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Masalha, Nur (2015) *Settler-Colonialism, Memoricide and Indigenous Toponymic Memory: The Appropriation of Palestinian Place Names by the Israeli State*. *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, 14 (1). pp. 3-57. ISSN 2054-1988

Version: Postprint (Accepted Manuscript)

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SETTLER-COLONIALISM, MEMORICIDE AND INDIGENOUS TOPONYMIC MEMORY: THE APPROPRIATION OF PALESTINIAN PLACE NAMES BY THE ISRAELI STATE

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ABSTRACT

Cartography, place-naming and state-sponsored explorations were central to the modern European conquest of the earth, empire building and settler-colonisation projects. Scholars often assume that place names provide clues to the historical and cultural heritage of places and regions. This article uses social memory theory to analyse the cultural politics of place-naming in Israel. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs' study of the construction of social memory by the Latin Crusaders and Christian medieval pilgrims, the article shows Zionists' toponymic strategies in Palestine, their superimposition of biblical and Talmudic toponyms was designed to erase the indigenous Palestinian and Arabo-Islamic heritage of the land. In the pre-Nakba period Zionist toponymic schemes utilised nineteenth century Western explorations of biblical 'names' and 'places' and appropriated Palestinian toponyms. Following the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, the Israeli state, now in control of 78 percent of the land, accelerated its toponymic project and pursued methods whose main features were memoricide and erasure. Continuing into the post-1967 occupation, these colonial methods threaten the destruction of the diverse historical cultural heritage of the land.

1. Introduction

1.1 Place names and social memory

Cartography and toponymy –the term derives from the Greek words *topos* ('place') and *onoma* ('name') –were central to European empire building in the nineteenth century (Bassett 1994: 316–335). Place names (including human settlements such as villages, towns, cities, streets and countries and natural places such as mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, springs, and *wadis*) are meant 'to provide clues as to the historical and cultural heritage of places and regions' (Kearns and Berg 2002: 284). Yet in reality place names are not just spatial references; they are rooted in power relations and struggles over land and resources and the identities of the people that inhabit these places (Kearns and Berg 2002). Struggles over land, place names, naming and renaming between indigenous peoples and settler-colonists are common. Examples include Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, the Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas, Constantinople/Istanbul, Northern Ireland/Ulster (the Six Counties); apartheid South Africa, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Palestine/Israel (Benvenisti 2000; Zerubavel 1995;

1996: 60-99; Yacobi 2009; Masalha 2007, 2012, 2013; Gann 1981; Nyangoni 1978; Abu El-Haj 2001; Ra'ad 2010; Berg and Kearns 1996: 99-122; Berg and Vuolteenhaho 2009; Nash 1999: 457-480; Housel 2009: 131-151; Kadmon 2004: 85-87). In modern times the drive to rename geographical sites is also about staking claims to a territory. This focus on place names in the context of nationalism shows how hegemonic political elites and state authorities use the toponymic process as a way of constructing a new collective memory and 'inventing traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and as a tactic of land grab as well as an ideological reversion to a supposedly ancient or mythical 'golden age'. State authorities deploy renaming strategies to erase earlier political, social and cultural realities and to construct new notions of national identity (Guyot and Seethal 2007; Nash 1999: 457-480; Azaryahu Kook 2002: 195-213; Azaryahu 1996:14: 311-330; Azaryahu 1997: 479-493).

The reinvention of both the Jewish past and modern Jewish nationhood in Zionist historiography and the creation of a modern Hebrew consciousness have received some scholarly attention (Myers 1995; Ram 1995: 91-124; Piterberg 2001; Raz-Krakotzkin 1993, 1994). Toponymic and remapping projects were also deployed extensively and destructively by the European colonial powers and European settler-colonial movements. In Palestine the Zionist-Hebrew renaming projects were critical to the ethnocisation of the European Jews and nationalisation of the Hebrew Bible. They were inspired by and followed closely British, French and American archaeological and geographical 'exploration' expeditions of the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. In line with the reinventions of European ethno-romantic nationalisms, Zionist ideological archaeology and geography claimed to 'own' an exclusive 'national' inheritance in Palestine; the 'land of Israel' was invented and treated as a matter of exclusive ownership. This process of ethno-nationalisation and reinvention of the past intensified after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 as part of the general attempt to ethno-nationalise both Jews and the Hebrew Bible (Rabkin 2010: 130).

Since the rise of the Zionist settler movement in the late nineteenth century, and especially since the establishment of Israel in 1948, the struggle over toponymic memory and the renaming of sites has developed as an integral part of the political conflict in Palestine. The indigenous Palestinians have insisted on their own comprehensive set of Arabic place names through which they see their own social memory and deep-rootedness in the land of Palestine. On the other hand, since the ethnic cleansing of the 1948 Nakba and the creation of the Israeli state, a large number of Palestinian Arabic place names have been Judaised, Hebrewised. Indeed since 1948 the Israeli army and Israeli state have sought to rename systematically Palestinian Arabic place names, claiming priority in chronology and using modern archaeology, map-making, and place names as their proofs of Jewish roots in 'the land of Israel'. In Israel the significance of place names lies in their potential to legitimise 'historical claims' asserted by the Zionist settler-colonial movement.

The Neolithic agricultural culture is considered to have begun in Palestine, in Jericho, about 10,000-8,800 BC. It is widely recognised by historians and archaeologists that Palestine had a remarkably stable population from the end of the Neolithic period, some 6000 years ago, when the Mediterranean economy was first established in the region (Thompson 1992: 171-352; 1999: 103-227). Long before the creation of the Israel State in 1948, Palestine had a diverse and multicultural population and a multi-layered identity deeply rooted in the ancient past. In the 1980s biblical scholars Thomas Thompson, Francolino Goncalvez and Jean-Marie van Cangh (1988) completed a pilot toponymic project with two

regions in the Holy Land: the Plain of Akka (Acre) and the Jerusalem Corridor which was published in 1988 in a monograph entitled *Toponomie Palestinienne*. This tried to bring out the many names of hills, *wadis*, springs and wells, but only those on maps. However this project was limited in its scope and has not directly worked with the oral tradition. Thomas Thompson's works *Bronze Age Settlements of Sinai and the Negev* (1975) and *The Bronze Age Settlements of Palestine* (1979) have a very useful list of antiquity sites with the corresponding Arabic and Hebrew names.

Furthermore the *Tubingen Bible Atlas* (2001) – based on the Tubingen Atlas of the Near and Middle East (TAVO) – documents the historical geography of the biblical countries in a unique way in 29 high quality maps and extensive indices. Although the question of Palestine's Arabo-Islamic heritage in the toponymic memory of the region is one which the *Tubingen Bible Atlas* project never took up directly, many Palestine maps of the TAVO B series as well as the *Tuebingen Bibelatlas* and TAVO archives, an important resource with an enormous range of critically evaluated structure and sources. More recently Salman Abu-Sitta's *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (2010) also provides useful maps and indices on the modern Palestinian Arabic place names of the region.

On the theme of the charting of maps and the production and dissemination of knowledge on the Holy Land in the medieval and ancient periods, Robert North's *A history of Biblical Map Making* (1979) is an important source. North's volume on early historical maps of Palestine had its basic foundation in the archives of the Vatican library, Rome. In addition, there are some cartographic materials on Palestine in the libraries of Istanbul. There are two kinds of maps:

- Maps such as the Carte Jacotin; The British Mandate map 1:20.000; the Map of Israel 1:10.000 (although many sheets are classified secret by the Israeli military) and 1:50.000 (this entire map (including Sinai) has been declassified)
- Scholarly geographically and historically analytical maps, such as those in the Atlas of Israel 1967 and other atlas studies such as Salman Abu-Sitta's *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (2010).
- The TÁVO maps, both the A and B series.

1.2 Filastin and the Palestinian Arabic toponyms

Palestinian social memory and place names have evolved from the Neolithic Age into the modern period by embracing multiple traditions and preserving the diverse cultural heritage of the land. In a largely peasant society and fertile land, many Palestinian Arab toponyms were based on plant foods (such as variety of bean, lentil), fruit trees (olive, vine) and natural geographical sites (hills, springs, streams, valleys and mountains).

Biblical archaeologist and Scriptural geographer Edward Robinson (1794-1863), writing in the early 1860s when travel by Europeans to the Levant became widespread, notes that, 'Palestine, or Palestina, now the most common name for the Holy Land' (Robinson 1865: 15). A cognate of the toponym *Palestine*, 'Peleset', is found in five inscriptions referring to a neighbouring people or land starting from c.1150 BC during the twelfth Egyptian dynasty and the Assyrians called the same region 'Palashtu' or 'Pilistu', in c.800 BC (Schrader 1878, 2012). In the Middle Ages the Arabo-Islamic toponym Filastin referred to the region from the time of the earliest Arab administrators, geographers and translators who relied on the Greco-Roman-Byzantine name – first occurred in a classical Greek text, *Histories* of Herodotus, written near the mid-fifth century B.C. Under Byzantium

administrative subdivisions in Syria and Palestine produced *Palaestina Prima*, *Palaestina Secunda* and eventually *Palaestina Salutaris* or *Palaestina Tertia*. The Greco-Roman/Byzantine administrative/territorial toponym became the source from which the Arabic term *Jund Filastin*, the ‘military district of Palestine’, was used for one of the sub-provinces of Syria beginning with the Umayyad period in the 630s AD. Arab administrators, historians and geographers preserved the ancient place names of Palestine. In 985 AD the Arab geographer Al-Muqaddasi (‘the Jerusalemite’) gave us a systematic account of all the place-names, cities and towns he had visited in Palestine.¹ According to another Muslim historian, the 9th.century al-Baladuri,² the principal towns of *Jund Filastin* included Gaza, Nablus, Jaffa, Imwas, Rafah, Yibnah, Sebastia, Caesarea, Bayt Jibrin and Lid (Lydda). The nearby city of Ramle was founded by the Arabs and became the capital of the district. In the 9th.century, during Abbasid rule, *Jund Filastin* was the most fertile of Syria's districts. After the Fatimid conquered the district from the Abbasids, al-Quds (Jerusalem) became the capital of the district and the main towns included Asqalan, Gaza, Ramle, Arsuf, Jaffa, Bayt Jibrin, Nablus, Jericho, Caesaria and Amman.

At its greatest extent, *Jund Filastin* was one of several districts of the Umayyad and Abbasid province of Syria, extended from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River and from Rafah in North Sinai to parts of lower Galilee in the north – with most of Galilee being part of *Jund al-Urdun* (the ‘military district of Jordan’). Its predominantly Muslim towns included Gaza, Nablus, Jafa, Lydda, Ramle, Caesarea, ‘Imwas (Emmuas), Yibna, Rafah, Sebastia and Bayt Jibrin. The medieval Arabic term was identical to the old French (‘Frankish’) term, *Philistin*, which came from Latin *Philistina* or *Philistinus*, which, in turn, derived from the Roman name of the province, *Palaestina*, which was based on the ancient name preserved in the Hebrew Bible and a variety of ancient languages, the Akkadian *Palastu* and Egyptian *Parusata*. However today it is widely accepted that the Palestinians are a mixture of groups (including descendants of ancient Hebrew and Canaanite tribes) who remained in the land and converted to Christianity and Islam and were later joined by some migrants of Arab descent (Doumani 1995; Yiftachel 2006: 53; Ateek 1989: 16). The evidence for mass conversion of Samaritans to Islam³ also raises the possibility of mass conversion of Jews and Christians to early Islam, and this may also explain the syncretistic nature of popular religion in Palestine and Islamic popular traditions in Palestine centring on local shrines and joint holy places.

The social and cultural importance of toponymic memory and geographical rendering of sites and terms in historical writing is evident in many histories from antiquity, medieval and modern Palestine. One classical example of listing place-names of ancient Palestine in ‘*Histories*’ (or *The History*, 1987) of Herodotus, written from the 450s to the 420s BC. Herodotus is believed to have visited Palestine in the fifth decade of the fifth century B.C. The

¹ Al-Muqaddasi, Shams Al-Deen Abu Abdallah (1866) *Description of Syria, Including Palestine* (Bengal: Asiatic Society of Bengal); Al-Muqaddasi (1994) (Basil Anthony Collins (Translator): *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions. Ahasan al-Taqasim Fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim* (Reading: Garnet Publishing).

² Al-Baladuri travelled extensively in Syria and Palestine. His main work, a condensation of a longer history, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* [Book of the Conquests of Lands] was translated by Philip Hitti and published in *The Origins of the Islamic State: Being a Translation from the Arabic, Accompanied with Annotations, Geographic and Historic Notes of Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* (2014).

³ On the mass conversion by Samaritans to Islam in Palestine during the early Muslim period, see Levy-Rubin (2000: 257–76).

'Father of History' refers to 'Palaistine' (Παλαιστίνη), Syria, or simply 'Palaistine'⁴ five times, an area comprising the region between Phoenicia and Egypt (Rainey 2001: 57-63; Jacobson 1999: 65-74). Herodotus also mentions the city of Ascalan (Arabic: 'Asqalan'; Akkadian: *Isqalluna*; Latin: *Ascalonia*; Hebrew: Ashkelon), an ancient seaport city which dates back to the Neolithic Age. At the time of Herodotus Palestine was deeply polytheistic and consequently, in contrast to the myth-narratives of the Bible Herodotus does mention Jews and monotheism but describes Ascalan as having a temple for Aphrodite and its polytheistic tradition. Although Herodotus's *Histories* is now considered a founding work of history in Western literature, and serve as a key record of the ancient traditions, politics, geography, and clashes of various powers that were known in Greece, Western Asia and North Africa, when it comes to Palestine and toponymic memory Western Christian writing relies not on Herodotus' *Histories* but on the myth-narratives of the Bible. Interestingly however the Greek toponym for *Palestine* and Ascalan were preserved in indigenous Palestinian Arab tradition and by medieval Arab historians and travellers and 'Ascalan' became known to the Palestinians as 'Asqalan'.

The Hellenisation of Palestinian toponyms was not uncommon in late antiquity. One well-known example of Hellenisation into toponymic writing from late antiquity is the work of the first-century Romano-Jewish historian and translator Josephus (Titus Flavius Josephus 37-c.100 AD)⁵ who spoke Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek and who became a Roman citizen. Both he and Greco-Roman Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria used the toponym Palestine (Robinson 1865: 15). Josephus believed in the compatibility of Judaism and Greco-Roman thought, often referred to as Hellenistic Judaism.⁶ He lists local Palestinian toponyms and rendered them familiar to Greco-Roman audiences. In his works *The Jewish War* (181) 75 AD and the *Antiquities of the Jews* which include material about individuals, groups, customs and place names, Josephus almost never refers to Torah-authority Jewish scribes as 'scribes'; instead he refers to them as sophists and elders. Similarly, Josephus refers to Jewish 'sects' (a loaded term) as philosophies or schools. The term he used to refer to Transjordan, *Perea* ('the country beyond') is not found in the Bible, modern Amman is referred to by its Greek name, Philadelphia. Medieval Muslims and modern Palestinians preserved Greco-Roman toponyms such *Nablus* (Greek: *Neapolis* Νεάπολις), Palestine, Qisariya⁷ (Caesarea; Greek: Καϊσάρεια), but not Philadelphia. Eusebius's fourth century *Onomasticon: On the Place names in Divine Scripture* (Notley and Safrai 2004, Eusebius 1971) refers to 'Amman: this is now Philadelphia'.

In addition to the Hellenisation of some Palestinian toponyms by Josephus, the Founding Fathers of Christianity introduced religio-political dimensions to Palestinian place names. The role of this religio-social memory in influencing the geographical mapping and toponymic memory of Palestine was widely recognised in the fourth century AD in two famous works: St. Jerome's Vulgate translation into Latin and the subsequent work of *Onomasticon: On the Place names in Divine Scripture* by Eusebius of Caesarea (260/265-339/340 AD) – a Roman historian of Greek descent, an exegete and one of these Founding Fathers who became the Bishop of Caesarea about A.D 314. Eusebius's work, *Onomasticon* (Notley and Safrai 2004, Eusebius 1971), the first comprehensive attempt to construct and

⁴The term 'Palestine' (Greek: Παλαιστίνη; Arabic: Filastin) is the conventional name used between 450 BC and 1948 AD to describe a geographic region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and various adjoining lands.

⁵Formerly Yosef ben Matityahu.

⁶ Josephus calls himself in Greek as *Iōsēpos* (Ιώσηπος), son of Matthias.

⁷ The Palestinian village of Qisariya was destroyed by Jewish forces in 1948.

'locate' these places and names from the biblical narratives, was partly based on Jerome's religio-imperial enterprise which was driven by the fact that Christianity had become a religion of empire. It was these two works by two of the Founding Fathers of Christianity, Jerome and Eusebius, rather than Herodotus's actual history of Palestine which formed the basis of Western religio-social toponymic memory of the 'Holy Land'. Eusebius, in *Onomasticon*, provides a list of place names of Palestine based on the biblical narrative with geographical, historical and religious commentary. His list was later translated into Latin. Jerome relocated physically to Judea while working on the Vulgate translation. Jerome was the first person to go back and translate the Hebrew Bible from Hebrew rather than from the Septuagint (or 'Greek Old Testament').

The medieval Western Christian religious memory of the 'Holy Land' had a major influence on the modern social memory theory of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), whose seminal writings on the sociology of knowledge and the social construction of memory was entitled *Mémoire Collective* (1950, 1980). In his work Halbwachs contrasted structured evolving 'social memory' with actual history and thus established 'collective memory' both as a concept and as a distinct research field. The term 'collective memory' itself is traceable to the founder of modern sociology, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who wrote extensively in *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912) about organised religion, remembering and commemorative rituals. Halbwachs, a student of Durkheim, contrasts 'history' with evolving 'social memory' and argues that an individual's memories and understanding of the past are closely related to group memberships, 'collective memory' and group consciousness. According to Halbwachs, this production of social memory is dependent upon a religious or political 'cadre' as we as the framework within which a group is situated within a society (Halbwachs 1925, 1992).

Halbwachs' work on the construction (and reproduction) of collective memory began with his landmark study on *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (1925, 1992) and *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (1941, 1992). The latter, which focuses on publicly available commemorative symbols, rituals, and representations, examines how groups of medieval Christian pilgrims and Latin Crusaders in the Holy Land 'found' and then 'found' again (reproduced) particular place names from the Gospel narratives. This article will show that Western Scriptural scholars such as Edward Robinson and Victor Guérin (like the medieval Crusaders and pilgrims) 'found' again and (reconstructed) in the nineteenth century particular place names in Palestine from the biblical narrative – place names which formed the basis of Zionist settler-colonial toponymic projects. Place names, geographical sites and landscape are also – to borrow French historian Pierre Nora's term, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1996, 1997, 1998) – 'sites of memory' around which social groups consciously construct and cultivate social and cultural memory and individual and collective identities. Underpinned by the social memory theory of Halbwachs, Nora and others this article also draws on other approaches: a) the exploration of Israeli archival historical documents; b) Palestinian oral history and memory accounts; c) map-making and the cultural production of maps in Palestine-Israel.

In the modern period and especially during the British Mandate of Palestine (1918-1948) the term 'Palestinian' was used to refer to all people residing in Palestine, regardless of religion or ethnicity, including those European Jewish settlers granted citizenship by the British Mandatory authorities. Earlier in the 19th century, the British had set up the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which sponsored the *Survey of Western Palestine* and mounted geographical map-making expeditions in Palestine. One of its main political motives was clear

from its own publication: *Names and places in the Old and New Testament and Apocrypha: with their modern identifications* (Palestine Exploration Fund (1889). The Palestine Exploration Fund listed more than 1,150 place names related to the Old Testament and 162 related to the New Testament. Shortly after the British military occupation of Palestine in 1918, the British mandatory authorities set out to gather toponymic information from the local Palestinian inhabitants. Following the PEF, the Mandatory authorities assumed that the Palestinian Arabs (Muslims and Christians) had also preserved knowledge of the ancient place names which could help identify archaeological and biblical sites. Since the exploration of the PEF and especially since the establishment of Israel in 1948 the cultural struggle over the naming of sites/cities/towns and villages has become an weapon of Zionist colonisation of Palestine.

2. Antecedents of Zionist Toponyms

2.1 British mapping and toponymy projects in Palestine

In her book *Bible and Sword: How the British came to Palestine* (1956, 1982) Barbara Tuchman shows how the two magnets, the Bible and the sword, have drawn countless British pilgrims, crusaders, missionaries, biblical archaeologists and conquerors of Palestine and ultimately led to the British conquest of Palestine in 1918. Central to this book is the idea that the land conquest narrative of the Bible has been the key text that redeems the European settler-colonisation of Palestine. Outside the Middle East the Bible has redeemed European empires and European settler-colonialism, the conquest of the earth and even current American imperialism. As a fact of power, the authority of the biblical narrative has also been central to organised religion and collective memory. As organised memory, the authority of the Bible became critical to the political theologies of the Medieval Latin crusaders, Spanish *conquistadors* – in the struggle for colonial power in Latin America from 1492 until the twentieth century – and a whole variety of settler-colonist projects. Indeed in modern times a range of Western settler-colonial enterprises have deployed the power politics of the biblical text and its ‘famous’ land conquest narrative very effectively and with devastating consequences for indigenous peoples. The narrative of Exodus has been widely deployed as a framing narrative for European settler-colonialism and the European *mission civilisatrice*, while other biblical texts have been appropriated and used to provide moral authority for European ‘exploration’ in, and settler-colonial conquests of, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas (Prior 1997, 1999).

2.2 From *Karm al-Khalili* to *Kerem Avraham* (1855)

James Finn’s Jerusalem colony

In the early modern period Palestinian place names contributed to the rise of biblical criticism. In the 17th century the rationalist Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza of Amsterdam initiated a critical approach to Scriptural studies by looking at place names in Palestine and the Bible. Using toponyms from Palestine as well as other arguments, he concluded that, contrary to the standard belief among Jews and Christians, Moses did not write the Pentateuch, the five books of the Hebrew Bible.

Palestinian place names attracted the attention of fundamentalist Christians and European imperialists in the nineteenth century. Toponymic projects and geographical renaming of place names in Palestine became powerful tools in the hands of the European powers which competed to penetrate the land of the Bible. The British were the first to recognise and exploit the power of state-sponsored explorations and began to link Scriptural

geography with ‘restorationist’ schemes, excavations and colonial penetration of Palestine. The first British colony of *Kerem Avraham* (‘Abraham Vineyard’) began as a small settlement founded in 1855 by the influential British Consul in Jerusalem, James Finn, and his wife, Elizabeth Anne Finn, the daughter of a noted English Hebrew scholar and herself a Hebrew speaker. James Finn, who served in Ottoman Jerusalem from 1846 to 1863, reigned supreme in the city and he became a central figure in the mid-nineteenth century European penetration of Palestine. He also combined his British diplomatic job with Christian missionary activities. His activities paved the way for the biblical explorations and military mapping of Palestine by officers of the British Royal Engineering Corp on behalf of the London-based Palestine Exploration Fund.

James Finn combined biblical ‘restorationist’ thinking and missionary activities with official British civil service. He and his wife Elizabeth were originally members of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. Also crucially, he was a close associate of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, a prominent Tory MP, a millennialist Protestant and a key contributor to Victorian Protestant Zionist ‘restorationism’, who invented the myth ‘A land without people, for a people without a land’. Finn had purchased in the early 1850s from a local Palestinian for £250 *Karm al-Khalili*, Arabic for ‘al-Khalili Vineyard’. *Al-Khalil* is the indigenous Palestinian Arabic toponym for the (biblical) city of Hebron, a city which both local Palestinian and biblical traditions link to the patriarch ‘Ibrahim al-Khalil’/Abraham, thus Finn used an indigenous name to link firmly the toponym of the modern colony in Jerusalem to biblical traditions.

2.3 The British Palestine Exploration Fund

As we shall see below, the Israeli toponymic projects had their foundations in the de-Arabisations of James Finn and the biblical explorations in the 1870s by members of the Palestine Exploration Fund whose work: *Names and places in the Old and New Testament and Apocrypha: with their modern identifications* (compiled by George Armstrong; revised by Sir Charles W. Wilson and Major C. R. Conder 1889) was central to Western colonial and imperial toponymic schemes in nineteenth and early twentieth century Palestine.

The systematic mapping, surveying and place-naming projects, which reached their peak with the British Ordnance Survey of Western Palestine between 1871 and 1877, were largely strategic. The sacredness of Palestine was not a sufficiently convincing motive for the British to organise and finance such surveys. The main motive for mapping the country as a whole was its strategic and geopolitical importance for the British Empire which was then engaged in international struggles over the Middle East (Goren 2002: 87–110). However, the surveys and mapping of the British Royal Engineering Corp in the 1870s led subsequently to the growth of proto-Jewish Zionism.

The ‘scientific exploration’ of the British Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which was founded in 1865 by a group of biblical scholars, scriptural geographers, military and intelligence officers and Protestant clergymen, most notably the Dean of Westminster Abbey, Arthur P. Stanley, was coordinated very closely with the British politico-military establishment and spying community anxious to penetrate Ottoman Palestine, country ruled by the Muslim ‘Sick Man of Europe’. With offices in central London, the PEF today is an active organisation which publishes an academic journal, the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*. In addition, the PEF presents public lectures and funds research projects in the Near East. According to its website, ‘Between 1867 and 1870 Captain Warren carried out the explorations in Palestine which form

the basis for our knowledge of the topography of ancient Jerusalem and the archaeology of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sherif [sic]; 'In addition to his explorations on, under, and around the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sherif, Warren surveyed the Plain of Philistia and carried out a very important [military] reconnaissance of central Jordan'.⁸ Captain (later General Sir) Charles Warren (1840–1927), of the British Royal Engineers and one of the key officers of the PEF, who was sent to map the 'scriptural topography' of Jerusalem and investigate 'the site of the temple', noted: '[British] King Consul [James Finn] rules supreme, not over the natives of the city, but over strangers; but yet these strangers for the most part are the rightful owners, the natives, for the most part, are usurpers' (Shepherd, 1987: 127–8). Both Warren and the (above-mentioned) long-serving and famous British Consul, Finn, who was a millennialist Christian Zionist involved with the 'Mission to the Jews' (Shepherd 1987: 110), apparently, 'literally burrowed' beneath the Muslim shrines in Jerusalem to chart the 'original dimensions' of the 'Temple Mount'. The biblical archaeology and toponymic projects of Warren and the Royal Engineers have remained basic data for many Israeli archaeologists, geographers and strategic planners of today (Shepherd 1987: 195; Benvenisti 2002: 11–27).

Following in the footsteps of the PEF, the British mandatory authorities in Palestine set out to gather toponymic information from the local Palestinian population. The British drive to present European colonialism as a continuation of an ancient Jewish ownership of the land meant that place names in Palestine became a site of fierce contest between the European Zionist settler-coloniser and the colonised Palestinians. Palestinian Arab names were (and continued to be) 'unnamed' and Hebrewised by the Zionists using a colonising strategy based on Hebrew biblical names. Indigenous Palestinian place names were deemed 'redeemed' and liberated when they were rendered from Arabic into Hebrew (Slyomovics 1998; 2002). The genealogy of British colonial name commissions and the Zionist-Hebrew renaming project, which began in the nineteenth century, continued under the British colonial system in Palestine (Al-Shaikh 2010) and were accelerated dramatically after the Nakba and the expansion of biblical and archaeological departments at Israeli universities.

After the 1967 conquests the Israeli State was bound to base its conception of Jerusalem upon a mythologised entity, 'Jerusalem of Gold', and to involve abstract historical and ideological rights in the newly acquired territories, as well as resting its claim on territorial expansion and domination and the 'redemption of land' through settler-colonisation. The same process of appropriation and erasure of Palestinian heritage and the superimposition of a Zionist Hebrew colonising toponymy on Palestinian sites continued after 1967. Almost immediately after the conquest of East Jerusalem the 'Palestine Archaeological Museum', which represented the multi-layered identity and heritage of Palestine, was renamed the 'Rockefeller Museum'. Some items were taken to the Shrine of the Book ('Heikhal Hasefer') a wing of the Israel Museum in West Jerusalem, which houses parts of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered 1947-56 in the Qumran caves. The site of the Palestine Archaeological Museum had been located on 'Karm al-Shakyh', the 'Vineyard' of Shaykh al-Khalili, a hill just outside the north-eastern corner of the Old City. The museum had been conceived and established during the mandatory period, with financial support from the Rockefeller family. It was opened to the public in January 1938. The museum housed a large collection of artefacts unearthed in the excavations conducted in Palestine in 1890-1948. Also among the museum's possessions were 8th century wooden panels from the al-Aqsa Mosque and 12th century (Crusader period) marble lintels from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

⁸<http://www.pef.org.uk/Pages/Warren.htm>

Until 1966 the museum was run by an international board of trustees it was then taken over by the Jordanian state. Since 1967 the museum has been jointly managed by the Israel Museum and the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (later renamed Israel Antiquities Authority). The site is now the headquarters of the Israeli Antiquities Authorities. While the 'Palestine Archaeological Museum' of the Mandatory period still represented the positive diversity of religions and ethnicities that characterised Jerusalem and Palestine for many centuries, the Israel Museum and Shrine of the Book represent that single-minded determination by the Israeli Antiquities Authorities and Israel's heritage industry to Judaise and colonise both the ancient and modern histories of Palestine.

4. Disappearing Palestinian villages and place names before and during the Mandatory period: Zionist toponymic strategies before 1948

During the pre-state period the Zionist Yishuvin Palestine developed three key strategies:

1. Appropriation of Arab names, hybridisation of names of Jewish settlements and indigenisation of the settlers;
2. Instrumentalisation of the myth-narratives of the Bible and 'restorationist' biblical archaeology: Hebrewisation and biblicalisation of Palestinians Arabic toponyms;
3. Utilisation of the toponymic lists of the Palestine Exploration Fund and the works of Western biblical archaeologists.

4.1 Appropriation of Arabic place names, Indigenisation of the European settlers and a hybridisation strategy

4.1.1 From Palestinian *Mahlul* to Dayan's *Nahlal*

Palestinian place names began to be replaced by biblical and Hebrew-sounding names during the late Ottoman period and mandatory period and small Palestinian villages began to disappear from the map, although local Palestinians continued to use the indigenous name for the new Zionist colonies. These practices of 're-claiming by re-naming', while displacing the indigenous names, were pivotal to the colonisation of the land of Palestine and as a language of creating an 'authentic' collective Zionist-Hebrew identity rooted in the 'land of the Bible'. Referring candidly to the gradual replacement of Arabic place names (and of Palestinian villages) by Hebrew place names (and Jewish settlements) during the mandatory period, Israeli defence minister Moshe Dayan – and the author of *Living with the Bible* (1978) – had this to say in an address in April 1969 to students at the Technion, Israel's prestigious Institute of Technology in Haifa:

Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Hunefis, and Kefar Yehoshua in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not a single place built in this country that didn't have a former Arab population.⁹

Dayan (1915–1981), who spoke Arabic, considered himself and was considered by his fellow European settlers as a typical *sabra*. He was born in Kibbutz Degania Alef in Palestine before his parents moved to Nahlal, founded in 1921. His father 'Shmuel Kitaigorodsky' (who served in the first three sessions of the Israeli Knesset) was born

⁹Reported in *Haaretz*, 4 April 1969.

in Zhashkov, modern day Ukraine, and immigrated to Palestine in 1908 and Hebrewised his name to Dayan, Hebrew for a judge in Jewish religious courts. According to Zionist propaganda 'Nahlal' derived its name from a biblical village (Joshua 19: 15). Yet Moshe Dayan knew and was prepared to acknowledge publicly that the name of his own settlement (*moshav*) 'Nahlal', was in fact a Hebrew rendering of the name of the Palestinian Arabic village name it had replaced, 'Mahlul'; however, to give it a 'biblical authenticity', the Hebrew-sounding 'Nahlal' was linked by the Zionists to a name mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. Also Kibbutz 'Gvat', set up in 1926, was a Hebrew rendering of the Arabic name-place it had replaced: the Palestinian village 'Jibta', but Gvat also echoed the Aramaic name Gvata (meaning hill) and a biblical name in the Galilee.

Central to the construction of Zionist collective identity – and subsequently Israeli identity – based on 'biblical memory' was the Yishuv toponymic project which was established in the 1920s to 'restore' biblical Hebrew or to create new biblical-sounding names of symbolic meaning to Zionist redemption of the land and colonisation of Palestine (Ra'ad 2010: 189). In the 1920s the Palestinian land of 'Wadi al-Hawarith'¹⁰ in the coastal region was purchased ('redeemed') by the Jewish National Fund from Arab absentee landlords, subsequently leading to the eviction of many Arab farmers. The Jewish settlement of Kfar Haro'e was established in 1934 on these lands. The Arabic name was rendered into the Hebrew-sounding 'Emek Hefer' (the Hefer Valley). In some cases the Zionist-Hebrew colonising toponymy simply translated Arabic names into Hebrew. In the 1920s a JNF Naming Committee was set up to name the newly established Jewish colonies in Palestine to compete with the overwhelmingly Arabic map of Palestine; its renaming efforts were appreciated by the British mandatory authorities and were incorporated into the Palestine government's official gazette (Benvenisti 2002: 26).

In the pre-1948 period many new Hebrew place names displaced the Arabic names: for instance the first Zionist settlement in Palestine, Petah Tikva, was originally set up in 1878 (deserted and re-established in 1882), on the lands of, and eventually replacing, the destroyed Palestinian village of Mlabbis. Petah Tikva is known in Zionist historiography as *Im Hamoshavot* – the 'Mother of the Colonies'. The Zionist religious founders stated that the name of Petah Tikva came from the biblical prophecy of Hosea (2:17). The land of Petah Tikva was bought from two Arab absentee landlords based in Jaffa, Salim al-Kassar and Anton al-Tayyan. Six decades after the Nakba Palestinian citizens of Israel still call the Jewish city of Petah Tikva 'Mlabbis'. Also the Zionist colony of Rehovot was founded in 1890 and was named after a name mentioned in the Hebrew, but which stood at a completely different location in the Negev Desert. Rehovot was set up by middle class Jewish businessmen and merchants on 10,000 *dunums* of land purchased from Arab landlords, displacing the Palestinian village of Khirbet Duran.

4.1.2 Indigenising Zionist colonial-settlers and the appropriation of the Palestinian *sabr*: the 'new Hebrew man'/*tzabra*

Secular Zionism was a classic case of the invention of a people in late nineteenth century Europe and a synthesising of a nation project. This invented tradition considered the Jews as a race and a biological group, and borrowed heavily from romantic nationalisms in Central and Eastern Europe. Political Zionism mobilised an imagined biblical narrative which was reworked in the late nineteenth century for the political purposes of a modern European movement intent on colonising the land of Palestine. As an invented late-modern (European)

¹⁰Wadi al-Hawarith was also the name of a Palestinian village depopulated in 1948.

tradition, Zionism was bound to be a synthesising project. As Israeli scholar Ronit Lentin has powerfully argued in *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah: Reoccupying the Territories of Silence* (2000), the Israeli masculinised and militarised nationalism has been constructed in opposition to a 'feminised' Other. The founding fathers of Zionism re-imagined the New Hebrew collectivity in total opposition to the despised Jewish diaspora unable to resist European anti-Semitism which led to the Holocaust. Zionism's contempt for diaspora Jews and rejection of a 'feminised' diaspora and its obsession with synthesising a nation is reflected in the fact that its symbols were an amalgam, chosen not only from the Jewish religion and the militant parts of the Hebrew Bible but also from diverse modern traditions and sources, symbols subsequently appropriated as 'Jewish nationalist', Zionist or 'Israeli': the music of Israel's national anthem, *ha-Tikva*, came from the Czech national musician, Smetana; much of the music used in nationalist Israeli songs originated in Russian folk-songs; even the term for an Israeli-born Jew free of all the 'maladies and abnormalities of exile' is in fact the Arabic word for *sabar*, Hebrewised as (masculine and tough) *tzabar* or *sabra* (Bresheeth 1989: 131), the prickly pear grown in and around the hundreds of Palestinian villages destroyed by Israel in 1948. Even the 'national anthem of the Six Day War', No'ami Shemer's song's 'Jerusalem of Gold', was a plagiarised copy of a Basque lullaby song (Masalha 2007: 20, 39). Seeking to create an 'authentic' nativised' identity, the East European Jewish colonists claimed to represent an indigenous people returning to its homeland after two thousand years of absence, in fact Russian or Ukrainian nationals formed the hard core of Zionist activism.

4.1.3 From Palestinian *Fuleh* to Jewish *Afula*

Afula is an Israeli city in the northern district often known as the 'Capital of the Valley' due to its strategic location in the Jezreel Valley. It was founded in 1925 by Zionist settlers after the purchase of large tracts (60,000 *dunums*) of Arab land from the Arab absentee landlords of the Sursuk family in Beirut by Yehoshua Hankin (1864–1945), the Russian born activist who was responsible for most of the major land purchases for the Jewish Colonial Association in late Ottoman Palestine and early Mandatory Palestine. These tracts became the site of numerous new Zionist colonies, including Dayan's Nahlal, Giva, Ein Harod, Kfar Yehezkel, Beit Alfa, Tel Yosef, settlements which replaced several Palestinian villages which disappeared from the map and of which some are cited by Dayan above.

The etymology of the Zionist settler toponym *Afula* is derived from the name of the Palestinian Arab village 'al-Fuleh, which in 1226 Arab geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi mentioned as being 'a town in *Jund Filastin*. The Arabic toponym al-Fuleh is derived from the word *ful*, Arabic for fava beans which are among the oldest food plant in the Middle East and was widely cultivated by local Palestinians in the Jezreel valley. The Palestinian village of al-Fuleh itself was depopulated during the Mandatory period. The 9,500 *dunums* of land of Al-Fuleh, which also became the site of the Jewish settlement of Merhavva, marked the beginning of bitter struggle between the indigenous Palestinians and Zionist colonists over the rights of Palestinian tenant farmers who had been evicted and eventually led to the eruption of the Palestina peasant-based rebellion in 1935-1939. Reflecting on this creeping process of ethnic cleansing two years earlier in a debate at the World Convention of Ihud Po'alei Tzion (the highest forum of the dominant Zionist world labour movement), in August 1937, had this to say:

The matter of population transfer has provoked a debate among us: Is it permitted or forbidden? My conscience is absolutely clear in this respect. A remote neighbour is better than a close enemy. They [the Palestinians] will not lose from it. In the final analysis, this is a political and settlement reform for the benefit of both parties. I have long been of the opinion that this is the

best of all solutions ... I have always believed and still believe that they were destined to be transferred to Syria or Iraq. (cited in Masalha 1992: 71)

A year later, at the Jewish Agency's Executive Committee of June 1938, Katznelson reiterated his support for a wholesale and 'compulsory transfer' of the Palestinians and added: 'Regarding the transfer of Arab individuals, we are always doing this (cited in Masalha 1992: 114) and in the early 1940s Katznelson reminded his colleagues in Mapai that the whole sale evacuation of the Palestinians was the continuation of a natural process that had begun with the when Zionist settlers had displaced Arab tenant farmers and residents and the establishment of Kibbutz Merhavva on the land of al-Fuleh had led to a small scale of Arab transfer (Masalha 1992: 130).

4.1.4 From Palestinian *Masha* and *Sajara* to Kfar Tavor and Ilaniya

The Zionist settlement (moshava) of Kfar Tavor was founded in lower Galilee in 1909 by the Jewish Colonisation Association for a group of Ashkenazi settlers from Eastern Europe. The origin of the Hebrew name is neighbouring Mount Tabor. Throughout the mandatory period this settlement was better known to the Zionist leadership of the Yishuv as *Mescha*, which the Ashkenazi rendering of the Palestinian Arabic toponym, *Masha*. Nearby Zionist settlement *Sejera* (later renamed 'Ilaniya') was established a decade earlier, in 1900-1902; also by the Zionist Colonisation Association by Ashkenazi rendering and using the Palestinian Arabic name *Sajara* (Palestinian dialect for 'tree') for one the earliest and most important Zionist settlements in Palestine.

The issue of Hebrewising Arabic toponyms such as *Masha* was not always a top priority of the fiercely secular early Zionist settler leaders in Palestine. Also the establishment of the Technikum in Haifa – now the Technion – by a secular German Zionist organisation at the beginning of the 20th century and the controversy about the language of instruction at the Technikum (German or Hebrew) marked the 'War of the Languages' (Margalit 1994: 87-119) in the Zionist colony (Yishuv) in Palestine. Some leaders of the left-wing secular Po'ale Tzion Zionist movement, such as Ya'akov Zerubavel (born Ya'akov Vitkin in the Ukraine and immigrate to Palestine in 1910) who was a Zionist writer, publisher and edited a Yiddish newspaper, were strong proponents of Yiddish, sharing the view of many left-wing secular Zionists that Hebrew was the language of few Jewish intellectuals and therefore not suitable to the party's goal of reaching the primarily Yiddish-speaking masses in eastern Europe (Chaver 2004: 97). But the 'War of the Languages' in the early Yishuv ended in victory for Hebrew whose domination was central to the formulation of the 'politico-social myths' of Zionism (Azaryahu 1995) of political Zionism and the construction of a Jewish 'national' identity of the Yishuv.

Among the early Zionist workers in 'Sejera' was David Grün, who immigrated to Palestine the Polish part of the Russian empire in 1906 and who later became known as David Ben-Gurion, the founding father of Israel and its first Prime Minister. The early Zionist settlers, workers and leaders of 'Sejera' and 'Mescha', mostly Russian or East European nationals, created a Jewish defence organisation in Palestine: Hashmor (Hebrew for 'the Guard'), which was organised in 1909 by socialist Zionists. This was disbanded during the mandatory period after the founding of the Haganah (Hebrew for 'defence') in 1920 from which the Israeli army emerged in mid-1948. The indigenising and nativising strategies of early settlers and leaders of Hashomer included dressed up like local Palestinian Arabs and

cultivating of image of the Sabra, the ‘new Jew’, or the New Hebrew Man, who dressed up like an Arab and rebranded as a ‘native’, self-reliant and armed Jew ‘rooted’ in the land of Palestine.

Throughout the British Mandatory period ‘Sejara’, like ‘Mescha’, remained better known to the settlers and the entire Zionist leadership of the Yishuv by its Arab toponym (not its new Hebrew toponym ‘Ilaniya’), a place name which was based on the Arabic dialect of the adjacent Palestinian Arab village ‘al-Sharaja’ (‘Tree’ in Arabic). The Palestinian village ‘al-Sharaja’ was subsequently destroyed by Haganah forces in 1948 and Zionist ‘Sejara’ is known in Israel today as ‘Ilaniya’ which is also the Hebrew rendering of the Arabic toponym for ‘tree’.

4.2 Judaisation, Hebrewisation and biblicisation strategies

The Zionist colony of Gedera, located 13 kilometres south of Rehovot, was founded by Russian settlers in 1884 and like the colonies of Rehovot, Afula and Hadera, the purchase of its lands from Palestinian landlords involved Yehoshua Hankin. The Jewish Colonial Association gave Gedera a Hebrew-sounding name (Hebrew: ‘wall’) after a site supposedly mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. Hadera’s name, on the other hand, clearly originated from *al-Kharda*, and *al-Khdeira* in local Palestinian dialect, Arabic for ‘Green’, the Palestinian origin of the Israeli name *Hadera*. Although this key Zionist colony (today a major Israeli city) was given a Hebrew-sounding name, this Zionist name makes absolutely no sense in Hebrew (Bar On 1996: 38). The lands of the colony of Gedera had been purchased with the help of the French consul in Jaffa, Poliovierre. Local Palestinian of Qatra had been cultivating the as tenant farmers when the Jewish settlers arrived and resented the intrusion onto what they still thought of as their land. Qatra was a Canaanite centre of political and economic authority that along with 30 other urban sites in regions bordering the Mediterranean Sea entered a period of decline in the late Bronze Age (Zevit 2003: 94) and flourished throughout the Islamic rule. Archaeological excavations at Tel Qatra discovered a pottery workshop for the manufacture of Gaza jars was discovered at Tel Qatra, an archaeological site on the outskirts of Qatra. Also Gaza amphorae were used to ship wine and other foodstuffs across the Byzantine world.

Etymologically the naming of Gedera by early Zionist settlers followed closely Christian Scriptural geography and biblical archaeology of the 19th century which worked from the narratives of the Bible. The ‘biblical location’ was first suggested by Victor Guérin (1868-80; 1881–83) an amateur French biblical archaeologist and Scriptural geographer who visited Palestine several times and whose works often referred to passages from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish sources such as the Mishna and Talmud as well as works by contemporary Scriptural explorers such as Victor Guérin and Edward Robinson who—like the medieval Crusaders and pilgrims in Maurice Halbwachs *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (1941) – using the biblical narratives, thought that more than 100 biblical place names in Palestine by largely linguistic speculation on the origins of Arabic place names used by the Palestinian *fellahin* who (Robinson believed) had preserved traces of the biblical roots in modern toponyms (Robinson, Smith and Others 1860; Davis, 2004; Macalister 1925). Guérin linked the name Gedera to the Palestinian village of Qatra (Fischer, Taxel and Amit 2008: 7–35) which was depopulated and destroyed by Jewish forces in 1948. During the British Mandate of Palestine it was referred to by local Palestinians as *Qatrat Islam* to distinguish it from the Jews colony of *Qatrat Yahud* (‘Jewish Qatra’) or Gedera, as it is called by the Zionist settlers

themselves. In the 1950s, a neighbourhood called Oriël ('light of God') was established on the lands of Arab Qatra for new Jewish immigrants with visual impairments.

Central to the construction of Zionist collective memory— and subsequently Israeli identity – based on 'biblical memory' was the Yishuv's memorialising toponymy project which was established in the 1920s to 'restore' biblical Hebrew or to create new biblical-sounding names of symbolic meaning to Zionist grab of the land and colonisation of Palestine (Ra'ad 2010: 189).

In the 1920s a JNF Naming Committee was set up to name the newly established Jewish colonies in Palestine to compete with the overwhelmingly Arabic map of Palestine; its renaming efforts were appreciated by the British mandatory authorities and were incorporated into the Palestine government's official gazette (Benvenisti 2002: 26). Both the JNF Naming Committee and the Israeli Governmental Names Committee of the 1950s were generally guided by the biblical geography of Victor Guérin (1868-80; 1881–83) and Edward Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea* (1841), in which he had argued that the place names of Palestinian villages and sites, seemingly Arab, were modern Arabic renderings of old Hebraic names. An important part of the 'New Hebrew' identity was the Zionist-Hebrew toponymy and Israeli maps which gradually replaced the Palestinian Arabic names: street names, geographical sites and toponymy (Cohen and Kliot 1981: 227–46; 1992: 653–80; Azaryahu and Golan 2001: 178–95; Azaryahu and Kook 2002: 195–213).

5. Zionist toponymic methods and strategies in the post-Nakba period: Key features of the Israeli place names projects

Until 1948 the Zionists were not in control of the toponymic processes in Palestine. Following the mass ethnic cleaning of the Nakba and now assuming full control of nearly eighty percent of historic Palestine, the cultural politics of naming was accelerated radically after the establishment of the Israeli state. State toponymic projects were now used as tools to ensure the effectiveness of the de-Arabisation of Palestine. One of these tools centres on the official Israeli road signs, which are often in Hebrew, Arabic and English. But both the Arabic and English are *transliterations* of the new Hebrew place names – rather reflecting the use of the original Palestinian Arabic name. Of course the overwhelming majority of Israelis cannot read Hebrew; this is partly to remind the indigenous Palestinians inside Israel of the need to internalise the new Hebrew place names or perhaps seek the expressed approval of the vanishing Palestinian Arab (Shohat 2010: 264), making Arabic complicit in the de-Arabisation of Palestine.

Key features and methods of Israeli-Zionist renaming patterns and creating new place name in the post-Nakba period included:

- a) The role of the Israeli Army: the Hebrew Names Committee of 1949 and Indigenising the European settlers
- b) State-enforced projects: the Israeli Governmental Names Committee
- c) The legendary toponymy of Zionist settlers and the medieval Crusaders
- d) Toponymicide and the appropriating Palestinian heritage, silencing the Palestinian past: mimicry, the de-Arabisation of Palestinian place names and assertion of ownership
- e) The creation of a usable past: the power/knowledge nexus
- f) Judaisation strategies and the assertion of ownership: the superimposition of biblical, Talmudic and Mishnaic names

- g) Fashioning a new European landscape as a site of amnesia and erasure
- h) Transliteration of new Hebrew place names and road signs into English and Arabic; post-1967 occupation

5.1 The Israeli Army's Hebrew Names Committee of 1949: Indigenising the European settlers and self-renaming:

British Jewish historian Sir Lewis Bernstein Namier (1888–1960), who immigrated to the UK in 1907, was a long-time Zionist and a close friend and associate of Chaim Weizmann. He also worked as political secretary for the Jewish Agency in Palestine (1929–31). Namier was born 'Ludwik Niemirowski' in what is now part of Poland and his devotion to Zionism did not prevent the Anglicisation of his name. While name changing among British or American Zionist Jews who emigrated from Eastern Europe became part of the process of Anglicisation or Americanisation, name changing in Palestine among Zionist settlers began during the mandatory period and became an integral part of the Hebraicisation and biblicalisation of the immigrant settlers (Brisman 2000 129). The initiative began by Yizhak ben-Tzvi, the second predefiner of Israel, and by a directive written by Ben-Gurion to the army officers that it was their moral duty to Hebraise their names and an example of the IDF as a result of the directive the army set up a Hebrew Name Committee to propose Hebrew names to officers and soldiers in the Army. A booklet was compiled by Mordechai Nimtsa-Bi (1903-1949), the head of the names Committee. The compilers offered four groups of Hebrew suggested names: family names, names of Taanim and Amoraim, biblical names and Hebrew personal names. A similar list was compiled a few years later by Yaakov Arikha under the title, *behar likha shem mishpaha Ivri*: 'Select for Yourself a Hebrew Family Name'. The booklet published in Jerusalem in 1954 by the Israeli Academy for the Hebrew Language, included advice on how to change family names, lists of Hebrew names served as an example (Brisman 2000: 129).

Although eastern European Jewish settlers claimed to represent an indigenous people returning to its homeland after two thousand years of absence, in fact Russian nationals formed the hard core of Zionist activism. This self-re-indigenization required a great deal of effort to create the mythological New Hebrew Sabra Man and construct a new Jewish identity. No wonder, for the early Zionist settlers were intent not only on 'inventing a Land, and inventing a Nation' (Rabkin 2010: 130), but also on self-reinvention. Reinventing their own new, Hebrew-imagined biblical identity, the post-1948 period saw top Zionist leaders, army commanders, biblical archaeologists and authors changing their names from Russian, Polish and German to 'authentic' Hebrew-sounding (biblical) names. Examples include the following:

- Moshe Sharett was born Moshe Shertok in Russia in 1894; he became Israel's foreign minister in 1948; he chose to Hebraise his last name in 1949, following the creation of the State of Israel.
- Golda Meir was born Golda Mabovitch in Kiev in 1898; later Golda Meyerson; Hebraised her last name, interestingly, only after she became foreign minister in 1956; she was prime minister 1969–74.
- Yitzhak Shamir¹¹ was born Icchak Jeziernicky in eastern Poland in 1915; he was foreign minister 1981–82 and prime minister 1983–4 and 1988–92.
- Ariel Sharon was born Ariel Scheinermann in colonial Palestine in 1928 (to Shmuel and Vera, later Hebraised to Dvora, immigrants to Palestine from Russia); he was prime minister 2001–6.

¹¹ Shamir means flint. In the Talmud there is the myth of King Solomon using Shamir in the construction of the first temple in the place of cutting tools.

- David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), the first prime minister and defence minister of Israel in 1948, was born David Gruenin Russia; his mother was called Scheindel and his Russian-born wife was called Pauline Munweis when she met and married Ben-Gurion in New York (she later changed her name Paula); after immigrating to Palestine he became David Green; he then changed his name to the biblical-sounding name David Ben-Gurion – Ben-Gurion literally ‘son of the lion cub’. He also chose a biblical name for his daughter, Geula (‘redemption’) and his son Amos, after a minor prophet in the Hebrew Bible.
- Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi was born in the Ukraine as Yitzhak Shimshelovich, the son of Tzvi Shimshelovich, who later took the name Tzvi Shimshi.
- Yitzhak Shimshelovitch in the Ukraine in 1884; he was the second president of Israel.
- Yigal Allon, Commander of the Palmah in 1948 and later acting Prime Minister of Israel, was born Yigal Peikowitz, later Yigal (‘to redeem’) Allon (‘oak tree’) in the settlement of Masha (Kfar Tavor). His father immigrated to Palestine from Eastern Europe in 1890.
- Menahem Begin, the founder of the current ruling Likud party and the sixth prime minister of Israel, was born in Brest-Litovsk, then part of the Russian empire, as Mieczysław Biegun.
- Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi’s wife, Rahel Yanait – a labour Zionist leader and a co-founder of the Greater Land of Israel Movement in 1967 – immigrated to Palestine in 1908, was born in the Ukraine as Golda Lishansky. Apparently she Hebrewised her name to Rahel Yanait in memory of the Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus (Hellenized name of Alexander Yannai) (126–76 BCE), a territorial expansionist, who during the 27-year reign, was almost constantly involved in military conflict and who enlarged the Hasmonean kingdom. Her two sons, born during the British mandatory period, were given biblical names: Amram, named after the father of Moses and Aaron, and Eli, named after the High Priest Eli.
- Levi Eshkol was born in the Ukraine in 1895 as Levi Skolnik; he was Israel’s third prime minister, 1963–9.
- David Remez was born David Drabkin in Belarus in 1886; he was Israel’s first minister of transportation.
- Zalman Shazar, the third president of Israel (from 1963 to 1973), who immigrated to Palestine in 1921, was born in the Russian empire as Shneur Zalman Rubashov.
- Pinhas Rutenberg (1879–1942), a prominent Zionist leader and the founder of Palestine Electric Company, which became the Israel Electric Corporation, was born in the Ukraine as Pyotr Moiseyevich Rutenberg.
- Avraham Granot (1890–1962), director general of the Jewish National Fund and later chairman of its board, was born in today’s Moldova as Abraham Granovsky; he changed his name after 1948.
- Shimon Peres was born in Poland in 1923 as Szymon Perski; he was Israel’s eighth prime minister and in 2007 was elected as its ninth president.
- Right-wing Russian Zionist leader Zeev Jabotinsky (1880–1940) changed his name to Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky during the mandatory period.
- Prominent Labour leader Haim Arlozoroff (1899–1933) was born Vitaly Arlozoroff.
- General Yigael Yadin (1917–84), the army’s second chief of staff and a founding father of Israeli biblical archaeology, was born Yigal Sukenik.
- Professor Benyamin Mazar, co-founder of Israeli biblical archaeology, was born Benyamin Maisler in Poland; educated in Germany, he immigrated to colonial Palestine in 1929 and Hebrewised his name.
- Yitzhak Sadeh (1890–1952), the commander of the Haganah’s strike force, the Palmah, and one of the key army commanders in 1948, was born in Russia as Isaac Landsberg.
- General Yitzhak Rabin, the first native-born Israeli prime minister, 1974–7 and 1992–5, was born in Jerusalem to a Zionist settler from the Ukraine, Nehemiah Rubitzov.
- General Yigal Allon (1918–80), commander of the Palmah in 1948, government minister and acting prime minister of Israel, best known as the architect of the Allon Plan, was born in Palestine Yigal Paicovitch. His grandfather was one of the early east European settlers who immigrated to Palestine in the 1880s. After Israel was proclaimed in 1948 he changed his

name to the Hebrew Allon ('oak' tree). General Tzvi Tzur (1923–2004), the Israeli army's sixth chief of staff, was born in the Zaslav in the Soviet Union as Czera Czertenko.

- General Haim Bar-Lev, Army chief-of-staff in 1968–71 and later a government minister, was born Haim Brotzlewsky in Vienna in 1924.
- Ben-Tzion Dinur (1884–1973), Israel's minister of education and culture in the 1950s, was born Ben-Tzion Dinaburg in the Ukraine and immigrated to Palestine in 1921.
- General Moshe Ya'alon, former army chief of staff, was born in Israel in 1950 as Moshe Smilansky.
- Prominent Israeli author and journalist Amos Elon (1926–2009) was born in Vienna as Amos Sternbach.
- Israel's leading novelist Amos Oz was born in mandatory Palestine in 1939 as Amos Klausner. His parents, Yehuda Klausner and Fania Mussman, were Zionist immigrants to mandatory Palestine from eastern Europe. He is married to Nilly Zuckerman, with a common German Jewish surname meaning 'sugar man'.
- Gershom Scholem, a German-born Jewish philosopher and historian and the founder of the modern, academic study of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) was born Gerhard Scholem; he changed his name to Gershom Scholem after he emigrated to mandatory Palestine in 1923.
- Yigal Tumarkin, a German-born Israeli artist known for his memorial sculpture of the Holocaust in Tel Aviv, was born in Dresden in 1933 Peter Martin Gregor Heinrich Hellberg.
- Israel's greatest poet, Yehuda Amichai (1924–2000) (Hebrew for 'Praise my people alive'), was born in Germany as Ludwig Pfeuffer; he immigrated to colonial Palestine in 1935 and subsequently joined the Palmah and the Haganah; in 1947 he was still known as Yehuda Pfeuffer.
- Ya'akov Zerubavel a Zionist writer, publisher and one of the leaders of the Poale Tzion movement, was born Ya'akov Vitkin in the Ukraine.
- Historian Ben-Tzion Netanyahu the father of the current Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was born in Poland as Ben-Tzion ('son of Zion') Mileikowsky in 1910.

Evidently many of these changes of name took place around or shortly after 1948. During the mandatory (colonial) period, it was still advantageous for individuals to have their original European names.

The above list also shows senior officers and army chiefs of staffs (*Rav Alufs* in Hebrew) adopting Hebrew-sounding names in the post-1948 period. Ironically, although in the Hebrew Bible the Philistines are constructed as the Other arch enemy of the Israelites, since 1948 a Philistine term such as *seren*, a lord, has been used by the Israeli army as a rank equivalent to captain. Also the terms *Aluf* and *Rav Aluf* (major general and lieutenant general respectively), which have been used for the two highest ranks in the army, are all apparently from the Hebrew Bible. In the Hebrew Bible *Aluf* ('chief', the one who commands a 'thousand people') was a rank of nobility among the Edomites, identified by some scholars to be of Nabataean Arab origins, and often depicted as the Israelites' inveterate enemies whom the Hebrew prophets denounce violently.

Since 1948 the Israeli state has encouraged a conception of an ethnocentric identity on the basis of the land and conquest traditions of the Hebrew Bible, especially on the Book of Joshua and those dealing with biblical Israelites' origins that demanded the subjugation and destruction of other peoples. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Book of Joshua is required reading in Israeli schools. The Israelite 'conquest' was not the 'Blitzkrieg' it is made out to be in the Book of Joshua, this book holds an important place in the Israeli school curricula and Israeli academic programmes partly because the founding fathers of Zionism viewed Joshua's narrative of conquests as a precedent for the establishment of Israel as a nation (Burge 2003: 82). Although the account of the Israelites' enslavement in ancient Egypt

as described in the Book of Exodus is generally recognised as a myth, in Israeli schools and universities this is treated as actual history.

Furthermore since 1948 Israeli academic institutions have continued the same colonialist tradition of intelligence gathering and data collection. The Israeli army and Israeli biblical academy, in particular, have always been intimately connected and close partners in nation-building. Engaging in nationalist mobilisation through the mobilisation of the Bible and myth-making through spurious scholarly activity involves a large number of Israeli academics and social scientists, in particular archaeologists, political geographers and Orientalists. The involvement of Israeli academic institutions with the Governmental Names Committee (below), which has operated since the early 1950s, and continues to do so, from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, is perhaps the best example of academic complicity in the production of knowledge through myth-making.

5.2 Toponym 'from above' and state-supervised projects: The Israeli Governmental Names Committee

Post-1948 Zionist projects concentrated on the Hebrewisation/Judaisation of Palestinian geography and toponymy through the practice of renaming sites, places and events. The Hebrewisation project deployed renaming to construct new places and new geographic identities related to supposed biblical places. The 'new Hebrew' names embodied an ideological drive and political attributes that could be consciously mobilised by the Zionist hegemonic project. The official project began with the appointment of the Governmental Names Committee (*Va'adat Hashemot Hamimshaltit*) by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in July 1949. Ben-Gurion had visited the Naqab/Negev in June and had been struck by the fact that no Hebrew names existed for geographical sites in the region. The 11 June 1949 entry for his War Diary reads: 'Eilat ... we drove through the open spaces of the Arava ... from 'Ein Husb ... to 'Ein Wahba ... We must give Hebrew names to these places – ancient names, if there are, and if not, new ones!' (Ben-Gurion 1982 vol. 3: 989).

The Israeli Governmental Names Committee of the 1950s was generally guided by Edward Robinson's biblical geography and his *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea* (1841), in which he had argued that the place names of Palestinian villages and sites, seemingly Arab, were modern Arabic renderings of old Hebraic names. An important part of the 'New Hebrew' identity was the new Zionist-Hebrew toponyms and Israeli maps which gradually replaced the Palestinian Arabic names: street names, geographical sites and toponymy (Cohen and Kliot 1981: 227–46; 1992: 653–80; Azaryahu and Golan 2001: 178–95).

In the immediate post-Nakba period Israeli archaeologists and members of the Israeli Exploration Society on the Government Names Committee concentrated their initial efforts on the creation of a new map for the newly occupied 'Negev' (Abu El-Haj 2001: 91–4). Commissioned to create Hebrew names for the newly occupied Palestinian landscape, throughout the documents produced by this committee, there were reported references to 'foreign names'. The Israeli public was called upon 'to uproot the foreign and existing names' and in their place 'to master' the new Hebrew names. Most existing names were Arabic names. Charged with the task of erasing hundreds of Arabic place names and creating Hebrew names in the Negev, the committee held its first meeting on 18 July and subsequently met three times a month for a ten-month period and assigned Hebrew names to 561 different geographical features in the Negev – mountains, valleys, springs and waterholes – using the Bible as a resource. Despite the obliteration of many ancient Arabic names from the Negev

landscape, some Arabic names became similar-sounding Hebrew names, for example Seil Imran became Nahal Amram' apparently recalling the father of Moses and Aaron; the Arabic Jabal Haruf (Mount Haruf) became Har Harif (Sharp Mountain), Jabal Dibba (Hump Hill) became Har Dla'at (Mount Pumpkin). After rejecting the name Har Geshur after the people to whom King David's third wife belonged, as a Hebrew appellation for the Arabic Jabal Ideid (Sprawling Mountain), the committee decided to call it Har Karkom (Mount Crocus), because crocuses grow in the Negev.¹² However the sound of the Arabic name Ideid was retained in the nearby springs, which are now called Beerot Oded (the Wells of Oded), supposedly after the biblical prophet of the same name.¹³ In its report of March 1956 the Israeli Government Names Committee stated:

In the summarized period 145 names were adopted for antiquities sites, ruins and tells: eight names were determined on the basis of historical identification, 16 according to geographical names in the area, eight according to the meaning of the Arabic words, and the decisive majority of the names (113) were determined by mimicking the sounds of the Arabic words, a partial or complete mimicking, in order to give the new name a Hebrew character, following the [accepted] grammatical and vowelings rules. (quoted in Abu El-Haj 2001: 95)¹⁴

In *Hidden Histories* Palestinian scholar Basem Ra'ad, citing a 1988 study, *Toponymie Palestinienne: Plaine de St. Jean d'Acre et corridor de Jerusalem*, by Thomas Thompson, Francolino Goncalves and J. M. van Canghai, shows the Israeli toponymy committees went far beyond their original mandates:

There was simply not enough [biblical] tradition to go by, so [the project] could only continue by picking out biblical or Jewish associations at random. It had to Hebraize Arabic names, or in other cases translate Arabic to Hebrew to give the location an ideologically consistent identity. For example, some locations were rendered from Arabic into the Hebrew phonetic system: Minet el-Muserifa became Horvat Mishrafot Yam and Khirbet el Musherifa was changed to Horvat Masref. Sometimes, in this artificial process, the committees forgot about certain genuine Jewish traditions, as in the case of the total cancelling of the Arabic name Khirbet Hanuta, not recognising that it probably rendered the Talmudic Khanotah. This forced exercise of re-naming often even went against biblical tradition, most notably in erasing the Arabic names Yalu and 'Imwas [after 1967]. Yalo became Ayallon, while 'Imwas, Western Emmaus, associated with the Christ story, was one of the three villages, along with Beit Nuba, razed in 1967. The old stones from the villages were sold to Jewish contractors to lend local tradition and age to new buildings elsewhere, and the whole area was turned into the tragic Canada Park, made possible by millions from a Canadian donor. (Ra'ad 2010: 188–9; Thompson, Goncalves and van Canghai 1988)

5.3. The legendary toponymy of Zionist settlers and the Latin medieval Crusaders

Israeli renaming committees followed sought to the methods of Christian Scriptural geographers and biblical archaeologists of the nineteenth century such as Victor Guérin and Edward Robinson who – like the Latin medieval Crusaders pilgrims in Maurice Halbwachs' *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (1941) – 'discovered', produced and reproduced particular place names from the myth narratives of the Bible, Talmud and Mishna.

¹²Don C. Benjamin, 'Stories and Stones: Archaeology and the Bible, an introduction with CD Rom', 2006, at: http://www.donbenjamin.com/Archaeology_&_the_Bible.pdf, note 78, p.254.

¹³Yadin Roman, at: <http://www.erezt.com/archive/jan3000.htm>.

¹⁴ Approximately one-fourth of all geographical names were derived from the Arabic names on the basis of the similarity of sounds.

5.4 Toponymicide, appropriating Palestinian heritage, erasing the Palestinian past: Mimicry and the de-Arabisation of Palestinian place names

The Palestinians share common experiences with other indigenous peoples who had their self-determination and narrative denied, their material culture destroyed and their histories erased, retold or reinvented or distorted by European white settlers and colonisers. In *The Invasion of America* (1976), Francis Jennings highlighted the hegemonic narratives of the European white settlers by pointing out that historians for generations wrote about the indigenous peoples of America from an attitude of cultural superiority that erased or distorted the actual history of the indigenous peoples and their relations with the European settlers. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that the impact of European settler-colonisation is continuing to hurt and destroys indigenous peoples; that the negation of indigenous views of history played a crucial role in asserting colonial ideology, partly because indigenous views were regarded as incorrect or primitive, but primarily because 'they challenged and resisted the mission of colonisation' (L. Smith, 1999: 29). She states:

Under colonialism indigenous peoples have struggled against a Western view of history and yet been complicit with the view. We have often allowed our 'histories' to be told and have then become outsiders as we heard them being retold ... Maps of the world reinforced our place on the periphery of the world, although we were still considered part of the Empire. This included having to learn new names for our lands. Other symbols of our loyalty, such as the flag, were also an integral part of the imperial curriculum. Our orientation to the world was already being redefined as we were being excluded systematically from the writing of the history of our own lands. (L. Smith 1999: 33)

Although continuing some of the pre-Nakba patterns, Zionist toponymic strategies in the post-Nakba period pursued more drastically memoricide and erasure and the detachment of the Palestinians from their history. With the physical destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns during and after 1948, the Israeli state now focused on the erasure of indigenous Palestinian toponymic memory from history and geography. The physical disappearance of Palestine in 1948, the deletion of the demographic and political realities of historic Palestine and the erasure of Palestinians from history centred on key issues, the most important of which is the contest between a 'denial' and an 'affirmation' (Said, 1980a; Abu-Lughod *et al.* 1991). The deletion of historic Palestine from maps and cartography was not only designed to strengthen the newly created state but also to consolidate the myth of the 'unbroken link' between the days of the 'biblical Israelites' and the modern Israeli state. Commenting on the systematic silencing of the Palestinian past, historian Ilan Pappé, in *The Ethnic Cleaning of Palestine*, deploys the concept of cultural memoricide, where he highlights the systematic scholarly, political and military attempt in post-1948 Israel to de-Arabise and ecologicide the Palestinian terrain, its names, space, ecology, religious sites, its village, town and cityscapes, and its cemeteries, fields, and olive and orange groves and the fruity prickly pears (cactus) famously grown in and around Arab villages and cultivated Arab gardens in Palestine. Pappé conceives of a metaphorical palimpsest at work here, the erasure of the history of one people in order to write that of another people over it; the reduction of many layers to a single layer (Pappé 2006: 225–34).

In the post-Nakba period, some of the features of Israeli renaming strategy followed closely pre-1948 practices of appropriation of Palestinian Arabic toponyms and mimicry. The historic Arabic names of geographical sites were replaced by evoked biblical or Tamudic names and newly coined Hebrew names, some of which vaguely resembled biblical names. It

has already been shown that the replacement of Arabic places and the renaming of Palestine's geographical sites follow roughly the guidelines suggested in the nineteenth century by Edward Robinson (1841; Robinson, Smith and Others (1860)). The obsession with biblical archaeology and scriptural geography transformed Palestinian Arabic place names, Palestinian geographical sites and Palestinian landscape into subjects of Zionist mimicry and camouflaging (Yacobi 2009: 115). From mid-nineteenth century and throughout the first half of the twentieth century Western colonialist imagination, biblical landscape painting, fantasy and exotic travel accounts, Orientalist biblical scholarship, Holy Land archaeology and cartography and scriptural geography have been critical to the success of the Western colonial enterprise in the Middle East, recreating the 'Biblelands', reinventing a historical-primordial Hebrew ethnicity, while at the same time silencing Palestinian history and de-Arabising Palestinian toponymy (Masalha 2007; Whitelam 1996; Long 1997, 2003).

Israel's biblical industry, with its Hebrew renaming projects, was embedded in this richly endowed and massively financed colonial tradition. Israeli historian Ilan Pappé remarks: [in 1948–1949 the land] changed beyond recognition. The countryside, the rural heart of Palestine, with its colourful and picturesque villages, was ruined. Half the villages had been destroyed, flattened by Israeli bulldozers which had been at work since August 1948 when the government had decided to either turn them into cultivated land or to build new Jewish settlements on their remains. A naming committee granted the new settlements Hebraized [sic] versions of the original Arab names: Lubyā became Lavi, and Safuriya [Saffuriya] Zīpori [Tzīpori] ... David Ben-Gurion explained that this was done as part of an attempt to prevent future claim to the villages. It was also supported by the Israeli archaeologists, who had authorized the names as returning the map to something resembling 'ancient Israel'. (Pappé 2004: 138–9)

The post-1948 project concentrated on the biblicalisation and Hebrewisation of Palestinian Arab geography and the practice of naming events, actions and places in line with biblical or Talmudic toponyms. The Hebrewisation project deployed renaming to construct new places and new geographic identities related to biblical names. The new Hebrew names embodied an ideological drive and political attributes that could be consciously mobilised by the Zionist hegemonic project (Pappé 2005: 153–72).

Jewish settlements were established on the land of the depopulated and destroyed Palestinian villages. In many cases these settlements took the names of the original Palestinian villages and distorted them into Hebrew-sounding names. This massive appropriation of Palestinian heritage provided support for the European Jewish colonisers' claim to represent an indigenous people returning to its homeland after two thousand years of exile. For instance, the Jewish settlement that replaced the large and wealthy village of Bayt Dajan (the Philistine 'House of Dagon') (with 5,000 inhabitants in 1948) was named 'Beit Dagon', founded in 1948; Kibbutz Sa'sa' was built on Sa'sa' village; the cooperative *moshav* of 'Amka on the land of 'Amqa village (Wakim 2001, 2001a; Boqa'i 2005: 73). Al-Kabri in the Galilee was renamed 'Kabri'; al-Bassa village renamed 'Batzat'; al-Mujaydil village (near Nazareth) renamed 'Migdal Haemek' ('Tower of the Valley'). In the region of Tiberias alone there were 27 Arab villages in the pre-1948 period; 25 of them – including Dalhamiya, Abu Shusha, Hittin, Kafr Sabt, Lubyā, al-Shajara, al-Majdal and Hittin – were destroyed by Israel. The name 'Hittin' – where Saladin (in Arabic: Salah al-Din) famously defeated the Latin Crusaders in the Battle of Hattin in 1187, leading to the siege and defeat of the Crusaders who controlled Jerusalem – was renamed to the Hebrew-sounding 'Kfar Hittim' ('Village of Wheat'). In 2008 the Israel Land Authority, which controls the Palestinian refugee property, gave some of the village's land to a

new development project: a \$150 million private Golf resort, which will have an 18-hole championship golf course, designed by the American Robert Trent Jones Jr. Nearby, the road to Tiberias was named the ‘Menachem Begin Boulevard’ and heavy iron bars were placed over the entrance to Hittin’s ruined mosque; the staircase leading to its minaret was blocked (Levy 2004).

Kibbutz Ein Dor (‘Dor Spring’) was founded in 1948 by members of the socialist Zionist Hashomer Hatza‘ir (Mapam’s) youth movement and settlers from Hungary and the United States. It was founded on the land of the depopulated and destroyed village of Indur, located 10 kilometres southeast of Nazareth. Whether or not the Arabic name preserved the ancient Indur, a Canaanite city, is not clear. After 1948 many of the inhabitants became internal refugees in Israel (‘present absentees’, according to Israeli law) and acquired Israeli citizenship – but were not allowed to return to Indur. In accordance with the common Zionist practice of bestowing biblical names on modern sites and communities, the atheist settlers of Hashomer Hatza‘ir appropriated the Arabic name, claiming that ‘Ein Dor was named after a village mentioned in Samuel (28:3-19). However, it is by no means certain that the kibbutz’s location is anywhere near to where the ‘biblical village’ stood. An archaeological museum at the kibbutz contains pre-historical findings from the area.

In the centre of the country the once thriving ancient Palestinian town of Bayt Jibrin (or Bayt Jubrin), 20 kilometres northwest of the city of al-Khalil, was destroyed by the Israeli army in 1948. The city’s Aramaic name was ‘*Beth Gabra*’ which translates as the ‘house of [strong] men’; in Arabic *Bayt Jibrin* also means ‘house of the powerful’, possibly reflecting its original Aramaic name; the Hebrew-sounding kibbutz of Beit Guvrin (‘House of Men’), named after a Talmudic tradition, was established on Bayt Jibrin’s lands in 1949, by soldiers who left the Palmah and Israeli army. Today Byzantine and Crusader remains survive and are protected as an archaeological site under the Hebrew name of Beit Guvrin; the Arabo-Islamic heritage of the site is completely ignored. The erasure of the history of one people at Bayt Jibrin in order to superimpose that of another people over it; the reduction of many layers of history to a single (Jewish) layer.

5.3.1 Examples of appropriation of Arabic toponyms and mimicry

The following are new Hebrew-sounding toponyms based on or derived from the Arabic toponyms of Palestinian villages depopulated and destroyed before or in 1948:

Palestinian villages and place names depopulated before or in 1948	Israeli settlements with toponyms derived from the names of destroyed Palestinian villages
<i>Lubya</i> depopulated July 1948, Arabic: ‘Bean’	<i>Lavi</i> (kibbutz); founded 1948; Hebrew: ‘lion’
<i>Al-Kabri</i> (in western Galilee), depopulated on 21 May 1948	<i>Kabri</i> (kibbutz); founded in 1949
‘ <i>Alma</i> (in the Sadad district); depopulate on 30 October 1948	‘ <i>Alma</i> (moshav); founded in 1949
<i>Biriyya</i> ; depopulated on 2 May 1948	<i>Birya</i> (moshav); founded in 1971
‘ <i>Amqa</i> (in the Acre area), depopulated in October 1948	<i>Amka</i> (moshav); founded in 1949
<i>Sajara</i> (lower Galilee); depopulated July 1948, Arabic: ‘tree’	<i>Ilaniya</i> , Hebrew: ‘tree’
‘ <i>Ayn Zaytun</i> (Western Galilee) depopulated, Arabic ‘Spring of Olives’	‘ <i>Ein Zeitim</i> (kibbutz). Hebrew: ‘Spring of Olives’, originally founded in 1891 north of the Arab village ‘ <i>Ayn Zeitun</i> ; abandoned during the First World

	War; Six Muslims and one Jew were recorded there in 1931, living in four houses; the Jewish settlement was re-established in 1946
<i>Indur</i> (Ibn Amer valley), depopulated in 1948. Arabic toponym possibly preserves Canaanite site: Endor	<i>Ein Dor</i> (kibbutz) founded 1948: Hebrew: ‘Dor Spring’
<i>Fuleh</i> ; depopulated 1925, Arabic: ‘Fava Bean’	<i>Afula</i> (town) founded in 1925
<i>Tal al-‘Adas</i> ; Arabic: ‘Lentils Hill’	<i>Tel ‘Adashim</i> (moshav) established in 1923, Hebrew ‘Lentils Hill’
<i>Al-Mujaydil</i> (village) depopulated in July 1948	<i>Migdal HaEmek</i> (town) founded in 1952; Hebrew: ‘tower of the Valley’
‘ <i>Ayn Hawd</i> ’; depopulated in 1948; Arabic: ‘Spring Basin’	‘ <i>Ein Hod</i> (Artists colony); founded in 1953; Hebrew: ‘Spring of Glory’ ¹⁵
<i>Eshwa, or Ishwa</i> , depopulated on July 1948	<i>Eshtaol</i> (moshav); founded December 1949
‘ <i>Aqir</i> ’; depopulated on 6 May 1948	<i>Kiryat ‘Ekron</i> (town), founded in 1948
‘ <i>Ayn Karim</i> , or ‘ <i>Ein Karim</i> (West of Jerusalem), depopulated in 1948, ‘Generous Spring’	‘ <i>Ein Karem</i> (Jewish neighbourhood in West Jerusalem); Hebrew: ‘Vine Spring’
<i>Kafr Bir'im</i> (northern Galilee) depopulated in October 1948; Arabic: ‘Budding Village’	<i>Bar'am</i> (kibbutz); established in June 1949; Hebrew: ‘Son of the People’
<i>Mahlul</i> ; depopulated in the 1920s	<i>Nahlal</i> ; (moshav) founded in 1921
<i>Jibta</i> ; depopulated in the 1920s	<i>Gvat</i> (kibbutz) founded in 1926
<i>al-Bassa</i> (Western Galilee); depopulated on 14 May 1948	<i>Batzat</i> (nature reserve); renamed after 1948
<i>Wadi al-Hawarith</i> ; Arabic: ‘Valley of Ploughing’	‘ <i>Emek Hefer</i> ’; Hebrew: ‘Valley of Digging’. <i>Ein Ha-Horesh</i> (kibbutz) founded in 1931; was one of the first Zionist settlements in the northern part of <i>Wadi al-Hawarith</i> ; Hebrew: ‘the Plowman's Spring’; notable residents included Israeli historian Benny Morris
<i>Wadi Sarar</i> or <i>Wadi Surar</i> (west of Jerusalem; Arabic: ‘Bebbly Stream’	<i>Nahal Sorek</i> ; Nahal Sorek Nature Reserve created in 1965 Hebrew: ‘Stream of fruitless tree’ derived from the Arabic toponym made to sound like a name from the Midrash the body of exegesis of the Torah
<i>Seil Imran</i> (Naqab); Arabic ‘Stream of Imran’	<i>Nahal Amram</i> ; Hebrew: ‘Stream of Amram’ recalling the biblical name of the father of Moses and Aaron
<i>Jabal Haruf</i> (Naqab); Arabic ‘Mount Haruf’	<i>Har Harif</i> ; Hebrew: ‘Sharp Mountain’
<i>Jabal Dibba</i> (Naqab); Arabic: ‘Hump Hill’	<i>Har Dla‘at</i> ; Hebrew: ‘Mount Pumpkin’.
Tall as-Safi ; (northwest of al-Khalil); depopulated in July 1948; Arabic: ‘the white hill’	<i>Tel Tzafit</i> National Park
<i>Bayt Dajan</i> (southeast of Jaffa); depopulated in April 1948	<i>Beit Dagan</i> ; founded in 1948; Hebrew ‘House of Grain’
<i>Sa'sa'</i> (upper Galilee); depopulated October 1948	<i>Sasa</i> ; kibbutz; founded in January 1949

¹⁵ Echoing the same glorification of the Zionist settler-colonisation, the two new settlements built on the lands of the destroyed Palestinian village Miar (in northern Galilee) were called: *Segev* (greatness or exaltation) and *Ya'ad* (destiny, goal).

<i>Hittin</i> (Eastern Galilee); depopulated in July 1948	<i>Kfar Hittim</i> (moshav); established in 1936; Hebrew: Village of Wheat'
<i>Al-Khadra, or al-Khdeira</i> (central Palestine): Arabic: the 'Green'	<i>Hadera</i> ; established in 1891 as a farming Zionist colony; today a major Israeli city; Israeli toponym makes no sense in Hebrew
<i>Meiron or Mayrun</i> (5 kilometres west of Safad) depopulated in 1948; the name associated with the ancient Canaanite city of <i>Merom</i> or <i>Maroma</i>	<i>Meron</i> (moshav), founded in 1949

Fifty-six years after the Nakba, in March 2004, Israeli journalist Gideon Levy writes:

The Zionist collective memory exists in both our cultural and physical landscape, yet the heavy price paid by the Palestinians – in lives, in the destruction of hundreds of villages, and in the continuing plight of the Palestinian refugees – receives little public recognition. (Levy 2004)

Levy adds:

Look at this prickly pear plant. It's covering a mound of stones. This mound of stones was once a house, or a shed, or a sheep pen, or a school, or a stone fence. Once – until 56 years ago, a generation and a half ago – not that long ago. The cactus separated the houses and one lot from another, a living fence that is now also the only monument to the life that once was here. Take a look at the grove of pines around the prickly pear as well. Beneath it there was once a village. All of its 405 houses were destroyed in one day in 1948 and its 2,350 inhabitants scattered all over. No one ever told us about this. The pines were planted right afterward by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), to which we contributed in our childhood, every Friday, in order to cover the ruins, to cover the possibility of return and maybe also a little of the shame and the guilt. (Levy 2004)

A monumental 1992 study by a team of Palestinian field researchers and academics under the direction of Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi details the destruction of hundreds of villages falling inside the 1949 armistice lines. The study gives the circumstances of each village's occupation and depopulation, and a description of what remains. Khalidi's team visited all except 14 sites, made comprehensive reports and took photographs. Of the 418 depopulated villages documented by Khalidi, 293 (70 per cent) were totally destroyed and 90 (22 per cent) were largely destroyed. Seven survived, including 'Ayn Karim (west of Jerusalem), but were taken over by Israeli settlers. A few of the quaint Arab villages and neighbourhoods have actually been largely preserved and gentrified. But they are empty of Palestinians (some of the former residents are internal refugees in Israel) and are designated as Jewish 'artistic colonies' (Benvenisti 1986: 25; Masalha 2005, 2012). While an observant traveller can still see some evidence of the destroyed Palestinian villages, in the main all that is left is a scattering of stones and rubble. But the new state also appropriated for itself both immovable assets, including urban residential quarters, transport infrastructure, police stations, railways, schools, books, archival and photo collections, libraries, churches and mosques, and personal possessions, including silver, furniture, pictures and carpets (W. Khalidi 1992).

'In many of the JNF sites', Pappé – who analyses several sites mentioned by the JNF website, including the Jerusalem Forest – observes:

bustans – the fruit gardens Palestinian farmers would plant around their farm houses – appear as one of many mysteries the JNF promises the adventurous visitor. These clearly visible remnants of Palestinian villages are referred to as an inherent part of nature and her wonderful secrets. At one of the sites, it actually refers to the terraces you can find almost everywhere there as the proud creation of the JNF. Some of these were in fact rebuilt over the original ones, and go back centuries before the Zionist takeover. Thus, Palestinian bustans are attributed to nature and Palestine's history transported back to a Biblical and Talmudic past. Such is the fate of one of the

best known villages, Ayn al-Zeitun, which was emptied in May 1948, during which many of its inhabitants were massacred. (Pappe 2006: 230)

In 1948 'Ayn Zaytun was an entirely Muslim farming community of one thousand, cultivating olives, grain and fruit, especially grapes; the village name was the Arabic for 'Spring of Olives'; In 1992 Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi described the site as follows:

The rubble of destroyed stone houses is scattered throughout the site, which is otherwise overgrown with olive trees and cactuses [cacti]. A few deserted houses remain, some with round arched entrances and tall windows with various arched designs. In one of the remaining houses, the smooth stone above the entrance arch is inscribed with Arabic calligraphy, a fixture of Palestinian architecture. The well and the village spring also remain. (W. Khalidi 1992: 437)

Today the old stone mosque, parts of which are still standing, is not mentioned by the JNF website. In 2004 the mosque was turned into a milk farm; the Jewish owner removed the stone that indicated the founding date of the mosque and covered the walls with Hebrew graffiti (Pappe 2006: 217). Other mosques belonging to destroyed villages were turned into restaurants, in the case of the town al-Majdal and the village of Qisarya (currently the archaeological, Roman–Crusader theme park of Caesarea); a shop in the case of Beersheba; part of a tourist resort, in the case of al-Zeeb; a bar/restaurant (called 'Bonanza') and a tourist site in the case of 'Ayn Hawd (Pappe 2006: 217; W. Khalidi 1992: 151).

In eastern Galilee, *Lavi*, near Tiberias, a religious kibbutz founded in 1949 on the fertile lands of the Palestinian village of Lubyā, depopulated during 1948 by the Haganah forces, is another example of the appropriation of Palestinian name places by Israel. Anyone can tell that the source of the Hebrewised name *Lavi* is the Palestinian village 'Lubyā'; the Zionists, however, claimed that *Lavi* comes from the ancient Jewish village that existed in the days of the Mishana and Talmud. Yet the appropriation of the Palestinian toponym and choice of the new Hebrew name *Lavi* ('Lion') – rather than *Levi*, the ancient Jewish last name; and a Levite member of the priesthood – reflected the self-identity construction of the European Jewish colonists, the 'New Jews', and Zionism's new relationship to nature, political geography and tough masculinity (Massad 2006: 38). Moreover at Lubyā the JNF put up a sign: 'South Africa Forest. Parking. In Memory of Hans Riesenfeld, Rhodesia, Zimbabwe'. The South Africa Forest and the 'Rhodesia parking area' were created atop the ruins of Lubyā, of whose existence not a trace was left.

Commenting on the gentrification of several former Palestinian villages (like 'Ein Karim) and neighbourhoods (like those of Lydda and Safad) and their transformation into Jewish built environment, Israeli architect Haim Yacobi, of Ben-Gurion University, writes:

The Palestinian landscape is a subject of mimicry through which a symbolic indigenisation of the [Zionist] settlers takes place. As in other ethnocentric national projects, such mimicry may be described as 'an obsession with archeology', which makes use of historical remains to prove a sense of belonging ... The obsession with archeology and history, as well as with treating them as undisputable truths, is clearly evident in the texts that accompanied the design and construction of the gentrified Arab villages and neighborhoods. In this process, the indigenous landscape is uprooted from its political and historical context, redefined as local and replanted through a double act of mimicry into the 'build your own home' sites. (Yacobi 2009: 115)

5.5 The creation of a usable past: The power/knowledge nexus

The creation of political ‘facts on the ground’ together with instrumentalisation of cultural heritage is central to all modern settler-colonial projects. The treatment of the cultural heritage of Palestine as a tool for the Zionist settler purposes is central to the Israeli educational policies, the Israeli biblical academy and Israeli government’s renaming projects. The creation of a usable past (Peled-Elhanan 2012: 12) by the Israeli educational system and the Israeli biblical academy has been examined by several Israeli academics and authors, including Nurit Peled-Elhanan (2012: 12–47), Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (1992), Shlomo Sand (2011), Meron Benvenisti (2002) and Gabriel Piterberg (2001: 31–46; 2008). In *Original Sins: Reflections on the History of Zionism and Israel*, Beit-Hallahmi (of Haifa University) comments on Israel’s biblical ‘knowledge’:

Most Israelis today, as a result of Israeli education, regard the Bible as a reliable source of historical information of a secular, political kind. The Zionist version of Jewish history accepts most biblical legends about the beginning of Jewish history, minus divine intervention. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are treated as historical figures. The descent into Egypt and the Exodus are phases in the secular history of a developing people, as is the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. The biblical order of events is accepted, but the interpretation is nationalist and secular.

The Historicization of the Bible is a national enterprise in Israel, carried out by hundreds of scholars at all universities. The starting point is biblical chronology, then evidence (limited) and speculation (plentiful) are arranged accordingly. The Israeli Defence Ministry has even published a complete chronology of biblical events, giving exact dates for the creation of the world ...

Claiming this ancient mythology as history is an essential part of Zionist secular nationalism, in its attempt to present a coherent account of the genesis of the Jewish people in ancient West Asia. It provides a focus of identification to counter the rabbinical, Diaspora traditions. Teaching the Bible as a history to Israeli children creates the notion of continuity. It is Abraham (‘the first Zionist’, migrating to Palestine), Joshua and the conquest of Palestine (wiping out the Canaanites, just like today), King David’s conquest of Jerusalem (just like today). (Beit-Hallahmi 1992: 119)

Commenting on the tight state control and supervision of the history of Palestine and ‘biblical knowledge’ in the Israeli educational system, Shlomo Sand (of Tel Aviv University), further explains:

The teachings of the Bible, used more as a book of national history than sacred religious canons, also became a separate subject in primary and secondary education in the eyes of the first immigrant [pre-1948 Yishuv] community in Palestine. Each student in every level of the Hebrew school system studies the history of their collective past separately from universal history. It was logical that the development of the collective memory was completed by an adequate university education. The ‘three-thousand years of Jewish nation’ had the right to a separate field of pedagogy and research prohibited to ‘unaccredited’ historians who would presume to access it. One of the most striking results of this original approach was that from the 1930s to the 1990s, no teacher or researcher from the various departments of ‘History of the Jewish People’ in Israeli universities considered him- or herself to be a non-Zionist historian. Historians of general history whose Zionist identity was not always as confirmed had the freedom to treat questions dealing with Jewish history, but they were ineligible for budgets, scholarships, research institutes, chairs or directing doctoral theses relate to Jewish history. (Sand 2011: 159–60)

Commenting on the production, propagation and dissemination of historical and geographical and archaeological ‘knowledge of the country’, Meron Benvenisti, Israeli author and former deputy mayor of Jerusalem (from 1971 to 1978), explained that in the state school curriculum and in the army the subject of ‘knowledge’ of the land of the Bible (*yedi‘at haaretz*) is obsessive. Furthermore ‘knowledge of the land’ is both militarised and masculinised. This obsessive state-directed search for rootedness in the land by the Israeli academia and often Western-funded Zionist research centres and the treatment of the Bible as actual ‘history’ is

conducted by predominantly secular Ashkenazi historians, nationalist archaeologists and biblical academics. Benvenisti writes:

The Bible became a guidebook, taught by reference to the landscape, less for its humanistic and social message – and not for its divine authorship. There is nothing more romantic and at the same time more ‘establishment’ than to be connected in some fashion with this cult. Its priests are the *madrichim* – guides and youth leaders. An extensive institutional network sustained *yedia’t haaretz* [knowledge of the biblical country]: research institutes, field schools, the Society for the Preservation of Nature in Israel (SPNI), the Jewish National Fund, youth movements, paramilitary units, the army. (Benvenisti 1986: 20)

In Jewish Zionism the ‘selective reconstruction of antiquity and manufactured ‘biblical memory’ was part of the historical mission of reviving the ancient national roots and spirit. [Selective] Antiquity became both a source of legitimacy and an object of admiration’ (Zerubavel 1995: 25). The American-Israeli academic Selwyn Ilan Troen, of Brandeis University and Ben-Gurion University, rewriting under the subheading, ‘Reclaiming by Naming’, while rehashing many of foundational myths of Israel, remarks on the continuity of European Zionist colonisation of Palestine and nineteenth century/early twentieth century Western Christian archaeological excavations and knowledge production :

Zionism also set out to ‘re-imagine’ and ‘re-constitute’ the country’s landscape. The process actually began with Christian explorers, and archaeologists and bible scholars from Europe and the United States who visited Palestine from the mid-nineteenth century when the country was under Turkish rule. Contemporary Arab names were but adaptations or corruptions of ancient designations found in sacred texts or other historical sources. Zionist settlers continued the process, although for them it was not merely to recapture the Holy Land of Scriptures. Rather it was a deeply personal attempt to re-imagine themselves in the land of their ancestors. As a consequence, in renaming the land they consciously ignored or set aside many of the physical markers as well as the social and cultural ones of both Europe and the Arab neighbours ... Zionists celebrated the return to history of Biblical Rehovoth¹⁶ and Ashkelon ... In addition, thousands of names were give to streets, public squares and the landscape, with signs in Hebrew everywhere. The total effect invited observers to appreciate that the settlements were the concrete manifestation of national revival by a people who could legitimately claim to be returning natives. (Troen 2008: 197)

5.6 Israeli biblical archaeology as a secular religion: Judaisation strategies and the assertion of ownership: the superimposition of biblical, Talmudic and Mishnaic names

In present-day Israel the claim is obsessively repeatedly made that the Hebrew Bible is materially realised thanks to secularising biblical archaeology, giving Jewish history flesh and bones, recovering the ancient past, putting it in ‘dynastic order’ and ‘returning to the archival site of Jewish identity’ (Said 2004: 46). Biblical archaeology was always central to the construction of Israeli-Jewish identity and the perceived legitimacy of the Israeli state. The debate about ‘ancient Israel’, secularist and nationalist biblical scholarship and biblical archaeology is also a debate about the modern State of Israel, most crucially because in the eyes of many people in the West, the legitimacy of Zionist Jewish ‘restorationism’ depends on the credibility of the biblical portrait. One facet of that debate is the argument in the public domain over the use of the term ‘Israel’ to denote the land west of the Jordan, both in ancient and modern times. The inevitable outcome of the obsession with the Hebrew Bible in Western biblical scholarship – by calling the land ‘biblical’ and by its exclusive interest in a small

¹⁶ Founded in 1890, the new Zionist settlement/city of Rehovot was named after a biblical town of a similar name, Rehoboth, which stood at a completely different location in the Negev Desert.

section of the history of the land – has resulted in focusing on the Israelite identity of a land that has actually been non-Jewish in terms of its indigenous population for the larger part of its recorded history (Whitelam 1996). This state of affairs would not happen in any other area of the planet. It is due to the Hebrew Bible and its influence in the West where an inherited Christian culture supported the notion that Palestine has always been somehow essentially ‘the land of Israel’. Traditional biblical scholarship has been essentially ‘Zionist’ and has participated in the elimination of the Palestinian identity, as if over fourteen hundred years of Muslim occupation of this land has meant nothing. This focus on a short period of history a long time ago participates in a kind of retrospective colonising of the past. It tends to regard modern Palestinians as trespassers or ‘resident aliens’ in someone else’s territory.

The nationalist obsession with the sacred artefacts of secularising biblical archaeology has been central to the formation of Israeli secular-nationalist collective identity and Zionist nation-building since in 1948. To make European Jewish identity rooted in the land, after the establishment of Israel the science of archaeology was summoned to the task of constructing and consolidating that identity in secular time; the rabbis as well as the university scholars specialising in biblical archaeology were give sacred history as their domain (Said 2004: 45). Abu El-Haj’s seminal work, *Facts on the Ground* explores the centrality of selective biblical archaeology in the construction of Zionist Jewish collective identity before and after 1948. The work provides a colonial archaeological exploration in Palestine, dating back to British work in the mid-nineteenth century. Abu El-Haj focuses on the period after the establishment of Israel in 1948, linking the academic practice of archaeology with Zionist colonisation and with plans for the Judaisation and repossession of the land through the renaming of Palestinian historic and geographic names. Much of this de-Arabisation of Palestine is given archaeological justification; the existence of Arab names is written over by newly coined Hebrew names. This ‘epistemological strategy’ prepares for the construction of an Israeli-Jewish identity based on assembling archaeological fragments – scattered remnants of masonry, tables bone, tombs – into a sort of special biography out of which the European colony the Yishuv emerges ‘visible and linguistically, as Jewish national home’ (Abu El-Haj 2001: 74; Said 2004: 47–8; Bowersock 1988: 181–91).

Ideologically driven restorationist biblical archaeology, in particular, has played a key role in secular Zionist-Jewish nation-building as we see in the formation of Zionist-Jewish collective identity before and after 1948. To make European Jewish identity rooted in the land, after the establishment of Israel the science of archaeology was summoned to the task of constructing and consolidating that identity in secular time; the rabbis as well as the university scholars specialising in biblical archaeology were give sacred history as their domain (Said 2004: 45). Abu El-Haj’s *Facts on the Ground* explores the centrality of restorationist/applied biblical archaeology in the construction of Zionist-Jewish collective identity before and after 1948. The work provides a colonial archaeological exploration in Palestine, dating back to British work in the mid-nineteenth century. Abu El-Haj focuses on the period after the establishment of Israel in 1948, linking the academic practice of archaeology with Zionist colonisation and with plans for the Judaisation and repossession of the land through the renaming of Palestinian toponymy. Much of this de-Arabisation of Palestine is given archaeological justification; the existence of Arab names is written over by newly coined Hebrew names. This ‘epistemological strategy’ prepares for the construction of an Israeli Jewish identity based on assembling archaeological fragments – scattered remnants of masonry, tables, bone, tombs, into a sort of special biography out of which the European colony the Yishuv emerges ‘visible and linguistically, as Jewish national home’ (Abu El-Haj 2001: 74; Said 2004: 47–8; Bowersock 1988: 181–91).

A large number of Israeli experts on and practitioners of biblical excavations – from General Yigael Yadin and General Moshe Dayan to even General Ariel Sharon – have remarked that biblical archaeology is the ‘privilege Israeli science *par excellence*’ (Said 2004: 45–6; Kletter 2003). Magen Broshi, a leading Israeli archaeologist, and a current member of the Government Names Committee, noted:

The Israeli phenomenon, a nation returning to its old-new land, is without parallel. It is a nation in the process of renewing its acquaintance with its own lands and here archaeology plays an important role. In this process archaeology is part of a larger system known as *Yedi'at haAretz*, knowledge of the land (the Hebrew term is derived most probably from the German *Landeskunde*) ... The European immigrants found the country to which they felt, paradoxically, both kinship and strangeness. Archaeology in Israel, a *sui generis* state, served as a means to dispel the alienation of its new citizens. (quoted in Said 2004: 46)

In settler-colonising Zionism the highly ‘selective reconstruction of antiquity and manufactured toponymic memory was part of the historical mission of reviving the ancient national roots and spirit. [Selective] Antiquity became both a source of legitimacy and an object of admiration’ (Zerubavel 1995: 25). For the deeply secular founding fathers of political Zionism and mobilised archaeological excavations, in particular, the biblical stories and ideology essentially functioned as the objective historical account of the Jewish ‘title to the land’ – a claim not necessarily borne out by archaeological findings. The passionate interest in biblical archaeology by deeply secular military leaders and politicians such as David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan and Yigael Yadin (the latter two army chiefs of staff) and the significance given to the ‘last stand’ at the fortress of Massada, were designed to forge emotional bonds between the new Israeli army, European settlers and the land. The role of colonial archaeology in justifying South African apartheid has been described elsewhere (Hall 1988: 62–4; 1984: 455–67). In contrast, however, although a great deal has been written about the role of ethnocentric biblical archaeology in confirming the legitimacy of the Zionist claim, little attention has been paid to the role of the biblical theology of ‘God’s People’ and archaeological digging in providing the ideological justification for the expulsion and dispossession of the Palestinians.

The Israeli historians, biblical scholars, archaeologists and geographers, Meron Benvenisti argues in *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948*, have reinvented and reconstructed a history and chronology of ancient Palestine, based on Israeli identity politics,

so as to emphasise the Jewish connection to the land, adding designations such as the biblical, Hasmonean, Mishnaic, and Talmudic periods. From the ‘early Muslim’ period onward, however, they adopted the nomenclature of the ‘conquers’ chronology’, since in this way it was possible to divide the approximately 1,400 years of Muslim-Arab rule into units that were shorter than the period of Jewish rule over the Eretz Israel/Palestine (which lasted at most for 600 years), and especially to portray the history of the country as a long period of rule by a series of foreign powers who had robbed it from the Jews – a period that ended in 1948 with the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. It was thus possible to obscure the fact that the indigenous Muslim Arab population was part and parcel of the ruling Muslim peoples and instead to depict the history of the local population – its internal wars, its provincial rulers, its contribution to the landscape – as matters lacking in importance, events associated with one or another dynasty of ‘foreign occupiers’. (Benvenisti 2002: 300)

While the colonial attitudes of European and North American historians and social scientists towards former colonies of the West has begun to be reevaluated critically since the 1960s, the Israelis have chosen to consolidate the colonial tradition and colonial historiography in Palestine–Israel. In Israel there has always been an obsession with ‘biblical memory’ and the convergence between archaeological excavations and Jewish settler-colonisation has always loomed large, but became most pronounced after the post-1967 conquests. Furthermore Israeli biblical archaeology has remained central to secular Zionist identity politics and Israeli settler activities – most orthodox Jews in Israel were and still are indifferent its findings (Elon, 1997: 38). Meron Benvenisti observes that

British, American, and other academics engaged in the study of the archaeology and history of their former overseas colonies have begun to reevaluate the attitudes that prevailed during the colonial period. They have admitted grave distortions that were introduced into the history of the colonies as an outcome of Eurocentric attitudes, ignoring or erasing remaining traces of the natives’ past and their material culture. In the wake of this evaluation, Amerindian, Aborigine, and native African sites were studied and restored, and a new history was written, focusing on the organic chronicles of those regions, which had been a mere footnote in the history of the European peoples. The Israelis, by contrast, chose to maintain the colonial tradition with only minor changes ... The [Israeli] Antiquities Administration is aware of only two sites in Old Jaffa: the ‘Biuim House’ (the first home of this group of early Zionist pioneers in the country, in 1882) and the first building of the first [Zionist] Hebrew High School (‘Gimnasiya Herzeliyya’), which have been declared ‘antiquities’ in accordance with Article 2 [of Israeli Antiquities Law of 1978]. Of course no structure ‘of historical value’ to the Palestinians has been declared as a protected antiquity under Israeli law. (Benvenisti 2002: 304–5)

Around Jerusalem thousands of acres of pine forests were planted by the Jewish National Fund, forests which are both aimed at camouflaging destroyed Palestinian villages and fashioning a new pastoral ‘biblical landscape’, create a new collective memory and give the impression of an ‘authentic’ timeless biblical landscape in which trees have been standing forever. But this ‘natural landscape’ is a carefully constructed scene to camouflage the systematically expropriated land of Palestinian villages, the destruction of cultivated olive groves and the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba. The underlying intention is to obscure the locations of the Palestinian villages and prevent any cultivation of the land by non-Jews. The Israeli architects Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, commenting on Israeli settlement and the creation of pastoral biblical landscape, write:

In the ideal image of the pastoral landscape, integral to the perspective of colonial traditions, the admiration of the rustic panorama is always viewed through the window frames of modernity. The impulse to retreat from the city to the country reasserts the virtue of a simpler life close to nature ... the re-creation of the picturesque scenes of Biblical landscape becomes a testimony to an ancient claim on the land. The admiration of the landscape thus functions as a cultural practice, by which social and cultural identities are formed. Within this panorama, however, lies a cruel paradox: the very thing that renders the landscape ‘Biblical’ or ‘pastoral’, its traditional inhabitants and cultivation in terraces, olive orchards, stone buildings and the presence of livestock, is produced by the Palestinians, who the Jewish settlers came to replace. And yet, the very people who came to cultivate the ‘green olive orchards’ and render the landscape Biblical are themselves excluded from the panorama. The Palestinians are there to produce the scenery and then disappear ... The gaze that sees a ‘pastoral Biblical landscape’ does not register what it does not want to see, it is a visual exclusion that seek a physical exclusion. Like a theatrical set, the panorama can be seen as an edited landscape put together by invisible stage hands ... What for the state is a supervision mechanism that seeks to observe the Palestinians is for the settlers a window on a pastoral landscape that seeks to erase them. The Jewish settlements superimpose another datum of latitudinal geography upon an existing landscape. Settlers can thus see only

other settlements, avoid those of the Palestinian towns and villages, and feel that they have truly arrived 'as the people without land to the land with people'. (Segal & Weizman 2003: 92)

There are dozens of biblical and archaeological parks in Israel run by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (*Rashut Hateva' Vehaganim*), a governmental organisation set up in 1998. Many of these archaeological (biblical and Crusader) 'national heritage' parks have been constructed on the ruins of Palestinian villages and towns destroyed in 1948. The negation of both the Canaanite and Islamic heritage of the land by Israel's heritage industry of archaeological theme parks is very much in evidence today in Palestinian Saffuriya (destroyed by Israel in 1948)– a heritage industry which is both geared towards retrospective colonisation of the past and the fashioning of modern Israeli collective identity.

5.5.1 From Palestinian Al-Majdal to biblical Ashkelon

In 1948 the towns and villages of southern Palestine, including the cities of Beer Sheba and al-Majdal, were completely depopulated. Al-Majdal was established in the sixteenth century near the medieval Muslim city of Asqalan, a city that had a long history and a multilayered identity dating back to the ancient Canaanites and Philistines. Its medieval Arab name, Asqalan, preserved its ancient Palestinian name, Ashkelon. With the oldest and largest seaport in Canaan, it was one of the five famous cities of the Philistines (Gaza, Gath, Ahkelon, Ashdod, Ekron). Al-Majdal, on the eve of the 1948 war, had 10,000 (Muslim and Christian) inhabitants and in October 1948, thousands more refugees from nearby villages joined them. Al-Majdal was conquered by the Israeli army on 4 November 1948 and many of its residents and refugees fled, leaving some 2,700 inhabitants, mostly women and the elderly, in situ. Orders in Hebrew and Yiddish were posted in the streets of the town, warning the soldiers to be aware of 'undesirable' behaviour on the part of the town's residents. 'As was customary in such instances', the Israeli intelligence officer wrote, 'the behaviour of the population was obsequious and adulatory' (Levy 2000). In December 1948, Israeli soldiers 'swept through' the town and deported some 500 of its remaining inhabitants. In 1949 the commanding officer of the Southern Command, in the south Yigal Allon, 'demanded ... that the town be emptied of its Arabs' (Masalha 1997: 9). This was followed by an inter-ministerial committee's decision to thin out the Palestinian population; another ministerial committee – 'on abandoned property' – decided to settle al-Majdal with Jews; the town was being Judaised, and, with 2,500 Jewish residents, it was named 'Migdal-Ad'. In December 1949, more Palestinians were deported to vacate more houses for Jewish settlers – this time for discharged Israeli soldiers. In the meantime the Israeli army made the life of those Palestinians who remained a misery, hoping they would leave. The new commanding officer of the Southern Command, Moshe Dayan, returned to the idea of Yigal Allon: 'I hope that perhaps in the coming years, there will be another opportunity to transfer these Arabs [170,000 Israeli Arabs] out of the Land of Israel', Dayan said at a meeting of the ruling Mapai party on 18 June 1950. Dayan also submitted a detailed proposal for 'the evacuation of the Arab inhabitants of the town of Majdal'. Both the army chiefs of staff agreed, and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion authorised the plan on 19 June 1950 (Masalha 1997: 9).

In the summer of 1950, almost two years after the 1948 war, the Arab inhabitants of Majdal received expulsion orders and, over a period of a few weeks, were transported to the borders of Gaza. They were loaded onto trucks and dropped off at the border. The last delivery of 229 people left for Gaza on 21 October 1950. The Israeli officials distributed the 'abandoned' houses among new Jewish settlers. To this very day the Palestinian inhabitants of al-Majdal live in the shacks and shanties of the refugee camps in Gaza. In 1956, Migdal-

Ad changed its name to the biblical-sounding one, Ashkelon (Levy 2000). Since then it has been kept as a purely Jewish city. Commenting on Israeli educational policies, Professor Ismael Abu-Sa'ad, of Ben-Gurion University, writes:

The education system is essential to making the displacement of indigenous history and presence 'official', through texts such as that quoted from the 6th grade geography curriculum in Israeli schools, which teaches Palestinian children that the history of the coastal plain began only a hundred years ago, with the advent of European Jewish settlement and their transformation of this previously 'abandoned area'. In the text, modern (Jewish) Tel Aviv overrides any mention of Arab Jaffa; modern (Jewish) Ashdod of (Arab) Isdud¹⁷; modern (Jewish) Ashkelon of (Arab) Al-Majdal. Modern Jewish Rishon Litzion ('First in Zion') and Herzliya and numerous other new towns are superimposed upon an unacknowledged landscape of Palestinian villages emptied and demolished in 1948. The indigenous landscape is erased *from* the curriculum, while it is simultaneously being erased *by* the curriculum, because of its absence from the official historical and geographical materials being taught about the region. (Abu-Sa'ad 2008: 24–5)

5.7 The new Israeli place names and landscape: fashioning a European landscape as a site of amnesia and erasure

In the first two decades of the state Israelis had a deep anxiety about the discovery of the truth about the 1948 Nakba and the 'nightmarish' prospect of Palestinian refugees' returning to their towns and villages in what had become Israel. *Facing the Forests*, one of novelist A. B. Yehushua's first major works, was published in 1963. It opens with the destruction of a Palestinian village in 1948 and the planting of a JNF forest on its ruins. The novel recounts the story of an Israeli student who is 'obsessed' with the history of the Latin Crusaders. The student, looking for a break and solitude, finds a job as a forest ranger. When he arrives at the watch house in the JNF forest he finds an Arab man whose tongue had been cut out and the man's daughter. Shortly after his arrival the student begins to suffer from nightmares and his is constantly anticipating a catastrophe. As the summer continues the student begins to desire man's daughter. The tension between the two escalates and suddenly the man sets fire to the forest and the whole forest burns down. At dawn the student 'turns his gaze to the fire-smoking hills, frowns. There out of the smoke and haze, the ruined village appears before his eyes; born anew, in its basic outlines as an abstract drawing, as all things past and buried'. While the student fails to see the truths unearthed by his research on the Crusades, the fire reveals it. The novel ends with the destruction of the forest and the re-emergence of the Arab village (Yehoshua 1968; quoted in Gover 1986).

The JNF's forests, such as the Carmel National Park, became an icon of Zionist national revival in Israel and in Israeli Hebrew literature, symbolising the success of the European Zionist project in 'striking roots' in the ancient homeland and sacred landscape. Children were often named after trees and children's Hebrew literature described young trees as children (Zerubavel 1996: 60–99). Names such as Ilan ('tree'), Oren ('pine tree') Tomer and Tamar (male and female for 'palm tree'), Amir ('tree top'), or Elon or Allon ('oak tree') are very common in Israel. Natural woodlands of oaks covered many areas of historic Palestine, especially in upper Galilee, Mount Carmel, Mount Tabor and other hilly regions. Some local Palestinian Muslim traditions in Galilee have even attributed holiness to ancient oak trees. The ancient oak tree and its leaves have been seen as a symbol of strength and

¹⁷*Isdud: District of Gaza*. Website: www.palestineremembered.com/Gaza/Isdud/index.html (accessed 4 February 2006).

endurance not only by Palestine but in many countries across the world. European pre-Christian and medieval Christian traditions of veneration of oak trees are well-known. The leaves of oak were also traditionally an important part of German Army regalia and symbolise ranks in the US army. In ancient Palestine this tree had its own cult in biblical mythology – mythology derived from Canaanite religious traditions; a tree which is associated also with life and supposed to have grown since the beginning of the world (Niesiolowski-Spano 2011: 132–7).

But the worship of the JNF (European-style) forests in Israel has also become central to Zionist secular collective *volkisch* memory. Israeli historian and journalist Amos Elon, who was born in Vienna as ‘Amos Sternbach’ and immigrated to Palestine in 1933, changed his name to ‘Amos Oak’. In similar vein General Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmah in 1948, was born ‘Yigal Paicovitch’ and changed his name to the Hebrew-sounding Allon (‘oak’ tree). As we have seen above this tradition of the ‘ancient woods’ and wood worship was derived from central European notions of romantic nationalism. In 2004 Amos Elon moved to Italy, citing disillusionment with developments in Israel since 1967. In *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, Elon writes: ‘[F]ew things are as evocatively symbolic of the Zionist dream and rationale as a ‘Jewish National Fund Forest’ (Elon 1983: 200). Israel’s European-style forests and reforestation policies enjoy Western support. Planting a European-style forest in the ‘sacred soil’ and ‘sacred landscape’ confirms the undeniable ethical value of Israel’s (and by extension the West’s) project in the East. Afforestation is also linked, materially and symbolically, to the European Holocaust, and thousands of trees have been planted in memory of the lost communities and individual victims (Elon 1983: 200). For Palestinians, however, few things better encapsulate the most notorious role of the JNF since the Nakba (Jamjoum, 2010).

5.8 From *Yerushalayim* to *Orshalim*: The transliteration of new Hebrew toponyms and road signs into English and Arabic

The Judaisation and Hebrewisation schemes which began after 1948 continued into the post-1967 era. Israel began interfering with Arabic road signs and toponyms in occupied East Jerusalem immediately after June 1967. In that year it coined a new word, *Orshalim*, that was supposed to be the Arabic form of the Hebrew word for Jerusalem, *Yerushalayim*.¹⁸ In recent years thousands of road signs also became the latest front in Israel’s battle of accelerating the erasure of the Palestinian Arab toponymic heritage of the land. The pattern, which began before 1967, included the transliteration of newly-coined Hebrew toponyms and road signs into both English and Arabic. In July 2009 the Israeli Transport Minister Yisrael Katz announced a new road signs scheme for all major roads in Israel, occupied East Jerusalem and even parts of occupied West Bank to be ‘standardised’ by converting the original Arabic place names into straight transliteration of the new Hebrew name. Traditionally some road signs in Israel included names that were rendered in three languages top-to-bottom: Hebrew (first), English and Arabic. Under the 2009 scheme of the Transport Ministry, which was open about the political motivation behind its policy: Jerusalem, or *al-Quds* in Arabic, would be standardised throughout occupied East Jerusalem into *Yerushalayim* and transliterated into Arabic *Orshalim*; Nazareth, or *al-Nasra* in Arabic, would be standardised into *Natzrat*; and Jaffa, the Palestinian port city after which Palestine’s oranges became famous as Jaffa Oranges, would be *Yafo*. As for *Nablus*, the ministry was also looking ways to make the

¹⁸Jonathan Cook (2009 ‘Israel’s plan to wipe Arabic names off the map’, *The Electronic Intifada* (17 July), at: <http://electronicintifada.net/content/israels-plan-wipe-arabic-names-map/8351>

Hebrew/biblical name *Shechem* spelt out in Arabic.¹⁹ Today all major international airlines which fly to Ben-Gurion Airport (formerly Lydda airport which was created in 1936 during the Palestine Mandate period and later re-named after Israel's first prime minister) use the Hebrew transliteration of the Arabic toponym *Yafa* (Jaffa) by drawing the attention of their passengers on arrival to weather in the *Yafo-Tel Aviv* region.

6 Epilogue:

6.1 Palestinian multi-layered identity and diverse heritage of the Land: The Toponym of Ancient Palestine

Palestinian responses to forced depopulation and ethnic cleansing from their villages and towns are 'discursively rich, complex and protean' (Slyomovics 2002). In recent decades novels, poems, films, plays, ethnographic and photographic documentation, maps, oral history archives, online websites, and a wide-range array of activities in exiled and internally displaced communities have been and are being produced, many with the aim of countering Israeli denial and correcting distortions of omission and commission that eradicate the Palestinian presence in the land. Also a large number of books have been produced both inside Israel and at Birzeit University, all dedicated to villages depopulated and destroyed. These form part of a large historical and imaginative literature in which the destroyed Palestinian villages are 'revitalised and their existence celebrated' (Slyomovics 2002). In the post-1948 period Palestinians maintained the multiple meaning of their Arabic names and the multi-layered Palestinian identity embedded in ancient names. Ashrawi 1995: 132-34; Doumani 1995).

6.2 Palestinian Multi-layered Identity, Toponymic Memory and Heritage

Palestinian nationalism (both secular and religious), however – like all other modern nationalisms – with its construction of national consciousness and identity, is a modern phenomenon (R. Khalidi 1997). The Palestinians, until the 1948 catastrophe, were predominantly peasants, deeply rooted in the land of Palestine. The local dialect and the names of their villages and towns preserved a multi-layered identity and diverse cultural heritage and place names in Palestine.

Today the Palestinians are culturally and linguistically Arab and largely but not exclusively Muslim. The Palestinian Muslim population was mainly descended from local Palestinian Christians and Jews who had converted to Islam after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century and inherited many of the social, cultural, religious and linguistic traditions of ancient Palestine, including those of the Israelites, Canaanites and Philistines (Shaban 1971: 25–161; Donner 1981; Nebel & Oppenheim 2000: 630–41; Rose 2010: 25–49; Esler 2011). Furthermore the similarities between their Arabic language and Ugaritic suggests that Arabic was not a late intruder into Palestine from 638AD onwards, following the Arabo-Muslim conquest (Ra'ad2010). Also many Palestinians are Christian Arabs who have historic roots in Palestine and a long heritage in the land where Christ lived. Commenting on the multi-layered cultural identity and diverse heritage of the Palestinians, Palestinian sociologist Samih Farsoun (1937–2005) writes:

Palestinians are descendants of an extensive mixing of local and regional peoples, including the Canaanites, Philistines, Hebrews, Samaritans, Hellenic Greeks, Romans, Nabatean Arabs, tribal

¹⁹ Cook (2009 'Israel's plan to wipe Arabic names off the map'.

nomadic Arabs, some Europeans from the Crusades, some Turks, and other minorities; after the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, however, they became overwhelmingly Arabs. Thus, this mixed-stock of people has developed an Arab-Islamic culture for at least fourteen centuries. (Farsoun 2004: 4)

The development of Palestinian nationalism in recent decades has brought with it a much greater awareness of critical archaeology and historical writing based on critical biblical studies and the question of the shared historical heritage of Palestine and the Palestinians (Thompson, 2003: 1). Also interestingly, Palestinian scholar Mazin Qumsiyeh has suggested, in his *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, a more realistic and less dichotomous approach to the debate on Canaanites–Israelites. He argued for coexistence in Palestine–Israel based on shared historical heritage and cultural and genetic affinities between the ‘Canaanitic people’: Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian Christians and Muslims (Qumsiyeh 2004: 28-30; see also Nebel and Oppenheim 2000: 630–41).

Indeed it would not be unreasonable to argue that the modern Palestinians are more likely to be the descendants of the ancient Israelites (and Canaanites) than Ashkenazi Jews, many of whom were European converts to Judaism. Certainly historically – in contrast to the myth of ‘exile and return’ – many of the original Jewish inhabitants of ancient Palestine had remained in the country but had accepted Christianity and Islam many generations later. Today, however – in contrast to the mythologised Ashkenazi Zionist and Arab nationalist historiographies – more and more archaeologists and biblical scholars are convinced that the ancestors of the Israelites had never been in Egypt and that the biblical paradigm of a military conquest of Canaan was completely fictional. Indeed, the archaeological evidence undermined, in particular, the Book of Joshua. If the Exodus from Egypt and the 40 years’ desert journey around Sinai could not have happened and the military conquest of the ‘fortified cities’ of Canaan (according to Deuteronomy 9:1: ‘great cities with walls sky-high’) were totally refuted by archaeology, who, then, were these Israelites, Philistines or Canaanites?

Palestinian responses to forced depopulation, dispossession, ethnic cleansing and cultural erasure have been diverse, complex and protean. In recent decades, however, indigenous cultural and toponymic memories based on the hundreds of villages and towns depopulated and destroyed in 1948 have experienced a spectacular revival in novels, poems, films, plays, ethnographic and photographic documentation, maps, oral history archives, online websites, and a wide range array of activities in exiled and internally displaced communities have been and are being produced, many with the aim of countering Israeli erasure and correcting distortions of omission and commission that eradicate the Palestinian presence in the land.

Also interestingly, Palestinian digitally-archived oral histories and toponymic memories of the destroyed has emerged in recent decades as a significant methodology not only for the construction of an alternative history of the Palestinian Nakba and memories of the lost historic Palestine but also for an ongoing indigenous life, living Palestinian practices and a sustained human ecology. In contrast with the Israeli hegemonic heritage-style industry and an orthodox biblical archaeology, with its obsession with assembling archaeological fragments, remains and traces of the ancient past – scattered traces of history, remnants of pottery, masonry, tables, bones, tombs – and officially approved historical and archaeological theme parks of dead monuments and artefacts destined for museum, Palestinians have devoted much attention to the ‘enormously rich sedimentations of village history and oral traditions’ as a reminder of the continuity of native life and living practices (Said 2004: 49; Masalha 2008: 123–56).

Reclaiming and preserving the ancient heritage and material culture of Palestine and the Palestinians is vital. The ancient history of Palestine and the Palestinians (Muslims, Christians and Jews included), to be taught in Palestinian textbooks, schools and universities, is urgently needed. This understanding and teaching should encompass the new critical biblical scholarship of Palestine–Israel and the new critical understanding of the ancient history of the land. The cultural heritage of Palestine and the Palestinians goes far beyond the religio-cultural Abrahamic traditions. This heritage encompasses languages such as Phoenician, Canaanite, Aramaic, Arabic, and Hebrew, all shared some common aspects, including the language and style of writing.

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