea of re-living the experiences of previous generations is paramount, and a great variety of religious rituals, objects, hymns, documents, and authorities mediate these experiences in important ways.

We have also seen how the ecumenical organizations on the one hand and the evangelical ones on the other have responded to the historical circumstances of contemporary Palestinian society in part by mounting a critique of Orthodoxy, changing in the process the way many Christians think and speak about the relationship between religion, culture, and politics. In this chapter, it appears that in some ways Seeds of life has returned to Orthodoxy, if only for the feasts. They have also taken up the theme of persecution and connected it to the deep history of Palestine going back two thousand years. But their use of the feast and the way it relates to that history is different from Khaled's in a significant respect: it reclaims the idea of Orthodox descent, but only as a ritual category. The family – and its spatial and temporal connection to the Church – has dropped out of view.

It appears that the political and class environment of the Old City from 1948 onwards weakened the link between family genealogies and the genealogy of the Church, and then the ecumenical and evangelical organizations filled the void with a powerful message of Christian unity beyond the liturgical, theological, and historical structures of any single Church. The result pleases virtually no one: ecumenical leaders decry Seeds' turn away from the national struggle, while evangelicals lament their return to Orthodox "superstition". Meanwhile, the Orthodox are suspicious of those who claim to support the Orthodox faith, "our" Orthodox faith, Seeds of life calls it, without being born or baptized in the Church. Some see them as traitors.

Nevertheless, in the confluence of many social and religious forces something new has been born. In this chapter, I have tried to describe what that is, discussing the emergence of Seeds of life in relation to the evangelicals who helped the organization develop on the one hand and the literature on masculinity, care, and religious feasts/feasting on the other. I divided the organization's work and value to the Christian

Quarter in two. First, I showed how the everyday maintenance work performed by the youths of Seeds of life indicates an extension of the custodial ethic we saw in Chapter 4 beyond the confines of the home or the convent, indexed by Bassem's icon corner in the street and young men serving food to one another and preparing the Quarter before a feast. I then showed how the zaffa structure used to celebrate the great feasts inspires a more aggressive, physical attitude towards Church, state, and society.

Conclusion

Change in continuity

In the 1920s, a Palestinian doctor called Tawfiq Canaan travelled the countryside documenting popular religious practices. In Jerusalem, he recorded a story recounted by George Qurt, the grandfather of Nora Kort from Wujoud (Ch. 4), about his own father and grandfather. In the story, the two men were ploughing the land outside their house, just beyond the Old City walls.

> [T]hey rested at midday, stretching themselves under an olive tree, which was known afterwards as Zetunit el-Hadr. Both fell asleep. St George appeared to the grandfather and ordered him: "get up and build my sanctuary, you will find the door at such a spot." Instead of getting up, the grandfather wrapped himself better in his cloak, thinking that it was only a dream. But the saint repeated his request and at last said: "You both shall remain dumb, until my sanctuary is built." Frightened, the man got up, aroused his son, and – behold – both were dumb. Next day the work was begun and they, indeed, found at the described spot the opening of a cave. To their astonishment and that of all spectators the calf which they had lost a year [earlier]…was found in the cave, well-grown and fed. Straw, barley and water were brought to him in a miraculous way by St. George. They found also the following inscription: "…Here is the place of the great saint among the martyrs, George clad with victories" (Canaan 1927: 120-121).

When the shrine was built, the men's speech was miraculously restored. From that point on, the family and the shrine were linked as a single household. The family maintained the shrine and in return, the saint maintained the family – e.g. by protecting their calf. As it has throughout the thesis, the link between father, son, and saint emerged out of the landscape, in a cave and under *zaytunat al-khader*, "the olive tree of St. George".

In 1948, however, Israeli forces confiscated the property and the family was forced to flee. Some of its members, including Nora, remained in the country while others emigrated. In Chapter 4, we saw how some of the objects from the house's shrine became a part of the Wujoud museum, which marks both the absence of the Palestinian family, as a dedication to those who lost their homes, and its enduring presence before the war.

During my fieldwork, I was working at Wujoud when some of Nora's relatives from the diaspora visited. One young man in his twenties called Tariq did not speak Arabic well and had spent little time in Palestine/Israel. One day, however, as he and I cleared plates from a Wujoud lunch, he mentioned wanting to visit his family home. I never saw him again but the next time I was at Wujoud, Nora told me that he went on his own to the property, which has been converted into an Israeli cultural center. When he arrived, he told a staff member that they were in his house, not theirs, after which he was apparently followed around the grounds until his departure. Eventually he returned to Nora's house in East Jerusalem. He told her that he wanted to return to Jerusalem and to start learning Arabic.

Continuity and change

Tariq's experience speaks across the breach of 1948. The war took away his family home and its sacred legacy. As a result, he never lived in the house and could not remember it in his own life experience. His visit was thus not simply a return to the past but also something new: an imagination of the future.

Many refugee families keep objects and substances from their former homes: a house key, a bit of earth, a family heirloom. These items help to maintain a link to a place and to the ancestral past broken by the Nakba. They have no obvious religious value, however. What matters is the link to a family, place, and society, a link that helps establish a past and create a future. So what difference does St. George make?

In Chapter 7, I described a former Jerusalemite who travelled all the way from Australia just to carry his family banner in the Easter procession. Again, this man's concern was more for his family continuity than it was for the Church. But for some reason, the Church procession helped him to demonstrate that continuity.

Over and over again in this thesis we have seen the idioms, objects, rituals, and personalities of the Orthodox tradition playing this role. My suggestion is that for this

man, the historical continuity of Orthodoxy frames his experience of rupture in the recent past.

The same could be said of Nora and Tariq. In Chapter 4, I described the process through which Palestinian families come to donate property to the Church, fearing that selling to an individual could lead to its takeover by settlers. Here as well, the political context provides the immediate impetus to act. But while the choice to donate came from the political threat, the choice to donate *to the Church* came from somewhere else.[93] In the case of the Wujoud house, it came from a longstanding reciprocity between the family and the Greek monastery. The patriarch's decision to hand over the property to Nora extended this relationship further, and she infused the building with the traumatic history of her own family, indexed by the handwritten Bible and cross from her great-great-grandfather's chapel. I do not know what inspired Tariq, her young relative, to finally visit the family house but I think Nora's memorial to the home had something to do with it.

For many Palestinians, references to historical continuity, indigeneity, and rootedness are closely tied to their experiences of dislocation, dispossession, and occupation, as well as the state-propagated discourse that Israel is the ancestral and national homeland of the Jewish people. The erasure of Palestinian belonging clearly requires a response, one which Palestinian politics, history, and art help to provide. At the same time, my research suggests that references to continuity also provide a way of incorporating the recent past into a deeper sense of historicity.

When a family erects a shrine to a saint next to their home, the shrine may mean many things to each individual but it also roots the house in the land in a particularly powerful way. The house in this case is not just a building; one cannot simply move into another. St. George appeared at that house, took care of that family, and will forever be associated with that piece of land. Even today, though the cultural center does not acknowledge the family's ownership rights, it does recognize the saint. Here is an excerpt from the website:

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[93] I am rephrasing Sahlins on kinship: "it may be in the nature of agricultural production that father and son *cooperate*, but it is not in the nature of agricultural production that *father* and *son* cooperate" (1976: 9).

In a source dated 1863, the building is described as the home of a Muslim family that rented it from the Greek Orthodox Church some 140 years earlier. There, for a small fee, the owners permitted Christians to enter to observe a variety of miracles, including the chain of St. George…to which any insane person chained would be cured…The miraculous chain is no longer there, but many individuals obsessed by a love of music, theater, and poetry regard it as their cultural home (KSCH ND).

Here an Israeli institution with every incentive not to draw attention to the past nevertheless maintains the presence of the saint – to inspire those "obsessed" by music – even as it erases the Qurt family history. Something about these saints clings to the land.

The difference Orthodoxy makes

Gillian Feeley-Harnik's epigraph to the Introduction, that "the creation and transmission of history is a ritual act", refers in part to the uneven way in which history is bestowed on different kinds of people and the fact that not all people have history in the same way (1978). Ritual establishes who is allowed to have it and who is not. But the point can be taken further. Historicity itself is variable. The pastness of the past is an open question.

Palmié and Stewart (2016) have shown how such variable experiences of the past are in tension with the historicist tradition in which most academic research is conducted. Historicism, they note, developed in the West as a view of history in which linear chronology, the independence of past and present, and the relationship between cause and effect are assumed from the outset (ibid: 210). Breaks in the chain of historical progression are treated with suspicion. Palmié and Stewart quote Linnaes: "'Nature does not make jumps'", he said, to which they add, "Nor does history in its secular, historicist sense" (ibid: 215).

Continuity is the baseline assumption not just for history or anthropology (Robbins 2007), but for all natural science. In semiotic terms, icons cannot be made into

indexes by mere charismatic pronouncement. An unbroken chain of evidence is needed." (ibid).

This brings us back to the question of religious difference. The examples the authors give of ruptures that defy this requirement for an unbroken chain are often religious in nature: Melanesian revelation, Greek saints, Sakalavan ancestors. When historians and social scientists view these events, they all too often classify them as "religious" and therefore not historical at all: they only appear to emerge out of the past but in fact occur in the present, in the minds and bodies of the religious (ibid: 220).

An approach to historicity that appreciates the "varieties of historical experience" (Palmié & Stewart 2019) is crucial to understanding Palestinian Orthodox claims of Christian descent. I would suggest, however, that another intervention is also necessary, for it is not just continuity which forms the baseline of Western historicism, but continuity with an exception.

Christian exceptionalism is one of the myths upon which modernity has been built, and the rupture it represents – between the Early Church and Rome, Europe and Byzantium, the West and the Rest – is constantly being reproduced. Historians often attempt to complicate and question the narrative of Europe's march towards Enlightenment but the modern difference returns, again and again (Lord Smail & Shryock 2013). Very frequently, that difference is framed in Christian terms (Hann 2011).[94] The fact that scholars in many disciplines including anthropology continue to align Christianity with a break from the past and a break from the family means that the question requires further consideration.

Between the continuity of history and the rupture of modernity sits the Palestinian Orthodox tradition. For centuries, Western Christians have viewed the Orthodox with skepticism and Jerusalem as "the swarming of sects about the corpse of religion" (Robson 2011: 44). To them, Orthodoxy was firmly of this world, its agents jealously guarding the

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[94] This extends well beyond anthropology or history to include Hegel's impossible religion (See Cannell 2005, 2006: 14-15), Nietzsche's slave morality (1969), Weber's Protestant ethic (2001), and Foucault's confessional self (1990).

holy sites with their lives and treating them as their possessions. This view still prevails today among a great many non-Orthodox pilgrims, visitors, and residents in the city.

My emphasis throughout the thesis on the descent relationships at the center of Palestinian and Greek Orthodoxy may be taken by some as further evidence of the Church's backwardness. It may also appear to some anthropologists and scholars of the Middle East that focusing on descent further entrenches the colonial and Orientalist view of Arab kinship as especially rigid, patriarchal, and ahistorical. Indeed, drawing on Edward Said and Johannes Fabian, Loring Danforth has argued that anthropologists interested in cultural continuity often use the past as a device for asserting power over the people they study, for placing a certain people in the past rather than the present (1984: 54-55). Danforth is interested in the Greek context and the search for ancient origins he discerns among scholars of contemporary Greece. A similar search is often made, however, about and by Palestinians – in relation to the Bible, Canaanite society, and religious practices that appear pre-Christian or pre-Islamic. Danforth's critique, like Robbins', is important: be it folklorists or the Comaroffs, scholars need to pay attention to social change and how change occurs not only through economic and political shifts but in all social domains, including religion and kinship (cf. McKinnon & Cannell 2013).

Nevertheless, when it comes to descent, the critique of continuity allows us to jump out of one fire only to land in another. By associating Christianity with change, and a change rooted in a break with the past, we end up re-enforcing the ideological narrative of Christian difference so central to the conceptual maintenance of modernity. It is therefore not enough to stress that Christians who practice witchcraft or sacrifice animals to ancestors are really Christians, or that the past is really past. The significance of a particular practice, experience, or idea varies according to the social context, Christian or otherwise. In the Palestinian case, as I believe I have shown, the past is bound up with the social domains associated with it, including kinship reckoned through descent.

I suggest that Palestinian Orthodox Christianity places emphasis on continuity of a different order. Descent does not imply stasis or even a single form of patriarchal, procreative authority. A Christianity that is transmitted not only through the spirit but also

through the land and the body, that can be inherited, is just as subject to change as one defined by a flash of divine presence. The thesis chapters thus indicate specific ways in which change can occur *through* idioms of descent rather than in opposition to them.

Throughout the thesis I show Orthodox Christians describing how their tradition accumulates history and how different points in time are located on the landscape itself – in the form of saints' shrines, ritual objects, hymnal verses, and family homes. I show how in so many areas of social life, the unit of the family merges with that of the Church in historically specific and materially concrete ways. The practice of hospitality is extended through the language of religious law, imbuing lay relationships with a new formality while also drawing the monastic hierarchy into the social. The regeneration of the patrilineage in rituals of burial and memorial merge with the larger lineage of the saints through acts of domesticity, care, and feeding. The transmission of authority, relatedness, and ancestry is linked to the passing down of divine presence through residence and custodianship of the Church body – its houses, convents, streets, and cemeteries.

The chapters of Part 2 relate this configuration of Orthodox descent relationships to broader forces in Palestinian society. They provide a narrative of what has happened to the Orthodox community and how its religious life is bound up with political and economic changes. They also throw the uniqueness of Orthodoxy into relief through comparison with non-Orthodox movements that emerged in the wake of occupation, war, and neoliberalism. Each of these bears striking similarity with the Orthodox sense of human and divine kinship. They all, in different ways, employ idioms of descent to express their relationship to prophets and saints of the land. This does not make them the same, however: even Seeds of life, which, more than the others, has wholeheartedly embraced the Orthodox Church and its role as the guardian of tradition, presents a radically different perspective from the Orthodoxy of Part 1. But crucially, it is not evangelical idioms of faith and love or ecumenical idioms of nation and liberation that express this difference. It is a new understanding of descent.

Orthodox Christians like Khaled, who spoke of his Ottoman blue bones, attend the Holy Fire and other events alongside Seeds of life. Unlike them, he takes the holy flame to

the cemetery after the ceremony. He visits the saints' shrines and feasts with his family; he keeps icons in his home; he speaks of his filial ancestors in relation to the history of the land and the Church. The young men of Seeds of Life developed their language of custodianship and care for the Church through their experiences living in the Old City. Despite not always being baptized Orthodox, they "carry" Orthodoxy through their processions, through living in Church homes, and through maintenance of the Quarter community. Something about them is Orthodox even if they know nothing of theology and never step foot in a Church. They are not the same as Khaled, but they have developed a new kind of continuity nonetheless.

The difference Orthodoxy makes is thus not only its historicity, for the relationship to the past is more than temporal. It is its emphasis on descent, a concept that places Christians in relation to the past but also to monastics, to space and place, and to a particular understanding of relatedness. This difference is significant both for Jerusalemite society and for anthropology. In both realms, Palestinian Orthodoxy demonstrates that descent is not only Palestinian but also Christian, not only human but also divine. I therefore hope that this ethnography contributes to the comparative study of both Christianity and descent-based kinship, indicating that they are not antithetical after all. On the contrary, for Palestinian Christians, descent is the medium of faith.

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