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Past Matters - Examining the Role of Cultural Heritage in the Construction of Palestinian National Identity

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Abstract

The cultural heritage of Palestinians is one aspect of collective memory that remains visible yet is perpetually overwritten by other narratives and other meanings. The American archaeologist Albert Glock argued that external powers have attempted to control Palestine for nearly 4,000 years and, as a result, Palestinians have been forced to flee into exile or bargain for survival with these powers in order to gain historical and cultural fulfillment. At the heart of this is the notion that the Palestinian people, as an ethnic and national community, have been disassociated from their past and restricted in the development of an independent, indigenous cultural heritage narrative.

Yet, today Palestinians are building unique heritage narratives that commingle the history of a distant past with the political strife of present-day occupation and displacement. The result is that Palestinian cultural heritage is actively becoming integrated within the construction and maintenance of Palestinian national identity rather than being entirely subjected to the goals and desires of American, European and Israeli scholars seeking to reaffirm decidedly Judeo-Christian narratives. Based on ethnographic field research conducted between 2004 and 2006, this paper will explore how Palestinians are actively constructing heritage narratives that infuses past with present and ultimately wrest control of Palestinian cultural heritage from external powers.

Nationalizing the Past in a Stateless State

Nationalism as a form of collective identity, or "nation-ness", is not a fixed reality based on natural boundaries or

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historical unity; rather, this form of collective identity is an imagined or forced production by populations searching for a means to distinguish themselves from other populations bound within a nation-state structure (Anderson 1991: 6). The power of these imagined collective identities can be demonstrated by the fact that most individuals within such a grouping will never meet their fellow members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their shared identity (Anderson 1991: 6). This collective identity, and for that matter collective memory, is the result of an active process of construction on behalf of the community itself and the individuals who comprise the community. Much of a community's life becomes involved in defining a collective story of common origins that serves to transcend the particular biography of each individual in favor of the group narrative (Azaryahu and Kook 2002: 199). The past provides the symbolic and iconic elements that nations and communities latch onto in order to substantiate their constructed collective identities and memories.

Archaeological and cultural heritage is but one tool used to foster and construct collective identities and collective memories of the past. It is argued that the close ties between collective identity, collective memory and cultural heritage is based upon the demands of communities searching for evidence to support the existence of a widely accepted past that is perpetually learned and propagated (Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1996: 3). The role of research focused on cultural heritage, specifically in terms of collective identity and collective memory, has several uses, the most pertinent being how archaeology legitimizes the territorial boundaries of the community and subsequently affirms a sense of collective identity within these legitimized territorial boundaries.

The majority of nationalist traditions in the cultural heritage research are oriented towards the construction of collective identities at the nation-state level and function to provide a cohesive agent for these populations (Trigger 1984: 358). Within the realm of cultural heritage research,

archaeology is a fundamental and unique institution for communities attempting to link their present collective identity to historic and prehistoric communities. This struggle to connect contemporary communities with historical and heritage legacy becomes bound within an essentially political processes of decisions, calculations and negotiations that strive to manipulate the past in such a manner so that it provides the ideological and existential justifications for action in the here and now. The broader nexus between politics and science is inhabited by disciplines dedicated to the study of the past because they serve the state as managers of historic narrative, knowledge and prestige. In particular, the utilization of archaeology is beneficial to nation-states because they are often uniquely situated for possessing the necessary apparatuses to support the requisite services of elite specialists (i.e. trained and accredited archaeologists) who produce and control the past (Gero 1985: 342).

Many modern nation-states have in the past, and continue in the present to encourage archaeologists to engage with frameworks geared towards national collective identities, devoting considerable financial assets to their advancement (cf. Arnold 1999; Diaz-Andreu 2002; Fowler 1987; Gero 1989; Petersen 2005; Trigger 1984: 1989). The investment of tremendous financial and scholarly resources in the archaeological search of a national collective past benefits the state by offering an official version of the past, confirming important aspects of national collective identity and denying a voice to alternative claims (Whitelam 1996: 18). This "heritage industry" often works to package and sell the past as a commodity, both figuratively and literally, which can enable both dominate and, increasingly, subordinated communities to utilize the market of heritage (Hodder 1990: 14).

As a mechanism for producing collective history and identity, heritage research is crucial in establishing links between modern populations and the territories they occupy. Once established boundaries are defined then specific populations can claim ownership to particular parcels of

land. The legitimizing the territorial boundaries is particularly vital for populations struggling to connect with lands that hold cultural, social and/or religious significance (Newman 2001: 236). Typically, these communities attempt to create a master commemorative narrative highlighting a commonality of the past and legitimizing aspirations for a shared territory and destiny (Zerubavel 1995: 214). The successive strata uncovered in archaeological excavations become the "proof" of national authenticity and a powerful instrument for rediscovering and recreating the evolving nation (Smith 2001: 441). Thus, histories and pre-histories focused on building collective identities serve to instill a uniform sense of pride, morale and identity within the population (Trigger 1984: 360). Furthermore, heritage research that bolsters the perception of collective identity is crucial for the perpetuation of a homogenized identity among populations that are essentially heterogeneous in composition.

Accounts of the past, particularly those bound to the same territory, are in competition and, as such, are written or heard at a particular moment in time and addressed to a known audience that has certain expectations regarding the construction of their heritage narratives (Whitelam 1996: 30). Therefore, the construction of heritage narratives is not a static process isolated from current political and social struggles; rather, narratives (both dominant and alternative) are actively defined and redefined in order to meet the needs of contemporary communities. Tilley (1989: 112) argues that "the past is not in any sense immobile or fixed or written indelibly; rather, it is something to be strategically reconstructed in relation to contemporary social and historical conditions, to be actively reinterpreted and rein scribed within the present social order." More specifically, narrative construction is not simply a recording of "what happened" in the transition of one state of affairs to another but a progressive *redescription* of sets of events in such a way as to dismantle an original structure and to justify an alternative recording of it at a later point (White 1978: 98). As such, narrative construction, augmented

through heritage research, becomes a social and political action of the present mediated upon the materials and cultures of the past. This active and dynamic process alters the reality of historic and cultural heritage research from a stable, positivist endeavor meant to produce objective, knowable truths to a fluid, interpretive action that can shape and modify contemporary social and political realities.

Many non-Western nation-states, particularly in the Middle East, resulted from the European imperial and colonial division of territories into regions and districts that were economically, politically, or bureaucratically more manageable than their predecessors. These nation-states, born out of imperial or colonial administration, are not typically composed of cohesive or homogenous ethnic communities. In reality, not only are the ethnic populations of most states mixed, but the boundaries of these states do not often coincide with the extent of a single ethnic population (Smith 1988: 129). Despite the heterogeneous nature of many nation-states, the various ethnic populations within a nation may find it advantageous to forge a collective identity and, subsequently, a collective memory of their past. This process of creating a collective identity, and eventually collective historical and heritage narratives, is often an act of socialization enacted on the individual by the community. Ultimately, acquiring the common memories of a community, and in so doing identifying with its collective past, is part of the process of acquiring any social identity, and familiarizing members with that past is a major part of the community's efforts to assimilate them (Zerubavel 2003: 3).

Raising Canaan - The Canaanite Narrative

Albert Glock¹, the former director of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem (1978-1980) and head of the Institute of Archaeology at Birzeit University (1976-1992), struggled with the quandary of how to connect the contemporary Palestinian population with

¹ Glock was killed while walking across the campus of Birzeit University on January 19, 1992 by an unknown assassin.

historical and, ultimately, prehistoric communities. For Glock, the most fruitful and scholarly path for identifying and tracing cultural continuities was by using the Palestinian oral tradition as a starting point and subsequently working backwards through historical, cultural and archaeological evidence in order to eventually arrive at pre-Islamic Palestinian cultural elements. As he argued, "where continuity of the present with the past is a reasonable assumption, elements of the deeper past are still alive in traditional village and public buildings, subsistence systems, and social organization" (1999a: 318). Glock and his ideological successors believe that Palestinian heritage connections are best determined by accessing the knowledge of the living population in order to begin the process of exploring the past.

However, as Palestinian archaeological theory and practice grew in the 1980s and 1990s, alternative methods for exposing Palestinian cultural continuities began to appear and rejected the inherent preconception that a viable, pre-Islamic Palestinian cultural connection was a legitimate narrative. Rather than working from the present to the past, these alternative methods began from the premise that Palestinians have an intrinsic and deep historical presence in the land that dates to the pre-Islamic periods. Yet these alternative narratives are often dismissed as overtly political propaganda or, in the words of one critic, lying "in the realm of popular imagination and folklore" (Gross 2000). Palestinian archaeologists, such as Jalal Qazzouh and Adel Yahya (2003), have endeavored to construct narratives that acknowledge a legitimate continuity of Palestinian culture in the land of Israel and Palestine that dates to pre-Islamic periods.

In 1998, Qazzouh, head of the Department of Archaeology at the An-Najah National University in Nablus, excavated two Canaanite era dwellings dating to approximately 3000 B.C. at Tel-Sofer, located west of Nablus, which created a controversy because he argued that these remains were the historical and cultural patrimony of the Palestinian people. The interpretation of the Canaanite

archaeological remains was a mechanism by which the contemporary Palestinian community could assert its historical legitimacy and heritage in the land of Israel-Palestine. According to Qazzouh, these archaeological interpretations "establish [Palestinian] roots to this land. We're saying these are our ancestors and these are our roots" (quoted in Eltahawy and Klein 1998: 4). Qazzouh recognizes the political implications of Palestinian-Canaanite archaeological research and claims that these interpretations of Palestinian historical continuity are "the biggest challenge to others [i.e. Israelis] who say they own this land and that they have a historical right to it" (quoted in Eltahawy and Klein 1998: 4). Khairy Ouda, dean of the An-Najah National University, went further to state that "we hope in the future we make more discoveries to disprove Israeli claims that they have a right to this land" (quoted in "Palestinian Archaeologists Uncover Canaanite Dwellings" 1998). In the case of Tel-Sofer, the ability to incorporate the historical Canaanite community into the narrative of the contemporary Palestinian community became an act of political resistance against the weight of the Israeli heritage narrative that too often is viewed as diminishing the legitimacy of the Palestinian presence in the land, both in a historical and modern context.

Similarly, other Palestinian archaeologists have challenged the prevailing theory that the Philistines were an intrusive people of Aegean origin who, according to biblical tradition², came from Caphtor (possibly Crete) at approximately the same time the Israelites entered the land of the indigenous Canaanite community. Using archaeological data and artifacts, archaeologists have begun to present alternative interpretations of the Philistine origins. For example, Yahya (1986: 30) examines ceramic, textual and linguistic evidence to argue that the Philistine people were, in fact, more akin to the Canaanites in terms of material culture. While advocacy for a Palestinian cultural connection with Canaanites was once summarily dismissed

² See Deuteronomy 2:23 and Jeremiah 47:4.

by academics (cf. Gross 2000), more and more scholars are beginning to examine the possible legitimacy of such a narrative. Today there is a growing trend among Palestinian intellectuals, including archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and others, to build a body of evidence in support of cultural and historical connections between ancient Canaanites and modern Palestinians (Marcus 2000: 90).

In addition to Palestinian intellectuals actively building associations between the Canaanites and Palestinians, the Palestinian public at-large is also beginning to seek a deeper Palestinian history by arguing that their presence in Palestine, in terms of cultural continuity, dates from the Bronze and Early Iron Ages (Yahya 2005). While the case for a Canaanite-Palestinian cultural association may be possible, the fact remains that there is insufficient archaeological data and evidence to robustly support and defend this interpretation. Despite the best efforts of Palestinian cultural heritage professionals, the inability of Palestinians to have widespread control and management over the full corpus of cultural heritage materials in Palestine has undermined their ability to produce such interpretations with the support of sufficient data.

Palestinian archaeologists often claim that the monopolization of archaeological research in Palestine by Israeli, European and American archaeologists (cf. Abu El-Haj 1998; 2001; 2003; Marcus 2000; Whitlam 1996; 1998) has resulted in the neglect and, at times, outright destruction of archaeological evidence that does not fit within the prevailing Judeo-Christian biblical narrative. Therefore, the effort to associate the modern Palestinian communities with the ancient Canaanite communities is a decidedly political endeavor designed to provide the Palestinians with a counterweight against the Israeli narrative that registers the Jewish presence in Palestine at the time of the biblical exodus from Egypt. The perceived power of this narrative is that it supersedes the Israeli origin narrative and provides a mechanism by which

Palestinians can claim original ownership, occupation and heritage in the land of Palestine. The Canaanite-Palestinian narrative essentially provides Palestinians with a mnemonic and political tool to combat Israeli claims to a deeper, more profound connection to the land. The cat and mouse game of cultural heritage in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle has been described as follows:

While Arabs essentially regard Israelis as usurpers who have come to "Palestine" only *very recently*, Israelis keep stressing the Jewish presence in "the Land of Israel" long before its conquest by the Arabs in the seventh century. Trying to out-past them, Palestinians go still further "back", playing up their even earlier Philistine roots.

Challenging Jewish claims to the highly contested city of Jerusalem, they likewise claim descent from the ancient Jebusites, who have lived there, according to the Bible, *prior* to its conquest by King David three thousand years ago, just as they do from other "indigenous" Canaanite peoples who had inhabited that region prior to its conquest by Joshua a couple of centuries earlier³ (emphasis original) (Zerubavel 2003: 106).

Conceptions of national origins and history have, over the course of the conflict, become mythical, homogeneous and geared towards the legitimization of temporal priority and territorial aspirations (Yiftachel 2002: 217). The result is that answers to the questions of "How?", "Why?" and "When?" a nation came into existence are not esoteric matters to be dealt with merely in theoretical and philosophical abstraction. Instead, based on the research and interpretation of archaeological and cultural heritage, they become weighty forces that can be manipulated for political advantage. Yasser Arafat, former Chairman of the Palestinian National Authority, once declared "our forefathers, the Canaanites and Jebusites, built the cities and planted the land; they built the monumental city of Bir

³ Yet as Zerubavel (2003:106) warns, when using this mnemonic argument against the Israelis, the Palestinian narrative currently allows for the possibility of being trumped by Israelis "who will cite God's alleged pledge to Abraham even earlier regarding the 'Promised Land'".

Salim [Jerusalem]" (Cline 2004: 93). However, despite the tempting political advantage a Palestinian-Canaanite narrative might provide, there is not universal agreement within Palestinian society concerning the appropriateness of advocating a Palestinian cultural association with the Canaanites.

While touring the city of Hebron, I posed the question to Khalid, a sophisticated Hebronite who moonlights as a tour guide in Hebron. Khalid politely listened to my question, as I detailed how some Palestinian scholars advocate the connection between Palestinians and Canaanites while some foreign academics claim that it is propaganda or a myth. After a short pause, Khalid cracked a slight smile and said "Palestinians and Canaanites? That is utter bullshit." When pressed on why he did not believe in a relationship between Palestinians and Canaanites, Khalid explained:

"You know, what Abu Amar [Yasser Arafat] did with saying that we belong to the Canaanites, he did that to make the Israelis angry. He thought if he could say we were here just like they were, then we are on the same level. But you know, there isn't anything that proves this and I think it's just political. And does it really matter? We are here now."

A Palestinian colleague involved with a heritage awareness program in the West Bank recounted how he had encountered friction from several members of the local school board.

According to Marwan, the problem was that the program dealt with pre-Islamic eras "there are some people who think that the times before Islam are ignorant and wicked... they do not want their children to be learning about these things". This Islamic concept of *jahiliyyah* (Arabic جاهلي) categorizes the era before the introduction of Islam as a time of ignorance of the divine guidance of Allah.

Throughout other conversations with Palestinians, similar sentiments concerning the Palestinian-Canaanite relationship were occasionally echoed; however, rather than the forceful disdain expressed by Khalid, the subject was merely skirted by redirecting the conversation towards post-Islamic eras of history. Overall, two major reservations were expressed concerning the Palestinian-Canaanite relationship: the lack of evidence and a general discomfort among Muslims with associating Palestinians with a pre-Islamic culture.

Anti-nationalism: Factionalized, Universal and Hyper scientific Narratives

For as much difference and disagreement that exists in defining what constitutes Palestinian nationalism, there is a similar diversity of opinion concerning how cultural resources should be utilized in the construction of Palestinian heritage narratives. As opposed to the narratives that highlight more nationalistic constructions of the Palestinian past, there are also narratives that are specifically designed to avoid the pitfalls of a strictly nationalist cultural heritage, particularly the criticism that the research is fundamentally biased and therefore "unscientific". The primary motivation behind these essentially a nationalistic heritage narratives is the awareness of and dissatisfaction with the cultural heritage narratives produced by Israeli archaeologists during its heavily nationalistic phases in the 1950s and 1960s (for further discussion of nationalism in Israeli archaeology, see Abu El-Haj 2001; Ben-Yehuda 1995; 2002; Kletter 2006; Kohl 1998; Whitelam 1996; 1998; Yiftachel 2002).

The historic primacy of biblical-based research coupled with the contemporary dominance of Israeli archaeological research has made some within the Palestinian cultural heritage community acutely aware of the ability of the past to be politicized for the purposes of the powerful at the expense of the marginalized. The history of Israeli archaeology's political power has been characterized as:

a widespread national-cultural practice among the Jewish public. Jewish public schools, youth movements, and the IDF (during its basic training for draftees) marched students and soldiers around the country in an effort to teach a knowledge of the homeland. This was a project in which the past and present, antiquities and contemporary settlements, and culture and nature were all brought into view (Abu El-Haj 2001: 1-2).

For much of the history of archaeology in Israel, and for that matter Palestine, European, American and Israeli archaeologists have privileged Iron Age I and II, Hasmonean and Roman strata that underlie the later Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Islamic layers, resulting in considerable damage to the later materials (Blenkinsopp 2002: 179) This historic favoring of particular archaeological data by Israeli scholars to provide legitimization for the Israeli national project has led some Palestinian archaeologists to abandon the effort to construct nationalist narratives from the body of archaeological evidence. These reactions against nationalist cultural heritage narratives take the form of universalist or hyper scientific approaches to the interpretation and presentation of archaeological and cultural heritage.

Universalist approaches, such as the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (DACH) *Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine* or the "Cultural Routes of the Holy Land" heritage management plan, stress that the archaeological and cultural heritage of Palestine is an important component of the Palestinian narrative but also of significance to other communities such as Christians, Jews, Americans, Europeans and Israelis. Here, the cultural heritage of Palestine ceases to be a component of a nationalist narrative; rather, the cultural heritage becomes part of a larger global narrative that cannot be confined within the borders of a nation-state. Proponents of these narratives argue that emphasizing universality acknowledges the broader value and significance of Palestine's archaeological and cultural

heritage for non-Palestinian communities. Furthermore, it is thought that the hypernationalist narratives will repeat the problems experienced by Israeli archaeological research during its nationalistic heydays of the 1950s and 1960s and, if pursued by Palestinian scholars, will only serve to isolate Palestinian heritage – and by extension the Palestinian people – from the world community. The benefit of integrating Palestinian heritage into a universal or global context is that it may result in an increased richness of heritage and identify of shared cultural values throughout humanity.

The holistic vision of archaeological and cultural heritage proposed by DACH demonstrates the diversity of narratives that can be constructed in Palestine and provides a richness that the traditional nationalistic narratives cannot. In a region that is burdened with the politicization of every aspect of culture and society, universalist heritage narratives can provide a source of commonality that has the potential to alleviate some of the tensions that exist between competing communities. According an individual intimately familiar with the Palestinian cultural heritage community, the universalist approach to heritage provides a means for Palestinians to express their respect for the heritage of the communities in the region.

"We, Palestinian archaeologists, are not digging to find Palestinians, Canaanites, Philistines, Jebusites or Muslims. We are looking for the past, for facts. If we find Roman artifacts, that is part of Palestine; if we find Stone Age artifacts, that is part of Palestine; and if we find Jewish artifacts, that is part of Palestine. We do not look only for Islamic or Palestinian artifacts – that is not scientific."

A similar sentiment was expressed by Adnan, another cultural heritage professional in Palestine:

"Jewish heritage is part of the Palestinian heritage, and that is a part of Palestinian history that we should be proud of. And we will preserve and protect the Jewish artifacts we find because they will stay with us as a legitimate part of our history."

Furthermore, several sources pointed out that stressing the universality of heritage in Palestine does not diminish the legitimacy of the Palestinian heritage narrative; rather, it frames it fully within the historical landscape of the region and the myriad peoples who lived therein. Similar to the universalist construction of heritage narratives in Palestine are those narratives that stress a rigidly scientific approach to the production of cultural heritage. By their very nature, archaeology and other cultural-historical disciplines inhabit the nexus between politics and science (Kristiansen 1993: 18-19). However, often the cultural-historical disciplines, particularly archaeology, have at times endeavored to reject or obscure the relationship between science and politics. In archaeological theory, this denial of politics reached its pinnacle with the introduction of New Archaeology in the 1960s. New Archaeology, through the works of archaeologists such as Binford (1983; 1968) and Schiffer (1978; 1987) espoused a decidedly "scientific" vision of archaeological research which deliberately eschewed any political elements (Carman 1993: 47-48). Rather than simply rejecting the political aspects of archaeological research, the advocates of New Archaeology sought to deny the intersection of politics and archaeology. The result of this is:

The idea that archaeology is a "pristine" science untainted by political ideology is not only false, it denies the real intellectual achievement of many of those who founded the discipline and who

worked to develop it. In its beginning, archaeology was political. Those who call for the "politicization" of archaeology are really demanding a restoration to its proper status (Carman 1993: 39).

The desire to not just avoid politics in archaeological research, but to eradicate any possible connection between the two fields has been a hallmark of the processual archaeologists working in throughout the world, including Israel and Palestine. Initially this was manifested in an effort to divorce "scientific archaeology" from the history of archaeological research that was geared towards strict biblical interpretation (cf. Dever 1981; 1999; Masry 1981; Moscrop 2000; Wright 1975). The product of these archaeological interpretations was a history of historic Palestine that emphasized the migration of populations in and out of the region, the cyclical rise and fall of urban settlements and the relationship between the archaeological record and textual evidence (i.e. the Bible). Despite the purported rejection of biblical emphasis by the processual archaeologists, many of the interpretations generated in this research have closely paralleled the biblical narratives and have been published in periodicals with acknowledged biblical biases (e.g. *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *The Biblical Archaeologist*). One of the most ardent supporters of processual archaeology in the Israel and Palestine, William G. Dever, has complained that New Archaeology "fought so hard to make archaeology [in the Middle East] a respectable discipline and to free it from these... emotional issues" (Balter 2000a: 29). However, the scholars who reject the political dimensions of archaeological research and affirm the objective and scientific nature of archaeology in Palestine will also be the same scholars who deny the fundamentally biblical orientation of their work, even though this influence is only slightly less explicit than it was in the past (Glock 1999b: 332).

In the case of Palestinian cultural heritage, the use of science as a mechanism to reject politicization is grounded

more in a practical desire to avoid the divisiveness of hyper nationalist narratives rather than in a broader ideological desire to divorce politics from archaeology. Some in the nascent Palestinian archaeological community have attempted to isolate ideological and religious issues from the archaeological discourse; however, this has proven difficult as the Palestinian general public "appears hungry for archaeological discoveries that would prove Palestinians were here first" (Balter 2000b: 34). In particular, the Palestinian the emphasis on science and universality is viewed by some within the Palestinian heritage community as a way in which to avoid the mistakes that Israeli archaeological research had historically made. Many involved within the discourse of Palestinian cultural heritage studies would often vigorously discuss how their narrative constructions were not nationalist in orientation and that the universality of their narratives were fundamentally different from those that had been historically put forth by Israeli archaeologists. However, in the contemporary context, there is agreement between a growing number of Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists on the problems associated with hyper nationalist narratives. To combat this, archaeological professionals in both Palestine and Israel have used science and universality as viable tools to construct narratives outside of the hyper nationalist paradigm.

Conclusions

The Politics of Cultural Heritage in a Post-Occupation Palestine As with the rest of the world, the politics of cultural heritage will never fade from Palestine. The politicization of the past is not a choice; it is a reality that archaeologists, cultural heritage professionals, governments and local communities must come to grips with in order to effectively manage the material culture of the past. The post-processual perspectives of the past have enabled archaeologists to confront this inherent politicization of history and heritage, resulting in the construction of narratives that avoid uncomplicated, linear histories of "peoples" and "states" in favor of explore smaller sub-state,

extrastate and interstate movements, forces and communities (Murphy 2002: 193-195).

Rather than "simply providing ancient fuel to the fire of land claims, ethnic superiority, or historical lineages", engaging the essential politics of the past connects cultural heritage research with other disciplines in academe and, more importantly, with the wider community at large (Meskell 2002: 280-281). Ignoring the politics of archaeological and cultural heritage research, or dismissively stereotyping these approaches as adding "an element of confusion to an already chaotic world of interpretive schemes" (Scham 2001: 205), only works to empower those who will manipulate archaeological and cultural heritage for their political purposes. Archaeological and cultural heritage research cannot be "de-politicized". To do so would be to deny that the past is actively and strategically reconstructed in relation to contemporary social and historical conditions for the benefit of the current socio-political order (Tilley 1989: 112).

The past can be used and manipulated for myriad political purposes that enable the "present" to effectively overtake the "past" for its own purposes (Kristiansen 1993: 5). Therefore, the relationship between archaeology, cultural heritage and practical politics is an enduring one that may be used to make political points, either under the auspices of archaeologists and cultural professionals or by others within the public domain (Harris 1995: 46-47). The politicization of the past and the expropriation of heritage in Palestine will not, unfortunately, end with the termination of Israeli political and military domination of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Politics will continue to impact and effect the management, presentation and preservation of archaeological and cultural heritage in Palestine both internally (e.g. DACH - NGO relations) and externally (e.g. sacred sites). Newly independent states tend to resort to hyper nationalist archaeological narratives in order to compensate for eras of occupation or colonization (Glover 2003: 17). Palestine has already started to cope with the hyper nationalist potential in its archaeological

interpretations by advancing universalist and hyper scientific constructions of the past, which are specifically designed to avoid overt politicization of the past. However, despite this, an independent Palestine will be presented with formidable challenges in managing, preserving and protecting archaeological and cultural properties. Occupation and political ambiguity, while creating an impossible environment for Palestinians to manage their cultural heritage, has also enabled the Palestinian archaeological and cultural heritage community to become embroiled in bureaucratic "turf wars" and avoid the difficult compromises and decisions required of sovereign states. Unlike the present system of occupation and political ambiguity, post occupation Palestine will have to deal with the sober reality that Israel can no longer be the proverbial scapegoat for poor site management, protection and preservation. Palestinians and Israelis will remain tied to the land of historic Palestine and, as such, must one day find a way to live in relative peace for the sake of both communities. The process of reconciliation and rapprochement will require an arduous effort by both peoples and demand a retooling of the collective constructions of heritage and identity narratives. Until each side recognizes the validity of the other's narrative, the conditions necessary for a reduction in tensions will not emerge (Rotberg 2006: 17). Narratives of collective identities, which are continually expressed, reproduced and reinvented in communities, are fundamental to the alteration of old societal beliefs and the construction of new ones. For Israeli and Palestinian communities to build new collective social beliefs there needs to be a bridging of these narratives that have become increasingly polarized.

The benefit of a bridging narrative, which is a conscious historiographical effort for reconciliation between communities in conflict undertaken by historians, is that it does not require political compromise by governments and elected leaders. Scholars, often historians, anthropologists and political scientists, working outside the official political realm become the 'builders of the bridge' between the two

narratives by critiquing the stronger, more entrenched narrative as a means of supporting and acknowledging the legitimacy of the less entrenched narrative (Pappe 2006: 194-195). The 'New Historians' of Israel began this process in the late 1980s when they challenged core Israeli heritage narratives concerning Zionism and the 1948 Israeli-Arab War.

However, while this critique of Israeli narratives did create controversy and some self-reflection within Israeli society, the goal of supporting and encouraging Palestinian reflexivity and, ultimately, collective Israeli-Palestinian narratives directed towards mutual respect and recognition failed. The primary reason for this failure is a matter of scale. The Israeli historical and heritage narratives have a tremendous volume of research and scholarship to build their collective narratives of identity. Conversely, the Palestinians still have a relatively sparse body of historical and heritage research upon which to build their narratives. To bridge these narratives at this time is nearly impossible since the Palestinian narratives do not have a sufficient body of scholarship from which to connect with the Israeli narratives in a process of ongoing critique and self-reflexivity.

Eventually, an adequate body of research and scholarship on Palestinian historical and heritage narratives will exist and provide a solid foundation upon which to bridge to the established Israeli narratives. However, at this point in time, there is a greater need for the Palestinian narratives of history and heritage to be constructed by Palestinians themselves. These Palestinian-constructed heritage narratives are essentially reclamations of the Palestinian past. No longer is the past purely occupied or expropriated by foreign powers or interests; instead it is a mechanism for Palestinian political self-realization and collective identity construction.

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