# Identity, Community, and Text: The Production of meaning among Palestinian Political Captives

by

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Ph. D.

The University of Taxas at Austin

May 2004

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# Identity, Community, and Text: The production of meaning among Palestinian political captives

by

**Esmail Nashif, B.A., M.A.**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

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***Dedicated to the memory of the late Jamal Ibrahim Nashif.***

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***Acknowledgements***

Many people contributed to the completion of this research. Of these, the former political captives are the major contributors. willingness to share their experiences with me, in different forms and made this research possible in the first place. While some of them are directly in the dissertation, others will remain anonymous but present between the lines, thoughts, and arguments of this text. I would like to the former political captives individually and as a group for their contribu

During the process of writing the dissertation I was in Palestin supervisor, Elizabeth Keating, spared no effort to support, advise, and new horizons of writing and thinking for me. The fact of being in the U not prevent her from giving generously of her time and efforts, sometim a daily basis. I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to Elizabe

Several friends accompanied the processes of research and writi dissertation, each one contributing in his unique way. Nassar Abu Karsh his relentless efforts at emancipation showed me the turns and twists backyard of the Palestinian strugglers. Ma'in Samarah, looking throug poetics of the everyday and the mundane, gave me the sense of the s and cafes, which are absent in the texts of the institutions I was enga researching. A special tribute is due to the late Hussein al Barghuth acuteness, experiences, and thoughts taught me invaluable lessons the history of the West Bank and its people. I was lucky to meet him.

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At Bir Zeit University some of my colleagues lived in and experience

*rise and the fall of the Palestinian national movement in the West Ban*

the Gaza Strip. My long discussions with them, although not recorded,

first hand oral history of the development on the social, cultural

intellectual levels of the Palestinian society under occupation. Majdi al

Suleiman al Rabadi, and Suha Hindiah shared with me their persona

collective experiences with the Palestinian national movement, far be

what one may expect of a colleague.

The discussions, debates, and differences with Suhad are the gro

on which the research and dissertation stand. During the writing phase o

research she started her doctoral studies. I hope that I will contribute e

to her research project in thoughts, feelings, and time.

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# Identity, Community, and Text: The production of meaning among Palestinian political captives

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Esmail Nashif, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at Austin, 2004

Supervisor: Elizabeth Keating

From the War of 1967 until 1993, tens of thousands of Palestinians fro occupied territories were imprisoned by the Israeli authorities. Inside the co prison these political captives built a community that continuously conte negotiated, and redefined the boundaries of the Israeli prison, the identitie ideologies of the Palestinian national movement, and Palestinian socie general. This research shows how the almost total annexation of the ma environment brought the Palestinian political captives to build a comm based on producing meanings. The processes of meaning production institutionalized formally and informally. Thus, literary production in the I

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colonial prison became the main site of praxes for constituting individual, communal, and national identities for the Palestinians.

The political captives' written and oral historical accounts of the building of their community narrate a formative stage based on protest against the material conditions, which are categorized into the living space, the quantity and quality of food, and the medical treatment. In order to organize protest, there was an acute need for communication inside each prison and between the different prisons. Gradually, the captives established communication networks that transcended most of the prison's barriers. These developments were accompanied by formally investing in the organization of a school-like educational system that disseminated meanings to demarcate the community's borders, borders that were gradually formalized to enforce inclusion and exclusion rites, such as the interrogation. While the interrogation was inscribed as an organizational issue, the intellectual and aesthetic textual productions have similar strategies of narrating captivity. These texts address the irresolvable conditions of the colonial context, which they resolve and transcend by contesting, negotiating, and reordering frames of meanings through the community's signification system. This signification system is part of the larger Palestinian national movement. But while it exists alongside other systems in the national movement, in the colonial prison it was seen by the captives as the only way of producing meaning in order to survive captivity. Hence, the crucial importance it occupies in generating old and new Palestinian national identities.



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## Chapter 1: *Introduction*

On the morning of February 21 2002, I was interviewing 'Ala' Jaradat in his office at al Damyr, a Palestinian human rights organization that gives legal services to Palestinian political captives in the Israeli prisons. I was interviewing 'Ala' as a former political captive, as a person immersed in the narrative of captivity, as a political activist and because of his work in al Damyr. It was a weekend, and except for 'Ala' and myself there was nobody else in the offices of al Damyr. The interview was developing into a discussion, for I had known 'Ala' for quite a long time through mutual friends. Suddenly, we heard several loud explosions. It was obvious to 'Ala' that they were Israeli rockets fired from Apache helicopters. Both of us instinctively jumped to the large window to see where they had landed. First, we looked toward the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, a few hundred meters to the north, where Arafat stays. No smoke. Another series of explosions rocked Ramallah. Again, we saw no sign. The phone started to ring. Then the noisy mobile phones rang continuously. In such situations, everybody starts to garner information and passes it on. But the callers were looking for 'Ala' for other reasons than the air raid on Ramallah. A high ranking political activist, who had been living underground for a long period, had been captured by the Israeli army, and it was estimated by human rights and political activists that the Israelis would harm him seriously if no international agency intervened. This evaluation was based on the fact that the Israeli army denied that it had arrested him. 'Ala' asked me to wait for him in the office, and



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to answer phone calls. He briefly explained the urgency of the situation, and left al Damyr. Two hours later he came back. We discussed the situation, and decided to resume our interview. It was around 4 p.m. when the interview ended. We were both hungry, so we went out for lunch. Life in the streets of Ramallah was already back to "normal" by then.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted under conditions of war. In ways that turned out to be ironic, the research, which was meant to explore one consequence of an ongoing violent conflict -- the experience of political captivity -- experienced war in each stage of its unfolding processes. These circumstances raise serious questions about the objective conditions of existence for the ethnographer, for ethnography, and probably more important, questions about the nature of knowledge that communities produce in times of acute crises. By "probably more important," I mean that there is no choice for the community investigated but to experience the war, in contrast to the many options open to the ethnographer to seek refuge from the crisis by staying outside physically and contemplating the crisis as an outsider. For example, it is almost a tradition among ethnographers, social researchers, and other Western professionals, who "do" Palestine, to resort to the Jerusalem hotel or the American Colony in the evenings to "share" experiences and contemplate the Intifada, the first and the second one. These spots are almost liminal types of hybrid social spaces in which rites of passage into and out of the field are practiced through announcing the presence of an "ethnographer" to his or her



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community of peers, and they function as a refuge from the harsh realities. This illustrates what Genet described as his position vis-à-vis the Palestinian strugglers in Jordan in the early 1970s -- as being with them and not of them (in Swedenburg, 1995a).

## 1.1 The Position(s)

The ethnography that I conducted for this research was different. At one level, my position is of Us, Palestinians, and not with them, western professionals, but not always, and not to the same degree in different contexts (Abu Lughod, 1991; Narayan, 1993; Kanaaneh, 1998). At each historical junction in the modern Palestinian history a different type of "identity" emerged for the Palestinians. The war of 1948 resulted in many different categorizations. The two major identities were Palestinians who were expelled from Palestine and became refugees, and Palestinians who stayed in their homeland under Israeli rule and became Israeli citizens, at least officially. As a result of the war of 1967, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip came under the rule of Israel, and this created a new set of identities for Palestinians living in the newly occupied territories vis-à-vis other Palestinian "identities" and, of course, in relation to the occupiers. I grew up as a Palestinian of 1948, entitled to Israeli citizenship. In the technical civic aspects I am defined by the Israeli system as an Israeli citizen, though a limited one. So, here one has the first hyphenated identity with all its complexities. The daily realities and conditions of existence for the



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Palestinians of 1948, who possess Israeli citizenship, shape their self-perception and the dynamics of their identities in unique ways that do not resemble other Palestinian identities, say refugees or West Bankers (Bishara, 1998). But this is not the whole story of my sack of identities. Like any Palestinian family, mine has relatives in the different domains of Palestinian identities. The story of my mother's family is a striking example of the fluidity of the construct Palestinian "identity." In the war of 1948 they were trapped in Taybih. They couldn't go back to their houses in Tulkarim. Taybih became part of the newly established Israeli state. So they, my mother's family, became citizens. The border was closed for twenty years, until Israel occupied the West Bank. Then, after the war of 1967, they packed their belongings and went back to my grandfather's house in Tulkarim. In this old Arab-designed house I spent most of my childhood and early teens. It had a big yard with a fountain in the middle, and many fruit trees. I remember especially the mulberry tree; it was an old one with many hiding places in it.

In many ways, I acquired multiple identities in the local colonial scene of Palestine/Israel. These identities have some direct impacts on this study, and others that affect the research in more subtle ways. Many of the Palestinians I worked with while collecting data for my research at least recognized my family name. Some even knew specific family members, with some I could figure out my relations to them, and others I didn't know. In most cases, though, the older generation of interviewees knew one Mr. S. Nashif who was the head of a



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college in Tulkarim that specialized in agricultural studies. In such instances I didn't know what to expect. What kind of memories did they have of Mr. S. Nashif? And how would these memories affect my relations with them?

Mostly, I tried to cope with these uncertainties by minimizing the importance of my family background. Usually, I would attempt to maneuver the conversation to the focus of the research. Academic affiliations were of great help in these attempts. Both my work at Bir Zeit University and my graduate studies in an American university would shift the emphasis from my familial identities to the professional ones. Moreover, although privately owned, Bir Zeit University is considered one of the major national Palestinian institutions. The professional and the national thus framed my ethnography to a large degree. Nonetheless, at times this could happen only after identifying the family name.

## 1.2 The Research

With this inherited and acquired set of identities, I came to do ethnography. In contrast to other ethnographies, which have formal dates of officially entering the "field," mine had no such ceremonial starting point. However, framing is a dissertational necessity. In early January 2000 I started a systematic pilot study of lingual and textual practices that could be described as expressions of Palestinian national ideologies and identities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The corpus of such materials is enormous, at least in the Palestinian context that I was trying to classify. The first step was to look at the literature



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and any type of lingual and textual practices. This decision was based on personal as well as theoretical argumentation. I myself am a writer, and the whole process of creative writing is of prime concern to me, experientially and theoretically. Moreover, the Palestinian literary circles and networks in the West Bank and inside Israel are familiar to me, as I am part of several such networks. I argued to myself that these would be great assets in doing the research. However, in the long run, it emerged that they would be assets in the pilot stage only. Theoretically, the debates in the academic literature about the relations between processes of literary production and nation-state ideologies, national identities, and issues of representation are the main horizons of interest for researchers who investigate the construction of identities, national and otherwise, in its modern historical contingency. The novel and the nation-state in these debates are the bride and the groom, respectively, of modern times. But in the Palestinian colonial context these issues are rarely addressed. The over-politicization of the researchers, or the politics of identity, as Hajjar (1995) calls it, overshadows the study of literary productions by Palestinians. Hence, there are few studies that focus on literature, and most examine "what really happened?" This state of affairs makes the study of literary production (which is a parallel constitutive process in the construction of national identity and ideology) more urgent if we wish to understand fully the intricate workings of the colonial condition in Palestine. This first narrowing step called for more selective criteria on two levels. First, the site/institution of production of such literature



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must be at least declared as a national one. Second, the site/institution had to be demarcated sufficiently clearly to satisfy the demands of ethnographic fieldwork. As I was searching for the literary national site par excellence, I came across several collections of short stories and poems written by various political captives. The most salient feature of these literary products was that they kept mirroring themselves as prison literature. The themes, the plot, the metaphors, among other literary tropes and techniques, all shouted the fact that the writer was a Palestinian political captive. Moreover, each poem and story was signed with the date, and the name of the prison where it was written ('layan, 1985; Abdallah, 1989). In searching for more materials about literary production by Palestinian political captives, I explored many avenues: public libraries, bookshops, former political captives, the Palestinian Writers Union, and many personal friends who themselves are former captives. In two weeks I compiled a long list of collections and anthologies about the Palestinian political captives' history, personal testimonies, memoirs, short stories, and poems. But above all, I became aware of the centrality of the experience of captivity in the daily lives of the Palestinians, and the ways in which it is represented in literature. The field was opening some of its gates to me, while building and closing others. At this stage, the realization that the Israeli colonial prison system is not only contested by its inmates, but also reconstructed as a Palestinian national site by the Palestinians who were forced to inhabit it started to take shape in my mind, redefining my understanding of the Palestinian national fields. The first criterion



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of the research -- to find a site/institution that declares it produces national literature -- was met satisfactorily. Palestinian prison literature is first and foremost declared as Palestinian. The second criterion, though, was more problematic. The colonial prison is so demarcated and structured that entrance to it entails security clearance from the Israeli authorities, a step that I was not sure about, to say the least. In addition, my being linked to the Israeli authorities by entering their prison system would alienate the political captives and create difficulties for my research. Hence, the research is based on two axes that demarcate the fieldwork: verbal reconstruction of the experience of political captivity by former political captives, and textual representation of captivity written by former political captives during their captivity. Thus, the demarcation of one side of the fieldwork in this ethnography is less physical, in that it relates to imaginary recollections of real experiences undergone during the phase of colonial conflict between 1967 and 1993, when it was seriously transformed. By July 2000, after six months spent collecting names and texts, I started to interview former political captives around the cities and villages of the West Bank. I was based in Ramallah, working at Bir Zeit University's sociology department, and traveling around the country for the research. Although most of the people I met were dissatisfied with the current political and social conditions, and now and then clashes erupted between Palestinians and the Israeli army, no one anticipated the imminent events of the second Intifada, for everybody



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saw the Oslo Accords as the only game in town. In retrospect, history saw other options.

Toward the end of September 2000, the ethnographic work was becoming more organized, with interviews, working on various collections of prison notebooks, archival work, and other practices of fieldwork. But, although nine months had passed since I started, the basic feeling was that I had many trees but no forest. I was collecting data and texts, establishing contacts with new former political captives, and trying to classify the piles of materials I had gathered.

Ariel Sharon's visit to the Dome of the Rock on September 25, 2000 ignited a series of clashes between the Palestinians and the Israeli forces that developed into a full-scale confrontation between the two sides. These events changed and, to a large extent, shaped the daily practices of my ethnographic work, and colored the whole ethnography in a certain light. The most appropriate description of it would be ethnography of war.

As the dynamics of events and confrontations in this Intifada took shape, they defined new realities unprecedented in their intensity and magnitude as an ongoing crisis for the Palestinian communities. Three years after the outbreak of these events, one could identify two stages in the nature of the relations between the Palestinian masses and their participation in resistance activities. During the first stage, which lasted several months, mass demonstrations and clashes with the Israeli forces were the main focus and practice of the second



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Intifada. This mass participation soon decreased and was replaced by guerilla warfare, with armed operations and suicide bombers. The Israeli authorities, on their side, started to take severe measures that became increasingly brutal. These measures could be classified into two basic categories. The first is the use of massive military force. For example, armored vehicles and tanks would fire at stone throwers, or F-16 fighter jets would fire air-to-ground rockets to assassinate a single political leader. Second, the Israeli army blocked most of the roads between the different Palestinian communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, trying to control and monitor the movement of the Palestinians. For example, a five-minute journey between two adjacent villages would now take over an hour due to military checkpoints. The entrances to the Palestinian cities were closed, and the movement in or out of them was monitored by the Israelis. These two practices were used as collective punishment. Living in the Palestinian territories, one could not escape the basic feeling of being targeted individually and as part of the Palestinian collectivity.

On February 21, 2002 I went to Nablus (See map 1) to interview 'Abid al Star Qasim, and Sami al Kylani. Both of them worked at al Najah University, the former as a professor and the latter as dean of students. My first plan was to stay overnight in Nablus so that I would have enough time for the interviews, and to visit the public library of Nablus, which has many original notebooks of prison literature. But the situation was very tense after several military operations, and there were rumors that the Israeli army was going to reinvade



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major Palestinian cities. This meant that Nablus could be under curfew for days if not weeks. So I decided to conduct two interviews in one day, and to dedicate a whole day to visiting the public library the following week.



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Map1: The West Bank and its major cities. Source: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps 07/24/2003.

At 6 a.m. I was in Qalandiah, at the military checkpoint. A few people were moving around, and many others were standing in line to pass through the checkpoint, which opens at 6 a.m. I did not have to stand in line, because the



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taxi shuttles bypass this checkpoint. I approached the taxi stand for Nablus. Dozens of yellow taxis were waiting for passengers. There were only five of us, and the taxi takes seven passengers, so we needed two more. I bought a cup of coffee from a man walking around the area of the checkpoint with a thermos flask, plastic cups, and a good voice for touting his wares. After 30 minutes of waiting the taxi was finally full. It started moving, and I asked the passenger next to me:

***How much do they*** [taxi drivers] ***charge to Nablus these days?***

He answered reluctantly: ***I don't know… last week it was 15 shekels. You know it changes every day, depending on the road and how greedy the driver is… anyway we will pay only when we arrive… don't worry.***

Only the radio was talking. Everybody in the taxi was silent, a silence filled with tense expectation. After 15 minutes we arrived at the first military checkpoint near the village of Taybeh (Ramallah vicinity). The checkpoint was set in the middle of a junction, and on the four sides of it there were long lines of cars. The taxi driver sighed.

Here it comes, if God wishes it won't take more than half an hour. Doesn't everybody have an ID?

Nobody answered. Time started to move slowly. Many Israeli civilian [settlers'] cars passed the checkpoint without stopping. A man in the back seat cursed. He didn't curse the Israeli occupation but the Arabs, and the Muslims.



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He was in his late forties, short, fat, and humorous. He started a monologue about his recent life. The rest of the passengers were silent but listened to him. He was a famous carpenter from Nablus; he had a small furniture factory. He wanted to expand his business, so he had relocated to Ramallah in the mid 1990s. He stopped the monologue, looked out of the window.

***Don't worry, It's moving, last week it took me seven hours to get to Nablus. Don't worry, we'll get there … ha ha ha…***

He laughed harshly and ironically, almost a cold laugh. The line of cars was barely moving. The driver went out to smoke. After him, several of us took the chance too. We stood outside the taxi smoking. The carpenter from Nablus didn't come out, nor did he continue his monologue. I kept looking at the time, 7.25 a.m. The line hadn't moved for the last 15 minutes. Without military checkpoints I would probably have reached Nablus by now, I thought. It is less than an hour's drive to Nablus. 7:35 a.m. A group of soldiers approached our line. Suddenly, they broke up the line. We hurried back into the car. When our turn came to pass, the soldiers turned away from us, but the driver kept moving into the junction by the order of another one standing in the middle of it. When we realized that the shouting and the shooting were directed at our taxi, we froze. The driver stopped the car immediately. Seven or more soldiers were surrounding it with M-16s pointed at us. The soldier closest to the driver ordered him to get out of the car slowly with his hands up. The tension didn't subside



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even when the soldiers realized their mistake -- but blamed the driver for it. As a punishment we were made to wait another hour.

The taxi reached al Til at 12.30. al Til is a small village on the southern hills of Nablus. No one could enter Nablus the regular way. Only special cases were allowed. Research is hardly normal anyway in these circumstances, so I decided to take the bypass "road" from al Til. We entered the village and crossed it to its northern side. We paid the driver 25 shekels each. Nobody argued with him. The price sounded fair for a six hours drive. In al Til there is no permanent military checkpoint. The Israeli army had segmented the "road" between Nablus and al Til, which is around four kilometers long. At intervals of 200 meters they had dug holes five meters deep and ten meters wide. Most Palestinians simply walk their way to Nablus. Others rent donkeys with carriages. This carriage business flourished in al Til.

Air raids, shootings, endless hours of standing at military checkpoints, and arrest campaigns became the daily bread of the Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and in my ethnography. The segmentation of the land and of the collectivity living on the land in this Intifada is the primary strategy used by the Israeli colonial authorities to cope with the Palestinians' resistance activities. The result of such a policy is shattering. At moments of heightened intensity, especially right after assassinations by air raids, when Palestinian bodies are turned into ashes and televised, the Palestinian collectivity oscillates between total insecurity and total oneness. This oscillation, together with the basic



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imbalance of military power, probably forms the ground out of which come the Palestinian suicide bombers of this Intifada. At least, it determines their timing.

Ethnography tries, at least partly, to silhouette the mundane and ritualized patterns of the life of a community. When conducting ethnography in a community with unexpected crises, like this one, the ruptures and disjunctions of the mundane and ritualized are reflected and refracted in the experiences of the ethnographer as well as in the knowledge produced in the study. In the context of doing ethnography in this Intifada, regardless of the focus of the study, it is almost impossible to plan a working day. Events may carry the researcher like a whirlpool. Palestinians living their daily lives cannot plan a day. In such a constellation, a unique composition of social time and social space emerges. One aspect of this composition is the reconnecting of disrupted networks, relations, and perceived meanings. These attempts at reconnections are located in new realities, new conflicts, and new relations. Thus, the composition is both old (i.e., familiar) and new (uncertain and challenging). Carts pulled by donkeys usually have radios with new bouncy Arabic music to entertain the new type of passengers. Many newly unemployed workers have opened kiosks or work as peddlers at the roadside just a few meters before the main military checkpoints. Thus, it may be said that in fact the post-1948 Palestinian society is mostly a collectivity, which regenerates itself around and through national crises. As a result of the war of 1948, most of the Palestinian society was dispersed to the neighboring Arab countries. The occupation of the West Bank



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and the Gaza Strip in 1967 created a new wave of refugees, and a whole new section of the society came under direct military rule. These two examples are not the only ones, though they are certainly the major ones in modern Palestinian history. These crises relocated large sections of the society by force, and as a result new realities and identities were created, partly through the agencies of the Palestinians themselves (see Bisharat, 1997; Rosenfeld, 2002 for discussions of specific case studies of Palestinian communities that underwent these processes).

The Palestinian political captives, I will argue in this dissertation, built a community of crisis par excellence. Between 1967 and 1993 a large section of the Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was forcibly relocated into a new regimented territory in which the Palestinians rebuilt, reconnected, and regenerated themselves in the new conditions of existence, namely, the Israeli prison. These processes of community building inside the Israeli prison system are not necessarily a predetermined type of social practice. On the contrary, as I will argue throughout the following chapters, the inherently conflictive colonizer/colonized nature of the Israeli prison system as a socio-historical site gave the Palestinian captives a social space with many options for types of action. This research tries to understand how and why it came to be a social space for building a Palestinian national community. The argument is that while the Israeli prison system became a contested colonial site, which ignited these processes of community building, the manner in which the community



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steered its development into fully formalized institutions seems to lie mainly in the collective agency of the political captives.

The dissertation retraces these processes of community building through their verbal and textual representation. Community building is deconstructed through the concept of "identity," itself no less problematic than the concept of community. Mostly, I will use the term in the plural in order to indicate its hybrid and fluid nature.

These dynamics of identity, which characterize identity as such, render the Us/Them type of identity conceptualization irrelevant to its fluid constructions. But the adjective "fluid" becomes more complex in situations where people are targeted/privileged for their apparent identities. To say that identity is a socially detectable appearance merely brings it back to its situated nature, on the one hand, and if we measure by appearances then we could easily make up identities, on the other. The reconceptualization of identity as situated appearances indicates the slippery type of data that social researchers deal with and try to understand.

The investigation of identities in times of crises through their representations constitutes the main axis of this research. Specifically, I want to explore the processes of national identity(ies) construction of Palestinian political captives in the Israeli prison system through the captives' textual and verbal representations of these constructions in the period between 1967 and 1993 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Textual and knowledge production, in



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different forms and genres, are prime sites for identity building processes in the nation-state era, and probably beyond that too (Anderson, 1983). While national ideologies across the globe have been actively striving and fighting to represent their communities as harmonious, homogeneous, and "clean" of conflicts, their over-investment in such a pattern of representation indicates the basic constitutive mechanism of crises that nation-state building processes must undergo in order to mature, if ever, into a stable nation-state. In a sense, these textual representations raise the basic question as to whether nationalism as ideology and identity practices can only exist through crises.

The phase of the Palestinians' national liberation from their colonial predicament does not differ from other national liberation movements and ideologies in its main characteristics of over-investment in patterns of representations. Nonetheless, there are some unique characteristics in the many ways that Palestinians expressed their national/colonial identities during the period of this study in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. I will argue in this research that due to socio-historical conditions basically connected with the structure of power relations in Mandatory Palestine/the Israeli control system (see map 2), representations - textual, verbal and other - became one of the main sites for Palestinians to practice their national identities.



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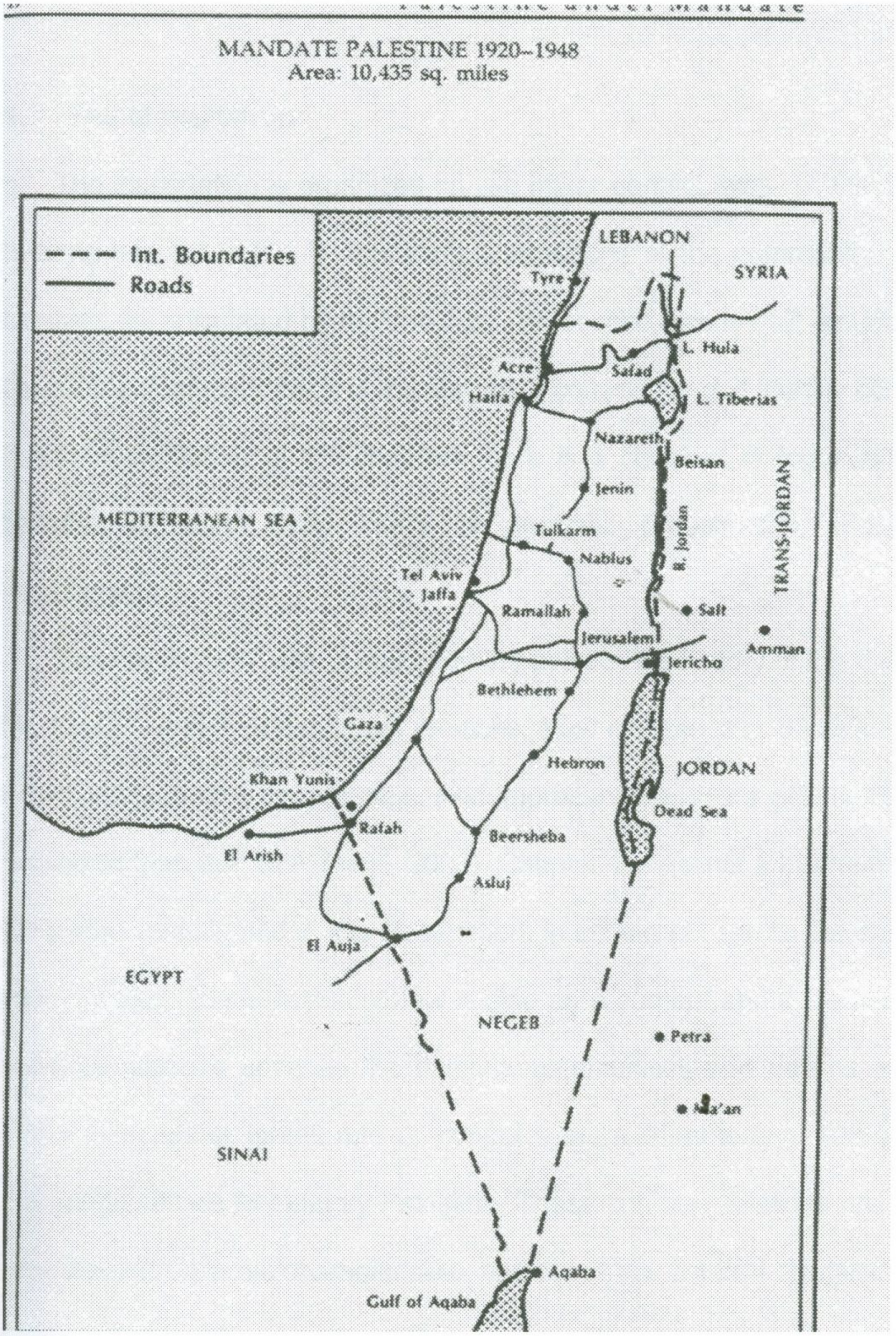


Map 2: Mandatory Palestine. Since the war of 1967, all of mandatory Palestine came under Israeli control system. Source; Kimmerling & Migdal 1994



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## 1.3 The dissertation

The dissertation is organized on two major parallel axes. The first axis tries to bring into focus the historical representations of the community of political captives, as articulated by themselves. The second axis is built around a salient conceptual feature of each of the stages of community and identity construction. In this organization of the chapters there is a constant dialogue and tension between at least three levels of analysis: presentation, analysis, and representation.

The war of 1967 was a major turning point in the history of the Palestinians, the Israelis, and their conflictive relations. New realities and identities emerged, and current events, processes, and representations are still seen to have originated from that war (Daraj, 2003). Chapter 2 presents a historical review of the period investigated in this dissertation. In addition to setting the stage for the later chapters, the historical review is also an argument about the nature of the complex relations between the different communities and nations in the land that is now under Israeli rule or control system (Kimmerling, 1989) and was previously named Mandatory Palestine. These complex relations are a colonial condition with specific characteristics, and out of this colonial condition came the community of political captives. The research attempts to examine the routes of



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development of this community through textual representations and ethnographic work.

Chapter 3 describes the origins of the community of captives as it developed through consecutive stages from 1967 to 1993. For this purpose, I took the conditions of existence and traced them back through histories written and spoken by the captives. The quality and quantity of the food, the health care, and the space allocated for the body are the main topics through which the captives relate the history of the community. Against these conditions the captives started to organize protest. The organization and mobilization of the political captives to protest indicate the existence of highly developed communication networks and channels that subvert the control of the prison authority. This chapter on community building then goes on to describe the *capsulih* as an example of the political captives' communication practices that are constitutive in building and sustaining a community.

Chapter 4, on the captive community's educational system, describes the centrality of this systematized and formalized production of knowledge about their community, their society, and their position in the world in general. The political captives organized their daily activities into regular sessions of lectures, reading, study groups, public debates, and so forth, resembling a school curriculum. The reading/writing activities became central in re-inscribing the national identity. This re-inscription is seen in the context of the relentless attempts of the colonial prison authorities to "rehabilitate" the Palestinians. In a



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sense, the valorization of reading/writing practices is both a shield against the colonial encroachment on the Palestinian I, and a homogenizing pot of the Palestinian non-national Is.

Chapter 5 -- on interrogation – focuses on the main rite of passage into the captives' community. The centrality of the interrogation phase in the communal relations is evident from the many publications and public debates around this issue. One of the main books published on the issue of interrogation is "The Philosophy of Confrontation Behind the Bars." This book may be seen as a manual on "how to behave, think, and feel" for the novice political activist -- who will eventually be arrested – in the moment of interrogation. Through textual and contextual analyses of the book, one can demarcate the bases of the processes of community and identity construction as perceived by the Palestinian national movement. In many ways, the book sets a structure of feeling for the Palestinian political captive, and probably beyond captivity into the general national community as a whole.

Chapter 6 presents a vivid example of the production of knowledge among the community of captives through the practice of lecturing. Ahmed Qattamish, a well-known former political captive and activist, gave many series of lectures at different times during his eight years of administrative detention. One of these series was written by his fellow political captives, who took notes during the lectures, and later published them as a book. The book was titled "Introductions to Carving the Alternative" and was widely circulated among the Palestinians in



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the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Chapter 6 tries to trace the context of lecturing, the lectures, and the written essays, which came out of these lectures. These different stages of producing and circulating knowledge, I will argue, are an example of how the community of captives as a whole works to construct its national identity.

Wisam al Rafydi, a former political captive, wrote a novel in prison. Several years later it was published and circulated outside the prison. "The Three Domains" tells the story of the arrest of an underground struggler, bringing the socio-historical realities of the Palestinians into this moment of confrontation. In chapter 7 I will examine, through "The Three Domains," two aspects of the literary production of the Palestinian political captives. First, through ethnographic work, I will try to explore the networks of circulation of the prison literature in the Palestinian society in general. The second aspect is based on textual analysis and raises the question of how the social realities and conflicts are represented in the prison literature in an attempt to re-carve a specific Palestinian national identity through the aesthetic dimension. These two aspects interact and exemplify the continuity between the society and its captured agents of change.

The dissertation as a whole, and through its different chapters, tries, via representation and interpretation, to demarcate the mechanisms and dynamics of (re)building national ideologies and identities through knowledge production. The material living conditions, the communication network, the educational



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system, the interrogation phase, texts, books, and novels are landmarks in these construction processes of the community of Palestinian political captives. As a nation in continuous crises, the Palestinians succeeded in building their communities and regenerating them around the crises themselves. As this research on the community of captives will suggest, it appears that the Palestinian national identities are constructed, textured, and shaped mostly through representation practices of the "real."

The research on this community raises questions not only about the nature of the Palestinian national identities and ideologies. Comparing this case study with others, it seems that one of the basic questions concerning nationalism and the nation-state should be: Could a nation exist but through a continuous or punctuated series of crises?

## 1.4 Notes on Gender, Language, and Politics

In many respects, my research, and this dissertation, touch the thin dividing line between politics and academic research. Studying any issue concerning modern Palestinian history is like entering a minefield. Probably more than any other topic of research, Palestinian studies have become overloaded with things political. Internal Palestinian politics, the relations with Israel, and the international sphere, all play significant roles in this regard. In this dissertation the most salient loci of politics are gender relations and the language used to describe and analyze the experiences of the political



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captives. While the former concern the politics of academia and the ideological grounds of nationalism, the latter relate directly to the colonizer-colonized set of relations.

Most of the dissertation deals with male political captives. In the cases when female political captives are discussed, especially in chapter four, concerning the educational system of the community of captives, they are brought in to illustrate the differences between the two experiences (of men and women), in order to elaborate on the arguments concerning the male captives. Like every other national project, the Palestinian one is a male project (Ahmed, 1992). This means that women are, functionally, used to enhance the Palestinian national liberation differently at each stage of the national struggle. This is not to say that women are passive in their national capacity. On the contrary, women in the many domains in which they participate have redefined the contours and contents of what "Palestinian" means. Nevertheless, I argue that this was done under the umbrella of a male national project (Jad, 1990; Sabbagh, 1998). As for the women political captives, they are marginal in quantity compared to the men. Usually, their number is between 20-50 compared to 7,000-15,000 men at any given time. In addition, their experience as a community differs sharply from that of the men. These arguments notwithstanding, the story of gender relations in the national context goes more deeply into the dialectic relations between the genders. These are represented in the present dissertation through the eyes



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of men. It is argued that women are positioned as the absent but constitutive other for "national" men. Hence, dissecting the women's positionality in the men's representations of them renders their agency, which might be recognized or denied publicly, in the national sphere visible through deconstructing the male dominance. So, while the claims and arguments of this dissertation are relevant to male political captives, the subtext is an argument about the women in the Palestinian national movement. A good example of such a dynamic is chapter seven. The chapter focuses on the aesthetic dimension of the prison literary production. Taking the novel "The Three Domains" by al Rafydi as an example, the woman and the colonizer are the basic themes towards which the protagonist, a Palestinian man, tries to redefine his position. While the colonial relations come to a resolution in content and in form, the gender relations are represented as a crucial aspect of the national I and We, but an aspect that is hardly dealt with beyond the national masculine stand.

Thus, the gender issues in this dissertation are at two levels. First, the experience of female political captives is not addressed in this dissertation, and there is a need for a different research project to go into the history, the community, and the literary productions of women Palestinian political captives. Second, the representations of woman in the Palestinian national male discourse are analyzed as dialectical relations between men and women, and hence, reposition the women's agency in its historical context.



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Almost every party involved in the Palestinian/Israeli colonial conflict has its own language and fields of meanings, and academics are no exception in this respect. To a large extent, the language used in this dissertation is a composition of several registers and discourses. First, there is the problematic of translation from Arabic into English. All of the Arabic texts were translated by me. Names of people and places are transliterated according to the Library of Congress conventions for Arabic. Even some of the names that are known in their English convention are transliterated, in order to bring the Palestinian dialect to the reader as accurately as possible. This attempt created a problem with ayn and hamza. So, in order not to complicate reading, I used the (') to designate ayn which recurs much more frequently than the hamza, which I left without designation. As for translating the concepts, terms, and expressions denoting political captivity in the Palestinian national discourse, there are many variants: *al sijn*, meaning imprisonment, bears the flavor of criminality; *al 'tiqal*, arrest, means the event of arrest itself; and *al asr*, captivity, means being captured by the enemy in war. To the three terms, the adjective *al siasy*, meaning political, is usually added. I chose *al asr al siasy* (political captivity) for several reasons. First, I wanted to distinguish the phenomenon of political captivity from any shade of criminality. As an ethnographer, I attempt to represent the community I work with as closely as possible to its perception of itself. Second, most of the political captives see themselves as freedom fighters, who were captured in



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warlike circumstances. Moreover, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under direct military rule, and captivity is a part of the military actions and operations. Third, in all the official documents of the political captives' community the term captivity is used to describe their condition.

Every choice has theoretical and political implications. Perhaps more than any other implication, the use of the term 'political captivity' indicates the ongoing colonial confrontation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between the Palestinians and the Israelis since their occupation in 1967. While the confrontation is sometimes a full scale one and is televised, so observers will acknowledge it as such, mostly the confrontation is the daily experience of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories, and it goes unnoticed by the outside world. Hence, although the war of 1967 ended after six days, the violent and oppressive actions towards the Palestinian population continue up to this day of writing the dissertation. To fully understand the complex realities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in the next chapter I will give a historical review of modern Palestine as a stage on which the drama of political captivity takes place and which the later chapters will discuss fully.



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## Chapter 2: *Historical Review*

One of the main characteristics of the Palestinians' socializing dynamics is their constant overtelling of history and politics. It could be framed as ironic, for modern history and politics were never on the side of the Palestinians. But it is not a sense of irony that brings the Palestinians to dig and rebuild histories. It can be understood on at least two levels. First, the Palestinians perceive themselves as the victims of history, and by retelling it they gain agency to reshape their personal lives. Second, on the collective level they construct an identity by restructuring the events that shaped their dislocation and dispossession. Inherent in the second level is the deep collective sense that the injustice of events is continued in the historical representations of the same events. Hence, at least in the intersubjective domain, the "true story" is told.

The aim of this chapter is to set the historical stage for telling one story among the many Palestinian stories experienced under the Israeli colonial rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1967 – the story of political captivity. Since the outbreak of the 1987 Intifada, many studies and ethnographies have been written and published about the society "Behind the Intifada" (Hiltermann, 1991). This corpus of literature represents an attempt to write the social history of the colonial condition in the occupied territories in ways that transcend the political screenings of the realities of occupation and give voice to disfranchised Palestinian communities. Ted Swedenburg (1995) explores the oral history of the 1936 revolt and frames it as a peasant revolution; Lisa Hajjar (1995) is



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concerned with the sociological aspects of the military courts established by the Israeli authorities to criminalize Palestinian strugglers; Julie Peteet (1994) tries to understand the Palestinian youth through their confrontations with the Israeli army, viewing the confrontation as a rite of passage; George E. Bisharat (1997) describes the changes in the identity of the Palestinian refugees in the West Bank camps; Rohda Kanaaneh (1998) tries to demarcate the hybridity of female identities through deconstructing the concept of birth among Palestinian men and women in the Galilee; Avram Bornstein (2003) addresses the issues of borderland culture and daily practices on the Palestinian side of the Green Line. These are examples of ethnographies and studies that apply current theoretical trends in western academia to the colonial situation in Palestine. Generally, these scholars are critical of the mainstream Zionist-biased narrative of the history of the conflict, and, while sympathizing with the Palestinians as a people, distinguish themselves from the Palestinian intellectuals. Still, it may be seen that the researchers of the 1990s were more inclined to accept the framing of the socio-historical condition in Palestine as a colonial condition with its unique characteristics (Kimmerling, 1989; Shafir, 1989; Hajjar, 1995; Ram, 1999; Bornstein, 2003). Historically, the framing of the Zionist project to settle Jews in Palestine as a western colonial project was the claim of some Palestinian and Arab intellectuals. The theoretical and practical implications of the adoption of this view by western researchers are not yet clear. Certainly, though, these studies opened new horizons for researching the colonial condition in Palestine,



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which will help to further our understanding of the socio-historical processes that generated the ongoing conflict.

One of the major questions raised by these scholars (e.g., Hiltermann, 1991; Hajjar, 1995; Swedenburg, 1995) is how the West Bankers and the Gazans managed to rebuild their disoriented and disorganized communities under the dire conditions of Israeli colonial rule from 1967 on, to form the well-organized revolt of the 1987 Intifada. Another subject they seek to understand is the swift decline into the demise of the Oslo accords.

In this historical review I will describe the socio-political background of the political captivity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Certain key players who will appear in the coming chapters will be positioned in their historical context.

## 2.1 History of the Conflict

For an overall view, it is important to position the conflict in history. In the context of larger processes in West/East relations in the 19th century, Palestine started to be incorporated into Britain's imperial designs (Hobsbawm, 1989) as far back as the 1830s. Bornstein (2003) makes this point by citing newspapers of that era:

> The early imperial designs were evident in newspaper reports from the period. On August 17, 1840, for example the *Times* of London ran three front-page articles on the Eastern Question. One article sympathetically described the celebration of Passover by Jews in Jerusalem. A second described an ongoing saga in which Syrian Jews were being accused of ritual murder based on confessions made under torture. A third article discussed the value of settling Jews to establish a colony against



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> Muhammad 'Ali and the French. The "Eastern Question" became an important subject of foreign policy and public opinion. The topic tied imperial interests, religious convictions, and racist orientalism into one overlapping project (pp. 33-34).

From this we understand that the Zionist project, which came into being half a century later, was formed in the corridors of British colonial schemes. The ideological explanations, whether religious convictions or racist orientalism, for the project of establishing a colony for the Jews in Palestine, were taken from the dominant ideologies that prevailed in the colonial powers at that time (Said, 1978). Later, as the colony was taking concrete shape, it seems that the ideologies motivated people more than direct imperial interests. In a retrospective analysis, it is easier to justify the penetration and domination of parts of the dying Ottoman Empire by the legacy of religion, since, after all, Palestine is the Holy Land.

It took almost a century and a world war for the British Empire to gain full control of the Middle East. Meanwhile, indirect and subtle mechanisms of penetration and control were practiced. Mapping and exploring Palestine, establishing missions, commercial activities, and small settler colonial communities under the guise of various ideological aspirations, as well as treaties with the Ottomans granting privileges to westerners living in the lands under their control, were among the practices that set the stage for direct political control. Most crucial for later developments was the practice of western capital gaining control of the land of Palestine through private ownership. After



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the second reformations in the laws of the Ottoman Empire in 1856, private ownership of land was permitted. This opened the door for the flow of foreign capital, mainly western, which, in turn, fundamentally changed the socioeconomic structure of Palestinian society, incorporating it and subordinating it to the world market of the colonial powers (Scholch, 1982; Shafir, 1989; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994).

Parallel and connected with these developments, new modern institutions and technologies began to be established and circulated in Ottoman Palestine. Modern schools, print, newspapers, railways, roads, foreign commodities and the like gradually became part of the public sphere in Palestine. These were not solely European initiatives; local elites made coalitions with western powers on religious, commercial, or other bases (Hafez, 1993; Doumani, 1995; Khalidi, 1997; Tamari & Nassar, 2003). As in the case of other Middle Eastern countries, these were part and parcel of an intensive process of colonization (Fanon, 1963; Mitchell, 1988). The unique position of Palestine as a Holy Land with its centrality in the Judeo-Christian perceptions, convictions, and beliefs was revived at this historical juncture, as evident from the corpus of literature published in the western metropolitan centers in the second half of the 19th century (Bornstein, 2003). However, contrary to the dominant argumentation that Palestine was colonized for its religious position, it appears that the revival of these religious convictions was part of the larger project of colonization based primarily on socioeconomic interests.



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The British, Russians, and French did not have to pacify the indigenous Palestinians during the second half of the 19th century. This situation prevailed until all of Palestine came under British control in 1918 (See map 2, p. 19). Armed with the mandate of the League of Nations, the British declared their aim as preparing the natives to run their country, but in practice they continued and accelerated the processes that had been decided upon decades before they gained direct control of Palestine. Their activities crystallized around two major processes: the flow of immigrant settler Jews, and the acquisition of land by various means. In addition, they built modern institutions, including a civil administration, police stations, prisons, a public school system, and so forth. The British mandate, in fact, was the caretaker of the Zionist movement, which it saw as an offshoot of its "Mandatory" project (Huneidi, 2001).

The processes of penetration and control interacted with the internal Ottoman politics to create a new landed aristocracy and high-ranking bureaucrats, who started to shape the Palestinian national identity. At first, these notables, like the other Arab elites, called for Ottomanism, since their direct interests were connected with the existing political order. But as the 19th century drew to an end, local, regional, and international processes matured and gave birth to the idea of Arabism as a distinct pan-Arab national identity. The intensified colonization by the Zionists and the British colonial authorities in Palestine, together with the rise of Arab nationalism, tapped the local Palestinian



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identity and channeled it into a distinct form of Palestinian nationalism (Muslih, 1988; Khalidi et. al., 1991; Doumani, 1995; Hopwood, 2000).

The practical implications of these changes in the collectivities residing in Palestine were communal and military confrontations and clashes. The rise of the prison and its symbolic centrality in the Palestinians' collective perceptions of themselves and others around them was a result of the daily reality of confrontations and clashes since the late 19th century. It could be argued that the arrest of many Arab Palestinian nationalists, among other Arab nationalists, by Jamal Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Greater Syria, was the first political imprisonment in the Palestinian national movement (Muslih, 1991). The first documented prison memoir is that of Khalil al Sakakyni, who was incarcerated by the Ottomans toward the end of WWI (al Sakakyni, 1955; al Jayusi, 1997).

The second important political imprisonment on a massive scale, which affected and shaped events, and in many ways was distinctly Palestinian on national grounds, started during the communal clashes that erupted in 1929 and culminated in the Revolt of 1936. Many Palestinians were imprisoned and executed by the British Mandatory authorities during those years. Famous among the collective national representations of these events is the poem "Red Tuesday" (1988 [1930]) by Ibrahim Tuqan. Martyrdom and political imprisonment became landmarks in the constitution of the Palestinian national identities from that time on (See Swedenburg, 1995).



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The Palestinian political captives in the Israeli prison system in the early 1970s took the Palestinians' experiences of resistance and political imprisonment in the early 1930s, through the Great Arab Revolt of 1936 to 1939, as their model and the starting point of the tradition of political captivity. Names, heroic stories of resistance, steadfastness, artifacts from that era, such as types of weapons used by the Palestinians, popular songs and poems, all became indices of an origin, of a founding father stage for the national liberation movement of the present as materialized in the colonial site of the Israeli prison.

The era between the late 1930s and the war of June 1967 is hardly mentioned in the stories of the political captives' community that developed under the Israeli colonial rule. Some of the older captives, who were imprisoned in the notorious Jordanian prisons, told stories of horror and steadfastness. But the presence of these stories is minor in the captives' collective perceptions and representations, although it should be emphasized that this older generation who had experienced different prison systems in the Middle East, Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian systems, brought with them invaluable knowledge about organizing the captives.

These two histories of imprisonment, the one under the British colonial rule and the other under various Arab regimes, constitute the background on which the captives under Israeli rule started, or continued, the tradition of resisting the colonizer through building national communal relations inside the prison system. One cannot fail to see the mutually constitutive relations between the organized



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Palestinian national movement and the political captives' community. If we distinguish between the two phases of the organized Palestinian national movement -- pre- and post-1967 -- we can discern the same distinction in the communities of political captives. The type, the cohesiveness, and the form of the community of captives, as well as the importance of the location of captivity to the general national movement, differ considerably in each phase. In the two decades after the war of 1948 there was no organized cohesive national movement but many different Palestinian organizations, which all came under the leadership of the PLO when Fateh took the leading role in its institutions in the late 1960s. After the war of 1948, the Palestinian political prisoners were dispersed throughout Israel and the Arab countries, and this made it difficult for them to organize as a community. They organized on the basis of small local groups. Therefore, prison literary productions and representations in the Palestinian national movement were sporadic and based on individual "heroic" stories and memoirs. The basic argument of this dissertation concerns the aftermath of the war of 1967. The reunification of most of Palestinian society under Israeli colonial rule, and the rise of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian national movement, combined to create the political captives' community as a demarcated whole in the Israeli prison system.



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## 2.2 The War of June 1967: Recognizing Colonialism in Palestine

The twenty years after the war of 1948 saw the rise of Arab nationalism as the dominant ideology in Arab societies, and this was manifested in the concrete form of the nation-state institutions. With regard to the colonial condition in Palestine, these nation-states declared that their main responsibility was to liberate Palestine and enable the Palestinians to go back to their land. Declarations aside, these states had no feasible plan for accomplishing the task. During these two decades the Palestinians were caught between the devastating effects of the war of 1948 and the sociopolitical conditions in and between the Arab states. By the mid-1950s some of the Palestinian intellectuals and political activists were calling for independent action regardless of the Arab states' policies and decisions. This trend came to dominate the Palestinian national movement from then on.

If anybody had cherished the hope, and many Arabs had, that the Arab states would liberate Palestine from Israeli colonial rule, the war of 1967 brought it to a deadly end. The new realities in the Middle East in general, and in Palestine in particular, ushered old and new socio-political forces into new socioeconomic and political constellations. The most important of these for our discussion is that Israel gained control of most of Palestinian society when it occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a direct result of the war (See map 3). Related and equally important is the rise of the PLO as the main arena of political activism working for the liberation of Palestine among the Palestinians



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in their Diaspora, and to a lesser extent, in the newly occupied territories. In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the PLO competed with the Jordanian Communist party, the Jordanian authorities, and the Egyptian ones, in addition to the old/new player/enemy -- Israel.

Many definitions and frameworks have been developed by different researchers and historians to explain the conditions created in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A striking point is that one can tell the theoretical frame by the national origin of the scholar. It is an old axiom that there is a link between one's nationality and the knowledge one produces. This link is often disguised, and refracted in many ways, but in the Palestinian case it is in the forefront of the theory. From modernization theories to settler colonial



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Map 3: Israel and the occupied territories in 1967. Source: www.domains.un.maps, 07/24/2003.



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theories, frames of analysis are extracted and used to analyze the predicament of the Palestinians in their lands (see Ram, 1999 & Hajjar, 1995 for reviews of the different theoretical attempts). It might be argued that this state of affairs is the result of political and ideological screenings that overwhelmed the academic literature on the issue of Palestine/Israel. Ideological and political positions notwithstanding, it seems that the political economy of the values generated from the colonial condition in Palestine in each western metropolis and in the Middle East, has to do equally with the conditions in each of these politico-academic centers. As described above, this study is based on the understanding that Palestine was colonized as part of a larger Euro-American project of subordinating the peripheries. From this contextualization I will try to explore, through ethnographic and archival work, the life history of a specific community that grew in the double margin of the metro-colony space/time -- the community of Palestinian political captives in the Israeli prison system. The life history of the captive community can only be understood by positioning it in the larger transformational processes that engulfed Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 1967, and specifically, the social, economic, and political processes initiated as impositions and as reactions to them, by direct colonial, military and civil Israeli rule.



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## 2.3 From Social Disorientation to Mass Mobilization

Several months after the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000, I was in a taxi shuttle from Jerusalem to Ramallah. We were passing the northern neighborhoods of Jerusalem when suddenly the taxi stopped; there was a military checkpoint. At that time, the permanent checkpoint close to Qalandiah refugee camp had not yet been erected. There was an endless line of cars, a chaotic atmosphere of anxiety among the taxi drivers, and many cars were making a U-turn back to Jerusalem. The passenger sitting next to me was a man in his late sixties. We exchanged looks saying "what a trap!". He started talking.

> ***This isn't real chaos … the real one was when the Jews came in 1967… Everybody ran away, I was there and I saw them running away. People were so frightened and panicked, they left everything … I was a post office clerk, and you know a regular clerk, in Jerusalem's main branch. Imagine that when the Jews came there was half a million dinars in the safe, I was alone in the office … I didn't take the money … I just ran away as fast as I could … what a fool I was …*** (Anonymous Jerusalemite, January, 2001).

Told some 34 years later, and in a warlike context, this story portrays the atmosphere in the newly occupied territories in 1967. The panic and the chaos were due partly to the surprising and devastating military defeat of the Arab countries. Moreover, the short period of fighting, six days, made the Arab states look like a paper tiger in the eyes of the Arab peoples (Ajami, 1981).

In this section I will discuss the relations between the Palestinian society in the occupied territories and the PLO as they developed between 1967 and



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993. First, I will describe in general the two main factions of the PLO, whose olitical captives are the focus of this study: the Fateh and the Popular Front for e Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Second, I will trace the processes whereby ie disorganized and disoriented masses became mobilized and organized ocially and politically. Finally, I will address the relations between these ansformations and the processes of community building among the political aptives.

### .3.1 *The PLO, the Fateh and the PFLP*

The Palestinian Liberation Organization, known as the PLO, was stablished by the Arab states, meeting together in 1964. The timing, structure, nd declared aims of the PLO had more to do with the internal politics of these tates and their relations with Israel than with the Palestinians themselves. In act, the PLO was controlled by the various Arab regimes, through their financial nd material support, until it was taken over by Fateh in 1969. Thereafter, the PLO became the refuge state of the stateless Palestinians. Although still inanced mostly by Arab states, the PLO under Yasser Arafat's leadership managed to a large extent to maintain independent policies and practices. Farsoun (1997) enumerates the different organizations that came under the PLO umbrella as it emerged after 1969.

> As the original elitist and traditional leadership was removed, the PLO came to be anchored in the principal autonomous political and guerrilla organizations: Fateh under the leadership of Arafat,



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> the PFLP under the leadership of Habash, the DFLP (a splinter of the PFLP) under the leadership of Nayef Hawatmeh, the PFLP-General Command (another split from the PFLP) under the leadership of Ahmad Jibril, other smaller organizations, and in 1987 the Palestine Communist Party (the Palestine People's Party, or PPP, after 1991) of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (p. 186).

These organizations and their leaders continued to control the PLO until the Oslo accords in 1993. During the last three decades, different coalitions and rivalries between these organizations were formed and dissolved. Most salient among these was the division over the attitude toward Israel. In the first stages, all of these organizations called for one democratic secular state in Mandatory Palestine. But as early as 1974, the mainstream Fateh, and some of the Palestinian left started to recognize Israel de facto and consider the option of two states for the two peoples in Mandatory Palestine. A coalition led by the PFLP opposed these trends in the PLO. This dividing line continued to be constitutive for the PLO's formal policies and for the opposition inside its different bodies.

In the period under discussion in this study, the majority of the Palestinian political captives, and the institutions that they developed in the Israeli prison system, were part of the PLO. Specifically, Fateh and the PFLP were the dominant organizations in most of the Israeli prisons. Usually, if an activist from another organization or an unaffiliated Palestinian was imprisoned, he was asked by the local community leadership which organization he wanted to be



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affiliated to in the prison for protection, responsibilities, and other organizational duties and rights. Almost all of the documents and oral histories state that the leader of the political captives' community throughout the Israeli prison system was a Fateh activist.

Fateh is an acronym of the Arabic words "Palestinian National Liberation Movement." The movement originated among Palestinian student activists in Cairo in the 1950s, calling for independent Palestinian action for the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle. Fateh has been headed by Yasser Arafat since its establishment.

> Fateh was populist, nationalist, and actually opposed to formulating an ideological program of its own. Its only clear formulation other than the goal of liberating Palestine was the method by which it would be liberated: through revolutionary violence or a people's war of national liberation, including guerrilla tactics, a significant component of the overall political struggle against the Israeli enemy (Farsoun, 1997, p. 191).

The aspiration of the Fateh leaders was to represent all the Palestinians, regardless of their social background and ideological inclinations. The liberation of Palestine was articulated as the common ground for all, and a sufficient condition for mobilization of the Palestinian masses. With the models of China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Algiers in mind, the popular armed struggle came to dominate the course of actions for the liberation of Palestine. Even when Fateh was institutionalized in the late 1970s, when the bureaucratic system of the PLO



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was at its peak, armed struggle continued to be the main component of political struggle.

Supported by many Arab countries, especially the Gulf monarchies, Fateh established and started to run social and medical services among the Palestinians in the refugee camps, and later in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In this way, it reached and recruited many immobilized Palestinian strata. In fact, by the late 1960s, Fateh was the most popular, and populist, organization among the Palestinians and the Arab states alike. Its control of the PLO, from 1969, gave it further resources and venues to establish its leadership among the Palestinians and achieve recognition for the PLO, under its leadership, as a state-like organization in Arab regional relations and in the international arenas (Cobban, 1984; Kimmerling & Migdal; 1994 Farsoun, 1997). Fateh's relations with other Palestinian organizations inside the PLO could be characterized as loyal "opposition".

> Ever since it came to be controlled by the feda'iyyin guerilla organization, the PLO has been dominated by Fateh and Fateh's strategy. One source of difference and division within the PLO was the ideology and practice of Fateh as distinct from those of the internal loyal "opposition", the ideologically leftist PFLP, and to a lesser extent the DFLP and the other less autonomous groups (Farsoun, 1997, p. 191).

While Fateh's political strategies were not different from those of any other Arab regime whose primary concern was the stability of the regime itself, the other Palestinian organizations, especially the PFLP, interpreted the conflict with



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Israel and made political and military decisions according to its declared ideological lines. Still, the important point seems to be that the loyal opposition was almost totally dependent on Fateh financially. As the dominant group in the PLO, Fateh controlled and channeled the resources in directions that suited its policies and reinforced its dominance.

While Yasser Arafat and his colleagues were organizing to struggle for the Palestinian cause in Cairo, a group of Palestinian students at the American University in Beirut was starting to work for the same cause, but with a radically different worldview. In time, this group of students formed the Arab Nationalist Movement, which developed into the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the PFLP.

> Like those of Fatah, its leaders came from the student movement - but in this case from the American University in Beirut. There George Habash - its preeminent figure - and colleagues had established the clandestine Arab Nationalist Movement; shortly after the 1967 war it merged with other groups to become the PFLP, finally joining the PLQ in 1970. The Arab Nationalist Movement's activists had originally advocated Nasserism. In the mid-1960s, it moved towards a Marxist perspective, demanding social revolution as a precondition for true Arab unity. After 1967, the Front took on a Palestine-first orientation (Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994, p. 223).

Two important aspects in the history of the PFLP may help us to understand the trends of thoughts and politics among Palestinians that led to the growth of Palestinian nationalism under the PLO. First, it was inherently related to pan-Arab nationalism. When the latter started to collapse towards and after the 1967



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war, Palestinian nationalism, like other Arab regional nationalisms, started to take its own independent course in shape and content. Second, while the politically dominant groups working for Arab nationalism saw as their ultimate goal the nation-state, regardless of the shape of the society under its control, many other groups aimed for a different vision, based on more radical and transformational social and economic ideologies. The PFLP saw the colonial condition in Palestine as something more than a strictly Palestinian issue. Their analysis of the Arab and Palestinian contexts was based on Marxist-Leninist thought, heavily accented with Arab nationalism. In fact, the tensions between the national and the international, and between the Palestinian and pan-Arab domains continued for a long time to cripple their literary and intellectual productions and practices. Farsoun (1997) gives a concise description of the PFLP orientations, while hinting at the tensions.

> Deriving from a strong pan-Arab nationalist background, the PFLP transformed itself into a Marxist-Leninist party in the late 1960s: militant and revolutionary in its social and economic agendas. It came closest to the Third World activist ideology of the Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara. It viewed as enemies of the Palestinian people and its goal of liberating Palestine not only Israel (and internationally organized Zionism) and imperialism (represented after World War II by the United States) but also the reactionary Arabs (especially the conservative oil-exporting regimes and other Arab comprador bourgeoisies): the tripartite and objectively allied forces of Zionism, imperialism, and Arab reaction. It defined the enemies and friends of the Palestinian revolution in terms of class. Thus for the liberation of Palestine to succeed, revolution must take place among dispossessed Palestinians and in the Arab world among the disadvantaged classes of peasants, workers, and the petty bourgeoisie (p. 192).



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The PFLP's multifocal ideological frame, while giving it a broader and deeper understanding of different socio-political processes, reveals the PFLP as ambivalent on the Palestinian level, oscillating between opposition and loyalty to Fateh's dominance. When the PFLP actively participated in the PLO meetings and policy making under Fateh's leadership, it came under the banner of Palestinian unity, and when it withdrew and made alliances with other Palestinian organizations against Fateh, the banner it then raised was that Fateh was part of the Arab reactionary regimes, and comprador bourgeoisie. The oscillating pattern of relations was compounded by the PFLP's dependence on the PLO financial resources, which were under Fateh's control.

The complex intra-Palestinian relations among the diverse organizations had direct repercussions and implications for the community of Palestinian political captives inside the Israeli prison system. The PFLP and Fateh were the largest factions in the prison system, at least during the period of the present study (1967-1993). Until the mid-1970s, the differences between the Palestinian factions in the Israeli prisons were mostly not rigid and obvious. But in the subsequent period, two main processes emerged and defined the character of the community. First, the different organizations started to pattern and control the daily life of the captives through the bodies they formed at the levels of the prison cell and section. Concurrently, they demanded, and later achieved, the allocation of cells according to organizational divisions, so that Fateh cells were occupied only by Fateh members, and the same with the PFLP. In this way the



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organization consolidated its direct responsibility and control over its members in their daily activities and beyond. The second process that helped to define the community was the emergence of institutional bodies for the whole community in specific prisons and across the prison system as a whole. These cross-communal institutions coordinated the activities, mobilization, and policies of the political captives as one community vis-à-vis the prison authorities, the PLO, and Palestinian society. These formal, though sometimes clandestine, bodies and institutions on the organizational and community levels were constructed according to the models of the mother organization and the PLO. It is worth noting at this stage that the ideological declarations by the various Palestinian organizations usually stayed at the declarative level (Daraj, 1996). In contrast to this gap between ideology and practice, the political captives, it appears, adopted a different course of behavior, one that tried to match ideology with practice. As I will show in the following chapters, the conditions of captivity are liminal on both the Israeli and the Palestinian level. And as such, captivity opened a wider space for the Palestinian political activist/captive to express and actualize his/her agency. These institutional and organizational divisions and coalitions, together with the nature of the colonial context of captivity and imprisonment, constituted the structural conditions necessary for the literary production processes that this study tries to explore, aiming to identify their working mechanisms in constituting the Palestinian national identities and ideologies.



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### 2.3.2 *Society, Direct Military Rule, and Resistance*

On the eve of the 1967 war, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lived mainly in rural areas, with several towns as centers for services, administration, and commerce. The landed gentry, whose powerful resources were extracted from the peasants' labor, resided mainly in the towns, and largely controlled the economy and the politics of the rural areas. Beside these two social categories, which some would describe as classes (Barakat, 1993), there were the Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war, who settled in camps near the major towns.

Although there were some small industrial workshops in the West Bank, the economy of the Gaza Strip was mainly dependent on agriculture, with the citrus harvest as the main season for employment of labor (Hiltermann, 1991).

With the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, major transformations on the socioeconomic level were initiated by the Israeli authorities. The most decisive process was a two-fold one, which took the two basic forces of production, labor and land, and subordinated, integrated, and used them for the Israeli market. The opening of the Green Line (the internationally recognized border) to workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip supplied the Israeli market with cheap labor. The annexation and confiscation of land was – and still is -- explained on ideological (building settlements) and security grounds (Hiltermann, 1991; Kimmerling & Migdal,



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994). If one accepts the analytic framework that the dominant socioeconomic rmation of the Palestinian society in the newly occupied territories was griculture, then the annexation of labor and land would lead to the destruction the social infrastructure of the society. And this was the aim of the numerous gulations and laws imposed by Israel after it occupied the West Bank and the aza Strip. Many scholars distinguish between two periods of Israeli colonial le in the occupied territories. The first period was between 1967 and 1977, nen the Labor party controlled the Israeli government. It is argued that the bor party, through the policies set by its defense minister, Moshe Dayan (see ltermann, 1991 for detailed discussion of these policies), wanted to deflect the stile political and social sentiments by easing the economic hardships of the lestinians. Major-general Shlomo Gazit, who was the first Israeli administrator the occupied territories, called this the carrot and stick policy, rewarding and nishing Palestinians for "good" and "bad" behavior. The terminology is miniscent of colonial regimes that are more openly condemned than Israel nong academics and political activists worldwide. The second period started in 77, when the Likud came to power in Israel. Declared as the right side of the aeli political spectrum, the Likud government started to implement its aightforward and more openly aggressive policies of settling Greater Israel, in ner words, Mandatory Palestine. This meant more land confiscations, leading more confrontations with the Palestinians. Reviewing the policies of the Labor d Likud parties, one concludes that they were not contradictory or opposed to



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each other. Simply, the differences were in the focus and the manner of implementing the policies of colonial settler ideologies, as Hiltermann (1991) suggests, based on an analysis of the Labor party's economic policies. The labor and land spheres were manipulated and treated differently by each Israeli party. While the Labor party saw labor as its major target in colonizing the Palestinians, it did not ignore the land. The Likud continued the processes of settling the land from the point were the Labor party had already institutionalized and formalized the confiscation of land, settlement, and the channeling of labor from the land to wage labor in the Israeli market.

The merchants and the small workshops were not left out of these processes of subordination and integration into the Israeli market. They paid one of the highest tax rates in the world, and, constrained by regulations and military orders, they started to buy Israeli goods (Hiltermann, 1991). Some claim that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were the second largest market for Israeli products after the United States.

In this way, the colonization processes cut across classes, city dwellers, villagers, peasants, landowners, and gender relations. No-one was left out of the Israeli machine of subordination.

These processes created broad social and political solidarity among the different Palestinian strata in their hostility and resentment towards their occupier. The first open semi-public political expression on an organized collective level occurred in 1973 with the establishment of the Palestine National



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ront (PNF). While many underground cells and local committees already xisted at that time, mainly through volunteering activities of a national flavor, ne PNF was a coordinated effort crossing organizational lines, covering all of ne occupied territories (Taraki, 1990). These beginnings in building an nfrastructure upon which the mass mobilization was later based have many haracteristics that should be noted, because they had direct and indirect npact on the building and institutionalization of the political captives' community nat will be discussed in later chapters.

As with many other communities and sections of Palestinian society under ne occupation, such as workers (Hiltermann, 1991), women (Jad, 1990; abbagh, 1998), refugees (Bisharat, 1997; Rosenfeld, 2002), and students (al Malki, 2000), the constitution of the Palestinian political captives' community vas part of larger processes that engulfed the whole of Palestinian society after 967. At the same time, there were specific processes that could be described s unique to the captives' community. The latter are the focus of my issertation. On the former I will elaborate here, in order to position the political aptives in the larger socio-historical context of the society of which they were a art. From the various studies mentioned above on the diverse Palestinian sub-ommunities, we can identify three main clusters of processes. First, the rocesses of harsh colonization initiated and implemented by the Israeli military ule. These processes, mostly aimed at controlling and subordinating the alestinian population, put the national identity in the forefront of the Palestinian



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identities. The materialization of the national identity was accomplished by building concrete social and political institutions and associations across the whole society. Unions of students, workers, women, professionals, and merchants were above all Palestinian unions and associations. The second cluster of processes could be called the Palestinian subjectivity or agency on the individual level, and a specific type of political entity on the collective one. Witnessing the destruction of the socioeconomic infrastructure of their society, many Palestinians, especially in urban centers, started to administer their own lives outside the channels of the occupier. These initiatives had important national effects when they snowballed, spreading around the countryside and into the refugee camps. Usually, a small group of people would organize around a theme or a domain of daily life, and start to act to liberate it from the control of the Israeli authorities. Paving roads, cleaning streets, daycare centers, literary activities, and theatrical initiatives are some examples of the channels through which this subjectivity developed and expressed itself. When these local groupings were linked across different locations, either by the PLO or by other local organizations, they came close to being a political entity on the collective level. Festivals, protests, campaigns for specific issues, elections for local institutions, among other collective practices, were expressions of this political entity. The third cluster of processes is what came to be called in the academic and political literature the "inside outside" dynamic relations of the Palestinian national movement. The PLO is the organized collectivity par excellence of the



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Palestinian Diaspora. The society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has its own agenda, leadership, daily issues, and even its own local version of "Palestinian-ness", all of these are different from the ones developed and nurtured by the PLO institutions abroad. In the academic literature on this subject, scholars tend to accept a certain division of labor between the two wings of the Palestinian national movement. The PLO, or the outside, is responsible for funding and determining the general policies and strategies, while the local leadership of the national movement, or the inside, is responsible for running the daily lives of the people, and the tactical decisions according to the general policies set by the outside. But, more than anything else, the inside was the solid socio-political base for the outside (Hiltermann, 1991; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994; Farsoun, 1997). These dependency relations notwithstanding, this depiction of the relations is at best one-sided. The relations between the two sides can be periodized into three stages in which the main arena of the Palestinian national movement shifted from side to side. Until the mid-1980s the major political arena was located within the PLO headquarters abroad. But from the beginning of the 1980s, more and more responsibilities were taken on by the inside, for two reasons. First, the PLO was defeated by the Israeli forces, which invaded Lebanon in 1982, and had to relocate its headquarters and military force to different Arab countries. Second, by this time, the national mass movement and institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had reached their peak in quantity and quality of activities. These processes culminated in a kind of "equality" of



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positions when the Intifada erupted in 1987. During the Intifada the Palestinian "event" was in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. After the Oslo Accords, and the return of the outside leadership to the occupied territories in 1994, a different pattern developed. While the Palestinian National Authority became the major political entity in the Palestinian national movement, the PLO's structure was never dismantled, and it still functions parallel to the PA, though much more confined to its bureaucratic system.

These three major clusters of processes were critical for any Palestinian community to build itself nationally on the institutional levels. For the Palestinian political captives' community they acquired crucial importance, due to the objective conditions of incarceration by the colonizer. The presence of the colonizer is so overwhelming in the colonial prison, and the captives are mainly criminalized, and targeted as part of the Palestinian collective and less as individuals. These conditions engender an acute sense of the national identity as a battleground to be won. As I will argue in the next chapters, reading and writing through the educational system that was built by the community of captives were the main axes in this battle for the national identity. Subjectivity and agency are major concerns for the captives. In most of the interviews I conducted, and on the textual expressive level as well, the narrative of the captives is one of entering history as agents and not as victims of history. Mostly, the captives struggled constantly to control their own lives in the prison. They built institutions parallel to those of the prison authorities, in order to



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administer their communities with minimal contact or help from the latter. They divided the prison cells along organizational lines, and after long struggles they were given the responsibility for assigning newcomers to specific cells. They took control of the kitchen and the entire process of administering the food stores. The captives scheduled the daily activities of each one of them so strictly that no one could escape their control. All these examples indicate the emerging subjectivity and agency of the political captives in their relations with the colonizer. When, in the early 1980s, all of the communities of political captives in all the Israeli prisons were coordinating their actions and positions towards the Israeli authorities, and towards different events locally and internationally, one could point to a political entity that had emerged in the prisons.

The political captives not only saw themselves as part of the Palestinian national movement in general, but specifically as part of the PLO. While each organization took care of its captives, and supported their families, financially and morally, the PLO had a section in its institutional structure that was in charge of the captives' and martyrs' families. According to Sayigh (1997), the budget of this department during the 1980s was around 50 million dollars annually. Although it dropped sharply after the Gulf War in 1991 (to 4 million annually) because the Gulf states stopped financing the PLO, the department still exists and functions. The PLO's declared policy is that the political captives are soldiers in the front line, and hence they deserve all the possible support. The political captives' repeated collective declaration that the PLO was the sole



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representative of the Palestinian people gave the PLO its needed legitimacy among the Palestinian masses in the occupied territories. These relations were more complicated in times of crises and conflicts between the different organizations that comprise the PLO. Usually, these crises were reflected in the captive community, so if Fateh and the PLFP were at odds for whatever reason in the various bodies of the PLO, the relations between the members of these organizations in the Israeli prison system would be tense and conflictive. And if there were crises between the different organizations in the captives' community due to local dynamics, more often than not the outside leadership would arbitrate between the rivals.

As in most documented cases about developments in the Palestinian society in the occupied territories, these three clusters of processes interacted with each other in the captives' community, from time to time highlighting different aspects of the communal process. In the following chapters I will examine and analyze these mechanisms through the domain of literary production processes as recollected and narrativized by the former captives in interviews, and as shown in texts written by them during their captivity.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Studies on the history of the colonial condition in Palestine have more trees than any forest, but in the academic arena, until recently there was no forest. Countless studies have been conducted, written and published about Palestine,



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yet few agree on the nature of the socio-historical conditions in Mandatory Palestine. For reasons mostly connected with the politics of knowledge in the western academic centers, the last decade saw a turning point in academic research on Palestine. This turning point is evident in studies that focus on the social history of specific Palestinian communities while emphasizing the colonial nature of the Israeli rule. Sustained partly by the theoretical and methodological baseline of these studies, my dissertation seeks to explore the social history of the community of Palestinian political captives in the Israeli prisons through the literary productions of this community.

In this brief historical review, I argued that contrary to the widespread notions about the religious and ideological nature of the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict, there were basic socioeconomic dynamics in the early 19th century that brought the foreign empires to incorporate the Holy Land into their colonial schemes. Later, ideologies played an equally important part in shaping the colonial conflict.

The colonial practices strengthened some of the existing Palestinian identities, weakened others, and still new ones emerged. The centrality of the PLO after the war of 1967, as the central organized collective will of the Palestinian people, is evident both inside and outside Mandatory Palestine, through its organizations, institutions, and the wide support it enjoys among the Palestinian masses. Despite all these indicators, conflictive relations between the different PLO organizations, especially Fateh and the PFLP, played an



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important part in shaping the different Palestinian communities inside the occupied territories. The captives' community was part of these processes, as it was built and consolidated inside the Israeli prisons.

In the next chapter I will trace the history of the material conditions in the Israeli prison system as perceived by the political captives. From this perception, the captives started to reorganize their internal communal relations, their position towards the prison authorities and towards the outside world. The reorganization, I will argue, is mostly evident through the communication networks, both material and symbolic, that were developed and practiced by the community. The details of the captives' perception and their communication networks will show us how the institution building, the subjectivity/agency, and the inside/outside wings of the national movement materialize concretely.



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# Chapter 3: *Building the Community: The Body, the Material Conditions, and the Communication Networks*

## 3.1 Introduction

In Mandatory Palestine the British built a police station and a detention center in almost every town and city. In the Palestinian cities, the yellow buildings stand as signifiers of the seat of political/colonial power. These buildings were occupied first by the British administration, then successively by the Egyptians, the Jordanians,[1] the Israeli military rule, and then the Palestinian authority, at least for a short while. The architectural design of the buildings is modern and standardized, rectangular in shape, with rows and columns of small windows with metal bars. The buildings are generally located in a position that overlooks the city, the Benthamite Panopticon for Palestine. There are very few academic accounts examining these processes of colonization in the Middle East as part of a comprehensive critique of modernity and its projects. Prominent among these accounts is Timothy Mitchell's (1991) "Colonising Egypt." Mitchell describes and analyzes the spatial and temporal techniques of power used by the British in Egypt through examining the architecture, schools, police, and texts, among other things, but he does not look into the prison system as a major focus of these practices of power.

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[1] The Jordanians ruled the West Bank from 1948 to 1967, and during the same period the Egyptians ruled the Gaza Strip.



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The prisons and detention centers that were built by the Israelis to augment the British ones tend to be cement gray and heavily guarded by modern technological devices. Together, these two generations of prisons and detention centers compose the list of prisons used by the Israeli authorities to imprison Palestinians between 1967 and 1993. Geographically, the distribution of the prisons and detention centers is as follows:[2]

a. Northern Palestine

1. *Shata* Prison: near *Bysan*, south of Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee).
2. *al Damun* Prison: east of Haifa.
3. *al Jalamih* Detention Center: near Haifa.
4. Haifa Detention Center: in Haifa.
5. *Majidu* Military Prison: some 8 miles northwest of *Jenin*. It was opened for Palestinian political captives during the first Intifada of 1987.

b. Center of Palestine

1. *Bit Lyd* Prison: east of *Netanya*.
2. *Tulkarim* Prison: in *Tulkarim*.
3. *Jenin* Prison: in northwestern *Jenin*.
4. The Central Prison of *Nablus*: located in eastern *Nablus*. This prison was built by the Ottomans [who governed Palestine until 1917].

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[2] I will use the Arabic names for the different locations and sites, as narrated by the political captives. The Arabic words will be italicized.



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5. *Jnyd* Prison: located west of *Nablus. Jnyd* was built by the Israelis in 1984 and has the largest inmate capacity of all the prisons.
6. *al Fara'ah* Prison: located near *Al Fara'ah* refugee camp, east of *Nablus*.
7. *Ramallah* Prison: in northeast *Ramallah*.
8. *al Ramllih* Prison: located in the city of *al Ramllih*. This prison complex contains the central hospital to which sick prisoners are transferred for treatment. It also houses the women's prison, *Navaih Tirtsah*. In addition, the complex has a section called *Ma'bar*, to which various political captives are brought before being distributed to their permanent prisons.
9. *al Maskubiah* Detention Center: located in Jerusalem.

c. Southern Palestine

1. Hebron Prison: in northwestern Hebron.
2. *'Asqalan* Prison: located northeast of the city of 'Asqalan.
3. *Bi'r al Sabi'* Prison: south of the city of *Bi'r al Sabi'*.
4. *Nafhah* Prison: located in *al Naqab* desert, some 50 miles south of *Bi'r al Sab'i*.
5. The Coast of Gaza Prison: located northwest of Gaza City.
6. *Ansar* 2: located in Gaza, it was opened during the Intifada of 1987.
7. *Ansar 3/al Naqab* Prison: located in *al Naqab* desert, opened during the Intifada of 1987.



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8. *al Dhahiriah* Prison: in a*l Dhahiriah* town, south of Hebron (al Qaymari, 1984; Qasim, 1986; Khalil, 1989; al Hindi, 2000; Qaraqi', 2001).

It was stipulated in the Oslo Accords of 1993 that some of these buildings in the major Palestinian cities were to be handed over to the Palestinian National Authority, symbolizing the transfer of authority. With the outbreak of violence on September 28, 2000, many of the buildings were bombarded and almost destroyed by the Israeli Army. The most famous of these is the Muqata'ah Building in Ramallah because of the siege placed upon its occupant, Yasser Arafat, since November 2001.

In addition to these prisons and detention centers, the Israeli authorities use military camps to hold, interrogate and torture Palestinian captives. For example, *Sarafand* military camp was used in the late 1960s and early 1970s to torture Palestinian political captives under interrogation (Interviews: Ghyth, 2001; 'Wdih Y., 2001; al Khayri, 2002).

This politico-geographical distribution, which covers the entire physical and imagined Mandatory Palestine (see map 2), weaves a web of power relations through the signs of real and imagined localities (Foucault, 1978; Anderson, 1983). Moreover, the spider-like web has an interior space, which is seen from inside the locality itself, be it the prison or the city in which the prison is located, and an exterior overarching space, which engulfs Palestine as a whole. The exterior space is seen from the main roads as the prison buildings that stand watching the passers-by, who move while the prison stays. Most of the former



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political captives who were interviewed during the fieldwork experienced their Palestine through the play between these interior and exterior spaces of the prison web.

> ***They kept moving me from one prison to another … they don't want you to feel stable, secure … so in two years I was in Ramallah first, then al khalil [Hebron], 'Asqalan, Jnyd … The Bustah showed me Palestine …*** [laughs for a while] ***now I know all of it … almost*** ('Arrar, Ramallah, 2001).

The Bustah is the term used by the political captives for the shuttle that distributes them around the different prisons, courts, and hospitals. The word, which is derived from the English "post," is also used in colloquial Arabic to refer to the post office. While the prison authorities moved him from one prison to another in order to sever his social relations, 'Arrar experienced the reshuffling as an opportunity to reorganize the space of his Palestine. His redefinition of the dynamics of the interaction between the interior and exterior spaces is grounded in the history of the political captives' community narrative. The isolated interiors of the separate prisons, along with their inhabitants, grew into a national political movement through the rebuilding of communal networks among the captives. The formal institutions of the PLO named this organized collectivity of the Palestinians in the Israeli prisons the Palestinian Political Captives' Movement. This chapter will trace back these processes of community building by focusing on the material conditions of the prisons and the communication networks developed by the captives.



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The community building processes could be analyzed from different angles. In order to understand the seemingly opposing dimensions (e.g., the material and cultural ones) of the political captives community, it is necessary to approach its analysis from both the material and cultural aspects and their many interrelations. In fact, the argument of this chapter is the urgent necessity to collapse this misleading analytical dichotomy of material/culture. In an attempt to redefine and reposition the accepted relations between ethnicity and archaeological cultures, Jones (1997), applying Bourdieu's habitus, argues that:

> Material culture is an active constitutive dimension of the social practice in that it both structures human agency and is a product of that agency… The social practices and social structures involved in the production, use and consumption of material culture become embodied by it, because such processes occur within meaningful cultural contexts… (pp. 117-8).

The human agency and the lived material conditions are interwoven through processes of social practice. Real living individuals are shaped by their material context while they shape it to different degrees. This reciprocity and mutual constitution acquires a rather accentuated and elaborated form in the context of the modern prison (Foucault, 1978).

The context of the colonial prison in Palestine since 1967 is a very specific socio-historical constellation, in which several dialogical and contradictory social structures, social systems and practices clash, merge and negotiate, through the actions of both sides, the colonizers and the colonized captives, to constitute



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the political captives' community. The material culture of the colonial prison in Palestine is characterized by the practices and narratives of scarcity and deprivation. The complex structure of power relations and the forms of domination between the colonizer and the colonized are embodied in the practices of deprivation of material, which in turn reproduce these forms of domination and their power structure. Power structures engender counter structures among the subordinated. The cultural systems of the Palestinian national ideology, which find moral and aesthetic expression, include the urge to resist, to stand firm and protect the national identity. Hence, in the Israeli colonial prison the counter power structures with their counter forms of domination are practiced through the conditions of scarcity and deprivation of material, not in order to reproduce the power relations of colonizer/colonized this time (although they do so at times), but to contest the power relations inscribed in the materiality of the colonial prison. The thesis of this chapter is that these dynamics of domination and counter domination form the core cluster of relations upon which the community of Palestinian captives is built.

Prison is meant to disconnect its inmates by isolation, at least this is the aim of its builders and owners. By contrast, the inmates of the prison seek incessantly to communicate and to reconnect themselves to each other and to their society. The channels of communication of the imprisoned are excellent locales for examining the contested sites of the material culture. The body of the prisoner is such a site, which the prison authorities circulate in a very



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regimented order. The political captives, on their side, use the same body in the same networks of circulation to develop channels of communication among themselves and with the outside world. Prominent among these is the *cabsulih*. The *cabsulih* uses the materials available in the prison, namely the body of the captive, and reallocates the spatial networks of the prison to counter and alter the existing formal structures of power. In addition, the Palestinian political captives developed many other channels of communication through communal processes. In order to fully understand the *cabsulih,* in the following sections I will position it in relation to the other channels of communication developed by the captives.

This chapter will trace the social history of the *cabsulih* through the narrative of the Palestinian political captives themselves. First, the early history of the material conditions in the Israeli colonial prison will be presented as narrated by the Palestinian captives. Then, the *cabsulih* will be analyzed through its embedded positionality in these material conditions. For this purpose, a view of the early history of the community, meaning the years immediately following 1967, as a formative stage will help to further our understanding of the processes of community building among the Palestinian political captives.

## 3.2 The history as told and written

The history of the political captives' community is narrated in verbal and written accounts by the captives themselves, as a time/space continuum



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punctuated by the landmarks of its materiality. The hunger strike after which the captives received beds, the date when the Red Cross stopped bringing fruit, the opening of grilles in the cell doors, are examples of history narrated as a changing materiality. Thus, the community's struggle and resistance are constructed in a historical narrative around the material conditions and the demands to change them.

> ***I was arrested right after the war*** [of 1967] **...** ***In Nablus prison they gave us a soup made of grains of broom[3] ... The prisoners had been eating it for months and nobody noticed... it was so bad and there was almost no food, so they ate it ... Then came a group of old men from the al Khalil*** [Hebron] ***area, who had been arrested for helping the rebels and the infiltrators ... They saw us eating the broom grains and started to shout and curse the occupation, 'Do you know what you are eating? It's broom grains' ... So we started to return the dishes... once, twice ... Then the head of the prison called some of us to his office ... I was one of the representatives ... I tried to explain to him in English that we use the broom plant to clean dirt... we can't eat it ...*** (al Khayri, al Byrih, 2002).

This story is a constitutive one in narrating the history of political captivity through materiality. The prison authorities behave in a certain way, for example, they change certain aspects of the material realities of the captives' lives. This is interpreted by the captives as violation of their human rights, and they start acting in protest against these changes. This is followed by a phase of negotiation, which may lead either to resolution or escalation. The captives then narrate the event as a part of their communal history, and in this way it

[3] A plant named *Makkanis*, literally meaning brooms, and used in Palestine to manufacture brooms. The degradation of eating the plant's grains stems from its usage as a broom in Palestinian society.



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constitutes their identity as political captives. In the narration, the events are organized sequentially in such a way that they complete a whole, the story of the birth and maturation of the captives' community.

Although the story is seen by the captives as part of the colonial condition, they distinguish between protests against the living conditions and protests for political demands. This distinction appears to stem from their understanding that the political leadership of their organizations, namely the PLO, should conduct the political struggle for their release. According to Qaraqi' (2001) the first political hunger strike began on June 21, 1994. The strike was against the Cairo Agreement between Israel and the PLO, which determined the release of 5000 political captives out of the total of 7170 Palestinians and Arabs incarcerated in Israeli prisons at that time.

One way of understanding the historical narrative of the material as told and written by the captives is by locating it in the conditions of material scarcity in the colonial prison. Each objective is gained if, and only if, the prisoner cooperates with the prison authorities. Rights degree zero is the rule, as Khalil (1989), a former political captive, phrased it in his historiographical account of political imprisonment in the Israeli prisons. al Qaymari (1984), who wrote a historical treatise on political captivity while imprisoned, describes the policy as follows:

> The Israeli occupation authorities were … so careful to keep the jailing conditions so low in supplying materials for the primary human needs. Although seventeen years have passed since the beginning of the occupation, and hence the long story of political



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> captivity, no changes or progress have been made in these really low conditions to answer the basic human needs … (p. 27).

The captives' primary human needs are food, drink, living space, and hygienic facilities. al Qaymari's subtext, on which he builds his assertions regarding the occupation authorities, is that, despite the protests and the passage of almost two decades, the same conditions of scarcity still dominate the captives' lives. From this position, he deduces that there is a set of laws that guides the prison authorities as part of the general practices of occupation. In the interview I conducted with him, 'Ata al Qaymari illustrated his point by telling the story of the salt in *Nafhah* prison.

In July 1980 the Israeli colonial authorities opened *Nafhah* prison. 'Ata al Qaymari was then in *Ramllih* prison. Six months before the opening of *Nafhah* he had been transferred to *Bi'r al Sabi'*. Seventy-six political captives, who were considered the leadership of the community across the whole prison system, were moved to *Nafhah*, and 'Ata was one of them. *Nafhah*, according to 'Ata, was a model prison, designed by the most brilliant colonial minds. The conditions of scarcity and deprivation of material needs were the main constitutive dimension of the power relations in the new prison.

> ***We started to notice that there was no salt in the food … we asked for salt … We thought in the beginning it was the cooks' mistake … but it kept recurring … Then they gave us a kilogram for the whole year…*** [laughs] ***imagine a kilo of salt for almost eighty men for the whole year … So their planned policy was that we would start to fight each other for salt*** (al Qaymari, Jerusalem, 2002).



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The political captives understand the manifestation of the power relations as based on two linked processes. The prison authorities shatter the ordinary by withholding the most ordinary components of food, such as salt. In doing this, their aim is to unweave the social fabric of the captives' community. Latent in this behavior is a specific perception concerning 'the nature' of the captives - that they will break down in certain conditions of deprivation.

In the historical tradition of the modern western prison, that is to say, a prison based on the panopticon and not on the traditional spectacle, conditions of scarcity and deprivation are seen both as a penalty and a means of rehabilitation. This view is one of imposition, enforcement, control, and reordering the disorder. At the other end of the continuum of these relations there is the view of the imposed upon, enforced, and reordered body/soul. The tension, violence and brutality, and their related cathartic pleasures cohere into a laser-like beam, a kind of sculpturing, which carves and shapes subjects and communities. It acts on both poles of the continuum. The intervention of rewriting the history of the Palestinian political captives by themselves resides in the flipped story of Foucault (1978). As such, it cannot be anything but its absented voice, for each historical event has at least two stories. Foucault, in his "Discipline & Punish," tells the story of the transformations undergone by the authority. The historical narrative of the Palestinian captives is the story of the authority's others.



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The prison as the complete and austere institution, Foucault (1978) tells us, is so deeply rooted in the dynamics of society that it is difficult to think of society without it.

> The 'self-evident' character of the prison, which we find so difficult to abandon, is based first of all on the simple form of 'deprivation of liberty'. How could prison not be the penalty *par excellence* in a society in which liberty is a good that belongs to all in the same way and to which each individual is attached … by a 'universal and constant' feeling? Its loss has therefore the same value for all; unlike the fine, it is an 'egalitarian' punishment (p. 232, italics in original).

The self-evident prison in the modern west is not necessarily self-evident in its colonial lands. Moreover, while liberty is the property of everyone in the metropolitan city, it is hardly so in the colonial periphery. Hence, the Palestinians in the first stages of the occupation were trying to understand the reasons that brought Israel to choose the prison as the main institution for punishment. This question recurs in the captivity narrative of the Palestinians: Why do the Israelis imprison us and not eliminate us physically, that is, simply kill the captives in the first place? al Qaymari (1984) deals with this issue in the introduction to the first part of his *al Sijnu Laysa Lana* ["The Prison is Not for Us"].

> The prisons which the Zionist entity inherited… were transformed into centers for the practice of violence against the Palestinian people and its struggling forces, that violence which aims at elimination, not by the hanging rope or the guillotine, but by techniques of gradual elimination of the human, bodily and morally (p. 22).

al Qaymari sees the colonial prisons as a substitute for the hanging rope as a means of achieving the aims of the colonizer. The first aim is to sell Israel as a



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democratic state to public opinion in the international arena. The second aim is to prevent the captives from becoming mythic figures for the Palestinians by their execution (p. 23). The Israelis' historical choice, then, according to al Qaymari, is a tactical one in the colonial context. The dominant faction of the Zionist movement, which established the State of Israel, sees itself as a modern national movement, as part of the European enlightenment, in contrast to the Palestinians, whom it perceives as pre-modern Orientals fixated in naked violence. These perceptions underlie the ambivalent nature of the Israeli colonial prison. Does it aim at rehabilitation? Or does it seek to punish and drain the prisoners in order to paralyze Palestinian political activists? It could be argued that, at least in the beginning, the prison was not a self-evident choice.

The conditions of scarcity and deprivation, as told and written by the captives, indicate that the aim was not an egalitarian type of punishment for rehabilitation. The main purpose was the gradual 'draining to death' type of violent power techniques. 'Abid al Latif Ghyth, a teacher by profession, was arrested in the early days of the occupation. He describes the scarcity and deprivation as a situation of under-stimulation, denial of social and physical stimuli. This situation, according to Ghyth, generates patterns of behavior that are totally blinded to the larger issues and over concerned with the details of daily life in the prison cell.

> ***After two or maybe three years I started to look into details … In the prison you would sit for hours and hours looking for details to argue about … There was nothing in these horrible, really horrible,***



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> ***dungeons ... Most of the political prisoners would become obsessive about small things if you didn't provide other activities for them... Later I started the sports project ... to kill the killing*** (Ghyth, Ramallah, 2001).

We see that from the perspective of the political captive, the aim of the social and material draining is "killing." The individual captive becomes obsessed with the trivial details of his surroundings in order to fill the vacuum created by under-stimulation. In this way, the predominant scarcity becomes the major social and mental issue, and the result is reduction of the captive to one dimension. To Ghyth this means killing.

The draining, both metaphorical and literal, starts with isolation, the first principle stated by Foucault as the main characteristic of the prison. A captive is first and foremost drained by being isolated from her/his collectivity. In the colonial relations between the Israelis and Palestinians, the collectivity is the kernel of the conflict (Swedenburg, 1995; Khalidi, 1997). Which collectivity has the legitimate right to hold the land, its history, and its living and dead inhabitants?

From the perspective of imposition, Foucault argues that:

> The isolation of the convict from the external world, from everything that motivated the offence, from the complicities that facilitated it. The isolation of the prisoners from one another. Not only must the penalty be individual, but it must also be individualizing – in two ways. First, the prison must be designed in such a way as to efface of itself the harmful consequences of gathering together very different convicts in the same place ... [second] through the reflection that it gives rise to and the remorse that cannot fail to follow, solitude must be a positive instrument of



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> reform … solitude assures … a spontaneous individualization of the punishment… (pp. 236-7).

The idea that isolation is punishing and individualizing is based on the understanding that society could, and at times must, redefine and reshape the relations between the individual and her society. The symbolic and material violent redefinition of these relations, in Foucault's analysis, is a vertical one; that is to say, the dominant redefines the dominated. But, even in European societies themselves, as many scholars have shown, the dynamics are more complex and vivid. According to these scholars one could argue that the redefinition at least acts both ways (Bakhtin, 1984; Stallybrass & White, 1986). Hence, it will not be surprising to find that in the colonial context, the dynamics of isolation and individualization have different patterns and dynamics among those subjugated to colonial rule.

These two dimensions of individualization, I will try to show, are the same dimensions through which the political captives rebuild their collectivity. The gathering of tens of thousands of Palestinian captives, and their solitudes, as individuals in solitary confinement or in groups, generated the dynamics of structuration, rather than dissolution of the social fabric into individuals (Giddens, 1984). The prison, even for the dominant social groups who planned and established it in 18th century Europe, is meant to individualize social inequalities and oppressions. The individualization of the prisoner minimizes any serious social challenge to the dominant. These interactive conflictive relations



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of individual versus society became rather acute in the colonial context of Palestine. In most of the documents and historical accounts from and about the formative stages of political captivity, immediately after the 1967 War, the main theme is protecting the collective national self.

> ***... for my generation, we had to fight for the recognition that we were political captives... we were not criminals ... we were war captives ... We have a national issue here to fight for... especially in the years after the defeat of 1967 ... The Jewish criminals would come to us and say that's it, you are dead, all the Arabs are dead now... We are freedom fighters, we are Palestinians ... Then it came to very very violent stuff with the criminals*** ('Wdih, al Byrih, 2001).

'Wdih, who was arrested in 1969, brings into focus the first issue that the first generation of captives had to deal with, namely, that they were political captives and not criminals as the Israeli authorities claimed. This issue is directly linked to the larger arena of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in which both sides denied the collectivity of the other, at least at that historical stage of the conflict. From this position, 'Wdih almost overemphasizes the collective identities, the Arab and Palestinian. Beyond the immediate context of the prison, this overemphasis has to do with the fact that the years following the 1967 War were the era of a general sense of defeat, some would even argue a defeat more total and all-embracing than the aftermath of 1948 (al 'Azim, 1972; Ajami, 1981; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994, among others). Hence, Israel's military victory and its classification of who was the criminal and who the freedom fighter had profound effects on the processes of identity formation for the Palestinian political captives.



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Thus, the narrative of protecting and building the national self, which continued to be constitutive into the later stages of structuration, was composed of two opposing, but mutually constitutive, clusters of significations: on the one hand, the material, social, and political forms of domination which were set by the colonizer, and on the other hand, the material, social and political forms of counter-domination that were practiced by the colonized. It is important to emphasize the continuous and relational nature of these two clusters (Volosinov, 1973), which have run through the now four decades of political captivity. A description of the material conditions of the Israeli prison system in the early formative years of the captive community will illustrate these complex structures and counter-structures of colonial power relations.

### *3.2.1 The material conditions and the powers of draining*

The material conditions in the narrated history of the community are usually divided into three main categories:

1. The living and sleeping spaces
2. The quantity and quality of the food
3. The medical treatment

These three categories largely constitute the objective conditions of existence for the political captives. As such, they were heavily narrated and intensely contested by the captives and the prison authorities. While the captives organized protests against these conditions, the authorities tried to



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keep a tight control over them and deny them any achievement gained by protest.

al Hindi (2000) describes vividly the prison cell in the early years of the colonial jail.

> In the first years of the occupation, the Palestinian strugglers lived in very hard conditions in the Israeli prisons. The cells were so overfilled with prisoners that movement was difficult in such a crowded place. During their sleep, the prisoners had to stay on their sides because of the narrowness of the space. The cells didn't contain toilets, nor were there taps for drinking water. The prisoners had to urinate in buckets inside the cells, and the drinking water was in buckets inside the cells too. Mr. 'Abid al Hay Salim al Khatib (a prisoner for 20 years from early 1969) mentioned that the prison guard used to forbid the prisoners to walk in the few meters of the cell, and he didn't allow sitting except cross-legged in the Arab style, and if the prisoner got tired he could stand without moving. The prisoner wasn't allowed to talk with the other inmates in the cell. He must keep his shoes on all the time, his hat on his head… The prisoners were allowed to leave their cells for a quarter to half an hour a day… where it was forbidden to walk in groups … or to smile … or talk, … or stand … One line, hands behind their backs, heads down in a silent atmosphere (pp. 22-3, parenthesis in original).

The frozen conditions of the material space were aimed at individualizing the political captives by dissecting their relations into controlled squares of material existence. But these were suffocating conditions. Furthermore, the political economy of allocating spaces to the captives, from the colonizer's standpoint, could not allow an isolated confined space to each captive. The exchange value of 'space' in the colonial list of prices is higher than the use value of capturing a Palestinian. The prison authorities could not put each captive in a separate cell, so they almost simulated solitary confinement by



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forbidding the captives to talk, walk, sit, and so on. This situation constituted an opening, a possibility, for the captives to employ survival techniques. Not only did they establish communication, but they also succeeded in communicating and organizing collective actions against the political economy of captivity itself. The first hunger strike took place in *Bit Lyd* prison in 1969. The main issue was the oppressive living conditions. Most of the documents referring to political captivity claim that the hunger strike failed to achieve its goals. The reason for this judgment is that the Israeli authorities dispersed the political captives into different prisons in order to break the strike.

> ***When I was in Nablus we staged several protests*** [1968] ***... the one in Bit Lyd, though, was the first serious one ... The hunger strike was total ... everybody was in it ... they were surprised by our determination... Then each one was thrown into a different prison ... They kept moving me for each protest I participated in ... They called us the hotheads*** (al Khayri, al Byrih, 2002).

In retrospect, it could be argued that the failure was on both sides. The dispersion of the captives reflects the prison authorities' inability to deal with the strike inside the prison itself. But regardless of the different evaluations of this first hunger strike, the tradition of hunger strikes developed to become the political captives' ultimate weapon against the oppressive conditions of their existence.

The second material condition that is narrated in the political captives' historical accounts is the quantity and quality of the food. The quantity is



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classified into three meals a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner, and into the weight of each food item in grams. For example, the first menu was as follows:

> Breakfast: invariably the meal consisted of one half boiled egg with a really bad smell + 5 grams of butter + 4 olives + half a spoon of jam + a quarter of a loaf of bread.
> Lunch: soup (hot colored water) + grains of broom boiled as rice + a small piece of fish or dried meat weighing 40-50 grams + a quarter of a dish of boiled or cooked potatoes. Sometimes there would be noodles instead of potatoes.
> Dinner: a third of a tomato + tea (hot water with no sugar) + half a spoon of yogurt + a quarter of a loaf + a quarter of a dish of salad, and sometimes a quarter of a dish of Byka (it looks like lentils in color is and usually used to feed animals, especially cattle). (Khalil, 1989, p. 46, parentheses in original).

As for the quality, the food was badly cooked and usually the fish and meat were rotten. Not infrequently, the political captives would complain that they had found worms and little stones in the food served to them. The political captives ate in the cells, where they slept and lived most of the time. These conditions continued well into the early 1990s. Wisam al Rafydi, who was arrested in 1991, describes the meager quantities of the food, but adds that by that stage the community was already established and could cope with such a situation.

> ***… then, when you receive an egg for each three captives and a half tomato for each one … I had to be equal, but it was absurd for me… Everybody would watch me to decide … Many used to give their share to others … Others would take the largest part … As a leader***



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> ***I worked on the group spirit … Food in a strong group is not really a problem*** (al Rafydi, al Byrih, 2000).

To overcome the objective conditions of existence, according to al Rafydi, one needs to build a coherent community with a clear hierarchy of leadership and a laity. And viewed retrospectively, these processes of building communal relations were the main resources of resistance that enabled the political captives to survive the dire material conditions of their captivity.

Another food resource is the prison canteen, which was made accessible to the political captives in 1970 due to the prohibition on captives' families bringing soaps and cigarettes for them. The items available in the canteen were: 'Wmar cigarettes, tea, instant coffee, soap, sugar, candies, and other kinds of expensive cigarettes. The opening of the canteen for the captives created new intra-communal problems. The family of each captive could deposit a certain sum of money for him/her, but many families could not afford to make the deposit. To cope with the anticipated problems of a socioeconomic nature, the leadership along with the majority of the captives decided to open a general account for the whole community in each prison. Each political faction was responsible for managing its members' income through the general account (Khalil, 1989; al Hindi, 2000). The matter of the canteen and its related problems are another example of the interrelatedness between the objective conditions of the prison and the communal relations of the captives.



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The meager diet provided by the prison authorities reflects the meager square of space allocated to the captives. The reduction of the body to its sub-basic needs is the expression and articulation of the gradual draining to death. As with the gradual shrinking in the tiny space, the bodies of the captives were forced into the exchange value of the political economy of captivity. While the dynamic of starving the body was accompanied by forced labor, this was not systematic and was resisted by the majority of the captives. Working in Israeli factories was a problematic issue for the captives. Some argued for it because it enabled them to move and spend more time in activity, while others rejected any form of subordination of the captives' labor for the benefit of the colonizers. For the captives the issue was resolved in the late 1970s, when clear and firm orders were issued by the different organizations forbidding any type of work. The colonial authorities, on their side, saw the work as a privilege, which should not be granted to any captive, only to the good docile ones.

The medical treatment provided for the political captives in the facilities of the colonial prison authorities is the third material condition that is contested continually by the narrative of the captive community, who claim that regardless of the type and severity of the captive's sickness, he gets the same medical treatment from the prison medical staff. The famous tablet of Acamol[4] should cure every illness.

[4] The local Israeli headache pill, parallel to the American Advil.



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> ***I had bad … really bad aches in my back, I didn't know what to do about it for weeks so I went to the prison clinic … After waiting two weeks for my turn, he told me to drink water … Water will cure your back, he said… I started to fume, so he smiled and gave me Acamol, and called the next one*** ('Abid al Hadi, Bir Zeit, 2000).

'Abid al Hadi was a second year student when he was arrested in the early 1990s. He served most of his sentence in *Majidu* military prison. The rule of thumb was not to attend the clinic unless the sickness was really severe. For that reason he waited for weeks. The captives saw any individual contact with the prison authorities as suspicious and possibly leading to collaboration, in other words, treason. Hence, they tightly regulated the visits to the clinic. The recurring story by the captives is that the nurse or physician would offer water, and then the headache pill Acamol.

Moreover, the medical staff, which usually consisted of a nurse and a physician, was representing the prison intelligence services. They conditioned treatment on collaboration with the authorities. Hence, the clinic became a forbidden place for the captives by their own rules, unless authorized by the leadership of the organization to which one belonged. The most notorious of the nurses was Yudah, who worked in the *'Asqalan* prison clinic. Yudah performed more duties than those expected of a nurse. For example, he used to participate in the 'beating parties' which were conducted by the prison guards under the orders of the security officers of *'Asqalan*. He regularly concealed the signs of beatings on the captives' bodies and did not record them in the files. He eliminated any trace of physical abuse (al Qaymari, 1984). The dentist was



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another story in *'Asqalan*. He extracted the good teeth and left the bad ones in (Qasim, 1986). There is a strong claim among the captives that physicians participated in torturing them, but this claim is always followed by the assertion that these were not really physicians and only pretended to be so. Y. 'Wdih, who was arrested in 1968, is famous among the former captives for the severe tortures he underwent.

> ***They took me to Sarafand, you know, where the military camp is … There were a lot of human organs dispersed in the grounds … hand, legs … Then came somebody who claimed to be a physician and started to check my body … He took a small stick of wood and started to beat my fingertips for hours …. But when I was bleeding from my head he refused to give me anything*** ('Wdih Y., Jerusalem, 2001).

In my interview with him, 'Wdih kept showing me different signs on his body, as marks left by torture. The major one was the scar on his head, which extends across his whole head from front to back. In narrating the practices of the medical staff he expressed disbelief, insisting that the torturers' claim to be physicians and nurses was untrue. Perhaps this interpretation of their identity is a survival technique. The understanding that there is no humanity left is too hard to bear, so 'real' physicians heal while those who torture are impostors.

In a parallel dynamic of counter-domination, the political captives' organized actions against the severe material conditions of imprisonment were gradual in strength and magnitude. For example, they would return their meals for several days, and then they would not leave their cells to see their families and lawyers, and so on, until they eventually arrived at the stage of a total hunger strike,



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which also means a total halt of any other activity. Usually, the argument for the gradation of the organized actions was a communal one. In order for the protest to achieve its goals, you need to mobilize and organize the political captives into one strong body that will stand firm in the confrontation with the prison authority. Radi al Jara'i, a teacher by profession, who was arrested in the mid 1970s and became a prominent figure in the captives' community, emphasized these processes as crucial ones for achieving improvements on the level of material conditions.

> ***In the prison you have many*** **[personality]** ***types … so I had, as one with responsibilities, to prepare them for protest … You know, I was like a father to them … When you start a hunger strike you want it to succeed, and all the suffering to be worthwhile … so you take your time to prepare it and you don't rush …*** (al Jara'i, Ramallah, 2001).

These processes of gradual preparation for mobilizing political captives are not exclusive to the Palestinian political captives' community. The Irish political prisoners, as Feldman (1991) and Beresford (1987) show, invested in preparation as much as in the protest itself. Moreover, from Feldman's and Beresford's descriptions of the Irish experience, as well as that of the Palestinians, the processes of preparation for protests enhanced the sociological institutionalization of these communities.

The list of demands around which the captives were mobilized and organized in the first stages of community building can be summarized as follows:



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1. Stopping the use of beating and harassment of the captives.
2. Canceling the humiliating rules of conduct imposed on the captives, such as making them call the guards "Sir" and putting their hands behind their backs and head down during the count, and forbidding them to talk during the daily break in the yard.
3. Allowing the prisoners to grow their hair and moustaches.
4. Permitting each political captive to choose whether or not to work in the Israeli factories.
5. Allowing the political captives to bring stationery and cultural materials into the prison.
6. Reducing the crowdedness in the prison cells.
7. Improving the quantity and quality of the food. In particular, the demand was to allow the captives to manage the food store, the cooking, and the kitchen (al Qaymari, 1984; Khalil, 1989; Qaraqi', 2001).

From these demands one understands that in fact the captives wanted to regain control over the management of their material conditions. The important division in the list of demands is that between control over the body and control over the environment of the body. These are the basic coordinates through which the Israeli prison authorities try to control and manage the captives.

The material conditions imposed by the prison authorities in the first stages, and the counter demands for changing them, which continued into the early 1970s, did not change in their basic constitutive matrixes and processes. What



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seems to have changed over time is the dynamics of the political captives as a group of individuals in the same prison and between the different prisons across Mandatory Palestine.

The immediate result of the War of 1967, for the purpose of our discussion here, was the mass arrest of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In most of the prisons, the political captives were a group that tried to differentiate itself from criminals. But, in general, there was a loose and informal sense of collectivity among the group as political captives.

> The prisons were full of political prisoners and criminals, who were the majority at the beginning of the occupation. And the life of the political prisoners was so bad. The thugs from the streets were moving freely around the cells; rigid factionalism for the locality, and the tribe/family was dominant. In addition to all of this, the criminals practiced immoral conduct [homosexuality]. But the political prisoners were in different cells from the criminals (Khalil, 1989, p. 42).

The different situations of criminals and political captives led, in the first stages, to violent confrontation between the two, between the 'moral' and the 'immoral.' These violent encounters redefined and reorganized the Palestinian inter-group relations. The conflictive relations were not only between political captives and criminals, but also between the different social identities and the emerging post-1967 national identities and ideologies. These contradictory and antagonistic dialogical relations (Volosinov, 1973; Bakhtin, 1986) would continue to play constitutive roles as power centers inside the political captives' community at the different stations of its subsequent history. The anthropological literature barely addresses relations between political captives



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and 'criminal' prisoners, and the processes of criminalizing the former and politicizing the latter. In a review of the anthropology of prisons, Rhodes (2001) does not mention any distinction, descriptive or analytical, between the two types of social experience. It seems that the academic literature is more than 'satisfied' with the politicizing of criminality, after Foucault. While this may be a positive analytical move in modern Western societies, it scarcely addresses the complex relational features of criminality and captivity across different societies. The practices of the Israeli authorities may cast some light on this issue. Each time there was an agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis to release captives, for example after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the Israelis released a large number of Palestinian criminal prisoners and counted them as part of the agreement. In most cases the Palestinians refused to count the criminals as part of the deal and described the Israeli practice as a deceitful trick. While the relationship between criminality and captivity is not the focus of this dissertation, these questions should be addressed and raised in future research on this topic.

From these beginnings, the community of captives grew into a viable socio-political system, organized according to the different political factions, and beyond them as a whole. The community's clandestine, alternative, and in many respects revolutionary communication systems developed in and through the processes of structuration of the community. The circulation and consumption of knowledge/power are crucial and indispensable for a community, any



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community, to sustain its communal identities and perceptions of continuity through time and space. The political captives' community, in the context of the harsh material conditions described above, developed many channels of communication, which subverted the forms of colonial domination. Some of these channels were verbal, and hence limited to the joint presence of the sender and receiver. Other channels were written materials, which enabled the community to transcend its locality, both of the specific prison and of the general community of political captives across the different prisons. One of the major written communication channels was the *cabsulih*. The word itself is the English "capsule" arabized into colloquial Palestinian Arabic. It became a sign of the entire captives' community as it redefined the borders of the colonizer's annexed space and the limits of the colonized contested body.

### 3.3 The cabsulih: Contested spaces/bodies of colonial knowledge/power

In order to be understood as a channel of communication, the *cabsulih* has to be located in relation to other formal and informal channels of communication used by the political captives, such as letters written on the forms supplied by the prison authorities (formal), and verbal messages to family members who come to visit (informal). The choice of a specific method of communicating from a range of available possibilities could indicate the dynamics and the division of labor between the different means of circulating narrated information. The distinction between the formal and informal channels is misleading as far as the



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political captives' community is concerned, but for the colonial prison authorities the formal/informal categories of communication are relevant and constitutive to their perception of the captives' activities. Moreover, the community of captives has its own institutional bureaucracies that communicate formal and informal messages, all of which are regarded by the prison authorities as informal and subversive. The conflictive and convergent dynamics between the observation, monitoring and surveillance structures of domination and the counter-structures of the dominated in the spatial grids of the prison led to the collapse of the distinction along the continuum of formality. This necessitated a redefinition of the channels of communication as contested spaces between the colonizer/colonized, between the individual captive and the community of captives, and between the community and the larger Palestinian society/spaces. In this respect, the 'comms,' which is the Irish equivalent of the Palestinian *cabsulih*, can cast light on the multiple aspects of this type of communication. Beresford (1987), in his book "Ten Men Dead," investigates the story of the 1981 Irish hunger strike. Most of the investigation is an attempt to reconstruct the flow of events by rereading and analyzing the written messages between the political leaderships outside the prison and the leading figures of the hunger strike inside. These messages were written as comms. In most of the cited comms the informal and formal aspects interwove to create the narrative of the hunger strike in the Irish context. On the day that the first hunger striker, Bobby Sands, died, many comms were exchanged. One of them reads as follows:



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Liam Og Tue 5.5.81 8.00 A.M.
Comrade, this grief is unbelievable. I know you all must be wrecked out there. Words fail me to tell you the truth. I always was prepared for this and thought it would come but I was always praying and hoping that we could avoid it … I've enclosed a short note to the Sands family and Ricky has done one from the blanket men OK? Lets stay together comrade and hammer the bastards into the ground. I'll be in touch again soon. Could you get the signer [lawyer] up on Thursday just to get me out of this concrete box. God bless. Bik. (Beresford, 1987, p. 100).

In this narrative the comrade, the individual feelings, the family, the lawyer, and the oppressor interact directly and simultaneously to form the texture of the experience as it is expressed in this specific form. The similarities between the comms and the *cabsulihs* seem to suggest a type of written narrative peculiar to the late colonial political captivity. In the following pages I will attempt to demarcate the characteristics of this narrative by looking into its materiality and its expressive forms in the Palestinian context.

The colonial authorities do not allow anyone from the outside world to be present during an interrogation. In some cases, after several days the Red Cross is the first to meet the interrogatee (Qasim, 1986; Abdallah, 1994). As far as the authorities are concerned, the captive, after being sentenced and moved to prison, can communicate in three ways:

1. Meeting with her/his lawyer.
2. Meeting with her/his family.
3. Writing a letter on a form supplied by the prison authorities or the Red Cross, which includes the name of the sender, the name and address of the



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addressee, and ten lines to be filled in by the sender as the letter (See Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3).

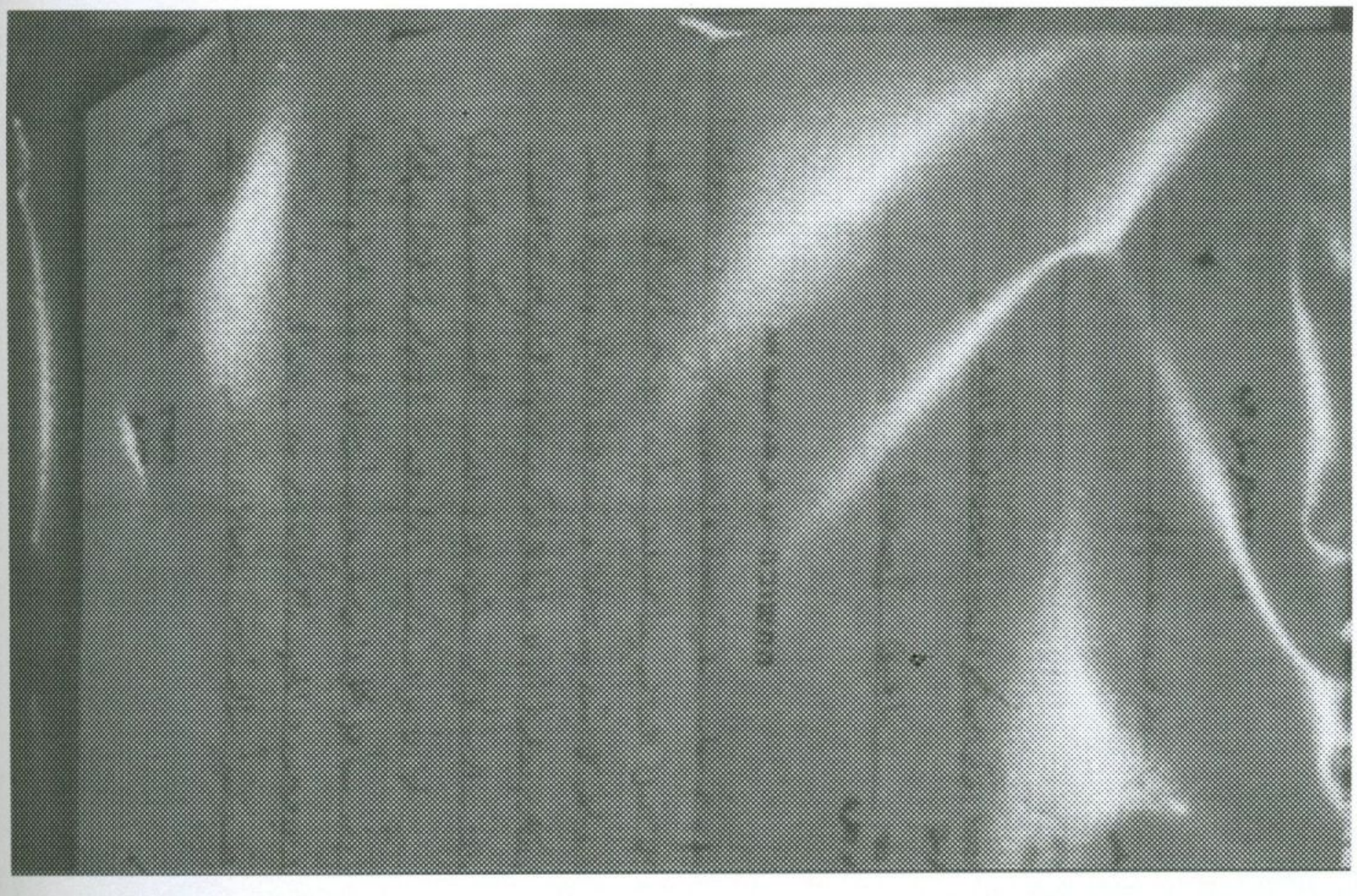

Figure 3.1: A letter on a form supplied by the prison authorities dated December 3, 1971.

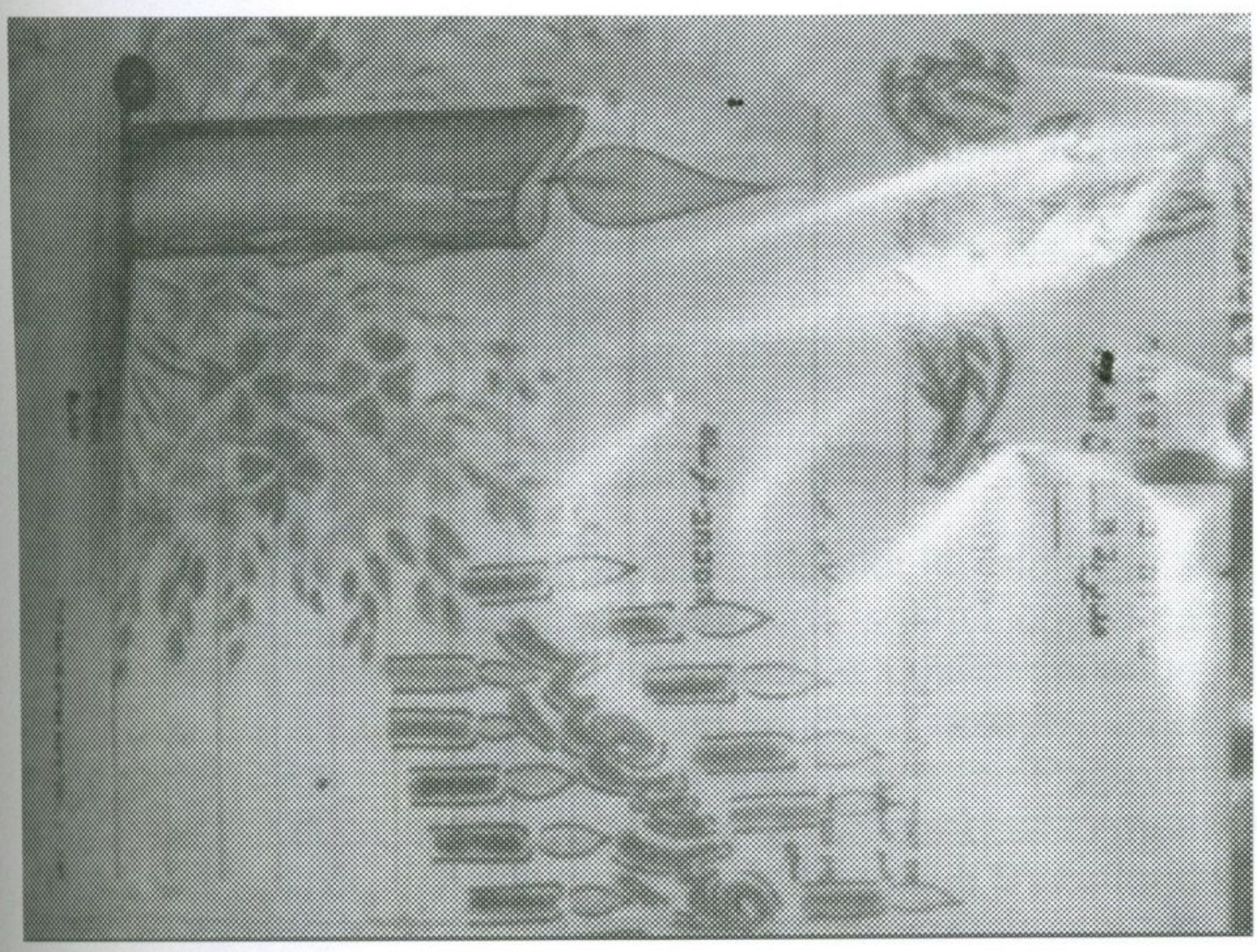



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Figure 3.2: A letterform supplied by the prison authorities, and used by the captive to draw a holiday card for his family.



Figure 3.3: The front page of the letterform supplied by the Red Cross.

The first two ways of communicating are strictly supervised by the prison guards, while the third is examined and read by the prison authority before being sent to its destination. Qasim (1986) describes the difficulties in meeting the families of the captives:

> It is not easy for the political prisoner to stand in front of his parents or brothers or wives or kids without any handshaking or bodily expression of happiness. The political prisoner wants to hug his father or mother. And he likes, like any other father, to play for long periods with his kids … But the Palestinian political prisoner does not get more than a few minutes to meet his family from behind the netting, which allows only a finger touch. The visit



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is short and it happens only after the oppressive measures of the prison authorities (p. 364).

As with the comm cited above, in this Palestinian narrative about the hardships of the political captive and his family, the personal is never brought up as an individual issue to be dealt with. Feelings, relationships, and perceptions are molded into the collective pot. From the viewpoint of the collective, the individual should seek to transcend the imposed confinement, and communication is the means par excellence for such an attempt.

The political captives' community also uses channels of its own, in addition to the communication channels of the prison authority. These channels can be classified into:

1. Written materials.
2. Verbal communication.
3. Signs other than the written and the verbal, such as knocks, hand gestures, facial expressions, and so forth. For example, in one of the central prisons the captives used the water and sewage pipe systems to deliver messages through knocking.

Verbal and sign communication depend on different kinds of co-presence that basically use the five human senses. Hence, the use of these channels is mostly confined to the spaces of the same prison. The prison is divided into sections, and each section is divided into several cells. Each prison also contains a yard for the captives' daily break. Movement between the different



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sections and rooms was prohibited in the first stages, but by dint of many protests it became permitted by the prison authorities (Qasim, 1986; Khalil, 1989; al Hindi, 2000). Most of the verbal communication between the cells and sections takes place between captives who work in the various prison facilities, such as the kitchen, the corridors, and the library. At first these captives were appointed by the prison authorities, and later by the community itself. Each faction allocates captives to work in these facilities proportionally to the number of its members in the specific prison. Hence, the workers in fact constitute the postal system of each faction.

> ***So each faction would fight to allocate more workers to the corridor and the kitchen … These workers are like the veins in the body, they come and go freely, they aren't much interested in cleaning and cooking … the organization needs them for its daily issues … You have a system to run … so it is crucial that these workers be reliable and clean… They would die before a paper is taken from them, in fact many fought the guards until they fell dead*** (Abdallah, Ramallah, 2001).

It is important to note that Hasan Abdallah, a writer and journalist who has been arrested several times since the early 1980s, is here describing the captives' community when its institutions were fully developed and viable in the early and mid-1980s. By that time, the dynamic of redefining the existing social and material networks shaped by the prison authorities to serve the needs and purposes of the community of captives was highly developed. Similar dynamics could be observed in other experiences of political captivity, such as the Lebanese political captives in Southern Lebanon who were captured by Israel



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and its allies. Suha Bsharah, a Lebanese freedom fighter against the Israeli occupation of large parts of her country, was arrested and imprisoned In al Khyam prison. She spent six of her ten years of imprisonment in solitary confinement. In her memoir "Resistor" (2000), which was first published in French and then in Arabic, she repeatedly refers to the dynamic of redefinition as a means of surviving the dire conditions of imprisonment. Comparisons with such experiences (see also al Sa'dawy, 2000 and other Egyptian political prisoners' memoirs) reveal that the contestations and redefinitions cross the specific localities and experiences. In the Palestinian case the written sphere seems to epitomize such counter-activities.

The written channels of communication circulate through networks that include the specific prison, the other prisons, the Palestinian society, and the outside world. Hence, the development of written channels went hand in hand with constituting the political captives' community in general across prisons, and bringing the captives, at least partially, back into active roles in the Palestinian national movement and in society in general. These dynamics are manifested in the concerted protests taking place simultaneously in the prisons and on the streets, beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing to this day, over Palestinian issues in general, and over the issue of political captivity in particular.

The written channels can be classified according to the techniques of delivery. Basically, the captives use their bodies as carriers of the written messages. Hence, the classification is:



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1. The written message carried on the body.

2. The written message carried in the body.

All the written messages that are to be carried by the body are 'wrapped' and hidden in the folds and lines of its surface and depths.

> ***I used to hide many letters in my clothes … for example, one of the nice places I used is the upper folded side of my shirt … I used it many times, and the folded parts of the pants you know … But nothing is like the cabsulih, it is the total secrecy … I was old so I couldn't carry it, but I helped to prepare it*** (Judah, Ramallah, 2002).

Judah, a primary school principal who was in his mid-sixties when I interviewed him, worked as the administrative assistant to the leader of the captives' community in Jnyd prison during the Intifada of 1987. His work was basically to copy by hand and edit letters written by the leadership of the community to the outside world, namely to other prisons and to society at large. Judah's description and distinction between the different places in which to hide letters tells us that the *cabsulih* is carried in the ultimate hidden place, namely, one not reached by the prison authorities. But, although the distinction between on and in is significant for an understanding of the sign of the body as a carrier, it is no less important to see it as a continuum of practices and perceptions. The body is not only a surface space; it has pockets of depth. The depth of the body cannot be portioned out directly by the colonizers like the other grid spaces. A written message on a paper is placed/hidden in the clothes, in the mouth, in the rectum, or swallowed. The clothes are the intermediate surface between the flesh of the social and the flesh of the individual body. Peteet (1994) and Pitcher



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(1998), in their research on the Intifada of 1987, emphasize the complexity and centrality of the relations between the individual body and the collective social one. Both these scholars argue that the colonial relations are inscribed on/in the flesh of the body only to be narrativized into the collective one. By the processes of narration, Peteet and Pitcher claim, the objectified body becomes a symbol of subjectivity for the Palestinian collectivity. Thus, the use of the individual body to carry the political captives' communications is part of the larger patterns of resistance practiced by Palestinian society facing the realities of colonization. The *cabsulih*, like the beaten bodies (Peteet, 1994) and the sacrificed ones (Pitcher, 1998), is an act of inscribing the social into the human body, which will be narrated as an agency of the objectified, that is, the political captive.

The materiality and physicality of the message, or one may say the body of the message, are conditional on the on/in distinction in the depths of the human body. The moment of insertion into the body is the conjuncture of the *cabsulih*. Different origins are narrated by the captives as the sources of the *cabsulih*.

> ***I think it came from the criminals who deliver hashish and stuff like that … What is sure is that with time we developed it and used it for our struggle against the colonials*** (al Khayri, al Byrih, 2002).

> ***You know when you really want to do something in the prison, you start to invent; the need for communication was a serious issue for us … In the beginning we threw papers, then we put them in plastic so they wouldn't get wet … And so on for messages to the outside world… And it got sophisticated with the gradual accumulation of experiences … Accumulation is the law in prison*** (al Qaymari, Jerusalem, 2002).



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Regardless of the different stories of its origin, the *cabsulih* gradually came to be the most important vehicle for the transfer of knowledge in and out of the prisons. It carries letters, books, articles, poems, and military orders, among other kinds of information. The processes of its preparation, circulation, and consumption necessitate well-organized and coordinated groups of senders and receivers.

The *cabsulih* is made in two stages. First, the message is written, preferably on greasy paper, like that used in wrapping food, as this causes less damage to the ink and the paper itself in its trip in and around the bodily fluids. The paper is prepared as follows: it should not be more than half A4 in size, with lines perpendicular to the direction of folding. Then comes the work of writing the message. The professional *cabsulih* writers use the msamsam[5] handwriting style (See Figures 3.4 & 3.5).

[5] *Msamsam* is the Arabic adjective for sesame.



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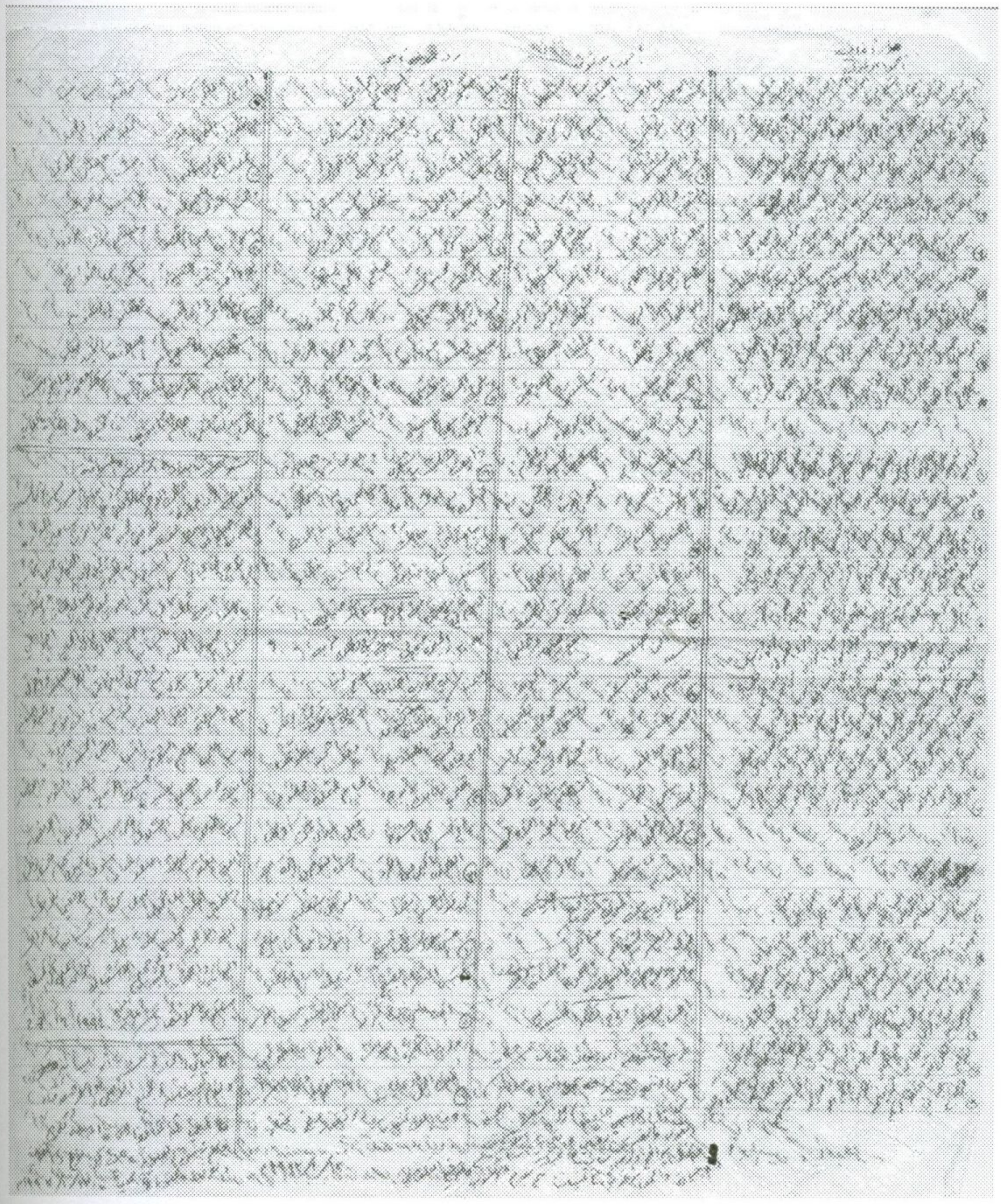

Figure 3.4: An example of Msamsam handwriting.



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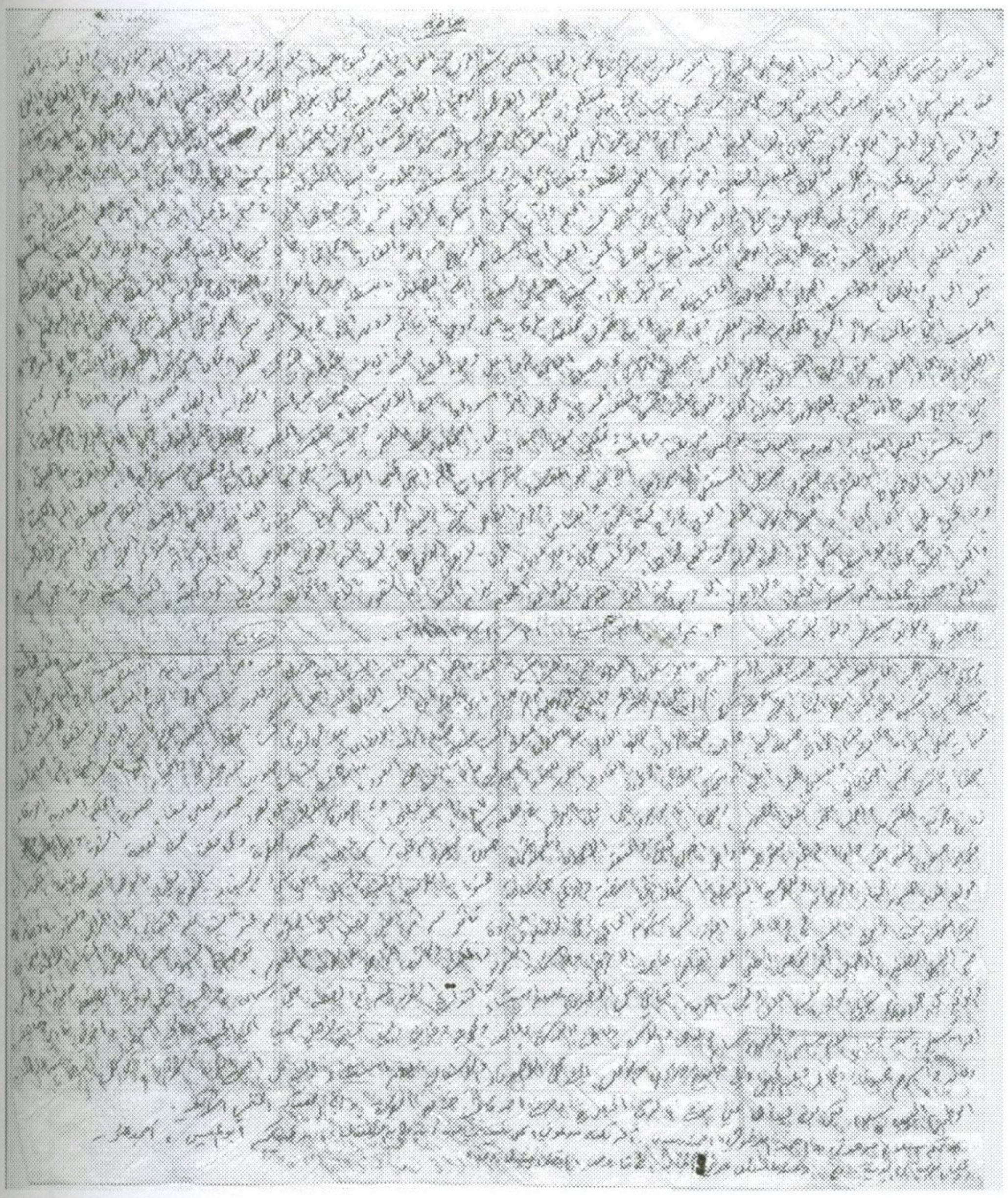

Figure 3.5: An example of Msamsam handwriting.

This is very small handwriting that can barely be read by the naked eye; it proceeds in an almost vertical direction instead of the regular horizontal one; the shape of the words tends to be elliptical, as it were engulfed inside itself, in contrast to the flat open shape of regular handwriting (see figure 3.6).



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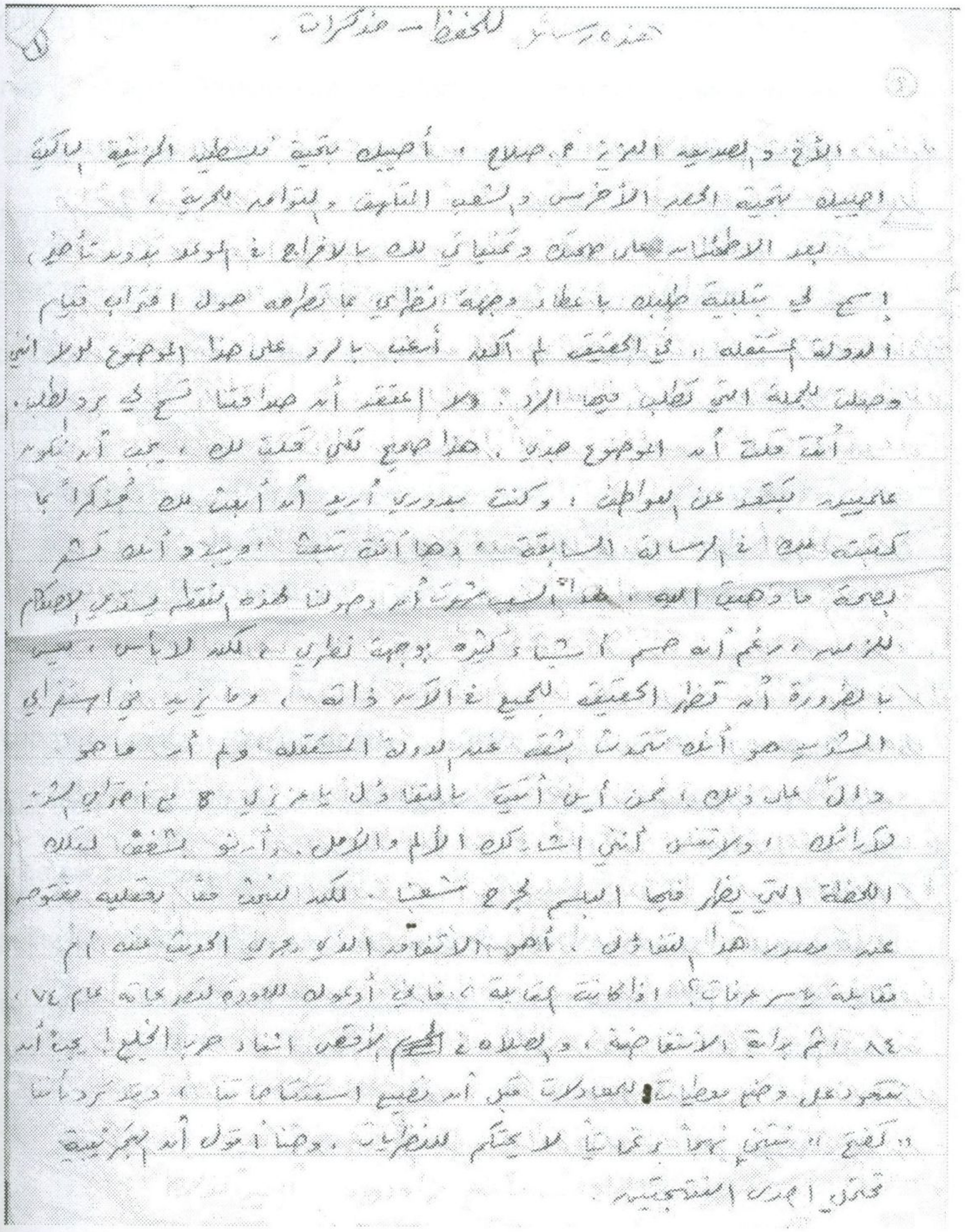

Figure 3.6: A message sent in a cabsulih with regular handwriting.

These features are continuous and range between the two poles. In fact one finds many *cabsulihs* written in regular handwriting. It may be, although it is



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difficult to generalize in this context, that the theme of the written message defines its shape. Organization and formal community messages tend to take the tiny vertical elliptical shape, while the more personal written messages tend to the regular horizontal flat shape. It could be argued that the designated receiver of the message largely determines its written shape. Murad used to read *cabsulihs* and rewrite them in regular handwriting as part of his organizational duties.

> ***I spent night after night reading cabsulihs … you know it is so tiny and difficult to see … So I used a ruler and a lens … the one with the hand… Some would arrive half damaged… but I know others who read them with their eyes only*** (Murad, Ramallah, 2001).

Each organization had specific cadres who were responsible for decoding the *cabsulihs* received from the prisons. The techniques of decoding, as Murad tells us, were known and institutionalized on the organizational level.

The second stage in preparing the *cabsulih* is the folding of the paper and wrapping it in plastic materials. The *cabsulih* has a cylindrical shape about half a centimeter in radius and three to four centimeters long (see Figures 3.7& 3.8).



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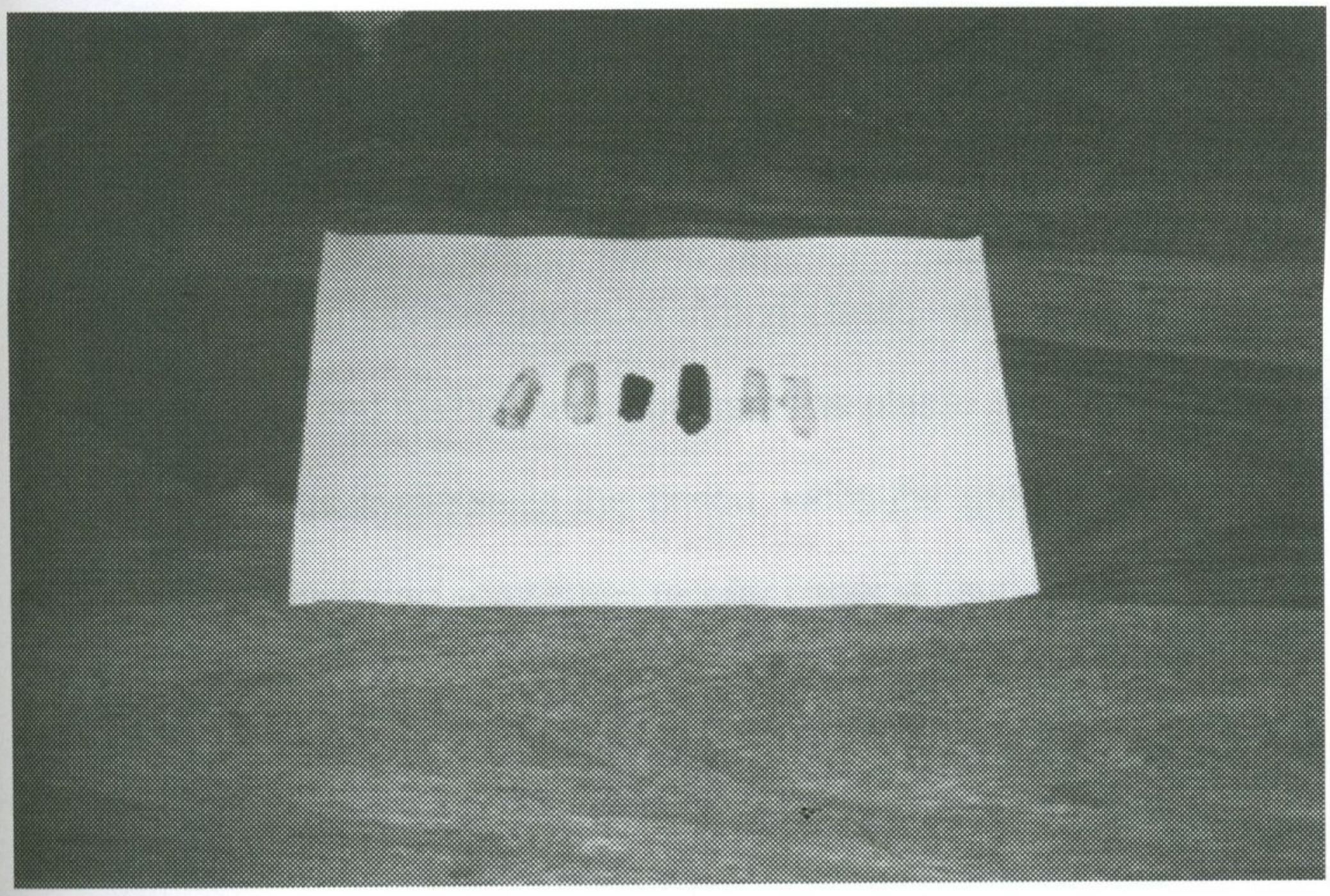

Figure 3.7: *Cabsulihs* seen from above.

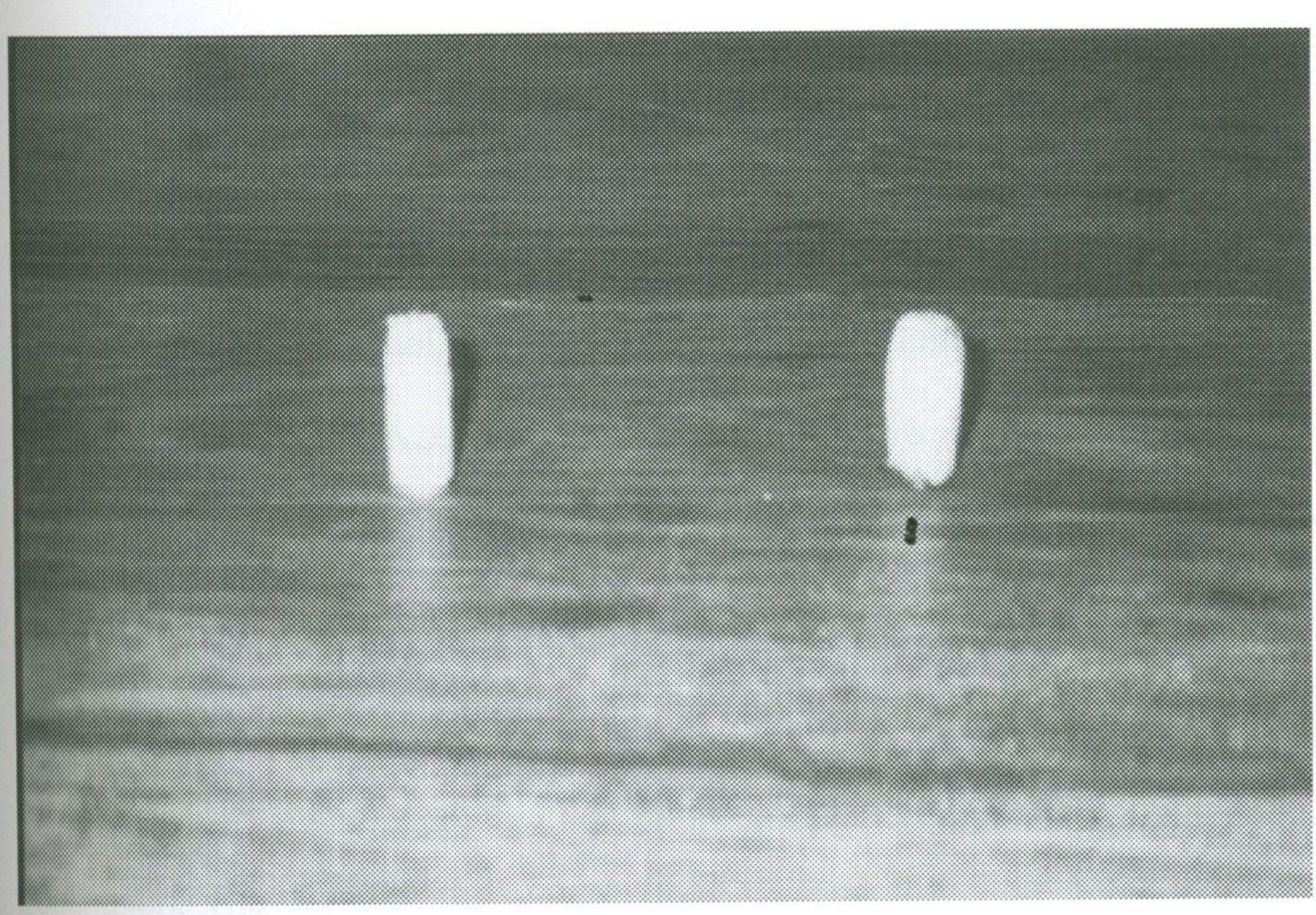

Figure 3.8: *Cabsulihs* from a horizontal perspective.



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Therefore, the paper must be folded very tightly in order for the *cabsulih* to contain ten to fifteen such papers, and sometimes even more. Usually, the paper is wrapped in several layers of strong plastic, which are concealed by burning the edges and fusing them together. The plastic is usually cut from the regular plastic bags available in the prison, while the greasy paper is not as available as the plastic, so sometimes regular paper is used.

The routes that a *cabsulih* could pass through are more than telling about the communication networks of the community. The *cabsulih* might be put in the mouth under the tongue, in the rectum, or swallowed. While the latter two are more frequent, the mouth is mainly used in family visits. Under the watchful eyes of the prison guards, the *cabsulih* is delivered from mouth to mouth while kissing across the netting that divides families from inmates. At times, regular unwrapped written materials are passed to the visitors and vice versa.

As a bodily channel of communication, the *cabsulih* depends on the movements of the captives' bodies. A political captive might leave the prison if transferred to another one, or if he is severely ill and taken to the central prison hospital in *Ramllih* central prison, or if he finishes serving his sentence and is released (Qaraqi', 2001). However, in the first two cases the prison authorities, as a matter of policy, hardly ever transfer a political captive directly to his destination. The *Bustah*, the vehicle that shuffles the captives around, tours round many prisons before it comes to a specific destination for a specific



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captive. The captives' postal network wove itself round the net. *Bustah*: the central hospital in *Ramllih* and its *Ma'bar* section, and the p themselves, with the *cabsulih* as its main carrier of written information. Upo. arriving at his destination, the political captive extracts the *cabsulihs* from his defecated materials and delivers it to its addressee. Sometimes a *cabsulih* might occupy several bodies before it reaches its destination.

The released political captive carries the *cabsulih* to the networks of the larger Palestinian society.

> ***My wife received around sixty cabsulihs from me … it was the whole book that I wrote in the prison … When I was released I unwrapped it and started to copy the book … After two months Fursan al 'intifadah*** [The Knights of the Intifada] ***was published and it reached most of Palestine*** (Abu al Haj, Ramallah, 2001).

Fahid Abu al Haj was imprisoned several times from 1978 on. He held different positions in the hierarchy of the political captives' community until he was elected as the leader of the captives' community in the Central Prison of Nablus in the late 1980s. Sary al Nusaybah, Palestinian intellectual and political activist, wrote the introduction to "The Knights of the Intifada." In it, he relates the cycle of the *cabsulih*.

> And Abu Basil [Fahid], while imprisoned, chose this time to tell one side of the story of struggle, he used his time in the prison **to produce**. So he filled so many pieces of paper, **which took their known way to the light behind the bars, and were piled by um Basil**. Until the day came, and Fahid was again breathing relative freedom (p. 14, emphases mine).



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captive. The captives' postal network wove itself round the networks of the *Bustah*: the central hospital in *Ramllih* and its *Ma'bar* section, and the prisons themselves, with the *cabsulih* as its main carrier of written information. Upon arriving at his destination, the political captive extracts the *cabsulihs* from his defecated materials and delivers it to its addressee. Sometimes a *cabsulih* might occupy several bodies before it reaches its destination.

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The postal networks of the community cross and trespass the colonial prison system by building parallel, contesting, and sometimes mocking channels of communication on the same colonial grid of spaces which are designed to imprison them. The colonizer sets the networks of movement for the body of the captive, while the latter uses the reshuffled body's deep spaces to externalize the collectivity by circulating the knowledge/power of the captives' community. The mouth, the rectum, and the inner digestive organs carry/hide the encapsulated body of the written message in the body of the encapsulated Palestinian in the colonial prison. Understanding the centrality of the body at the different levels of its practices may help us to understand in greater depth the processes of building the community.

### 3.4 The body of the community

The *cabsulih* and the hunger strike are the two extremes in relation to other bodily techniques, two forms of counter-domination that relocate the body of the captive into its 'liberated zones.' In the case of the *cabsulih*, although it is practiced clandestinely, both the colonized and the colonizer are aware of its existence as relational to other channels of communication. The colonizer is the lord of the surface; the colonized is the lord of the depth. By mobilizing the depth into the exterior face of captivity, through the communication and circulation of knowledge, the political captives' community attempts to redefine the surface. The hunger strike is a total halt of the body and its routine activities. In a sense,



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the captive tells the jailer "I will turn your game upside down." And in that way the captured body is restored to its owner. Moreover, in a hunger strike, the captive eliminates the same body that the colonizer thought he would seize by capturing and jailing it – both the colonial land and its people.

The intensity of the colonial prison creates a major break for the body from its previous structures, social systems and actions (Pitcher, 1998). The captivity aims at annulling the domain of the body as an agent, a subject. Feldman (1991), who studied the formations of violence in Northern Ireland, argues that in the context of military occupation the body is constantly displaced. These practices of annulment and displacement paradoxically create a dynamic, which results in the primacy of both the human body and the collective one. In the academic literature on the subject, the discussions and debates concern the degree of systematization of annulment and displacement (See Masalha, 1997 & Morris, 1987 for different views on the subject of Israel's use of deportation as a systematic technique for 'cleaning the land'). Pitcher (1998) claims that the acute crisis brought about in Palestinian society by the occupation created patterns of return to the Lacanian 'real' in relation to bodily practices. In her discussion of the martyr as a situated praxis of contemplation and commitment to action, she argues:

> In the contemplative encounter with death the martyr is able to see himself more clearly. The meditation offers a place to consider the meaning of what is "real" for the subject. Lacan identifies this process as that of the tuche, an encounter with the "real" behind a network of signifiers … that delimit "reality" … (p. 21).



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While political captivity is not the death of the body, it is perceived as draining it to death. Hence, one could argue that the *cabsulih* and the hunger strike are attempts by the captives to contemplate and act in order to encounter the 'real' through bridging by using the body. The question that arises from this perception is whether the body and the 'real' can be assigned such objective existences.

Contrary to Pitcher's view, Judith Butler (1990) attempts to deconstruct some of the a priori epistemic thought that constitutes the production of knowledge/power on gender relations. As part of this attempt, she explores the notions of the 'body.'

> The sex/gender distinction and the category of sex itself appear to presuppose a generalization of "the body" that preexists the acquisition of its sexed significance. This "body" often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as "external" to that body (p. 164, emphasis in original).

Butler argues that the notion of the preexisting raw body is misleading and is part of the ideological process of naturalizing the body as 'sex.' Referring to the ambivalence of Foucault, who considers the body as culturally inscribed through corporeal destruction under the drama of history, Butler asks and maintains that:

> If the presumption of some kind of precategorical source of disruption is refused, is it still possible to give a genealogical account of the demarcation of the body as such as a signifying practice? This demarcation is not initiated by a reified history or by a subject. This marking is the result of a diffuse and active structuring of the social field.



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> This signifying practice effects a social space for and of the body within certain regulatory grids of intelligibility (p. 166).

As there is no raw flesh of the body upon which history performs its inscriptive activities, any inscription is dialogical and contingent in the sense of Jones's (1997) statement that "material culture is polysemous." The body is as material in its culturality as it is cultural in its materiality. Although the "real" in Pitcher's argument is socially distinct, it is nonetheless historically contingent. The Palestinian captive's body is restructured through diffuse and active structurings of the social field. The colonial prison as a social field is, in my opinion, continuously challenged, and hence it is involved in multiple processes of structuring. The regulatory grids of intelligibility of the colonial are destabilized and displaced. The displacement is marked by the counter-signifying practices of the *cabsulih* and the hunger strike, which demarcate the contours, the volumes and the depths of the captive's body in its moving spatiality. This displacement, though, is invariably greeted by the colonizer with constant violent attempts to restore the colonial regulatory grids of intelligibility. 'Arrar describes the dynamic vividly.

> ***I entered 'Asqalan in late 1985 … the atmosphere was so bad and heavy … all the political prisoners' achievements were taken and canceled by the prison authorities … It was to start all over from the beginning … I felt that the 1967 conditions were back … so we organized a hunger strike … In 'Asqalan I participated in three hunger strikes in several months*** (Ramallah, 2001).



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Amjad 'Arrar is a journalist and editor of the PA newspaper al Hyat al Jadydah. His description of the relations between the captives' community and the prison authorities indicates the cyclical pattern between the displacement initiated by the captives and the regulatory grids of intelligibility imposed by the colonizer.

The *cabsulih* and the hunger strike are bodily techniques of resistance through displacement. There are two connected and hierarchically constitutive levels of the body as a sign. The body of the individual captive, although analytically distinct, can be understood only if positioned in the social space of the body of the community of captives in its multifaceted relations with the 'bodies' of the colonizers. R. Williams (1977), in his analytical attempt to understand the dual social/individual aspects of the sign, claims that:

> The usable sign -- the fusion of formal element and meaning -- is a product of this continuing speech activity between real individuals who are in some continuing social relationship. The 'sign' is in this sense their product, but not simply their past product, as in the reified accounts of an 'always-given' language system. The real communicative 'products' which are usable signs are, on the contrary, living evidence of a continuing social process, into which individuals are born and within which they are shaped, but to which they then actively contribute, in a continuing process. This is at once their socialization and their individuation (p. 37).

The captured 'body' as a multi-leveled sign, since its enforced break from the mundane social domains, has been contested in and through the practices of the political captives and the colonial authorities. These practices were situated in the formative stages of the Palestinian political captives' community



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as transitory ones. The past products, as Williams calls them, are the bodily sign system of the Palestinian society. The present of the colonial prison is a break, a rupture, and a displacement of the past products. The argument is that this same rupture initiated processes of structuration in the sense that Williams describes the past/present and individuation/socialization. But while Williams' intervention indicates the processes of the social at the level of the sign, it does not enable us to enter into the larger processes of the constitution of the community as a whole.

It seems that in order to build a collectivity, communal relations are part of the blueprint for being a social individual. It is the acquired ability to structure structures without being totally aware of it, or at least without conscious premeditation. The question then becomes one of contingency and power struggles over the shape, manner, and form of these relations. Bourdieu's theoretical concept of habitus (1977) clarifies this acquired ability rather succinctly:

> The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (p. 72).



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The socio-historical realities of the Palestinian captives constitute a particular type of environment. The two techniques of individualization, namely isolation and solitude, according to Foucault's argument, set the processes of communization in the gathering of tens of thousands of Palestinian captives. The conductor, in Bourdieu's argument, seems like an orchestrated, or in Williams' terms, a past, product. Understanding the social individual as a cognitively fixed machine, or one may say a rationally fixed machine, tells a many-sided story as a linear one. The problem can best be approached if the habitus itself, as the social living real individual of Williams, is reconceptualized as a social real living dynamic of structuration, which by definition changes through the practices of the conductor. The individual political captive's habitus of community is part of his being a contingent Palestinian. But he or she is far from being the Automaton of the era of late colonialism.

Anthony Giddens (1984) discusses the issue in an insightful reframing. Analyzing the relations between structure, social system, and practice, Giddens argues that:

> Structure, as a recursively organized sets of rules and resources, is out of time and space, save in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces, and is marked by an 'absence of the subject'. The social systems in which structure is recursively implicated, on the contrary, comprise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space. Analyzing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction (p. 25).



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The habitus exists in a social system. Hence, it is practiced by human agents and not as energetic inertia or a self-generating social force. The argument is that the structure, any structure, a habitus or the structure structuring it, acquires its relevance only as a practiced set of processes by social real individuals. As such, it not only produces and reproduces; the real social is one of conflict, of subordination and unevenness, which also brings transformations.

The Palestinian political captives in the moment of rupture in the colonial prison carried the communal rules and resources from their Arab Palestinian near past. But they needed social systems; they needed to reestablish their annexed social space as a system in order for these communal rules and resources to be practiced. However, temporalizing the relation between the structure and its social system is misleading. The duality of structure indicates the simultaneous presence of both.

> Crucial to the idea of structuration is the theorem of the duality of structure.... The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize (ibid).

For the Palestinian captive, the moment of capture is both a continuity and a rupture. The continuity is that of instantiations and coordinated traces of memory, and the rupture is in the social systems. This constellation is a tense



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one which, by definition, has the potential to regenerate the social systems. The question, then, becomes: is this regeneration a transformative one? Is the colonial prison rupture also a rupture of the dominant socio-historical structures of Palestinian society?

The next chapters will try to explore the different social systems that were regenerated by the political captives, mainly by examining them through what Giddens (1984) calls the structures of signification, which he distinguishes from those of domination and legitimation.

## 3.5 Conclusion

The Israeli colonial administration in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between 1967 and 1993 used many institutions, technologies of power, and practices of control to eliminate any sort of political will of the Palestinians (Hage, 2003). One of the main modern institutions of domination, legitimation, and signification, which was used intensively by the Israelis, was the prison. However, contrary to the aims and purposes of the Israelis, the captured Palestinians gradually managed to institute their own communal relations inside these colonial prisons. This chapter attempted to deal with the question of how the Palestinian captives managed to initiate processes of community building in the harsh conditions of scarcity and deprivation. Three levels of relations were chosen to explicate the processes of community building: the material conditions, the channels of communication, and the body.



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The analysis of these three levels indicates that a major recurring dynamic largely determines the processes of constituting communal relations among the political captives. The domination structures, and the processes of their structuring by the prison authorities, led to counter-domination structuration processes. These relations of domination and counter-domination in the colonial prison have two basic characteristics: the illegitimacy of the colonizers' domination, and the severely regimented material conditions imposed by them. Hence, the counter-domination practices of the political captives were basically on the level of structures of signification and their related practices.

The protests, such as the hunger strikes, and the communication channels, such as the *cabsulih*, are practices of signification that use the conditions of existence that are imposed by the prison authorities, only to challenge them by redefinition. The grids of materiality and the rigid spatio-temporal rules of conduct and movement are read, contrary to the colonizers' readings, in order to be liberated. This is a process of (re)inscription. If the conflictive and mutually constituting colonial relations are displaced in the colonial prison into the arena of inscription, no wonder then that the community of political captives over-invested in building and institutionalizing its educational system in general, and reading/writing in particular. The educational system and the practices of reading/writing are the formalized signification structures par excellence. The next chapter presents a detailed description and analysis of the processes of



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institutionalization of these signification practices and structures among the Palestinian political captives.



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# Chapter 4: *Structures of a Revolutionary Pedagogy*

## 4.1 Introduction

One of the major sites of the Palestinian national movement is the Israeli prison. In this site of intense and tense colonial relations the prison, the pedagogy and the revolution are interwoven to create a revolutionary Palestinian pedagogical system. The far-reaching effects of this pedagogical system, as the prominent signification structure of the political captives' community, on the lives of the captives, the Palestinians, and by extension of the Israelis, are the main focus of this chapter.

Hasan Abdallah, a former political captive, who will be the main interviewee in this chapter, describes his first meeting with this pedagogical system as a shocking but a constitutive one:

> ***When I entered the prison for the first time I was so surprised. I had come from the university. And you know when somebody comes from the university he thinks he knows something, he feels that he knows more than the others. This is because he can read any book and so on … I was surprised that after a month I had to change and deal with critical cultural issues, in order to benefit from them*** *[the political captives]* ***… so I joined in their discussions, which I felt were far more sophisticated than the university's …*** *(Ramallah, September 6, 2001).*

The rebuilding of the Palestinian communities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, from shattered populations living under occupation into the "revolutionary society of the Intifada," in the words of al Dyk (1993), depended on the creation and transformation of institutions that could sustain this



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resistance. Palestinian intellectual Lisa Taraki, in a 1990 article, described how universities, unions, voluntary groups, and other associations were transformed by mass participation in these joint endeavors as well as by the symbolic meanings attached to them. While Taraki did not examine Israeli prisons in any detail, she ends her essay with the recognition that they too "played a significant role in the politicization of Palestinians, especially the youth."

> Israeli jails, a powerful symbol in the political folklore of the occupied territories, are often considered by their "graduates" as the ideal place for acquiring a political education. There, isolated from the routine of normal life, prisoners organize seminars and study circles, conduct Hebrew and English lessons, and teach the illiterate among them how to read and write. The impact of this collective experience is no doubt a lasting one (p. 68).[1]

In the following I want to explore the "impact of this collective experience" by examining the complexities, contradictions, and conflicts of being a Palestinian political captive studying, and producing knowledge while in the Israeli prison.

According to surveys by local and international human rights organizations, at least one-quarter of the Palestinian society has been imprisoned by Israeli authorities at some time. For example, the Amnesty International report for 1993 stated that 813,000 Palestinians out of three millions living in the occupied territories had been imprisoned since 1967 (cited in al Hindi, 2000). Since the

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[1] The Palestinian Intifada of 1987 had many determining effects on the Palestinian national movement. One of the main processes it set in motion was the shifting of the main arena of struggle for liberation to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Part of this process was the rise of Palestinian intellectuals living in Palestine to the upper ranks of the Palestinian leadership. Lisa Taraki, who works at Bir Zeit University, is one of this intellectual group. In addition, the relations between the intellectual political captives and these groups of academics and political activists expanded and deepened during the Intifada of 1987.



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late 1980s, the annual Amnesty International report on human rights conditions in Israel and the occupied territories has regularly begun with the issue of political captivity. The report of 1989 opens with the following:

> About 25000 Palestinians, including prisoners of conscience, were arrested in connection with the *intifada* (uprising) in the Occupied Territories. Over 4000 served periods in administrative detention without charge or trial. Several thousands others were tried by military courts. By the end of the year over 13,000 people were still in prisons or detention centers. (Amnesty International, 1990).

These mass arrests had major effects on the Palestinian society in the occupied territories, even on a daily basis. By regularly raising issues of political captivity since the mid-1970s, the Palestinian media brought the issue to the attention of Palestinian society as part of the national daily agenda (see figure 4.1).



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احتجوا على استمرار تضييق الخناق عليهم

# إصابة ٢٠ أسيرا في سجن عسقلان في مواجهات مع جنود الاحتلال داخل غرفهم

كتب حسام عزالدين:

تعرض ظهر امس، اسرى سجن عسقلان، الى حملة شرسة من جنود الاحتلال، استخدم خلالها جنود الاحتلال، من حراس السجن الغاز المسيل للدموع، وقاموا باجراءات تفتيش استفزازية لغرف السجن، بعد اخراج الاسرى بطريقة وحشية، مما ادى الى اصابة اكثر من عشرين معتقلا، حسب ما افاد اسرى من داخل سجون الاحتلال.

وقامت حملة جنود الاحتلال القمعية بحق اسرى عسقلان، عقب احتجاج الاسرى على اجراءات الاحتلال المهينة التي استهدفتهم داخل السجن.

ومن هذه الاجراءات، وضع حاجز رجاجي بين الاسرى وذويهم خلال الزيارة، بدلا من الاسلاك الشائكة

[التتمة ص ٢١]

أحد الأسرى المصابين يظهر في الصورة، وهو مقيد اليدين، بعد اصابته في مواجهات سجن عسقلان أمس. (أ.ب)

Figure 4.1: Headline of main page of al Ayyam newspaper reporting about clashes in 'Asqalan prison, 08/01/2003.

When hunger strikes by political captives inspired Palestinians outside the prisons to protest and demonstrate, the effect of the lessons learned by the captives spread far beyond the prison walls. Thus, while political captivity was an expected result of political activism, it then spread back to reach wider social circles. Specifically, the centrality of the captivity experience in reshaping the Palestinian identities and ideologies in the colonial system is manifested in the political, social and cultural aspects of the Palestinian national movement. This is reflected in the fact that in almost every political speech of any Palestinian leader, the act of turning the colonial prison into a 'revolutionary school' for the



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cadres of his/her political organization is celebrated as a victory. Furthermore, the values of cooperation, solidarity, and equality, which are said to reign in the political captives' community, are propagated as a social model for Palestinian society in general. On the cultural level, the powerful, almost mythical, symbol of the Palestinian captive who rises from the ashes of the colonial prison into history by educated resistance is a recurring trope in Palestinian literature, art, and daily storytelling among political activists and laymen (see figures 4.2 & 4.3).


تهنئة بالدكتوراه
للاسير ناصر عبد الله عبد الجواد عودة

Figure 4.2: An ad in Al Quds daily congratulating a political captive for receiving his Ph.D., 08/21/2003.



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السبت ٢٠٠٣/٨/٢٣

روح تفيض من وراء الجدران..

# السجن مدرسة... وتمنح الدكتوراه أيضاً

كتب محمد دراغمة:

ربما لم يخطر لإدارة مصلحة السجون الإسرائيلية أبداً وهي تلاحق الأسرى والمعتقلين بحثاً عن أجهزة الهاتف الخلوي أن لدى هؤلاء البشر القابعين وراء الجدران العالية هموماً إنسانية كبيرة غير ما تعتقده من شكوك ومخاوف أمنية، تدفعهم لمخاطرة تهريب تلك الأجهزة وإخفاءها بحرص بالغ من حملة تفتيش وتنكيل إلى أخرى.

ويوم السبت الماضي كان شاهداً كبيراً على عظمة هموم واهتمامات هؤلاء الأسرى عندما استخدم أحدهم هاتفاً خلوياً مهرباً لمناقشة رسالة دكتوراه مقدمة للجامعة الأمريكية المفتوحة ومقرها واشنطن.

وقد أوصت اللجنة التي شكلتها الجامعة المذكورة بالتعاون مع جامعة النجاح بمنح الطالب الأسير ناصر عبد الله عبد الجواد ٣٨ عاماً شهادة الدكتوراه بتفوق عن رسالته التي حملت عنوان «نظرية التسامح في التعامل مع غير المسلمين في المجتمع الإسلامي».

وكان عبد الناصر وهو حاصل على شهادتي البكالوريوس والماجستير من الجامعة الأردنية اعتقل قبل عشر سنوات أثناء عمله محاضراً في الكلية الإسلامية في مدينة أم الفحم وحكم عليه بالسجن ١٢ عاماً بتهمة الانتماء لحركة حماس.

وقالت زوجته بأن الهاجس الأكبر لزوجها في السجن ظل على الدوام استكمال دراسته العليا والحصول على شهادة الدكتوراه.

وتألفت لجنة مناقشة الرسالة من: الدكتور أمير عبد العزيز رئيساً وعضوية الدكتور حلمي عبد الهادي والدكتور ناصر الدين الشاعر وثلاثتهم أساتذة في كلية الشريعة في جامعة النجاح.

وقال الدكتور الشاعر بأن إدارة الجامعة الأمريكية المفتوحة طلبت من جامعة النجاح تشكيل لجنة علمية مختصة لمناقشة رسالة الطالب الأسير عبد الناصر لتعذر وصوله إلى الجامعة.

وقال بأن اللجنة حاولت عقد المناقشة في السجن لكن إدارة السجن رفضت بشدة رغم تدخل جهات عديدة من بينهم أعضاء كنيست وأنها حاولت بذلك حرمانه من هذه الفرصة.

وأمام رفض إدارة السجن الغير مبرر وافقت الجامعة الأمريكية على المناقشة عبر الهاتف وهو ما جرى أمس بعد أن وفرت جامعة النجاح التسهيلات الفنية اللازمة لذلك مثل قاعة مناسبة وخط هاتفي مع مضخم للصوت.

وقد جرت مناقشة علمية جدية طويلة بين اللجنة والطالب الأسير وطلبت منه اللجنة إدخال بعض التعديلات على رسالته قبل أن تقرر منحه درجة الدكتوراه.

وقد ضج سجن مجدو بهتافات الفرح بعد أن أبلغت اللجنة قرارها للأسير، ردد صداه صيحات فرح في قاعة المؤتمرات في جامعة النجاح حيث انعقدت جلسة المناقشة بحضور جمع من المهتمين بينهم زوجة وولدي الأسير.

وقالت أسرة عبد الناصر بأنه واجه مشكلات كبيرة بعضها معقد في إعداد رسالته وإخراجها من السجن.

وقال ابن عمه إسلام عبد الجواد وهو محاضر في جامع النجاح وساعده في تلقي مواد الرسالة وجمعها وطباعتها: كان عبد الناصر يرسل مواد الرسالة تباعاً مع الأسرى الخارجين من السجن، وكنت أتلقاها وأطبعها.

وواجه الأسير مشكلة أكبر في المراجع حيث تفتقد مكتبة السجن لبعض المراجع المهمة في هذا الموضوع.

وقال إسلام: كنا نرسل له الكتب والمراجع اللازمة إلى السجن، وعندما كان يتعذر علينا إيصالها للسجن كنا نرسلها له عبر الهاتف النقال، حيث نقرأ عليه المادة المطلوبة كلمة وراء كلمة ليقوم بدوره بتسجيلها واستخدامها في كتابة الرسالة.

وقالت لجنة المناقشة بأن رسالة عبد الناصر كانت محكمة ورفيعة المستوى.

وقال الدكتور ناصر الشاعر: لقد استخدم عبد الناصر ٢٦٨ مرجعاً في رسالته وهذا جيد جداً.

وخلص الأسير عبد الجواد في رسالته إلى نتائج مثيرة للجدل حيث دعا إلى إعادة النظر في بعض الآراء الفقهية بشأن التعامل مع غير المسلمين في المجتمع الإسلامي لمصالح التعددية والحرية الدينية ومنح مدى واسعة من الحرية حتى لغير أهل الكتاب.

واعتبر الباحث آراء بعض الفقهاء بشأن التشدد في التعامل مع المسيحيين في المجتمع الإسلامي آراء ظرفية جاءت نتيجة حروب وصراعات في تلك الفترة مثل آراء الفقهاء ابن تيمية وابن القيم داعياً إلى عدم الاستناد إليها اليوم وبناء علاقة مع الأقليات على قاعدة التعددية والحرية.

وأشار الدكتور ناصر الشاعر إلى أن عبد الجواد استعان بأفكار محدثة في رسالته مثل المفكرين والعلماء راشد الغنوشي ويوسف القرضاوي ومحمد الغزالي وفهمي هويدي إلى جانب فقهاء وعلماء قدماء.

وقد دأبت إدارة السجون والمعتقلات على حرمان الأسرى والمعتقلين من الكثير من وسائل الحياة ومن بينها أجهزة الاتصال والمعلومات من هاتف خلوي وحاسوب تحت ذرائع أمنية واهية.

ولطالما طالب الأسرى والمعتقلون بأجهزة هاتف رسمية من قبل السجن تخضع للرقابة وهو ما رفضته على الدوام متجاهلة الحاجات والهموم الإنسانية لهؤلاء الأسرى من تواصل مع أسرهم ومدارسهم وجامعاتهم وأعمالهم علماً أنها توفرها للسجناء الجنائيين اليهود.

وبدلاً من ذلك تشن إدارات السجون حملات تفتيش واسعة في غرف وزنازين الأسرى بحثاً عن أجهزة الهاتف الخلوي المهربة وتقوم بمعاقبة من تضبط لديهم مثل هذه الأجهزة بالتعذيب الجسدي والعزل الانفرادي لفترات طويلة.

وقال أسرى في سجن عسقلان حيث أمضى الأسير عبد الناصر معظم سنوات حكمه قبل أن ينقل مؤخراً على سجن مجدو بأن السجانين يسحبون أسرى من بينهم من حين لآخر وينكلون بهم في زنازين عزل انفرادي بذريعة حيازتهم أجهزة اتصال هاتف خلوي.

وكانت إدارة السجن عزلت مؤخراً الأسير مروان البرغوثي مدعية عثورها على هاتف خلوي مهرب في زنزانته علماً أن البرغوثي نجح عبر اتصالاته مع قادة القوى المختلفة في إقناعهم بإعلان الهدنة.

وغالباً ما يظهر الأسرى حساسية بالغة تجاه مظاهر وشؤون الحياة المحرومون منها في أسرهم دون أن يلقى هذا الاهتمام تفهماً من قبل إدارات السجون.

وأظهرت دراسة ميدانية أجراها الباحث المعروف عماد عمر المقيم في عمان على أسرى سجن الخيام «أنصار» في لبنان الكثير من تلك الصور بينها قيام الأسرى بزراعة الورود في قطعة أرض متاحة لهم في وقت كانوا يعانون فيه من شح الطعام.

وقال عمر في دراسته بأن الورود التي نبتت في قطعة الأرض المسيجة تلك عكست تأثيراً إيجابياً حتى على السجانين أنفسهم الذين لم يفهموا أن هؤلاء الأسرى بشر لهم همومهم واحتياجاتهم واهتماماتهم الإنسانية

Figure 4.3: An article in al Ayyam daily titled “The prison is school … it awards Ph.D. too”, 08/23/2003.



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The exploration of the complex social field of the 'prison' in general, and of Palestinian political captivity in particular, should begin by setting aside two opposing meanings, though one structure of 'othering': criminality and romance. The Israeli metadiscourse, in the academic arena as well as in other spheres, sees the political captives as terrorists, thus criminalizing their practices before, during, and after imprisonment. The Palestinian mainstream discourse transforms them into mythical heroes. Both these attributions -- of criminality and of heroism -- conceal, distort, and deny the experience of captivity. Imprisonment is interrogation, solitary confinement, torture, life sentences, and death. At all times, being a captive means dealing with oppression and engaging in resistance, which transforms prisons into structures where revolutionary practices have to be learned. By uncovering these naked power relations between the colonizer and the colonized, in this chapter I will focus on the (re)production of a new field of meaning through pedagogical practices. In this context, pedagogy is seen as a prerequisite for a true revolution.

Many former Palestinian political captives have written about their experience of political captivity, and others have described the collective experience in interviews conducted after their release in the early 1990s.[2] 'Abid al Satar Qasim and his students (1986) at Al Najah University in Nablus, most of them former political captives, wrote one of the first historical studies on political

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[2] For the history of political captivity see al Qaymari (1984), Qasim (1986), and Abu all Haj (1992); for literary criticism see Abdallah (1994), and al Jwhar (1997), among others; for political essays see Qaraqi (2001). In the Palestinian press the issues related to political imprisonment are discussed almost daily.



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captivity for the Palestinian public. Hasan Abdallah (1994, 1996), who has been arrested several times since the early 1980s, explores the literary history of political captivity. Since his release from his second term of political captivity, Fahid Abu al Haj (1992) has been collecting and publishing the life stories of political captives. Together with other former political captives and political activists, Abu al Haj established The Abu Jihad Center for the Political Captives Movement. The center, which is located in Ramallah, engages in documenting and collecting the texts, artistic creations, and narratives produced by the political captives. These are some of the examples of the enormous corpus of written materials about the Palestinian political captivity in the Israeli colonial prison. Many of these texts were written while the authors were political captives serving their term. In the interviews and in the histories that they wrote, former political captives identified the practice of reading/writing and the prominent place of textual interpretations and (re)productions in the fabric of the political captives' community as the main achievement of the political captives' movement. In the context of the national conflict, the assumption that this community could not sustain itself without its own pedagogy leads to an imperative need to explore its social and historical premises. Seen from this perspective, pedagogy is defined as the intentionally formalized practices of a community to sustain and reproduce itself in the images created by its own hegemony.



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The harsh conditions of their captivity, which were intended by the Israeli authorities to resocialize Palestinians into docile and submissive bodies/souls, left the political captives with meanings that were as ruptured as the colonial prison space/time. The discourse of *thaqafah* (culture) became the site for captives to resist the effect of the prison by constructing, through the praxis of writing/reading, a counter-hegemonic symbolic and material field of action. The creation, dissemination, and propagation of *thaqafah* as a space between captives that transcended the space of the prisons thus became the empowered site for the Palestinians' revolutionary pedagogy.

This experience of the Palestinian political captives with *thaqafah* provides a new perspective on Michel Foucault's argument about 'the technologies of the soul' and the development of the modern prison. For Foucault (1978), the subject of study is not the prisoner or the prison, but rather the technologies of power:

> What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too punitive or too efficient, but its materiality as an instrument and vector of power; it is this whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the 'soul' - that of educationalists, psychologists, and psychiatrists - fails to conceal or to compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools (p. 30).

Analysis of the prison's "materiality as an instrument and vector of power" shifts the interpretive framework from particular conditions to the underlying power relations that the prison in totality enforces upon and through the bodies and souls of prisoners. Following Foucault, in this chapter I ask how the



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submissive and helpless position of Palestinian captives is secured and sustained through "the technology of power over the body" and "the technology of the soul" that are more openly employed in prisons than in other 'correctional' facilities such as schools, hospitals, and factories.

But I will attempt here to go beyond Foucault and examine the agency of prisoners and the possibilities of a counter-hegemonic discourse articulated by imprisoned subjects, on the assumption that in any socio-historical context of power relations, certain spaces/times of resistance coexist concurrently with the oppression and dominance. In the case of the Palestinian political captivity, reading/writing became the praxis of resistance to the Israeli colonial jailing system, not just in and by itself, but more importantly as part of the community building process.

The community of Palestinian political captives uses this meaning of culture, *thaqafah*, to define the whole ideological apparatus through which the community seeks to reinstall, reconstitute, and reaffirm 'Palestinian-ness' as a national identity. In fact, in this context *thaqafah* delimits a site liberated from prison conditions and thus liberating for the captives, with the ultimate goal of making the lessons learned in prison an instrument of liberation for all Palestinians.[3]

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[3] One of the recurring arguments in the many interviews that I conducted with former political captives from the different Palestinian organizations is that one should die rather than let any piece of paper or pen be taken from him by any of the representatives of the prison authorities. These attitudes and values should be



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This community is not a set of relationships brought from the outside, though it is linked to the outside world. It is a community that was constituted mainly by the processes of struggling with the spatio-temporal grids of the colonial jailing system, a struggle that provided the community with new options for resistance. Prominent among these options are the writing and rereading of the community's own identities and ideologies in a historical perspective. The almost formal (in the sociological sense) pedagogical institutions of the political captives' community inculcate in the individual political captive a structure of feeling that we can call 'the historical mission.' The political captive is defined as part of an irreversible historical movement, which will lead eventually to the liberation of Palestine. The complexity of the relationship between pedagogy and history in this community not only helps us to understand the larger workings of these relationships in Palestinian society, but also casts light in general on the relationship between pedagogy, as an ideological apparatus, and history, as a context partly determined by objective conditions of materiality.

Both the prison and the captives' community are materialized in the bodies of the captives, the former as a means of control and the latter as a weapon of resistance. In his study of the processes of violence formation in North Ireland, Allen Feldman (1991) explores the political agency and the body, as an agent/object of violence. He interviewed former political prisoners, Catholics and

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understood in the context of resistance and liberation. Liberating a paper in the colonial prison has a social value that echoes far beyond the paper as such.



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Protestants, Nationalists and Loyalists. His ethnographic data led him to narrate the events of violence through excavating the narratives of violence as told by the interviewees (p. 14). In his attempt to understand the body in relation to time and space in modernity, and building on Foucault's interventions, he argues that:

> The political form and the commodity form fuse because, in modernity, political power increasingly becomes a matter of regimenting the circulation of bodies in time and space in a manner analogous to the circulation of things. Power, as Foucault amply documented, becomes spatialized (p. 8).

The Israeli prison system is a modern surveillance system par excellence, especially if we notice that it was erected, literally and metaphorically, on the British jailing system in Mandatory Palestine. Locating the relations between the Palestinian political captives and their Israeli captors in modernity enables us to understand the mechanisms of circulating the Palestinian political bodies in the severely regimented squares of time and space in the occupied territories. Feldman, based on his fieldwork, argues that reducing the space allocated to the body under surveillance interacts directly with the perceived agency of the resisting subject. He claims that "… the shrinkage of the space of political enactment corresponds to the expansion of the acting subject – the increasing correlation of personhood to historical transformation" (p. 10). In the Palestinian case, this dialectic of resisting the spatially defined limits of the colonizers by expanding the agency of the colonized is realized by and through the categories of narration used by the Palestinian political captives to characterize the



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differences between diverse Israeli prisons. Those prisons that are populated by captives with long sentences are said to be the most communally organized, intellectually elaborate, culturally democratic, and politically sophisticated and mature. The history of *'Asqalan* prison is an example of these processes of spatial shrinkage and expansion of the agency of the political captive. Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, the shortest sentence was 15 years. Beating and abuse of the captives was a daily occurrence. The prison authority systematically deprived the captives of everything they managed to achieve by strikes and protests. In spite of all this, or more accurately, in direct relation to these harsh measures, the captives' community of *'Asqalan* came to take the leading role in the entire captives' community in Palestine. [4]

The community of Palestinian political captives is engaged in continuous confrontations, mediations, and negotiations between the captives and the prison authorities. These interactions gradually became regulated and institutionalized in specific communal functional structures, prominent among which are those designed to (re)produce knowledge and power inside the community and vis a vis the prison authorities. The main argument of this chapter is that the captives, their community, and *thaqafah* constitute the agents, the location, and the products, respectively, of a revolutionary

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[4] Usually the leadership of the political captives' community resides in one of these prisons, such as 'Asqalan or, later, Jnyd prison in Nablus. The Israel prison authorities have made several attempts to disperse the leadership of the community, most notoriously when the colonial administration of the prison system opened Nafhah prison in 1980 and transferred to it some 80 political captives whom they regarded as the 'ringleaders' of this community.



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pedagogy. Moreover, the unique educational system built by the political captives came to be one of the main dynamic sites for reproducing the Palestinian subject within the Palestinian community.

Louis Althusser's theoretical insights about ideological state apparatuses provide another perspective on the Palestinian political captives' community as a self-constituted educational system. Althusser distinguishes between ideological state apparatuses (ISA) and repressive state apparatuses (RSA) by arguing that the former use ideology as a representation and as a materiality, while the latter use violence:

> The (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by *repression* (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology.... In the same way, but inversely, it is essential to say that for their part the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by *ideology*, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic (Althusser, p. 145, italics in original).

Moreover, Althusser argues that the educational ISA is the most dominant type of ISA in the age of mature capitalism, which includes the unique circumstances of modernity as embodied in the colonial relations between Israelis and Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The negotiations, mediations, and confrontations between the Palestinians and the Israelis in the context of the colonial prison are constellations of dynamic relations. At least formally, the Israelis control the physical and the material, aiming to redefine the Palestinian subject. The Palestinians, on their

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side, control the meanings of being a subject in order to seize the physical and the material. At this juncture of the colonial relations, the production of meaning/knowledge becomes crucial for both sides. Hence, the educational system of the political captives' community is seen as a strategy for redefining the hybrid meanings of the colonial context as an alternative, resisting meaning in order to liberate the material, namely the land of Palestine, and to build on it a nation-state.

But the political captives' educational system cannot be understood simply as a handmade system; it has to be seen as part of the social web of relations with other educational and social systems in both the Palestinian and Israeli societies.[5]

Therefore, the social formation of the Israeli prison encompasses a complex set of interrelations between the repressive and the ideological, and between the state apparatuses and the community apparatuses. The colonizer-colonized class division is materialized both metaphorically and literally in these ideological-repressive formations. The actions, practices and rituals of the ideological formation of the colonial prison, that is to say, the revolutionary educational system of the Palestinian political captives, the colonial authorities and their interrelations, contain at the same historical moment of colonizer-

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[5] After the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the educational system continued to follow the Jordanian curriculum in the West Bank and the Egyptian one in the Gaza Strip. An educational officer in the Israeli colonial administration amended and changed the texts and the teachers according to the colonial administration practices.



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colonized, the ideological conditions for reproducing and transforming the colonial relations as the dominant mode of production. In the following I will try to show that the Palestinian political captives' community has transformed these colonial relations, at least in some important respects.

As for the concrete ways by which these ideological apparatuses work, Althusser positions the real subject in the center of the apparatus, by the actions, practices, and rituals that s/he performs. In fact, Althusser's main argument is that the apparatus exists only through the praxes of a subject.

> … when a single subject … is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject* (p. 169, italics in original).

Thus, the actions, practices, and rituals constitute the basic elements by which ideological apparatuses are built and crystallized. From this point of view, in order to understand the educational system of the captives' community, one must identify the actions and practices of the individual political captive as a subject located in these apparatuses.

To demonstrate these processes of producing and reproducing meaning through the actions, practices, and rituals of the Palestinian political captives, I will present the case of a former political captive, Hasan Abdallah. Hasan wrote extensively on the issue of political captivity while he was a captive, and he continues to write using different genres. Hasan's voice is unique in the problematic that it rises in the context of the period following the Oslo Accords,



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which were supposed to put an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and hence to the issues of political captivity. In a sense, he is the historian of the era of political captivity, which was dismissed as part of the ancient regime that had to be forgotten. Being on the borders of these different Palestinian national historical constellations, Hasan, through his actions and practices, helps us to understand the transformations in the Palestinians' colonial experience with its many complicated facets.

The Palestinian captives' community in the Israeli prison is a complex multi-layered socio-historical situation. In order to understand it in its many facets, I will use Foucault's understanding of the prison system, on the one hand, and Althusser's intervention about the dynamics of ideological apparatuses, on the other. The first section will address the question of the historical positionality of political captivity in Palestinian society through the community members' practice of reading/writing. The second section will present, through the case of Hasan Abdallah, the specific actions, practices, and rituals that constitute the ideological apparatus of this captive community as a revolutionary pedagogy. In the third part of the chapter I will try to reconnect these practices with the Arab Palestinian society through its different formations and structures. Understanding the captives' community as existing in a state of liminality (Bhabha, 1990) is one way to analyze the pedagogy of revolution that was developed by the political captives.



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Finally, the questions and issues invoked by the case of the Palestinian political captives on the practical and theoretical levels are relevant both for an understanding of the constitutive dynamics of the national conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis and for opening new horizons to explore the human conditions in which hierarchical power structures construe the deep schisms between the material and social conditions of existence. Thus, ideological misrecognitions about the separate domains of intellectual exploration could be transcended. The illuminating example of the Palestinian political captives' educational practices, seen in its historical context and socio-political processes, indicates the thin lines that blind social and historical inquiries to the Gramscian insight that each social group creates its intellectuals in order to survive.

## 4.2 Writing the History of the Prisons

The Palestinian national movement and political consciousness developed, as Taraki (1990) shows us, by capitalizing on modernity's logic of affiliation, namely, modern institutions such as political parties and professional associations. However, these relations of communitas are not fixed, but rather contingent on the specific historicity of Palestinian society. And Palestinian history has at its disposal many social formations, which manifest and materialize on the cultural level more than in any other social sphere as one of the characteristics of the Palestinian locality of colonization. The colonization processes shattered the nuclei of the competing agricultural, mercantile and



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dependent small-scale industrial modes of production (Saleh, 1990). Despite these intense processes of transforming the infrastructure of Palestinian society, the cultural systems and practices of significations that correspond to the shattered socioeconomic patterns of activity persist in different ways. For our purposes here, the Palestinian national identities and ideologies dominate, compete, and merge, largely by articulating these histories of the many social formations. In the context of the colonial prison, the Palestinian city dweller, the former landlord, the peasant, the manual worker, and the professional, among others, meet in the confined colonial space/time. This meeting created a community, a subject, but this new community has certainly not replaced the pre-existing identities, rather it interacts, competes, and merges with them (See Homi Bhabha's theoretical intervention in this regard, 1990a). How does the community of captives as a whole interact with these pasts? Do the captives rely on specific cultural patterns of behavior to cope with the new situation of captivity? And mainly for our purpose here, how did the reading/writing practices, as a revolutionary pedagogy, come to be the prominent dynamic of producing knowledge/power, and thereby producing and reproducing the community of captives?

For the Palestinian captives, writing in and out of prison about the history of the prison became an act of writing the history of the present, as Foucault sought to do in *Discipline and Punish,* (Foucault, 1978, p. 31). In an interview with Muhammad 'Iyan, a former political captive and a short-story writer, I asked:



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***What did it mean for you, literary writing in the prison? I mean in general and practically, how did you do it?***

Muhammad answered in an affirmative and authoritative voice:

> ***There is no such a thing as literary writing; in the prison everybody writes … the different genres are less important … you write yourself, you don't have many other options … so you write all the time even if you don't have the tools for writing*** (Jerusalem, December 6, 2001).

The reading/writing sign, site, and space of actions, practices and rituals are still the main activities practiced by the political captives in order to establish themselves as a social group. As Palestinian literature and interviews with former captives show us, learning through reading/writing was liberated through the struggle against the prison authorities, and it was liberating for the political captive in the regimented colonial prison. Hence the question arises: how can we deconstruct the social space of the reading/writing activities, on the level of both material and social relations? For if we understand the relational elements of the social space created by the reading/writing activities, then we can better understand the ways in which this social group (re)built itself through its revolutionary pedagogy.

The broader issues that deconstruction of the social space of reading/writing may help us to explore, relate to how the traces of other Palestinian social formations are articulated and repositioned by the different sections of the Palestinian national movement. If education was confined to certain social groups in the near past, it could not be so in the new modern



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community of the political captives or the larger Palestinian society. It goes without saying that this was not a linear modernization, on the contrary it created diverse and alternative shapes of modernity, largely due to the absence of an independent Palestinian nation-state as the main actor in a stable hegemony (Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994; Doumani, 1995; Swedenburg, 1995). Thus, by tracing back the practices of revolutionary pedagogy as equally accessible and widespread among most of the Palestinian political captives, we may locate these shapes of Palestinian modernity as a historical continuum of construction of the Palestinian community.

The next section focuses on Hasan Abdallah's historical account, as narrated in interviews held with him, and uses it to trace the history of reading/writing in the Israeli colonial prison. In addition to Abdallah's account, I will introduce other former captives' narratives in order to highlight and also to criticize some aspects of the main narrative. As mentioned above, Abdallah's account of the political captives' educational system is part of his larger written corpus documenting the literary history of the political captivity experience. As such, his narration is self-conscious and locates itself as an intervention designed to shape Palestinian society and counter the Israeli narrative about its history. Hence, beyond providing insights about the ways in which the history of the political captives' experience is told, Abdallah's account may cast light on the way in which Palestinian society at large retells its own history.



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### 4.2.1 *Hasan Abdallah*

The name of Hasan Abdallah is familiar to anyone interested in the subject of Palestinian political captives. When I began my fieldwork in the summer of 2000, I made inquiries through formal and informal channels, and especially in the literary circles in Ramallah, about former political captives who had published literary texts written while imprisoned by the Israelis. Hasan Abdallah's name was mentioned most frequently, not only as a former political captive, but also, and in ways that turned out to be even more important for my fieldwork, as the local historian/critic of the prison literary (re)production. His written corpus introduced me to the names, titles, and dynamics of political captivity.[6] Meeting Hasan was my initiation into the textual realities of Palestinian political captivity.

My first interview with Hasan took place in Ramallah on September 6, 2001. It was in his office at *Watan* TV, where he works as chief news editor. Those were the stormy days of the current Palestinian Intifada (before the September 11 attack in America), when political and military events and operations in the occupied territories were occurring on an hourly basis. The interview was interrupted many times by reporters and journalists, coming with items of

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6 Hasan's publications include collections of short stories, such as "A Bride and a Groom in the Snow" (1993), documentary works and commentaries on prison literature, including "The Literary Production of Political Imprisonment" (1994), examples of prison journalism collected in "A Journalism that Challenged the Chain" (1996), and many other articles and interviews in the local newspapers.



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information and updated events. The flow of telling and listening was extremely discontinuous.

> ***I am one of those people who were arrested while studying at the university. I was imprisoned from 1981- 83, and spent those two years in 'Asqalan. This experience was so important to me that it superseded the university experience. To speak about this experience, we must talk about the prison … 'Asqalan … 'Asqalan prison was opened after the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And its purpose was to resocialize the Palestinian fida'yyn*** [freedom fighters], ***those who came as infiltrators from abroad and the Palestinians who were sentenced for long terms. For 15 years no new prisoners with short sentences came to 'Asqalan, only those with long sentences. In 1981 I met prisoners who had not left 'Asqalan since 1967, not even for transfer*** [to another prison] ***or medical treatment. 'Asqalan prison was closed, closed … This closed experience was an exciting one. I felt that I was entering a closed city … like that … it had its norms, habits … it had conventions, the people talked about a temporal context, reminding each other of 'stations'*** [landmark events that changed the conditions of imprisonment]. ***This means that their memory had become confined in the prison to the prison's history … the workings of the prison … how it developed … the stations of struggle that the prison had gone through… the cultural, organizational, and struggle stations …. When this prison opened, it was a punitive one… in the morning the Palestinian prisoner had to eat the beating meal of the morning … and there was the evening beating meal …*** (Ramallah, September 6, 2001).[7]

Hasan lived the memory of specific landmark events that had changed the relations between the prison authority and the captives' community as 'stations' in the developing history of the political captives' community. These historical

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[7] The language of the interview was Arabic. Hasan used vernacular and standard Arabic in the interview. Moreover, he used different vernacular dialects. In translating his interviews, I have tried to convey the atmosphere and the dynamic of each variety of Arabic wherever possible.



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stations were recounted and articulated to him as a novice in *'Asqalan* by the older political captives. Each moment of confrontation with the prison authorities was transmitted to him, in the ritual of retelling histories of the prison to transform him into a member of the community. In his "The Literary Production of Political Imprisonment" (1994), he reiterates the stations textually:

> To start to study and analyze the prison literature, one must deal with the living, social, intellectual and psychological conditions that formed the first years of the lives of the first political prisoners, and continued to influence them and the thousands that followed … The beginnings especially formed the basis, which brought a more mature and organized stage of political imprisonment… (p. 13).

Hasan narrates the history of the captives as a community based on heroic beginnings. At each beginning stage there are two poles, two antitheses that are asymmetrical in their power relations. One is a human struggling to survive, and the other is a brutal colonizer, who does everything to eliminate 'the Palestinian.' The more the body, its space and time, suffer, that is, the more it is subjected to harsh measures of centralized spatio-temporal domination at the hands of the colonizer, the stronger and deeper becomes its cohesion as a community.

This dynamic of relations between the Israeli and the Palestinian in the context of political captivity illustrates some aspects of the two theoretical tracks mentioned in the introduction. First, the idea of state apparatuses in a nation-state context in Althusser's argumentation could be extended and examined in the context of a national community, such as the Palestinian community, that does not possess a modern nation-state bureaucratic system. The critical



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question seems to be: how are the dominant ideologies articulated and materialized by different mechanisms? On the other hand, these dynamics seem to follow the logic of spatializing the power relations, as described by Feldman in discussing the case of Northern Ireland; that is to say, the harsher the measures of confining and regimenting the captive's body/soul, the more politically active he/she will be.

The almost mythical origin and heroic beginning of the community, as told by Abdallah, contradict the Israeli hegemonic narrative that positions the political captives as terrorists and criminals. The narrative of the heroic beginnings installs a certain set of codes of behavior by building model figures. The main trope in this narrative is the well-educated, group-oriented and steadfast freedom fighter.

The centrality of reading/writing and education in general combine in the oral and written narratives of the former political captives. For example, Faris Qadurah, who is an elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, describes his experience with almost a spirit of emancipation:

> ***I was from the third generation of political captives … I was not educated before I was imprisoned … in fact I was a simple worker … I was assisting a blacksmith… Then in prison I had a big chance and I used it … I had some basic skills in Arabic, but it was not much of a help, and I couldn't stay ignorant … so I took courses in Arabic and in other subjects*** (Faris Qadurah, Ramallah, February 17, 2002).

'Ata al Qaymari, a critical and articulate journalist, was imprisoned for 14 years, from 1971 to 1985. During the last two years of his captivity, he started to



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write the history of the political captivity of the Palestinians since 1967. In *al Sijnu Laysa Lana*, "The Prison is Not for Us," he describes the dynamics of confiscation by the prison authorities of any object connected with cultural activities. For example, pen, paper, and books were forbidden until 1971. The political captives' counter activities to this policy of confiscation, literally and metaphorically, were constant struggles to regain the confiscated objects (pp. 117-125). After his release, 'Ata opened a translation and press service. When I met him for the interview he was still running the service from his office in Jerusalem.

> ***Then they moved me to the central prison in Ramllih where they put all the Palestinian political prisoners from Jerusalem ... One day a French prisoner came ... he had almost 2000 books, but they were in French, I made a deal with him ... cigarettes for books ... What was forbidden in Arabic was available in French ... I asked my organizational superior*** [for permission] ***to study French ... He refused saying 'you don't have time for it' ... after a while he agreed to an hour a day ... The first book I translated was that of Giab*** [Vo Nguyeu Giap], ***the Vietnamese general, about the popular war ... The superior was astonished, then we made several handwritten copies of it and distributed them among the prisoners*** (Jerusalem, January 13, 2002).

In contrast to Qadurah, al Qaymari's narrative indicates the centrality of reading/writing in the political captives' community, not as a general amorphous practice, but rather as a specific kind of activity that is integral to the hegemonic ideology of each Palestinian organization. Although each community in the various colonial prisons has general activities, such as lectures and courses for



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all the political captives, most of the cultural activities are conducted by each organization independently of the others.

A year after his release from political captivity in 1987, Muhammad Lutfy Khalil wrote a book about the dynamics of the community of political captives, in which he argues (Khalil, 1989) that the cultural activities of the community were institutionalized according to the organizational divisions.

> In fact there is no one cultural system in the prison, but each faction [political organization] has its own system, especially the big factions. Each cultural system starts with a higher committee of three members, who are known for their high cultural abilities and especially their understanding of the faction's program, political principles, positions and aims .... The members choose a president [for the committee] who is usually a member of the general central committee of the faction ... this procedure is, in most of the cases, in consultation with the [political] leadership .... Then the committee appoints a cultural officer on the section level and one on the room level, too (p. 108).

The ideological community apparatus has many mechanisms of interpolating a subject, a Palestinian. For example, the political captives' community uses the Palestinian national calendar, which divides the time into cycles that reinstall, among other things, the time frame of the Palestinian national identity.[8] But mainly, this community of Palestinian political captives uses systematic educational activities, termed *thaqafah*, to interpolate its subject, basically along the different organizational ideological lines. The word

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[8] The calendar of the political captives contains many memorial dates, which the captives usually celebrate with festivities and speeches. The prison authorities regularly try to prevent these celebrations.



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*thaqafah*, which literally means culture, denotes the whole ideological apparatus through which the community sought to reinstall, reconstitute and reaffirm Palestinian-ness as a national identity and ideology. These main objectives were gained through institutionalized cultural practices centered on reading/writing as the core of *thaqafah*. Moreover, the systematic educational activities, while building an identity, were designed to counteract the hegemonic colonial practices of annulling the Palestinian subject. During his second term of imprisonment, from 1985 to 1988, in Jnyd prison in Nablus, Hasan Abdallah became the librarian of the captives' community.[9] Positioning the *thaqafah* in the context of struggle against the colonizers' attempts to redefine the Palestinian subject, Hasan explains that:

> ***The political prisoners, from the beginning, understood the importance of the cultural side, and they understood that the prison authorities were trying to empty the Palestinian prisoner or struggler of his cultural content; and when you empty him of his cultural content, whether a prisoner or not a prisoner, it will be easy to make him docile, to break him. Then it will be easier to fill his mind with other ideas … The prison authorities wanted to turn the prison into a cultural wasteland for us*** (Ramallah, September 6, 2001).

The colonial authorities' constant attempts to empty the Palestinian captive recur in texts written in prison and outside. But these attempts are always countered by the *thaqafah* practices of the political captives' community, as

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[9] Each prison has a public library. Usually, each Palestinian organization in the prison has its own library in addition to the public one. According to different testimonies, the public library of the Jnyd prison had around 8,000 titles, most of which had been brought in by the prisoners.



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narrated in the interviews and texts (See al Qaymari, 1984; Qasim, 1986; Khalil, 1989; Abdallah, 1994; Qaraqi, 2001). Reading/writing was established by then as the action of inscribing the national ideology and expanding the persona, which would transform history. In the early days of the occupation, until 1971, there were no pens or paper in the prison community, nor were there books, unless smuggled in. Through different stations of confrontations and struggles, the pen, the paper, and the book became some of the basic signifying materialities of the community's identity (Qasim, 1986).

The basic action of the *thaqafah* is the reading/writing activities and skills. The practice of these actions followed a regular schedule: daily, usually twice daily, study circles, reading sessions, lectures at the level of the cell and the section, lessons on scholastic topics and training in professional skills, literary/intellectual group discussions, oral transmission of the local history during the daily break, and physical exercises. Alongside these organized activities, many of the political captives practiced writing and reading as part of their organizational duties (communiqués and articles), and some of them engaged in literary reading and writing activities using different genres of literature. Thus, the basic skills of reading, writing and interpretation must be seen and positioned in the larger context of the processes of constituting a resisting community. It is worth noting that these communities of the Palestinian national movement were secular modern ones, unlike the Palestinian Islamic



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movements that developed in a later phase of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially in the late 1980s.

At the other end of this range of practices, there were many study groups on intellectual and literary topics, which transcended the narrow organizational affiliations:

> ***I participated in many of what could be called conferences on Hana Mynah's[10] novels … I remember that in 'Asqalan there was a novel by John Steinbeck, I forget the exact title, the Ghost City … or something like that … It was so popular among the prisoners … that I met people who had read it ten times, and the paper faded and you couldn't see the words … So we kept rewriting it all the time, making new copies for the prisoners to read*** (Abdallah, Ramallah, September 15, 2001).

With the passing of time and the accumulation of skills and knowledge, the division of labor in the community became more differentiated. The growing differentiation and specialization called for the establishment of social rituals granting recognition to certain individuals entering the public sphere of the community as experts.

> ***There were many experts on different topics. Faris Qadurah was famous for his foreign language skills; Jibryl Rajwb was an expert on Israeli studies. Others were experts on political economy … There was one Hafiz 'Byat who was the most expert person on "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State" by Engels. I took a course on the book with this man, for a whole course we discussed it*** (ibid).

The processes leading up to the public initiation of an expert are punctuated by stations marking the accomplishment of certain reading/writing practices,

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[10] Hana Mynah is a famous and prolific Syrian novelist.



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with specific social values gained at each station. It could be argued that in the organizational and inter-organizational contexts of political captivity, reading a certain corpus of literature and writing certain texts qualify the captive as an expert on a certain subject.[11]

> ***I was known for literary and journalistic skills ... When someone new comes to the prison, and is known for being interested in such and such, people direct him to prisoners who have the same interests*** (ibid).

The basic skills, practices, and social rituals, together with the elaboration of the differentiated division of labor in these communities, defined the borders of the community, spatially and temporally. The mechanisms of inclusion in and exclusion from the community, with the elaborated skills and practices of reading/writing, took clearer and more coherent shape. The next stage in these processes of community structuration was the building of networks between the different colonial prisons. An example of the operation of this communication network is the coordinated measures taken by the captives in the different prisons, such as strike days. Thus the borders of the political captives' community stretched to include all of the Palestinian political captives, transcending boundaries between prisons. Three main factors enabled the captives' community to enlarge and become more dynamic: the consolidation of the PLO's social and political networks in all the occupied territories, the

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[11] Many of the political captives who were known as experts were also leading figures in the community. Moreover, they took leading positions in the Palestinian National Authority or the private sector. For example, Faris Qadurah is an elected member of the Palestinian legislative council; Jibryl Rajwb was the head of Preventive Security.



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sophisticated postal system of the captives themselves, and the more flexible formal communication circuits with the outside world, newspapers and radio, for example. These circuits of information and knowledge work in both ways, from the larger society to the colonial prison, and from the latter to the daily lives of the Palestinians in their social settings. These mutual relations, especially when all of the political captives started to coordinate their activities as one group, had some passing effects on the Palestinian national movement, while other effects were more lasting.

Now the question is: how do these new relations interact, in a conflictive manner or otherwise, with the social formations of Palestinian society at large? More specifically, how does this revolutionary educational ideological community apparatus interact with the educational systems outside the borders of the captive community?

The actions, practices and rituals of the prison community are constantly compared with the parallel ones of the larger Palestinian community in the occupied territories, based on each organization's view of Palestinian society. There are two main dynamics of comparison. First, Fateh, the largest mainstream Palestinian organization, is based on a nationalist ideology and seeks to liberate Palestine by subordinating the different social formations to the organized effort to build a nation-state. This does not necessarily mean changing Palestinian society as long as these social formations are compatible with the efforts aimed at national liberation. The second is that of the Palestinian



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left, mainly represented by the PFLP (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). The Palestinian left sees the different Palestinian social formations as an obstacle, another front to deal with in addition to the occupation. Their solution is to disseminate an alternative *thaqafah*.

Hasan Abdallah retells the experience by comparing the left with Fateh.

> ***Fateh was concerned with the organizational side, how to attract new members. They were concerned mainly with the national*** [Palestinian] ***culture; this is in general. The left was investing a lot in the cultural dimensions and this I am telling you objectively. Always the left led the thaqafah in the prison ...*** (Ramallah, September 22, 2001).

While Hasan Abdallah tried at one stage of the interview to attribute the complex relations with the larger society to differences in the organizations' ideologies, at another point in the interview he raised new dimensions. This use of multiple and contradictory strategies of narration by Abdallah characterizes many former political captives.

> ***... it does not mean that in all the organizations there were things forbidden; it depends on the people who are in charge. This means that a certain leader at a specific time could be a democratic person or an oppressive one, could have problems with certain social issues or not; it could be that the woman issue is an obsession for him, and he wants to suppress it in all the people under him. He wants to marginalize it ... In the prison, personality problems were reflected in the experience*** [of political captivity]... (ibid).

Hasan Abdallah continues describing and analyzing these problems by relating and connecting them to the larger Palestinian social divisions:



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> ***... and there is a big difference between somebody who finished a year in the university and someone who didn't. If I come from an open*** [liberal] ***social environment, it will not be easy to oppress me and to pattern me in a frame. In contrast, one who is 16-17 years old, a newcomer from a closed*** [conservative] ***family, from a village with a limited range of relations ... It made a big difference if you were from the city, or from the countryside ... and it made itself felt in the prison, in the camp*** [refugee camp], ***and there were different social coalitions that intervened and affected the organizational life of the prison ...*** (ibid).

The occupation of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza strip, sometimes intentionally and sometimes as a by-product, generated processes of social and economic transformation, which led to the destruction of the existing socioeconomic formations, such as the agricultural and small-scale industrial domains. Yet the social and cultural differences persisted and were part of the new identities and ideologies in the Palestinian national movement, and in that capacity played a major role in the specific constitutive processes of the political captives' community (see Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991, for theoretical discussion, and Doumani, 1995, for discussion on the Palestinian social history). The materiality of these social formations was articulated mainly in ideological forms and practices of prohibitions and borders of inclusion/exclusion, not only of individuals, but also of social spheres of activity for these individuals.

> ***... for example I saw the censor*** [appointed by the Palestinian organizations] ***in the prison ... as you know several Hebrew papers were sent to us, one of them was Ha'olam Hazeh,***[12] ***and in this magazine there were a lot of scenes and photos of almost full nudity. Now the censor comes and surveys it.***

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[12] An Israeli magazine established by Uri Avneri, and known for its leftist outlook.



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> ***He has ink, so he covers the photos with the ink, so that when the magazine is read by the different prisoners nobody will see it … Of course who sees it? The censor … ohhh … the censor sees what the others do not see*** (ibid.).

Such prohibitions and practices of exclusion/inclusion were institutionalized in the political captives' community by the appointment of a censor for each organization, and by formal prohibition delivered in written orders to the cadres.

In the matter of sexuality among the captives' community, the ideological and repressive apparatuses merge at different levels. Censorship is epistemic and physical violence. In the context of sexuality, we see how the community domesticates systems of signification from the larger Palestinian society, in this instance patriarchy, to appropriate and control the 'body'. In this way, the political captives' experience reproduces the general social and cultural practices, and does not transform them. Thus, the multiple practices of prohibition are signification practices that mark both the outer borders of the community and the inner ones that demarcate the individual in his relations with the community.

Still, some issues, which are inherent in the patriarchal structures of society, seem to have more valued meanings than others. This positionality led to over-investment in implementing prohibitions related to these social domains. Such is the case with sexuality. The prison of sexuality, if one may say so, is a kind of over-determination. It recurs in different domains of the social and cultural spheres with different manifestations but with the same deep structure. Thus,



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we see the different expressions of the dynamics of prohibition practiced by the censor, the father, and the political leader. The intense relations in the prison add the colonizers' practices to these patterns of signification.

The Palestinian practices of prohibition interact and merge into a unique kind of hybridity with the colonial practices of prohibition. The mass media in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip can serve to illustrate this argument. The Israeli colonial authorities forbade any expression, whether written, visual or auditory, that had anything to do with Palestine, Palestinian national history or national identity/ideology (Jammal, 2000). Like every other infrastructure, the Palestinian press was curtailed by systematic Israeli orders and actions (Farsoun & Landis, 1990). During the era of occupation from 1967 to 1993, there were no Palestinian radio or TV stations, only several heavily censored newspapers. Parallel with the colonial prohibitions, the traditional Palestinian social mechanisms of enforcing prohibitions were weakened and redefined by the rising national ideologies. The political captives' community is a dynamic example of these processes. Although the political captives developed their own communication systems, the flow of information was heavily censored by the prison authorities. For example, radio and TV sets were forbidden until the mid-1980s, but radios were smuggled into the prison from the early 1970s. The new electronic media created new problems of prohibition/censorship for the political captives' community, which was trying hard to control the flow of information into and out of its borders.



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Abdallah recounts the new problematic from his critical stance towards the practice of censorship.

> ***... then in 1986 came TV ... and the censorship worked even more than with the books, you know the TV and its scenes, although the prison authorities restricted it to Israel*** [Israeli Channel One], ***and at that time the Israeli Channel Two started to broadcast,***[13] ***and this channel broadcasts a lot of foreign movies and there is the possibility of scenes of nudity that are much worse than the books. And Hana Mynah's*** [literary] ***pictures are nothing*** [compared to the audiovisual pictures of TV]. ***There was a big debate in the organization leadership... so they used the organizational censor for this purpose, when there was a scene he would turn off the TV, and the moment it ended he would turn it on ... This whole issue created a bad atmosphere, it didn't take seriously the people who were watching the TV, and expressed mistrust in the prisoner's ability to take responsibility for himself. And not only that, it made the prisoner's imagination go wild, especially if he was a young man - what is this scene? And what did it contain? It would drain him more than protect him ... this issue was debated again and again***[14] (Ramallah, September 22, 2001).

The political captives' consumption of information through TV was constrained by two main factors. First, only the Israeli channels could be received by these TV sets. Second, the times of watching TV programs and the type of programs were severely regimented by the community's leadership and institutions. Therefore, television did not compete with the written texts. On the contrary, the written word remained dominant at least up to 1993, when the

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[13] Until the late 1980s the Israeli Channel One, which is owned and run by the state of Israel, was the only legal TV channel in Israel. Channel Two was the first private TV channel in Israel.

[14] In the early 1990s the national organizations stopped censoring TV programs. But the Palestinian Islamic movements, which I do not deal with in this dissertation, still practice censorship of TV programs.



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whole structure of the community changed as a result of the Oslo Accords. Most of the practices of the revolutionary pedagogical institutions were conducted through reading/writing around and through the written text. Issues of sexuality are a good example and an indication of this dynamic between the written and the visual. While the ambivalent, contradictory, and conflictive expressions of sexuality of the Palestinian political captives were sometimes tabooed, there were also attempts to resituate the sexual body textually.

> ***... in 'Asqalan I read several educational essays on masturbation. The comrades did an extensive research on the subject, and wrote about its negative and harmful effects as well as about its positive ones. How many times should one do it, and how to cope with it? You know, to do sport and the like*** (Ramallah, September 15, 2001).

The political captives dealt with their sexuality mainly textually. By projecting the sexual practices onto the text to demarcate the forbidden and the legitimate ways of coping with it, they shifted the problematic to the text, only to redirect the behavior of the body.

By using these dynamics of dominance of the text in the political captives' community, the captives show that the text of the body, and its related body of the text, seem to be located on the thin line between the repressive and the ideological apparatus. This community inculcated a Bourdieuian habitus of social and national ideologies, mainly by (con)textualizing the body of the Palestinian captive. This statement shakes my previous argument that in the colonial prison the Palestinian community used meanings/*thaqafah* to rupture



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the colonial time/space. The community's over-investment in the body of the text is, in a sense, a way of bridging the colonial circumstances of the total annexation of the text of the Palestinian body by the colonial authorities. The uneven and contradictory traces and presences of the different social formations of Palestinian society, which interplay with the processes of confinement and community building in the colonial prison, lead us to problematize the analytical distinction between ideological and repressive apparatuses. The texts, as the site of practices for the ideological apparatuses, and the bodies, as the site for the practices of the repressive apparatuses, are interwoven as relational constructions on the practical expressive levels.

In this section I started to narrate the narrative of Hasan Abdallah by presenting the actions, practices, and rituals of the educational ideological community apparatus. These basic skills of reading, writing and frames of interpretations are located in the communal processes that defined the community's identities and ideologies through the different organizational apparatuses.

Moreover, I have tried to highlight the relational and layered nature of the political captives' educational system. On the one hand, the systematic and institutionalized practices of the political captives in their efforts to redefine the space of the colonial prison engendered a unique form of production of knowledge/power through over-investment in textuality and its relevant skills and practices. On the other hand, these practices and processes, while they are



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part of the Palestinian national movement and hence of society at large, simultaneously reside outside of the society. This dual position, as manifested in the data, indicates the complex relations of body/text, which raises serious questions about the Althusserian distinction of ideological/repressive apparatuses. This position of liminality and difference will enable us to uncover the deeper workings of the Palestinian society and culture in the colonial context, by using the political captives' textual body, and the bodily text, as the example for our study.

### 4.3 Dissecting the Practices from the Arrested Social Body

The revolutionary pedagogy of the Palestinian captives' community, with its main educational system in the prison, competed with, resisted, and at times transformed both the traditional educational system of the larger society and the colonial pedagogical system. For most of his captivity, Radi Jara'i was a key figure in his organization, Fateh, and in the community of political captives in general. During his first long sentence, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, he was the cultural officer of Fateh. After the Oslo Accords in 1993 he was appointed director of the Rehabilitation Center for Former Political Captives, which was part of the newly built bureaucratic system of the Palestinian National Authority. His rich experience of political captivity, and of political activism in the larger society at different stages of the Palestinian national movement, gave him



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the ability to articulate and elaborate on the revolutionary pedagogical system in comparison with the colonial and traditional ones.

> ***As you know the traditional system in the West Bank operated according to the Jordanian curriculum and most of the teachers got their salaries from the Jordanian government. The same situation existed in Gaza, but with the Egyptians … They*** [the Jordanians and the Egyptians] ***did not represent us, the Palestinians, they have their own agenda. As for us, we taught the cadres in the prison about the three circles, right from the beginning with the basic skills of reading and writing; the first and most important is the Palestinian circle and it must be represented by PLO … then the Arab Islamic one, which should be our allies, the last one is the world beyond the first two circles, which has a different dynamic… The colonial authorities in the jail and in society in general wanted the Jordanian and Egyptian systems to replace the Palestinian national identity with something neutral that eliminates Palestinians … So educationally in the prison we had to work all the time on many fronts*** (Ramallah, August 29, 2001).

From this description and Jira'y's comparative viewpoint, it seems that these processes of separating the Palestinian national identity and ideology from the colonial authorities and from the pre-occupation Palestinian political practices, are linked to the processes that Taraki (1990) describes as the history of the development of political consciousness in the Palestinian territories. Farsoun and Landis (1990) analyze these practices and institutions as the sociological infrastructure of resistance. These accounts of Taraki and Farsoun, among others, position the political captives' communal institutions in the processes of rebuilding the Palestinian national movement through political and mass organizations. But how did the practices of revolutionary/resistance education in



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the colonial prison create their own space/time as part of the national movement although a distinct constituent? Or is the political captives' community confined within the bounds of the political culture of the dominant ideologies in Palestinian society? Has the unique constellation of the colonial prison produced its own distinctive nationalism among the range of nationalisms in the Palestinian national movement? (See Daraj, 1996, for a critique of the dynamics of culture and politics in the Palestinian national institutions).

In order to analyze the diverse patterns of relations between the different educational ideological apparatuses, it is imperative to look at Arab society in general and Palestinian society in particular as arenas of conflictive ideological formations. Many scholars have addressed these issues, the most prominent and influential of them being Hisham Sharabi. In his book 'Neopatriarchy' (1988), he argues that Arab society is torn between the traditional structures of domination, which he terms traditional patriarchy, and processes of modernization, that interact differently and in varying degrees with the existing structures of domination. Hence, for Sharabi this is an incomplete/distorted project of modernity. Sharabi delimits modernization by stating that:

> The term "modernization", used here to denote "modern" *in a patriarchal context*, has as a central characteristic, crucial to the understanding of contemporary Arab neopatriarchy that it refers to *an indigenous phenomenon resulting from contacts with European modernity in the imperialist age*. Modernization is expressed in everyday material things -- dress, food, life style; institutions --schools, theaters, parliament; and in literature, philosophy and science (p. 22, italics in original).



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But these phenomena of the processes of modernization are foreign to, in contradiction with, and in opposition to deep structures of patriarchy. In contrasting modernity and neopatriarchy as value systems, Sharabi dichotomizes them as two incompatible systems.

> As systems of value and social organization, heteronomy is based on subordination and obedience and upholds an ethic of authority, and autonomy is based on mutual respect and justice and adheres to an ethic of freedom (p. 43).

The schism in Arab society in general is seen as applicable to the Palestinian one in particular. (See for example Daraj, 1996; Khalidi, 1997; Sabbagh, 1998; Hilal, 2001). Sharabi's line of argumentation would lead us to articulate the political captives' community, and by extension the Palestinian national movement, as a specific manifestation of the modernization processes into which the Palestinian identities and ideologies are forced into due to the contact with Zionism as a specific brand of European imperialism. Thus, according to Sharabi, the building of a pedagogical revolutionary system based on modern patterns of affiliation must be situated in the processes of modernizing the Palestinian. But, as we saw above, these practices are not 'clean' of traditional ones.

The processes of change and transformation of the political captives' community are not necessarily attributed to modernization by the captives. For example, in the interview with Faris Qadurah, he pointed to the changes and



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transformations that the community had undergone as part of the succession of older and newer generations.

> ***The decade of 1980s witnessed some major events for us*** [the political captives] ***.... What the first generations of political prisoners' leaders had laid down was not good for us anymore ... we made a new renaissance in the community ... according to our new generation, we, the ones who had grown up under occupation*** (Ramallah, February 17, 2002).

As with Hasan Abdallah, Faris Qadurah's arguments and information lead us to the conclusion that analyzing political captivity in the frame of the modernity/patriarchy dichotomy, as developed by Sharabi and his many predecessors and followers who believe in the theories of modernization for the so called Third World, would be no more than a missed theoretical track, if not an ideological misrecognition.[15] The contact with European imperialism, in its different historical variations, did not create a distorted Europe in Palestine, or any Arab society for that matter. It initiated processes, which could and must be located historically on a conjuncture. Due to its historical contingency, this conjuncture has its own characteristics, which are not measurable in European terms of modernity/traditionality. The Palestinian political captives' community may be seen as a test case to understand and attempt to theorize an alternative, contingent modernity. Homi Bhabha (1990a) describes these

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[15] Hisham Sharabi and many other Arab intellectuals are eager to see Arab societies in general, and the Palestinian one in particular, 'develop' into modern ones, 'modern' being the neo-liberal modern. It seems that his ideological projections 'distort' his analytical intervention, and not that the Arabs are a distorted modern project as such.



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processes of cultural contingency by emphasizing the multi-layered nature of the localities and the borders of the national culture.

> The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of inside/outside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning, and inevitably in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation (p. 4).

Hasan Abdallah, through his oral and written accounts, and with his acute historical awareness, points to the heterogeneous and incoherent social forces that make up the political captives' community. The multiple cultural and social forces did not undermine or curtail the processes of building the community of captives; on the contrary, as evident from the various written accounts and interviews, it brought dynamic and vivid processes of communal relations.

The gender issue could be the most striking of the social divisions in constituting the community of female political captives in contrast to the male captives' community. The women experienced their captivity on the basis of difference, and on the not necessarily transformed patriarchy. Iman, a former political captive, tells the story of the women's community of political captives, which is centered more directly on and around the conflictive gender relations and issues of the larger Palestinian society:

> ***The community of the women political captives was not a large one … but in the Intifada*** [the Intifada of 1987] ***we started to receive a different type of captives, they were not politically active or highly committed, but there were waves***



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> ***of stabbing soldiers and most of the stabbers were women ... Now I had to deal with girls who had never left their homes, and on the other hand, with grandmothers ... I couldn't enforce the party's program on them ... so the social issues were the primary ones, courses in reading and writing, reading short stories ... some history ... But the worst was to deal with the families outside ... Some would come to the prison and tell their daughter that they would never allow her to leave the house for the market even after she was released ... Imagine the depression of that girl ... and if it is her turn to clean the dishes for that day... I tried to inculcate the group spirit ... yes the group ...*** (Bir Zeit, February 11, 2002).

Iman was captured in 1988. For most of her nine years in captivity she was one of the leading members of the captives' community. Her description of the community of women political captives demarcates the main direct reasons for women's political captivity during the Intifada. Moreover, she positions the different context of learning and acquiring the basic skills of reading/writing, and the emphasis on, or one may say the watching eyes of, the patriarchal social control system, as the main issues that the women captives had to deal with. These factors do exist in the community of male captives, but they interact in profoundly different patterns. The families of the men see their sons as heroes, and treat them accordingly. The reading and writing are directed toward politicization without an intermediate stage of general education, while the intermediate stage is crucial in the women's experience. Iman describes the reading/writing, history, and literature courses as a preparatory stage for politicizing the women captives. Stabbing soldiers and settlers is not the dominant military action among the men. Usually men see stabbing as a



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desperate/primary act of resistance. These differences between the communities of men and women show us how the different cultural and social divisions and forces interplay in the processes of building communal relations. Moreover, these different communal relations are seen as modern in the sense that they are built on affiliation to a modern type of organization, namely the political party, in contrast to the traditional form of communal relations based on 'blood' relations. Political captivity is seen as part of the modern Palestinian social space, which is constituted through its relation to the Israeli colonial regime. But this stage of the Palestinian modernity is not unique in its relation to the colonial power – Israel. It has a British version (Swedenburg, 1995), which dates back to Mandatory Palestine.

The location of modernity in contemporary Palestinian history is the location of its Western colonization, first by the British, and then by the Zionists. Most of the intellectuals and academics concentrate their efforts on exploring the politics of Palestinian modernity, and pay little attention to the social history of the Palestinian predicament. The disastrous outcome of these efforts, and not the only one for Palestinian society, is a highly linear political historiography articulated in European and Israeli discourses. It is thinking of Palestine as a distorted Eurocentric construct of the Modern, as one of the mechanisms of controlling it. The colonial prison system in Palestine, like the production of political knowledge about Palestine, but more intensely so, is materially and socially a modern system. Palestinians imprisoned in, colonized by, circulated



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in and out of this shrinking space of modernity, reshaped and reconstructed it by relying, in part, on their social formations, which are not the 'pure' modern European ones.

## 4.4 Some Concluding Remarks

Many processes were involved in constituting the community's alternative modernity. First, a huge number of Palestinians have been imprisoned for political reasons since 1967, just over a quarter of the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (al Hindi, 2000). Second, the colonial prison is one of the most intense sites of colonizer/colonized conflict, and as such it opens possibilities for change and regeneration on the part of the colonized (al Qaymari, 1984; Qasim, 1986; Morris, 2000; Qaraqi, 2001). Third, the specific socio-historical stage of the era after the 1967 war brought the fall of the Arab nation-state, but it also brought the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the building of its infrastructures in the occupied territories (Ajami, 1981; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994). These processes generated practices of communal relations, which gradually took the shape of a distinctive community within Palestinian society and vis-à-vis the colonizer. On the one hand, these gradually built communal relations were centered, in content and form, around liberating the colonized 'I', and on the other hand, this was to be achieved by resisting the colonizer 'Other.' But this dialectical I-Other is an



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ideological (mis)recognition of the national pedagogy, as Homi Bhabha (1990b) tells us.

From the interviews and the written material collected for this research, it appears that the constitutive dynamic of the Palestinian political captives' community is more complex than a simplistic I-Other variation of the east-west kind of dichotomy. It seems that this is a community with dual liminality. It is exiled, in a sense deported from Palestinian society, only to be transplanted into a foreign land/space, and not any space but a liminal one, the prison of the colonial metropolitan.

From this perception of the Palestinian political captives' community as a dual liminality, let us return to my opening remarks on Althusser and Feldman, in order to further our understanding of the unique social and cultural dynamics of this community. Althusser tries to give us a theoretical frame in which to articulate how a subject is reproduced by ideology, while Feldman claims that in certain conditions the subject has the agency to act in a transformational manner in history, and hence in ideology too, but both of them have the nation-state at the back of their minds/texts. Homi Bhabha (1990b) in his article "DessimiNation" argues that the Althusserian subject is an object of national pedagogy - because the nation-state controls educational systems - but at the same time, in the many constellations of time and place that exist in any culture, there are practices and performances of the object as a subject/agent. Bhabha redefines the double narrative, arguing that when:



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> We... have a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pregiven or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process (p. 297).

Moreover, argues Bhabha, in a state of liminality not only do the subjects perform rather than being constructed by pedagogy/ideology, but they also have a wider range of political and psychological strategies for negotiating and maneuvering. In this sense of liminality, the Palestinian political captives, in relation to the wider Palestinian national society, are objects of national pedagogy, but, and perhaps more importantly, they are the subjects who create this same nationalism by struggling to liberate the collective and the individual 'I'. The same actions, practices and rituals of reading/writing and interpretation, which interpolate the Palestinian subject as a pedagogical object, when performed in the context of political captivity, that is, liminality, become a revolutionary educational ideological communal apparatus. Moreover, as positioned simultaneously by the national 'I' and by the colonizer 'Other,' at the edges of the colony-metropolitan continuum, the Palestinian political captives' writing/reading transformational agency (Hafez, 1993) decentralizes the authority of the hegemonic metropolitan and the homogenized colony.

In an interview with Rami, who was one of the first generation of leading political captives, he told me a story in which both the homogenized practices of



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masculinity of the Palestinian society and the hegemonic practices of confinement were simultaneously superseded. Evidently, in the late 1960s he already had the sense of a revolutionary who destabilizes both the metropolitan and the colony.

> ***I was brought to the military court in Ramallah … to testify … they put me in the dungeon with other captives … One of them had a book that I was dreaming of reading… you know dreaming … I copied it by hand, I didn't sleep for three nights copying it … then I arranged it in capsules … Some moments for you as a man*** [in terms of masculine sexuality] ***you are not ashamed to do things that are usually shameful … but I didn't think twice, I had the five capsules so I put them in my ass … It wasn't easy … everybody was watching, nobody joked or anything like that, people were basically shocked, but later I became a model for them …*** (Ramallah, October 2, 2001).

The story of Rami highlights the main arguments of this chapter. The unique relations of text and body that developed in the social space of the colonial prison collide with the accepted boundaries set by the colonial authorities as well as by Palestinian society. The body of the political captive is read differently. The body becomes an open text for new interpretations, defying its confinement to the one interpretation imposed by the colonizer. However, this act of defiance requires new skills of reading/writing and interpretation. In this manner the text comes to be the dominant social space of resistance in the colonial prison, which basically aims to annex the body, the text, and their material context. This dynamic of resistance through rereading and rewriting the



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text of the body and the body of the text, although intensified in the colonial prison, is not confined to it in the modern Palestinian national movement.

The political captive and the armed struggler are seen as heroes in the Palestinian national discourse. According to this discourse, a hero is a Palestinian who stops his ordinary life only to be in a constant liminal space/time of resisting the colonizers. Moreover, the hero will succeed, in his mythical time/space alterity, by the constant retelling of his actions and deeds in relation to the 'Other,' not by himself, but by the Palestinians as a collective (Harlow, 1996). This structure/trope of national heroism was/is reproduced and produced at the same time in the two liminal Palestinian national spaces, the armed struggle and political captivity. Each domain has its own revolutionary pedagogy, namely its own educational organizational apparatus (Althusser, 1971). The split, as Bhabha (1990b) calls it, is expressed in the fact that at the moment of his creation by the Palestinian subject, the Palestinian hero becomes a national pedagogical object.

The moment of constituting a hero by a specific discourse is the moment of disseminating him throughout the larger society as a communicative event. The elevation of certain sets of practices -- in our case political captivity and the armed struggle -- into heroism is linked to the interrelation of text and body. The rituals that transform the accepted divisions between the body and the text in the mundane and ordinary time generate the dynamics of heroization,



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culminating in a communicative act in order to close the cycle on the social and cultural levels. 'Ata al Qaymari vividly puts this cycle into a narrative:

> ***The first year and half they put me with the criminal prisoners because I was young … I couldn't wait to be transferred to see Rami and Mahmud, they were mythic figures for me … In 1973 I met Rami, Mahmud wasn't there, he was already out … he was my superior, he is a real struggler, he was my hero … Later, I understood their mistakes … then I myself was seen as a hero by the newcomers, they were reading my articles and hearing about me … the wonder child who did his first military operation at 14 years old with no organizational help*** (Jerusalem, January 18, 2002).

This chapter tried to shed light on the ways in which culture works in the historical moment of building the ideologies and identities of a nation-state. Using the example of the educational apparatuses of the community of Palestinian political captives, it reopens a passage of local and specific history in the Palestinian national movement in order to explore the inner mechanisms of rebuilding the national ideologies and identities. Basically, the junction of the colonial prison is redefined to examine the Palestinian body and the Palestinian text. The over-investment in *thaqafah*, as a signification system, becomes comprehensible through the reinterpretation of the social boundaries, spaces, and temporalities of 'Who is the Palestinian?'.

This chapter, and the previous one, examined the socio-historical processes of how the community came to demarcate itself through signification structures of boundaries. When the processes of institutionalization of the community of captives reached a well-organized level, the rules of passage into



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and out of the community became formalized and in many senses structured and closed. One such important passage is the interrogation of the Palestinian captive by the Israeli security services upon his/her capture. While in the early phases of the community building processes these rules of passage relevant to interrogation were transmitted orally and were not binding, later when the community established its formal and informal social boundaries these rules of passage were written as a book. This book is a manual of the rules of how to behave, what to feel, and what meanings one should generate during the interrogation.

The interrogation phase of captivity is the site of border and boundary for the community of captives and the prison authorities alike. As a formal entry into the prison and into the community it became overloaded with ritualized meanings and behaviors. While this chapter dealt with the signification structures of the community of captives in general, the next one will take the interrogation phase of captivity, as textualized and as told, as a ritual through which a Palestinian captive either succeeds in entering the community or fails to do so. I will look into texts, written by political activists and by captives, which explain the rules and the criteria for entry into the community of captives through the gate of interrogation. The detailed and structured, written and oral codes of behavior for the interrogation phase transform it into a ritual of passage for the potential Palestinian political captive. While describing this ritual in detail, the next chapter will argue that these codes of behavior determine the entire



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relations between the community and the prison authority, and probably beyond that -- to the question of what it means to resist in the colonial condition.



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# Chapter 5: *The Textual Formation of Subjects: Interrogation as a Rite of Passage*

## 5.1 Introduction

The Abu Jihad Center for the Palestinian Captives' Movement is located in a small three-bedroom apartment on the fifth floor of a building in Um al Sharait, a southern lower middle class neighborhood of Ramallah. The Center's main aim is to gather and archive written material and art produced by political captives while serving time in Israeli prisons. Since starting its activities around the end of 1993, the Center has collected thousands of prison notebooks, and several hundred plastic art products. When I first met Fahid Abu al Haj, the director of the Center and a former political captive, in December 2000 he was more than enthusiastic and supportive of my project. Fahid's own narrative of his personal history is more than telling about the Palestinian social and national formations. He grew up in Kubar, a small village north of Ramallah, as an "illiterate peasant," as he describes himself in his early years. Passing through the rites of passage of the Palestinian national movement -- clandestine political activities, political captivity, coalition with political power centers, a formal position in the hierarchy of one's organization -- Fahid came to be a prominent figure in the local politics of his organization, Fateh. Of all the socio-national rites of passage that he went through, his first arrest and interrogation were the basic formative experiences.



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***To tell you the truth, before I was arrested for the first time I wasn't, you know … I grew up in Kubar, an illiterate peasant, most of the time herding sheep … Of course the occupation was bad and all that, but I didn't really know what it meant … In the interrogation room in Ramallah they wanted to break me, they knew a lot about me, I felt naked, and in a way dumb … I didn't breakdown, I had a lot of energy, if you know what I mean. After that, in the prison, I spent many years studying … maybe you don't know, but I really couldn't read and write, can you believe that?*** (Ramallah, December, 2000).

Fahid describes the interrogation as a major transformational experience. If the captive is resolute, he regenerates himself by shedding his previous perceptions and understandings of his situated self. The feeling of nakedness is the direct outcome of the tangible confrontation with colonizers (Peteet, 1994). The recurring narrative about the interrogation, in interviews with former political captives, and in written descriptions of political captivity, indicates the almost institutionalized ritual of interrogation in the relations between Palestinians and Israelis. Part of the process of instituting the interrogation is its textual representation and symbolic ordering in the symbolic social order of the Palestinian national movement's discursive formations. One such textual representation is a book entitled *Falsafat al Muwajahah Wara' al Qudban* ("The Philosophy of Confrontation Behind the Bars" – hereinafter PCBB). Although the book is distributed through semi-clandestine networks, it is widely circulated and consumed.

***Esmail: You have many copies of Falsafat al Muwajahah … I counted at least ten on these two shelves…***



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***Fahid:*** ***Well, you know it's a famous one … I mean a lot of people in the prison read it … I think these are different handwritten copies from different prisons; did you look at the dates and the prison name at the end of each one?***

***Esmail:*** ***No, let me see … so you think in each prison they made copies of it?***

***Fahid:*** ***I am sure of that … the question is, are our copies from different dates? … OK, this one is from 'Asqalan, look at the signature here, this is from Nablus central prison … this one seems from Jnyd, this is also from Jnyd but its not the same copy. Look at the handwriting*** (Abu Jihad Center, January 10, 2001).

In each Israeli prison there is at least one copy of PCBB. The specific situation in each prison, that is, the number of captives, the relations between the different Palestinian organizations, and the rigidity of enforcement of the prison rules of conduct, may necessitate more than one copy. These facts, together with the oral stories told in the interviews, led me to investigate PCBB as a textual representation of the rite of interrogation on its many levels of practices, meanings, and representations. Although the book deals with the interrogation stage of captivity, taken as a case study it can illuminate processes of textual production in and about political captivity in the context of colonial Palestine. Since political captivity is intensely and widely discussed in Palestinian society, PCBB should be positioned in relation to other Palestinian texts dealing with the colonial condition in general and political captivity in particular.

In the first half of the 1980s three main books were published concerning the political captivity of Palestinians by the Israeli colonial authorities. Each book



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was published by a different body in Palestinian society and addressed to different, but sometimes overlapping, audiences. These bodies were (a) the PFLP, a political organization, (b) the political captives' community in *Nafhah* prison, and (c) a professor at al Najah National University, Prof. 'Abid al Satar Qasim, together with his students.[1]

*Falsafat al Muwajahah Wara' al Qudban*, ("The Philosophy of Confrontation Behind the Bars" - PCBB), was published by the PFLP in the early 1980s, it has no date of publication nor has it an author's name on the cover. PCBB was and is distributed among the new members of the organization, and to other young political activists from other organizations. The book deals with the question as to what a Palestinian activist arrested by the Israeli colonial authorities should do during the interrogation stage.

*al Sijnu Laysa Lana* ("The Prison is Not for Us" - PNU), was published by the community of political captives. It, too, has no author's name or year of publication, but the introduction, written by a political captive, is signed with a specific date: "The writer of the introduction, *Nafhah* prison, March 12, 1985," and the author's introduction ends with a date, too: "The author, *Nafhah* prison, March 13, 1985."[2] PNU is a historiography of the Palestinian political captivity

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1 Since the publication of these books many others have been published. Still, these started a genre of texts that was later followed by tens of books, if not more.

2 Most of the texts written in prison are marked with the date and the name of the prison in which they were written. This may be explained by the social value attached to being a political captive. In fact, the date and the name of prison are a signifier of the concrete experience of captivity.



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from 1967 up to the mid-1980s. Though written as a history, it is not descriptive. Rather, it is an attempt to define the rules of the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized in the context of political captivity as it developed historically. Within this view of the experience of political captivity, PNU shows the reader the strategies of struggle against the colonizer in the colonial prison.

*Muqadimah fy al Tajrubah al I'tiqalyah fi al Mu'Ataqalat al Sahywniyah* ("Introduction to the Imprisonment Experience in the Zionist Prisons" - IEZP) was published in 1986 by Dar al Umah Publishing House in Beirut. The author is 'Abid al Satar Qasim[3] and his students from the Department of Political Science at al Najah National University, Nablus. IEZP describes the political captivity of the Palestinians by presenting the different stages of the captivity itself and tracing the historical development of the relations between the captives and the colonial prison authorities. The data for the book were collected through open-ended interviews with former political captives, and by asking some of them to write of their experience of political captivity.

How should these books be located and understood in relation to the realities of political captivity, and to their circulation and consumption by the different Palestinian audiences?

It could be argued that, almost two decades after the 1967 War and the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the political captivity of the

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[3] 'Abid al Satar Qasim is a prominent Palestinian thinker. He is well known for his opposition to the Palestinian Authority, for which he was imprisoned several times.



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Palestinians had become a daily social, political and national issue (al Hindi, 2000; Qraqi', 2001). The three books are positioned in the pre-Intifada stage of 1987, not as precursors but as part of a larger socio-historical process of changing the relations between the occupied and the occupier (Nassar & Heacock, 1990; Al Dyk, 1993, among others).

This chapter will describe and analyze the complexities, contradictions, and conflicts of the political captivity experience as represented textually in The Philosophy of Confrontation Behind the Bars. As stated, PCBB concentrates on the interrogation stage of political captivity, but the 'philosophy' relates to the history of the political captivity and its future. The didactic features of PCBB open for the reader more articulated windows into the delicate workings and linkages of the realities of interrogation as a rite of passage into the community of captives and their representation on the symbolic and discursive levels.

## 5.2 A Manual for the Novice

The ways in which we meet a text in a certain socio-cultural context may reveal to us certain aspects of its social history; these are the text's circulation and consumption processes. The value of meeting a semi-clandestine text in the Palestinian context resides in the meeting as such, and in the way it occurs. Meeting, in this context, means classifying the outsider as part of, or entering into, a specific sociopolitical formation. The ways of meeting indicate the spatio-temporal techniques of the ordinary Palestinian's entrance into political activism.



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I met Ahmed, a university student, through our discussions on Marxism in a course that I gave at Bir Zeit University (BZU). He was a very active, politically committed person, with the flavor of an old party cadre, although he was in his early twenties. And this I liked about him, especially against the social background of the BZU student population in the late 1990s.[4] At the beginning of our relationship he thought that I should indoctrinate the students with Marxism. For him, Marx's political program and his scientific method of historical materialism could not be separated. In three months we became friends. We began to meet more frequently, outside the framework of the course. At that stage, he told me that there was a book that would help me in my research on political captivity.

***Ahmed: Are you still doing research on the political captives?***

***Esmail: Yes, I have interviewed several people, and I am collecting texts...***

***Ahmed: There is a book "Falsafat al Muwajahah"*** [Philosophy of the Confrontation] ***it is a great one about the political captivity, have you read it?***

***Esmail: No, I haven't ... Who wrote it?***

***Ahmed: I don't know... but you know the party gives it...***

***Esmail: How can I get a copy of it?***

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[4] The student population had taken an active role in the national movement since its establishment. However, after the Oslo Accords, there was a retreat in their role. Many books and articles have been published lately exploring these changes. Prominent among them is:
al Malky, M. (ed.) 2000. *The Palestinian Students Movement and the Missions of the Stage: Experiences and opinions*. Ramallah: Muwatin Institute (Arabic).



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***Ahmed: I will bring you my copy … but keep an eye on it … I use it sometimes … You know, in the interrogation room the mukhabarat*** [intelligence services] ***usually put "Falsafat al Muwajahah" on the shelf, they tell the captive that they have read it, there is no need to resist because they know the tricks written there in the book …***

***Esmail: Really? I've never heard about that, you must bring me a copy of it … Don't we meet tomorrow in class? Then bring it with you, don't forget …*** (Bir Zeit, November 17, 2000).

The next day Ahmed brought the book with him. He pulled it out from under his shirt. The cover of the book is deep red, and the title is black, it is the only thing printed on the cover: *Falsafat al Muwajahah wara' al Qudban*, Philosophy of the Confrontation Behind the Bars (see figure 5.1).

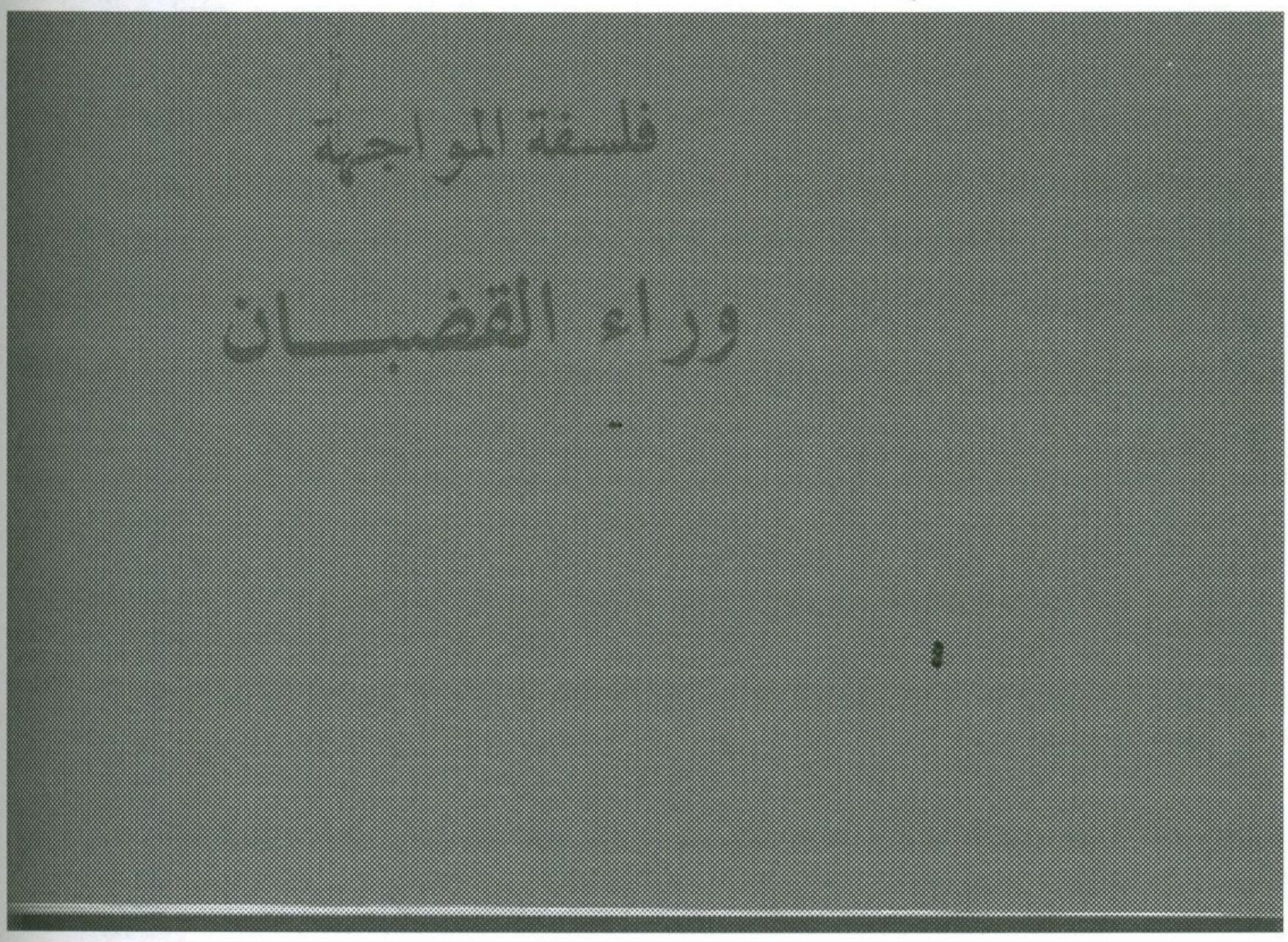


Figure 5.1: The cover of PCBB.



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I felt that one of the keys to the different historical doors of political captivity was laid in my hand. Holding the book brought to the surface the complexities of the structures of feelings of the researcher/Palestinian/moment in the Palestinian history of the Now.[5] I thought about the next military roadblock that I had to pass that day. If they found the book, how should I behave? A week earlier, I had been stopped at Surrda checkpoint. I told the Israeli soldier that I was a researcher. ***"Tell that to your grandmother,"*** he replied in Hebrew. He made me wait for two hours, then said: ***"It's closed... you can't pass."*** I turned back to Ramallah, took the shuttle to the first bypass, and crossed the checkpoint.

In the late evening of that day, I wrote in my fieldwork notebook in an attempt to grasp the flow of that day's events:

> I put several books in my backpack, trying to plan the view of the bag that would be inspected at the military checkpoint. Soldiers will not identify forbidden books, they look for weapons and explosives, or at least that is what people say. Still, at times Israeli intelligence service units, who would recognize the book, observe and monitor Palestinians at the checkpoints, and I didn't want to take the risk. I finished my lectures around noon, by then I had almost forgotten about PCBB. I picked up my bag, and at that moment the feeling started. A surge of energy of confrontation flowed to my forehead. I felt my body stiffen and harden. The service shuttle from BZU to checkpoint was full of students and lively music. I looked out of the shuttle window at the hills of Palestine to pass the five miles drive to Surrda. The beauty of the land and the olive trees distracted my feelings from the awareness of the moment. ***"How is the checkpoint?"*** I asked the driver.
> ***"I don't know, two hours ago there were soldiers but they didn't stop people ... I don't know what it is like now, you know it changes every minute..."*** he replied with the authority of a taxi driver. Unintentionally, I pulled my backpack up to my chest, when one of the students broke into the conversation, affirming ***"They don't check ...***

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[5] See Williams R. (1977) for the term "structures of feeling", pp. 128-135.



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***my friend just crossed and he phoned … with her mobile."*** I didn't understand the addition ***"her mobile."*** Everybody carries a mobile phone; people seldom confuse sex/gender. This is the talk on the checkpoint shuttles these days. Still, I was ambivalent, so I went back to land and trees. Leaving the shuttle, my eyes were on the checkpoint, looking for soldiers. Cement cubes and a camouflaged post stand naked with no soldiers. I forced my steps, the feeling of confrontation coming and going like a shy child. I am in Ramallah now. What a relief! I rushed to the first stationery store and made my copy of PCBB. (November 18, 2000).

Several of the former political captives whom I interviewed recounted their story of the meeting with PCBB, but Iman was the most articulate in telling her story, and her ironic nostalgia in recounting her formative years as a political activist rendered it most vivid.

> ***You meet every week to discuss … to discuss Yakhut. Oh, oh, my god how tired I was of discussing it*** [laughs for several seconds]. ***Yakhut … a guy who wrote a summary of dialectic materialism… ask anybody of my generation… there's nobody in my generation who didn't read it … everyone knew the same stuff … There was an ABC*** [in English] ***in our*** [party] ***… First, you read Yakhut, the material before the soul and all those stories, then you move on to Ghassan Kanafani, especially "Return to Haifa" and "Men in the Sun." You have to know the sentence "Why didn't you bang the walls?", you know you must resist … after that comes "Educational Poem" and all the communist morals from Lenin's writings …*** [silence, as if collecting her thoughts, then in a lowered tone] ***Philosophy of Confrontation …*** [in a lowered ironic voice] ***you know, you have to know security …*** [laughs] ***… you discuss and theorize about it … You needed some terms*** [a strong laugh] ***to compete with others … Some called it indoctrination. Maybe, but it made a human out of you*** (Bir Zeit, February 11, 2002).

PCBB was one of the basic requirements, part of the ABC for building the active Palestinian political revolutionary. Carving this identity and ideology



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through the party's educational ideological apparatuses was part of the conflictual relationship with the colonizer, on the one hand, and it was conducted in the complex context of the Palestinian social formation, on the other. The system of educating and "indoctrinating" by the party was a parallel, merging and conflicting ideological community apparatus to the traditional formal educational system. Building on Althusser's ideas, Pecheux (1994) illuminates the relations between the different ideological formations, in this instance the party and the school, in a specific social formation, arguing that these relations are a complex set with

> … relations of contradictions-unevenness-subordination between its 'elements', and not a mere list of elements: indeed, it would be absurd to think that in a given conjuncture *all the ideological state apparatuses* contribute *equally* to the reproduction of the relations of production *and* to their transformation. In fact, their 'regional' properties – their 'obvious' specialization into religion, knowledge, politics, etc. – condition their relative importance (the unevenness of their relationships) inside the set of ideological state apparatuses and that as a function of the state of the class struggle in the given social formation (p. 143, italics in original).

Although Pecheux's model of analysis is the nation-state, still, as discussed in the previous chapter, communities under conditions of no-state, or at least no legitimate state, reveal similar patterns of dynamic contradictions-unevenness-subordination.

As an expression of the contradictions-unevenness-subordination relations on the textual and discursive levels, PCBB is ascribed different social values by



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different discourses of the diverse ideological formations.[6] For example, 'Abid al Satar Qasim (1986) describes PCBB as part of the endeavors of the political captives' cultural activities. In their efforts to produce scientific knowledge, the captives wrote PCBB, which, although not sufficiently academic is still an impressive attempt. al Hindi (2000) classifies PCBB with the internal documents of the PFLP. This means it is not a book or a published text for public circulation and consumption. For al Hindi PCBB is devalued by being confined as an informal text for the party's domestic consumption. A third book about political captivity, by Qraqi' (2001), does not mention PCBB directly, but heavily cites the interpretation texts which were inspired by it.

In this dissertation PCBB is treated as a book, not simply because it was presented to me as a book, but also because a journey through its topography and structure reveals it as a book by accepted standards. Needless to say, there are political implications in this choice – or one may say an implicit coalition.

## 5.3 The Book

PCBB has a title, a cover, contents, a preface and three chapters, as follows: 1. Introduction, 2. Techniques of Interrogation, 3. General Concepts.

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[6] Some would position PCBB in a devalued position as a result of the rivalries between the different organizations. However, I am not addressing that issue here.



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### 5.3.1 *The Cover*

The cover is deep red, with the title printed in black. In the Palestinian national discourse, red signifies two hierarchized fields of meaning (see figure 5.1). On the one hand, it signifies the blood of the strugglers with which they saturate the occupied land, only to free it. Many metaphors in literary and verbal texts build and transfer this field of meaning to almost every domain of the Palestinian struggle against occupation. It is one of the constitutive tropes that establish a continuum between the points of the triangle: the Palestinian body (flesh), the social body, and land as a body. In the discourse of the struggle for liberation, the blood, the liquid of life, circulates between the three points to create them as one entity, the nation. The second field of meaning is red as the color of communist revolutionaries throughout the world, which is naturalized by the Palestinian left - in the case of this book, the PFLP. For example, there are two kinds of kuffyahs, one black and white, the other red and white. Wearing the black kuffyah marks one as a Fateh member or sympathizer, while the red kuffyah signifies its wearer as a PFLP member/sympathizer.[7] The movement between the local red and the general/communist red must be understood in the historical context of coalitions and confrontations. It is part of the political economy of mapping the different struggle projects across the globe. It is the common ground on which Chinese, Cubans, Palestinians, and Russians,

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[7] For more discussion on the history of the Kuffyah see Swendeburg, T., 1995. *Memories of Revolt*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.



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among others, stand as a community. In a parallel and sometimes contradictory manner, Fateh's coalitions are mainly with the Arab and Islamic spheres.

The title on the cover is in the middle, divided into two lines. The first line says "Philosophy of the Confrontation," and below it, in a larger font, "Behind the Bars." The use of the word "philosophy" places a certain value on the meaning of the title. It is not simply a book about techniques or skills in confronting the colonizer; the word "philosophy" in the title plays on two fields of meaning. One is the academic field of philosophy as a deep comprehensive understanding; hence, knowledge/power is invoked. The other is philosophy as sophisticated wisdom, a combination of talent and life experience, acquiring control over the overarching dynamic of a phenomenon. It is the structure of confrontation from which one can generate the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive techniques and skills to confront the colonizer.

The philosophy of the confrontation is further delimited by its location in the intense site of the colonial prison. At the same time, the metonymic use of the word "bars" to denote the whole, the prison, transforms the denotation into a connotation that opens the literal meaning of the prison into the wider contexts of imprisonment, namely Palestinian society itself. As with the color red, the playful use of the signifiers generates fields of meanings that move outward, from the local to the international, from the individual captive to the imprisoned society. The movement outward is one of the main characteristics of the



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metanarrative of the nation-state ideologies, which try desperately to claim the outer face, the borders, by homogenizing the different inner faces.

In this regard, although the absence of the author's name on the cover of PCBB could be imputed to the objective conditions of clandestine resistance, it is still movement on the narrative level of building the outer face of the collectivity. This framing becomes more palpable when PCBB is compared with other books published by PFLP, which are disguised by using fictitious titles and authors' names.

Neither the author(s) nor the publishing data appear on the cover of the Philosophy of Confrontation or on the pages that follow. The no naming/owning practice should be positioned in relation to other variations on the subject/institution/time signifying relations. The specific constellation of these relations is related to the target audience of the text, levels of clandestinity, and the concept of the community as a collective author that developed in the captives' community. There are three main categories of constellations of information that appear on the cover of a book, ranging on a continuum:

1. No subject, no institution, no date.
2. Fictitious subject, institution and date. In this case the title could be fictitious too. For example, if a text is prohibited it is usually camouflaged by substituting a different cover for the real one.



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3. Subject, institution, and date appear on the book cover.[8]

The continuum between these three categories produces several variations of camouflage and secrecy in relation to the circulation of texts. It is the movement of the text that is monitored by the colonial authorities, and not necessarily what type of meanings it could or could not generate. In this sense, the movement delimits the alternative spaces of identity. Building on his fieldwork experience in Northern Ireland, Feldman (1991) argues that:

> In a colonized culture, secrecy is an assertion of identity and symbolic capital. Pushed to the margins, subaltern groups construct their own margins as fragile insulations from the 'center'. Secrecy is the creation of centers in peripheries deprived of stable anchorages. Cultural resistance inspires the production of fragments as a counterpractice to imperial agenda (p. 11).

In the Palestinian context of the circulation of PCBB, identity and symbolic capital are acquired and constituted through receiving and reading the text. It marks the identity of a novice political activist, a struggler, and in the context of a national liberation movement being a struggler is a social value, or the desired symbolic capital. But the claim that subaltern groups create fragile insulations from the center, lead to deprivation of anchorages and fragmentary counterpractices, which Feldman does not explore further, seems to be the center's view of its relation to the subaltern group and not vice versa. This argument can be verified by raising the question of the authorship of PCBB.

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[8] This classification is based on the corpus of texts that I collected and others that I came across, and on the ethnographic data of the interviews.



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The relationship between an author and a text is multifaceted, and this characteristic demonstrates its historically contingent nature. In his attempts to supersede the common, read ideological, concepts of the individual author who precedes his own text, Foucault (1984) expands the accepted notion of the author while distinguishing it from the idea of the individual in the capitalist era. He destabilizes the modern notion of the relation of author-name-individual.

> The proper name and the author's name are situated between the two poles of description and designation: they must have a certain link with what they name, but one that is neither entirely in the mode of designation nor in that of description; it must be a *specific* link (p. 6, italics in original).

The no-naming of the author(s) and publisher of PCBB creates a specific link with other Palestinian (colonized) and Israeli (colonizer) discourses, with its readers, and more importantly it signifies the domain, the space/time of its sociality and historicity. The main characteristic of the space/time of the no-naming practice is the fact of being out of reach of the colonizer's surveillance practices. But in the case of PCBB this being out of reach is not a passive fragile insulation. On the contrary, the invisibility is capitalized on to resist the colonizer whose eye is blinded by the secrecy. The act of no-naming blinds the colonizer's eye/discourse.

> The author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture. It has no legal status, nor is it located in the fiction of the work; rather, it is located in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being (ibid, p. 107).



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The no-name is an author's name that creates a break between the Palestinian resistance discourse and its specific realization in a manual text that prepares the Palestinian struggler to redefine the power relations in the confined space/time of interrogation, which is almost totally controlled by the colonizer. It is a discourse of the Palestinian novice's rite of passage, which hardly needs to be named or owned by a name. The author is the collectivity.

The counter colonizer/center discursive practices of PCBB are far from being fragmentary. In the dialectical relations of Palestinian-Israeli confrontation, the Palestinian, according to PCBB, cannot allow himself the privilege of fragmentariness. The no-name is the discursive practice of the myth of the collective, it is so immanent and transcendental that one does not need to name it. By not naming it, one reproduces the myth of the We.

### 5.3.2 *Prefacing*

It could be argued that PCBB is a specific textual realization of "We," the metanarrative of the Palestinian national ideology. But, like any transformative parole/structure, it displaces relations, hierarchizes others, and depletes still others. Political captivity, along with the armed struggle, is the most intense site of the colonial confrontational relations, and the first stages of this captivity - arrest and interrogation - are the focal points of PCBB. How should a Palestinian captive behave, think, and feel while being interrogated by the Israeli colonizer/interrogator? To destabilize the colonizer-colonized structure of the



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relations of interrogation, PCBB, as a moment in the history of these relations, negates the 'colonized.' In the interrogation, the material space/time is totally annexed by the colonizer. Hence, the space/time to be liberated is the colonized himself as an agent. Agency brings the colonized into her/his collective 'Palestinian-ness.' No confession, no cooperation, are a preparatory stage to reversing the relations of subordination. Confession, technically meaning delivering information at the request of the interrogator, is betrayal. For the Palestinian captives, confession was not a betrayal from the outset of the occupation in 1967. *Butwlat fy 'aqbiyat al Tahqyq* ("Heroism in the Dungeons of Interrogation" – HDI, 1988) a book of commentary on PCBB written by the political captives themselves, periodizes the history of confession into three stages:

> The first stage, 1967-1975, was directly after the launching of PFLP in 1967; in that period PFLP was not different from the other organizations. Their actions were dictated by spontaneous urges, and concentrated on military activities at the expense of organizational and ideological construction, and mass mobilization…. At that time members … confessed right at their arrest … we remember that there was a norm common to all the members of the different organizations, by which the deal was that anybody who was arrested must resist for 24 hours only … The issue was the readiness to confess and not be steadfast and shut the mouth (p. 7).

The periodization of confession is located in the general process of constructing the main tool for resisting the occupation, namely, organization. Many scholars have explored the impact of the war of 1967 on the Palestinian national movement and its organizations (Sayigh R., 1979; Ajami, 1981;



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Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994; Sayigh Y., 1997, among others). For our discussion, the important conjuncture of the first stage that is emphasized by the authors of HDI is the lack of coherent ideological organizational apparatuses. This absence might reflect the confusion and the transitory character of that period in the history of the Palestinian national movement. The interrogation is seen as a site of confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, and the dynamics of steadfastness/confession are determined by the features of the colonial relations at the collective rather than the individual level.

The second stage started in the mid-1970s and continued until 1980.

> With the deepening of the experience the issues became more obvious, the dynamic of the work of the Front [PFLP] started to develop and to progress in the different spheres … and concerning the security problematic, the concept of steadfastness, not telling secrets and not bringing the comrades into the interrogation dungeons, began to crystallize gradually. The limit of the confrontation process in the interrogation became the confessing on one person or a dead point (p. 7).

Minimizing the damage of confession to the collective, the organization, was the upper limit of the confrontation at this stage. The captive would admit to the implication of one person or an end point rather than giving in totally, which would have led to the destruction of the collectivity. It was during this period that the myths of total and ultimate steadfastness started to circulate among the captives and the Palestinians in general. Prominent among these myths was the story of Muhammad Khauajah, who was killed by the Israelis during



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interrogation in 1975, for refusing to confess.[9] These stories of martyrdom and sacrifice prepared the stage and built the iron norm that confession means betrayal.

> The third stage 1980-1985: In this stage, the Popular Front [PFLP] developed its concepts and techniques of work in a palpable way. The security issue, the arrests and interrogation were part of these developments, and they were crowned by the elaborations and interventions in PCBB. PCBB expressed a pioneering attitude suitable to a vanguard and a progressive party. This attitude strengthened and established the slogans 'Yes for the honor of the party and for protecting it', 'Confession is betrayal', and 'No to revealing the party's secrets and the comrades' names'. Alongside the crystallization of the PCBB intervention and the slogans of steadfastness, there was a campaign of mass mobilization and coalitions, and a constant urging for steadfastness. Although the results were not at the desired level, some of it was positive and its effects were seen on the different levels (p. 8).

PCBB is a juncture of accumulating experience and developing strategies based on the knowledge acquired from these accumulation processes. As such, while building on the historical processes that led to its production, it initiates new horizons of practice. 'Confession is betrayal' is a slogan; it sets a mode of behavior that resolves the primary conflict between the individual I, and the collective I in a very specific way. The manner of the resolution is minutely detailed in PCBB as a discourse textualized.

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[9] In almost all the interviews that I conducted, the names of captives who were killed during interrogation were narrativized as part of the Palestinian heroism myth.



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#### *5.3.2.1 The Text*

The preface of PCBB starts with life, or more accurately it starts with the love of, desire for, and eagerness to live. It etches certain types of individuals who love a certain type of life.

> The revolutionaries love life, and for that reason they do not hesitate to risk their own lives to make a free decent life for their people; the life of humiliation and subordination to the chains of oppression and exploitation is not a life, it is a miserable and wretched existence that must be changed (p. 5).

The beginning sets the primary constitutive loop. It has two opposing poles, two mutually exclusive options: life or death. The track of life, if chosen by the revolutionary, will redeem his people and bring them to a free decent life. The track of death, not necessarily physical death, is a state of existence that is miserable and wretched. In this schema of life/death there is a reclassification of the accepted notions and categories of the mundane practices of the Palestinian society. Life lived under occupation, accepting the colonial order of things, is death. The death of the individual as a total rejection of the colonial order is life for the collective. Several years after the publication of PCBB, these dynamics of resistance came to dominate the political activism during the Intifada of 1987 (Pitcher, 1998).

The track of life for the Palestinian revolutionary in the occupied territories, if chosen, leads to four possibilities: martyrdom, deportation, going underground,



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or political captivity. The last option is the most common because of the socio-historical context of the colonial situation in Palestine.

> Captivity is the most common path, in which the struggler faces physical, mental and barbaric terror, and years of captivity, which may be long or short ones … The balance of the material powers in the interrogation is in favor of the enemy, who owns the stick and the brutal oppression. But the struggler is not devoid of any weapon, on the contrary he has a weapon which cannot be beaten, it is the moral weapon: his belief, his fighting will, his convictions, his humanity and his morality, all of which fight bitterly with the material weapon (PCBB, p. 8).

The interrogation, then, is a conflict, a battle between the soul and the material. The life/soul/revolutionary Palestinian, armed with his moral and mental weapons, fights hard to gain victory over death/material/Israeli colonizer who is armed with material weapons. The terrorizing acts of the colonizer as interrogator aim to shatter the struggler's physical and mental cohesiveness, causing him to collapse. Belief, will, conviction, and morality are both mental resources and the manifestation of a strong, coherent inner mental constitution. The clash between these two forces determines the outcome of the interrogation.

The text then goes on to describe the only two possible scenes that could result from the interrogation: collapse or steadfastness.

> He who thinks that collapse will save his head and rescue him from the intelligence services is ignorant of them; it is like someone who runs away from a bear only to fall into a well. Just as you cannot seek refuge from the coal in the fire, you cannot seek refuge from the intelligence services in confession … In contrast, the steady struggler stands in front of them like a huge mountain. He does not soften or bend. They start to back up, and carry their defeat by changing the interrogation teams, and



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> this is the first sign of victory for the struggler. Many have proved they were made of steel. The historical memory contains tens of thousands, and in our Palestinian experience there is a long list, for example Qasim Abu 'Akir, Nadir Al 'Afwry, 'Abid alhafith Zydan, 'Aly Jamal, Muhammad Sulieman (p. 10-11).

As a captive one either falls into the coals and the fire, one confesses and becomes a prisoner in a well; or one can become a mountain made of steel and join the list of historical memory. The confessor is forgotten; the steadfast struggler joins the historical train of heroes. The names of strugglers who overcame the interrogator demarcate the concrete significant others, the models of the revolutionary.

After describing these two options, the text analyzes the battle of interrogation, which could lead to victory or defeat. In the opinion of the author(s) there are five main factors on the side of the colonized that determine the result of the battle. These factors are: the beliefs, convictions, and tradition of the national organization, the quality and personal background of the struggler, the organizational technique, the class status of the organization, and the conditions of captivity. These factors are part of the collective processes and dynamics. The individual struggler, even in his quality and personal background, is seen as a product of his socio-historical context.

The enemy, in order to subjugate and defeat the Palestinians, manipulates the body and mind of the Palestinians. For the author(s), the torture does not start with the interrogation; it began at the moment of occupation, in 1967. Since then, the colonizer has made the Palestinian society totally dependent on his



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institutions, military and civic. Arrest, interrogation, and captivity are just one site, although unique and intense, in the larger context of occupation. For PCBB, there is only one principle to which the struggler must abide.

> In the interrogation the enemy wants to create an atmosphere of cooperation between the struggler and the interrogator. The latter will order, and the former will obey … he will ask and the struggler will answer. The intelligence service man will use his famous frightening image, and terrorizing and deceitful techniques. The moment the struggler refuses and challenges the orders, the two conditions of the interrogation process will fall. The only principle is to refuse to cooperate and to bring down the barricade of fear and terror (p. 22).

In fact, the 'principle' is to shake and destabilize the unevenness of the power relations between the struggler and the interrogator by negating the ground that the interrogator, as a center of power, stands on. In order to negate the condition of being acted upon, of being colonized, the struggler, as an agent, has to destroy the fear and terror and refuse to cooperate.

In the preface, the author(s) of PCBB present the following schema:

| | |
|---|---|
| **a- Life/revolutionary** | **'a- Death/colonizer.** |
| **b- Political captivity** | **'b- Colonial interrogator.** |
| **c- Victory** | **'c- Defeat.** |
| **d- Decent life/real revolutionary** | **'d- Miserable existence/traitor.** |

These eight threads weave the texture and build the topography of occupation. In b we can substitute other moments and modes of resistance, while in 'b we can alternate between the different colonial institutions and



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practices. Hence, while it seems that the national discourse is structured with a, c, d and its opposites ‘a, ‘c, ‘d, as permanent signs, b and ‘b change, alternate, displace, and transfer the colonial relations across the range of sites that is socio- historically determined.

PCBB, as a specific site in the topography of colonial relations, then goes on to describe and analyze the interrogation in detail on two parallel, yet connected and mutually constitutive, axes. The first is the theories and techniques that the interrogator uses to bring the captive to a state of fear and terror and force him to cooperate. It enters into the mind scheme of the colonizer to observe the laws and details of his actions. The second is the theories and techniques *that the struggler must use to resist and negate the fear and terror that could lead to cooperation with the interrogator.*

### 5.3.3 *The Theory of Interrogation*

PCBB locates the theory of interrogation as the study of the vicious conflictual processes between the representatives of the Palestinian national movement and the representative of the colonial authorities. The interrogation exists on the continuum of colonizer-colonized relations, in which:

> … the interrogator aims at emptying the struggler of his national and class content, and destroying his struggling attitude. On his side, the struggler aims to remain steadfast and block the chances of the interrogator. In consequence, the struggler protects himself, his party, and his national movement from the blows of the enemy (p. 30).



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The two poles of the conflict -- the struggler and the interrogator -- act according to the interests of the parties that they represent. The interrogator is an official in the occupying system, backed and strengthened by all the colonial machines and resources. He uses these resources to extract information from the struggler and bring him to a state of paralysis and total dependence on the colonizer. The struggler, the opposite pole, is fighting for freedom from the state of colonization that his people and society are suffering. "The struggler defends this issue with his physical, cognitive, mental, and moral powers" (p.30). So long as the struggler is a captive, the battle of the vicious conflict must be resolved. The resolution, according to the theory of interrogation, depends on convictions, belonging, principles, will, and belief.

> In such a conflict, the probability of winning tends to be on the side of the one who is stronger in convictions, stronger in belonging, firmer in his principles; he who is stronger in his belief will win. The struggler will win if he is determined to achieve victory and resolution… determined not to betray his comrades, his party organization, and his national movement … determined not to betray his people … At the end of the day, the interrogator is a clerk (p. 31).

The aim of these detailed descriptions is to find the pattern of relations and predict the outcome of the confrontation in the interrogation context. The concept of 'theory' is used in PCBB as a law that interprets and predicts the movement of the relations between the interrogator and the captive. Moreover, 'theory' is knowledge that guides the captive in 'how to be' in the vicious interrogation. The next step is to break the 'to be' into specific sets of behavior.



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There are two alternative sets of behavior: one is steadfastness and solidity, and the other is collapse and confession. The first is defined as follows:

> The prisoner faces different techniques of torture in order to affect him mentally and bodily … it is to make actions, reactions and interactions in the human material and moral structure … (such as beating… denying him water to drink, etc.). The important aspect, though, is that the one who has belief and will may be affected physically and bodily by the beatings, but no method will shake the moral aspect … Steadfastness here means that the struggler overcomes the material and moral effects that he faces … (p. 36).

Steadfastness, then, is a condition in which the soul defeats the demands of the body. It means overcoming the physical and mental torture that is controlled and applied by the interrogator by standing firmly on moral ground, refusing to cooperate, and destroying the fear and terror.

The set of behavior that constitutes collapse/betrayal is:

> … the condition of readiness to give information and reveal secrets about the revolution and the party under the excuse of getting out of the rounds of interrogation. There is a belief that giving a confession is the end, the real rescue, which is followed by a cigarette and a cup of tea, the life in the dark lonely dungeons of interrogation will turn nice and happy for several minutes … (p. 38).

To give information, secrets, and knowledge to the interrogator is to submit oneself to the enemy. It is to descend to the state of an animal. In order to eat and drink, the confessor delivers his revolution and his party.

The fullness/emptiness metaphor recurs here. The interrogator aims to empty the struggler of his content. Morals, convictions, beliefs, and principles are the basis on which stand the strong will, namely, the agency. The



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Palestinian's humanity/soul is expressed through this agency of resisting the colonizer. The ultimate aim of the interrogator/colonizer is to shatter the Palestinian's strong will to resist by draining him of the basis of morals, convictions, beliefs and principles. The confession is the first stage of shattering the will and draining its mental and physical bases.

Hence, according to the theory of interrogation, there is a structural set of relations that governs the dynamic of the vicious conflict and its two possible resolutions.

| | |
|---|---|
| **a- The captured struggler/full** | **'a- The interrogator/drainer** |
| **b- The steadfast captive/the collapsed captive** | **'b- The defeated interrogator/the victorious interrogator** |

This schema can be further elaborated, as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **a- Passive 0/full** | **'a- Active 0/empty** |
| **b- Active 1/passive 1** | **'b- Passive '1/active' 1** |

Viewed from this perspective, the theory of interrogation can be seen as a specific instance of a resistance theory in a colonial condition. The hierarchical colonial relations are, at the a and 'a phase, a situation in which the colonized is full of history/ideology but in a state of passivity due to the violence of the colonizer. The colonizer is active due to the position of power that he occupies.



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At the same time, he is empty in two senses. First, he is empty of human morals; second, he is empty of knowledge about the colonized and needs to fill himself with it in order to sustain his privileges.

The passage of the relations into phase b and 'b, is mediated through two different qualities of mediators. The colonizer uses material, physical, and mental means to actively build the passage into the state of passive 1/active '1, while the struggler uses moral means, namely ideology, to designate the passage into the state of active 1/passive '1.

At this point, PCBB goes on to describe and analyze the interrogation techniques, and the counter techniques that the struggler must use to stand firm. In the perspective delineated above, these techniques and their counter techniques are instruments of passage; they build the bridge on which the colonial relations pass from the first phase (conflict) to the second phase (resolution).

### 5.3.4 *The Techniques of Interrogation*

The choice of the various techniques of interrogation depends on the type of captive and the type of interrogator who is questioning him. A captive might be arrested by chance, that is, not because of political activism or commitment to resistance. In the context of the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza strip, any Palestinian could be arrested either for a specific reason, such as being a witness to an event or helping revolutionaries to cross through his land, or as



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part of military campaigns and raids. The second type of captive is the professional one.

> The professional captive is a citizen who is committed mentally, politically and organizationally. He ties his destiny totally to the wheel of struggle through the party or the organization. He becomes totally integrated in them in such a way that his destiny becomes one with the destiny of the revolution. The destinies of the revolution, the revolutionary party or organization become his own (p. 65).

The political activist is part of a larger organized social group. His commitment is an outcome of rational processes on the levels of thought and politics. These processes lead to the merging of the individual activist with the organized group, a unification of destinies. Such an activist is a professional captive in two senses. First, he will experience captivity many times during his life. Second, he is well prepared, as an active political agent, to face captivity with skills and techniques that will make him withstand the interrogation.

The interrogator leads the conflictive processes of the questioning and uses specific techniques based on the preparatory stage. The preparatory process includes:

1- Collection of personal and social information on the captive from every possible source.

2- The interrogator meets the captive and talks with him about general issues to determine his general condition.



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3- The interrogator initiates the first round of interrogation by asking direct questions about the specific topic and the related issues. At this stage he tries to give the impression that he knows everything and there is nothing left to hide.

4- The interrogation team studies the information collected and tries to diagnose the mental condition of the captive.

5- After deciding on the general plan of interrogation, the interrogators decide on the techniques of interrogation to be used with the specific captive (p. 77-78).

The book's detailed description of the interrogator's steps and plans gives the captive, in the shock of being captured, a sense of secure ground based on his ability and knowledge of how to predict the behavior of his interrogator. This description of the preparatory stage portrays the interrogator in a state of uncertainty and search. Like the captive, he seeks a way to control a context mostly characterized as unclear and vague. This way of presenting the interrogation puts the two sides on the same footing.

The two poles are demarcated and positioned in their respective contexts, and hence their behavior during the interrogation is predictable. The predictability provides both sides with options for controlling the resolution of the conflict by using specific techniques and skills.

PCBB distinguishes between three main kinds of techniques: mental, neurological, and collaborative (by Palestinians). While the mental and



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neurological techniques are mainly practiced by the interrogator himself, the third kind is operated by Palestinians who work for the interrogator and for the colonial system in general.

The author(s) of PCBB define the mental techniques as:

> ... a sequence of framed practices and operations and a method which aims to affect the mental condition of the detainee, subordinating him, weakening him mentally and morally, destroying his personal coherence, and creating a general deficit in his mental condition and interconnection, so as to make him more compliant with other specific effects, and react in certain specific ways. The effect of the atmosphere on the captive would be of the greatest magnitude (p. 81).

The almost lexical definition of the mental technique demystifies it and renders it comprehensible. It is a sequence of imposed behaviors designed to bring the captive to a state characterized by a shattered mental condition. The sequence comprises certain practices that can be verified and listed. They are summed up as follows:

1- Doubting and shaking the connections between the captive and his social groups.

2- Terrorizing.

3- Simplifying the case.

4- Exaggerating and magnifying the consequences of the case.

5- The friend and the monster.

6- Many interrogators.

7- Scattering of thoughts.



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8- Concentrating on the emotions and social morals.

9- Political burning and bad naming.

10- Buying and making deals.

11- Surprises and coincidences.

12- Polygraph test.

13- Hypnosis (p.81-175).

No one practice is used alone or permanently, and their use depends on the evaluation of the interrogation team. Moreover, these techniques are used in addition to torturing the captive. Usually, the captive is beaten, starved, spread-eagled on the wall, imprisoned in a small cupboard with hands cuffed behind his back, freezing water is thrown on him in the winter, he is forbidden to go to the toilet for days, among other techniques. The aim is to deprive the captive's body, and hence his/her mental state, of any of the basic physical needs in order to break him or her. So the interrogation techniques are used before and during the torture sessions (p. 82).

In all the mental techniques, except for the polygraph and hypnosis, the interrogator attempts to force the captive to disconnect from his sense of collectivity and to act as an individual. You are alone now; all the social and political groups that you are part of are worthless. I, the interrogator, control your life and death. You have to submit yourself to me. As opposed to this, the narrator of PCBB guides the captive to think and summon the collective from his memory. The captive should remember the party, the neighborhood, his



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comrades, his family, his righteous struggle for liberation, and the captives who sacrificed their lives by not telling secrets to the interrogator and thus saved him and other comrades.

The sections of the book describing the polygraph and hypnosis focus on the informative level. They describe the working of each technique and the ways to defy the interrogator who uses them or threatens to use them. The claim, it is argued, is that the interrogator can bypass the captive's defenses and extract whatever information he is hiding by using 'scientific' techniques. The counter claim is that no information could leap out under any circumstances without the will of the captive (p. 163-175).

In the Zionist discourse, the claim that there is no Palestinian nation was one of the major constitutive themes. There is no Other in the land, there is only Us. The mental techniques of individualizing the captive seem to build on the general discursive practices of not negating the other, but eliminating him as a national collective.

The neurological techniques are physical practices designed to affect the nervous system. The brain, according to PCBB, works by a general law of stimulation and depression. The interrogator makes use of this law to exhaust the captive bodily and mentally and bring him to a cooperative mood. The practices are:

1- Continuous monotonous beating on nerve endings, for example, the finger-tips, the genitals, the eyes, the ears, and the lips.



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2- Over-stimulation of the auditory and visual senses by using patterns of highly magnified sound and light to irritate the captive.

3- Handcuffing the captive's hands behind his back, and tying him to a wall for hours and days on end.

4- Creating a tense atmosphere by denying the captive food, water, rest, and physical needs for long periods.

5- Forcing the captive to practice patterns of movements that are alien to his normal activities, such as hopping on one leg for hours.

6- Using medications to exhaust the body, for example, an insulin overdose.

7- The use of narcotics in such a degree as to paralyze the captive's body but still keep him awake (p. 177-178).

The purpose of these practices is to destroy the body as a resource for the captive in resisting the interrogator, or at least, to give the illusion of this to the captive. These practices appear to be based on the assumption that the body/soul dichotomy is hierarchical. The body is the foundation upon which the soul is erected. Hence, if the body were destroyed, the soul would collapse. This assumption is refuted by PCBB, which asserts that the destruction of the body will not necessarily bring about the collapse of the soul. On the contrary, one can turn the destruction into victory if one acts, thinks and feels in certain ways.

So, the brain condition, like the central nervous system, plays a role in the manner of responding. And the activity of the brain in general is affected by one's expertise, experience, and culture. It



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> is also affected by the bodily, mental, and moral conditions previous to the use of the stimulant. Also, the expectation regarding the type of stimulant, the readiness of how to respond, the duration of the stimulant, and the attitude toward it, all these factors help the captives in controlling their reactions … (p. 188).

Two sets of factors can minimize the effects of the techniques applied to exhaust the nervous system. The first set is external factors such as the captive's expertise with interrogation and captivity, life experience, and cultural background. The second set is the captive's internal factors or mental condition at the time of the interrogation. It seems that these internal factors, such as the duration of the stimulant administered, and previous readiness, are based on academic literature on the human nervous system.

By being aware of these two sets of factors the captive can minimize the effects; in fact, he can preempt the aims of the interrogator.

The subject of collaboration with the colonial authorities is one of the main issues discussed in PCBB, which relates to it as the ultimate defeat, humiliation and degradation that a Palestinian could reach. In the chapter on interrogation techniques, the use of collaborators is seen as a type of technique different from the other two, although it might overlap in many of the practices of interrogation.

Because of the importance of this category which connects the two poles of the conflict, it is worth quoting from PCBB at length in order to understand its centrality as 'half other, half I,' and PCBB's attitude toward the collaborators.

> The falling of a person nationally, and his connection with the intelligence service, are not limited to commercial relations of give and take – they go beyond that. The person who falls becomes a



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> miserable animal to be ridden by the men of the intelligence service, no more than a tool with two legs … In the beginning the relations may be restricted to the principle of 'Atake information and give me money' … This situation does not suit the intelligence service, they have to turn him into a ridden animal … And through this continuous falling, the collaborator is trained to do spying activities, following and penetrating the national organizations and groupings… (pp. 191-192).

Leaving the collective I, and joining the Other is classified as a downfall from a human to an animal state. There is no midway between being a collaborator and being a 'Palestinian.' It is a dynamic relationship that leads one right to the bottom as a ridden animal.

In this classification system, the collaborators perform certain functions in the interrogation processes. These are:

1- They play the role of captives in the dungeons, aiming to gain the trust of other political captives and extract information and confessions from them.

2- Some of the collaborators are planted in the community of captives. While there, they try to undermine the community by initiating quarrels and fights, smuggling drugs, watching and following political activists, spreading rumors among the captives, using religious argumentation against the secular organization and thus stripping them of their legitimacy, and other destructive practices.

3- Some collaborators live in separate sections of the prisons, the Shame Sections. If a captive does not confess, he may be sent to these



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sections, which he is told is the regular community of political captives. The procedure of welcoming a new captive is acted and performed by the collaborators. Part of this procedure is to write a report about his organizational activities and what happened to him in the interrogation. In the three spheres of activities of the collaborators, the main praxis is to act as a nationally committed Palestinian in order to collect information, or better still, to make the other confess and collaborate, and bring him to the colonial interrogator. In many respects, collaborators are the Trojan Horse of the colonial system in general, and of the interrogators in particular. The relations between the two poles of the conflict are bridged, mediated through the category of collaboration. Although the basic dynamic of the scheme of colonial relations is not changed by this category, the pace of the mediation is accelerated and intensified. The acceleration and intensification of the mediation are built upon the Palestinian socio-historical context, namely, the economic and social factors that produce the socio-cultural phenomenon of collaboration.

The final chapter of PCBB analyzes the socio-historical basis of Palestinian society, which can produce socio-cultural contexts of legitimate confession and collaboration. Under the title "General Concepts," the author(s) enumerate and negate these contexts.

1- Shame and honor

2- Torture and patience

3- They caught it on me



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4- Somebody told everything

5- Compromise and selling out

6- I found everything in front of me

7- I didn't confess except about one person

8- General procedures.

9- Critical moments (pp. 217-252).

Captives who confess and collaborate use these arguments to justify their behavior. These arguments are (re)produced in the socio-historical context of a shattered agrarian socioeconomic structure in the era of late dependent capitalism with its colonial offshoot. Patriarchal and neo-patriarchal moralities, as moral dominance systems, are invoked by the captives, the collaborators, and the colonizers to narrate certain behaviors and attitudes. For example, the value of 'shame' could be used by the political captives' community to claim that it is shameful to betray one's family and relatives; the collaborator could argue that it is shameful not to defend one's sister, mother or wife when brought to the police station, and hence he confessed and collaborated to protect his honor; many times the colonial interrogator manipulates the captive by using or threatening to use female family members to get him to confess.[10]

[10] For more details on this topic of dualities and its historical roots see Sharabi (1988) and Barakat (1993).



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PCBB is a manual for the novice political activist who is expected to be arrested and interrogated. In it, the colonial site of interrogation is represented in three main spheres. First, it demarcates and positions the relationships between the two poles of the conflict -- the Palestinian political captive and the Israeli colonial representative -- in the context of political captivity. In this general setting, the representative of the colonial authority has control over the physical surroundings, including the body of the captive, while the captive himself has many other resources in the mental and almost 'national' spiritual spheres. The second sphere is the theory of interrogation, which is the law of the dynamics of these relations. This law is characterized and detailed in such a way as to control and predict the outcome of the interrogation. The third section of the book focuses on the specific techniques and practices used by the interrogator, based on this theory of interrogation. These techniques are classified into mental, neurological, and use of collaborators.

The general perception of political captivity, the theory of interrogation, and the description of the specific techniques, are all based on the Palestinian political activists' understanding of their historical moment in colonial Palestine. These understandings stem from accumulated experience and from analytical practices of extrapolating the laws of the socio-historical realities. Hence, PCBB is an intervention in these realities in order to channel them in the desired direction. To fully understand these relations of representation as intervention



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we need to locate the text, PCBB, in the social and historical context that produced it, gave it its shape and content.

## 5.4 Tracing the discursive formations

The arrest and interrogation are socio-historical events in the larger context of political captivity as realized, practiced and communicated in colonial Palestine. This section attempts to grasp the encoding/decoding processes of the interrogation as a social event, through the eyes of the colonized, namely PCBB. More specifically, the analysis of PCBB as a textual code and a discursive form, will, I believe, be more comprehensive and thorough if we explicate the conditions of its production, circulation and consumption/ reproduction, as part of a larger collective effort to cope with the realities that are laden with conflictive relations.

In his analysis of the processes of encoding/decoding of the telecommunication process, S. Hall (1981) describes the relation between a social event and its communication through the networks of society. He argues that:

> A raw historical event cannot, *in that form*, be transmitted by, say, a television newscast. Events can only be signified within the aural-visual forms of the televisual discourse. In the moment when a historical event passes under the sign of discourse, it is subject to all the complex formal 'rules' by which language signifies. To put it paradoxically, the event must become a 'story' before it can become a *communicative event* (p. 129, Italics in original).



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Although Hall's argument concerns the telecommunication process, the dynamic of encoding/decoding is relevant to communicative events in general. The analytical move that distinguishes between the raw materials of history and, to paraphrase Levi-Strauss's intervention, the cooking of that material through the processes of signification to make a story is an insightful one as long as we take its limitations seriously. First, the assumption that there exists a history before the sign is misleading; historical events exist only because of their representation in circulated signs, be it 'raw' or 'cooked' (see Butler, 1990, for a detailed critique of this issue). Hence, the raw event and its story are simultaneous in time, and do not abide by the concept of linear temporality. The second limitation concerns the 'story' as a coherent template of communication. Hall argues in his article that different social groups would have different stories, and in this way he tries to relativize and contextualize the story as such. But the claim that each social category, be it class, gender, or race, has its own story does not address the notion of a pre-given social category (Thompson, 1966; Williams, 1977). Understood in this way, the story is in an emerging state, it is a process in the making in its social locality or site, which, like society in general, is multiple and not necessarily coherent (Volosinov, 1973). PCBB creates a problematic for such an understanding, because the story communicated in it is one of totality, homogeneity, and complete dichotomy, either steadfastness or collapse. In the previous sections of this chapter, I attempted to demarcate the processes of forming the story of PCBB, which started in 1967 and culminated



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in its writing during the first half of the 1980s. In this section I will analyze the crystallized moment of the story of interrogation. Locating PCBB as a moment in these processes may help us to understand the tension between the totality of PCBB and the theoretical understanding that the story, any story, is never total.

Therefore, the socio-historical making of PCBB as a story communicated specifically throughout the political captives' community and across Palestinian society in general, should be analyzed at the conjunction between the making of the event, that is, colonization, and the making of its stories, for example, PCBB. The socioeconomic formations of colonial Palestine make political captivity a socio-historical event that is mostly characterized as an intense site with the potential of a transformative set of structural relations. The colonial prison in Palestine, it is argued, is the colonial site par excellence. The interrogation is a transitory stage between the actual arrest and imprisonment as such. In this transitory process there is a totalizing mechanism, which supposedly puts all the power in the colonizer's hands, and leaves the colonized naked in face of this totality. However, in the realities of the daily practices of occupation and colonization, there is no such totality. Different ideological formations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip constitute, in a sense, zones of 'relief' in their hierarchical relations and non-correspondence. These are socio-historical spaces/times of the pre-colonization era. It is not that these spaces are uncontaminated by the colonial relations, but that they are ideologically reproduced in the colonial condition as uncontaminated, purified, totally 'I'. If



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resistance is the fight, the zones of relief are the flight, in the psychoanalytic sense, into redigesting history. For example, modern standard Arabic, as used in Palestinian society, is reified as purely pre-colonial. A close look into this variation of Arabic would suggest the contrary. The colonial condition is present even at the syntactical levels of Arabic. These dynamics of decontamination on the symbolic level are structurally necessary due to the violent nature of colonialism as practiced by Zionism, which aims at 'cleansing' the land. In fact, one of the main tropes of the Zionist colonial settlement discourse is that there are no people with history in the land of History. But this argumentation in late colonialism, as the parallel of late capitalism in the periphery, is a neat realization of what Deleuze and Guattari (1983) call the two-fold movement:

> ... there is the two-fold movement of decoding or deterritorializing flows on the one hand, and their violent and artificial reterritorialization on the other. The more the capitalist machine deterritorializes, decoding and axiomatizing flows in order to extract surplus values from them, the more its ancillary apparatuses, such as government bureaucracies and the forces of law and order, do their utmost to reterritorialize, absorbing in the process a larger and larger share of surplus value (pp. 34-35).

From this perspective, the prison, as a bureaucratic force of law and order, functions in a larger system of decoding and recoding mechanisms of capitalism. The notions of rehabilitation and integration, for example, fall into the movement of recoding. The question is: is this two-fold movement countered in general by other ones? And specifically, what are the counter movements to the



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prison? Further, what is the relevance of these analyses of industrial societies in their colonies?

In principle, Zionism had to violently decode Palestine, the people and the territory, in order to pluck its surplus values. The circle is completed only by coding it anew through different bureaucratic institutions and forces of law and order. One of these is the entire institution of political captivity. Robert Young (1995), building on the interventions of Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus, phrases the violent two-fold movement of Western colonialism rather succinctly:

> This description of the operations of capitalism as territorial writing machine seems not only especially suited to historical development of industrialization, but also describes rather exactly the violent physical and ideological procedures of colonization, deculturation and acculturation, by which the territory and cultural space of an indigenous society must be disrupted, dissolved and then reinscribed according to the needs of the apparatus of the occupying power (p. 82).

While Young's description of the processes of destruction and deconstruction of indigenous societies and their reorganization in accordance with the colonizer's system is accurate, it does not address the agency of the indigenous people in relation to the occupiers' practices. How can we conceptualize the indigenous counter inscriptions? And, is the 'counter' the only possible way in the colonial condition?

The decontamination dynamic of the colonized is the parallel counter to the colonizer's attempt to deculturate and acculturate them. By excavating the 'past' in a pure form, the colonized society in fact counter reterritorializes it's claimed



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but brutally annexed space/time. Seen from this perspective, interrogation as a socio-historical event is composed of a range of techniques of decoding and recoding, and of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, not only by the colonizer/interrogator, but also simultaneously by the colonized/interrogated. Put in this light, PCBB is the interrogation event under the sign of discourse, which becomes a quartet movement. It decodes the colonial condition of decoding/recoding only to re-recode, through intense processes of decontamination; it is the Palestinian flight to fight. To paraphrase S. Hall, PCBB retells the Palestinian story to communicate/install the uncontaminated 'I'.

PCBB is a text that uses decontamination techniques in order to articulate a resolution, due to Palestinian society's inability, at least temporarily, to resolve the contradictions of the colonial condition, of which the interrogation is a salient example. In his "The Political Unconscious", F. Jameson (1981) tries to build a pre-model for a comprehensive Marxist theory of interpretation. He proposes rereading the cultural artifact or the text in three different but related concentric horizons.

> … in particular we will suggest that such semantic enrichment and enlargement of the inert givens and materials of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks, which mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text through the notions, first, of political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chroniclelike sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now less diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and succession and destiny of the various human social formations (p. 75).



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The threads between these three frameworks of analysis are the crucial point for a full understanding of the text as a symbolic intervention in the different layers of a specific reality. By placing the emphasis on the interactive relations between these different spheres, one can supersede the almost mystifying presence of texts and textualities as they appear in the academic literature. In peeling off the different aspects of PCBB, one reaches the conclusion that the moment of a text, in its sociality, contains the three frameworks or circles of Jameson's model.

The political history of PCBB, as a text that deals with the problematic of interrogation for the Palestinian resistance organizations, tells us that while the tide of arrests was peaking, the organized systematic social actions of the community of political captives, and their counterparts in the larger society, narrated the problematics, the real contradictions, into a text, into a socially symbolic act. Building on Levi-Strauss's reading of facial decoration as a socially symbolic act of the Caduveo in his "Tristes Tropiques" ([1955] 1992), Jameson argues that there is "... a basic analytical or interpretive principle: the individual narrative, or the individual formal structure, is to be grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (p. 77). PCBB symbolically repulses the attempt to shatter the Palestinian identity, in other words, the colonial decoding process, by totalizing and purifying this identity into one homogeneous whole, steadfastness.



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At this stage of locating the symbolic act in political history, one should look for the discursive procedures that narrate the symbolic itself. Foucault (1981), in his article "The Order of Discourse," delimits three main discursive procedures: exclusion, internal procedures of rarefaction, and the determining conditions of application. The schema that appeared earlier in this chapter can help us to understand these discursive procedures in regard to PCBB.

| | |
|---|---|
| **a- Passive 0/full** | **'a- Active 0/empty** |
| **b- Active 1/passive 1** | **'b- Passive' 1 /active' 1** |

In PCBB, exclusion is based mainly on prohibition. It is forbidden to build any bridge of cooperation whatsoever with the colonizer. The passage from a to b is achieved by strengthening the steadfastness, which means adhering to the prohibitions. The author(s) relegate to the domain of the prohibited all the discursive practices from the history of the Palestinian culture that could indicate the possibility of any kind of naturalizing the relations between the colonizer and the colonized. For example, individualistic tendencies, shame and honor on the basis of the patriarchical discourse, hospitality to strangers, and similar patterns, are recontextualized in PCBB as prohibited practices vis-à-vis the colonizer. In this manner, while the active interrogator extracts information, the active captive withholds it according to the matrix of prohibition, which is totalized in all the



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domains of social and political practices. Thus, decontamination is achieved, at least partly, by the totality of the prohibition.

The internal procedures of rarefaction are described by Foucault as "... procedures which function rather as principles of classification, of ordering, of distribution, as if this time another dimension of discourse had to be mastered: that of events and chance" (p. 56). Foucault enumerates three main procedures for the accomplishment of these functions: the commentary, the author, and the discipline. The commentary is used as a differentiating and hierarchizing mechanism between the regular and the unusual, above the mundane type of discourse. PCBB is not a regular discourse; it is a manual for the heroes-to-be, or for the traitors to be punished. Hence, we see that the commentary type of discursive units form the majority in PCBB. With regard to the author, as the source of a certain group of discourses, PCBB is seen as a product of PFLP. As such, it is perceived as an element of a coherent system; it is the norm of the author, namely the PFLP, and not the exception.

As for the discipline, PCBB is part of a language, a system of organized texts of the Palestinian national liberation movement in general. Moreover, it is a constitutive part of the disciplinary clandestine resistance practices, which has its topics, methods, rules, definitions, and specific dynamics of generating the true and the false.

Foucault (1981) describes the conditions of application as:



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> … imposing a certain number of rules on the individuals who hold them, and thus not permitting everyone to have access to them. There is a rarefaction, this time, of the speaking subjects; none shall enter the order of discourse if he does not satisfy certain requirements or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so (pp. 61-62).

The determining conditions of application of the discourse of PCBB rely on two sets of processes. First, the social processes of secrecy, which determine who is to speak, to read, and to rewrite PCBB. Clandestine activities in the Palestinian national movement have their own language, rituals, and doctrines. The second set of processes is related to the entrance into these social and political circuits, which has one path, the resistance organization.[11]

These characteristics of exclusion, internal procedures of rarefaction, and conditions of application of PCBB, are most prominent on the textual level through the volume of the voice of the narrator(s) and the pace by which this volume is determined. The volume is so high that it almost shouts, and the pace is so rapid that no empty space is left. On the textual level, the combination of volume and pace in PCBB is achieved through the play of relative proportions between the function units and the indices. Roland Barthes (1977) differentiates between these two types of unit, claiming that while both have functional dimensions, the former are distributional while indices are integrational.

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[11] The topic of clandestine activity within the Palestinian national movement is barely addressed by the national movement itself or by the academic research institutions. It could be claimed that the nature of the topic renders it inaccessible, yet it seems that these types of practices constitute an important axis in the resistance movement.



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> Indices, because of the vertical nature of their relations are truly semantic units: unlike functions… they refer to a signified, not to an 'operation'. The ratification of indices is 'higher up'… a paradigmatic ratification. That of functions, by contrast, is always 'further on', is a syntagmatic ratification. *Functions* and *indices* thus overlay another classic distinction: functions involve metonymic relata, indices metaphoric relata; the former correspond to a functionality of doing, the latter to a functionality of being (in Guha, 1988, p. 128, emphasis in original).

The text of PCBB is mainly a text of indices. The functions, the sequential order of the units, are supportive of the vertical order of the indices. Each moment of operation is not left alone; it must be a path leading to a state of being, which is steadfastness. The hierarchy of indices over functions creates the high volume and the rapid pace. There is no function as such. It is always an indexed one. Hence, reading PCBB is always a collective reading/writing of the main symbolic order of the Palestinian national movement.

The political history of PCBB is located in the larger dynamics of Palestinian society. The main issue in the second framework of interpretation is the class struggle and its class discourse. Jameson (1981), following Bakhtin, frames the class discourse as "essentially dialogical in its structure," adding that:

> … it will be necessary to add the qualification that the normal form of the dialogical is essentially an antagonistic one, and that the dialogue of class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code.… This larger class discourse can be said to be organized around minimal 'units which we will call ideologemes… manifest itself either as a pseudoidea… or as a protonarrative (pp. 84-87).



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If we apply the class struggle to the colonial condition, following Fanon's argumentations (1963), instead of the dominant class and the laboring one, we have the colonizer/dominant, and the colonized/laborer. Moreover, in the colonial condition, and the Palestinian case is no exception to this, the various socio-historical divisions such as class, gender, and ethnicity are usually subordinated to the primary division of colonizer/colonized.[12] The dialogical aspect of the colonial conflict is materialized discursively on many levels, but most prominently in the use of Hebrew phrases by the colonized, and the presence of Arabic in the Hebrew of the colonizer.[13] The colonial discourse, as the common master code, is organized around the colonial ideologemes. In the Palestinian colonial condition, as in other colonial conditions, the protonarrative is that of the desire for power. One must do everything, even die, to seize power and control the land and the people. In the light of this ideologeme, the narrative of Palestinian national liberation must be reread. The real contradictions of interrogation in the colonial jail are resolved in the imaginary manner of the text, PCBB. The discourse of the colonial/class struggle is structured in a dialogical

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12 One of the main debates among the Palestinian organizations and intellectuals is around the issue of the primary conflict. The right wing, represented by Fateh, claims that it is the national conflict, while the left, represented by the PFLP, sees the primary conflict on the level of class divisions.

13 Language use in colonial Palestine is another issue, which has not been addressed adequately, although language is a crucial aspect of the colonial conflict. Arabic is seen by the Palestinians, as by other Arabs, as a sign not only of identity, but also of a glorious history. Hence, Palestinians Arabize Hebrew, they domesticate it in their history. On the other hand, Hebrew plays a different role within the Israeli society; it is the young sign of identity. So, in the dialogical/antagonistic relations, the Other's language plays a different role in the language of the I.



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and antagonistic way between two poles, colonizer and colonized, each of them striving to seize the power over the land and the people. The techniques of decontamination are a way of empowering the colonized Palestinian in his struggle to reign over the land.

The third horizon in which to locate and reread PCBB is that of history in the larger sense. Jameson takes from N. Poulantzas the argument that at each historical juncture there is a social formation, which consists of several modes of production. In each transition and transformation of one mode of production to another, the previous ones do not just disappear; rather, they are hierarchized and become dependent on the current dominant mode of production[14]. For Jameson the textual object of analysis at this final horizon is the ideology of form.

> I will suggest that within this final horizon the individual text or cultural artifact… is here restructured as a field of force in which the dynamics of sign systems of several distinct modes of production can be registered and apprehended. These dynamics - the newly constituted 'text' of our third horizon - make up what can be termed the ideology of form, that is, the determinate contradiction of the specific messages emitted by the varied sign systems which coexist in a given artistic process as well as in its general social formation (pp. 98-99, italics in original).

One could argue that several sign systems exist in contradictory ways in PCBB. Each of the following modes of Palestinian society has its own sign

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[14] The Arab Marxists have been struggling with the rereading of the Arab Islamic history through applying Marxian analysis at least since the 1950s. The coexistence of several modes of production is one of the debated issues among them. Prominent among these thinkers are: Samir Amin, Mahmwd Amyn al 'Alim, Husayn Mruwheh, and Mahdy 'Amil.



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system, which is both distinct and relational to other systems: agricultural production, semi-feudal land owners and urban landlords, foreign trade, late dependent capitalism and its offshoot the colonial condition, and finally, in minor tones, the Palestinian bourgeoisie. These different sign systems and their contradictory relations are resolved in PCBB by subordinating them to the national sign system then emerging counter to the dominant one of dependent late capitalism. Dependent late capitalism is part of History as an 'absent cause' in the Althusserian sense. It confines the events to a form. What characterizes History is the possibility of rereading it retroactively. PCBB is a textual trace of the dominance of dependent late capitalism in Palestine, but the latter is extracted from the former and not vice versa.

## 5.5 Conclusion

PCBB is a manual for the novice Palestinian political activist, who will eventually be arrested by the Israeli colonial authorities. As a manual, it explains the machinery of political captivity through the stage of interrogation. The reader is given the theory, the concepts, and the codes of behavior of the different players in the game of interrogation. The interrogator, the captive who remains steadfast, and the one who collapses and collaborates, are presented through detailed descriptions of their characteristics, moralities, and social backgrounds. As its main aim, PCBB sets steadfastness as the ultimate resolution of the interrogation. Furthermore, it concretely guides the Palestinian activist to reach



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such a resolution. This resolution will lead the captive into the community of captives, and by extension, into the Palestinian national movement and society. Collaboration as the resolution of the interrogation phase will lead to the expulsion of the captive from these communities.

PCBB sees the interrogator as representing the Israeli colonial machinery, with all the resources and powers at its disposal. The Palestinian political captive represents the Palestinian national movement, and uses its resources and powers. In the colonial condition, PCBB argues, the material is annexed by the colonizer, while the colonized must rely on his mental and social resources. In this way the interrogation in PCBB is positioned in the larger socio-historical context of colonial Palestine.

Two main themes arise in analyzing PCBB's positionality in the community of political captives, and in Palestinian society in general. The first theme concerns the attempt to redefine a certain 'subject' and a certain type of 'Palestinian-ness.' The basic dynamic advocated in PCBB is that of decontamination, which aims at purifying the collective 'I' of things colonial. The second theme deals with the real irresolvable contradictions, which make purity impossible in relation to identities. These contradictions are resolved on the textual level in PCBB. Thus, the textual production in the Palestinian context of political captivity is a unique variation of the colonial realities. In most of the texts produced in captivity, there is an unflagging effort to find a way out of a condition perceived as a predicament. The next chapter will present "Introductions to



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Carving the Alternative" by Ahmed Qattamish, which epitomizes this trend in textual production in the experience of political captivity in Palestine.

The tradition set forth by PCBB, and similar texts that cope with the irresolvable realities of the Palestinian captivity on the textual and discursive levels, continued well into the early 1990s. After three years of the Palestinian Intifada of 1987, new realities, locally and internationally, with new challenges emerged. These realities brought the Oslo Accords between the State of Israel and the PLO, which is led by Fateh. It was expected that these accords would end the colonial condition and political captivity. But it didn't bring a resolution to the colonial condition nor to captivity as part of this condition. Still, the Oslo Accords were a major turning point in the history of the Palestinian national movement in that they changed some of the most basic premises on which it stood. These changes shocked Palestinian society, and the community of captives, in new ways, which have served as the subject of a huge corpus of treatises, written inside and outside the colonial prison. Based on the intellectual and literary traditions, among others, of the political captives' community A. Qattamish's "introductions" deals with the new realities of the early 1990s as a general predicament of Palestinian society as a whole. He proposes textual resolutions, based on the tradition of PCBB but this time directed to the whole of Palestinian society, which would revise the entire national conceptual frame that led to the Oslo Accords. In the intersection of "Introductions", I will argue in the



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next chapter, the isolated community of political captives and the general society are reunited as one whole, at least on the textual level.



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# Chapter 6: *The Hidden Intellectual: Lecturing Political Captivity*

## 6.1 Introduction

In the late afternoon of September 1, 1992, Ahmed Qattamish was reading a story to his two year-old daughter Hanin. As Hanin was falling asleep, Ahmed heard a loud knock on the front door of the apartment and hurried to see who the visitor was. As he opened the door, sixteen armed soldiers burst into the apartment, two of them pointing their guns at his chest.

> I asked them, "What is going on? What do you want?" They pushed me violently, and forced their way in … An officer addressed me saying, "Sit on the couch and don't move." I replied, "There are children and women." He said, "We know. Don't waste our time." They blindfolded my eyes and cuffed my hands, while their noises indicated their continuing search of the house … After almost half an hour, they pulled the blindfold off my eyes and they were ready to photograph me from different angles… Then they opened the door of the apartment where a large number of troops were standing. They tightened my handcuffs and my blindfold … The moment I felt we were crossing the yard of the building I straightened my body, my head was up, and they put me into an open military vehicle … (Qattamish, 1995; pp. 5-9).

Although the scene of arrest is a typical one in the occupied Palestinian territories, Ahmed was not a typical political captive by any standard. First, he was not accused of specific charges, but imprisoned with an order of administrative detention. A military officer renewed the order every six months for the entire period of his detention, which lasted for six years. During those six years, the Israeli Supreme Court twice ordered the military to release Ahmed,



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citing the absence of any legal ground for his detention, but the military refused to comply. Second, Ahmed was a mythical figure among the Palestinian activists in the occupied territories. He had been underground for sixteen years, and in fact the story goes that he had defeated the occupation forces. Moreover, many claimed that he headed the PFLP in the West Bank during his years underground. For these reasons, the arrest of Ahmed was an important and unique event, for the Palestinians as well as for the Israelis.

The early years of the 1990s were transformational for the Palestinian national movement as a whole, and intensely so in the West Bank. In retrospect, one could argue that Ahmed's arrest was part of a wider process of change that the national institutions, perceptions, and attitudes were undergoing. The dead end reached by the Intifada of 1987, the second Gulf War, the Madrid Summit, and eventually the Oslo Accords, were among the major events that the PLO and its different bodies inside and outside the occupied territories were trying to cope with in order to reorganize and attain their aim of achieving a sovereign political entity (al Sharif, 1995; Sayigh, 1997, 2002; Ghanem, 2002, among others). In his memoir of the interrogation phase of his detention, Ahmed Qattamish (1995) points to the various offers he received from his Israeli interrogators for the purpose of incorporating him into what came to be known as 'the peace process' (pp. 54-60). These offers were part of the 'new' mental interrogation techniques, and at the same time they were indicators of the changing atmosphere related to the upcoming attempt to resolve the



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national/colonial conflicts.[1] However, Ahmed Qattamish was dealing with issues beyond the locality of the politics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As an intellectual in political captivity, he spent most of his time in prison lecturing to the other captives and writing essays, stories, and his memoir of the interrogation. The first two years were fruitful. In 1994 he published his book "Introductions for Carving the Alternative," and a year later his memoirs of the interrogation phase "No, I Won't Wear Your Turban."

"Introductions" is a collection of 37 lectures that were given between late 1993 and early 1994. Usually, these lectures were delivered early in the morning, due to the location of *Ansar* 3, or *Al Naqab* Detention Center.[2] *Ansar 3* was opened by the Israeli army in *Al Naqab* desert in the south of Palestine during the first Intifada, on March 16, 1988, in order to contain the masses of new captives that the existing system of military and civil prisons could not cope with. In *Al Naqab*, the mornings were the most pleasant time for the 'tent dwellers,' as the political captives in *Ansar 3* used to call themselves. At this stage in the development of the community of political captives, across the different colonial prisons, the tradition of lectures was firmly established, and nobody would miss a lecture by a famous name such as Ahmed Qattamish. But these lectures coincided with a period of deep crisis in the Palestinian national

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1 Many political captives later became involved in the negotiation process between the Israelis and the Palestinians. When the Palestinian National Authority was established, some of them became high-ranking officials.

2 Palestinians and Israelis give different names to the same prisons. *Ansar* 3 is Qtseeot prison according to the Israeli colonial authorities.



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movement, reflected among the captives' community either by strong hope that they would soon be released by political accords or deep despair that they would spend the rest of their lives between cement walls and barbed wire fences. Hence, "Introductions" positioned itself as an intellectual effort in a period comparable with other tragic moments in modern Palestinian history.

> These visions [introductions] try to supersede the political discourse by the intellectual one, because it is already well established that thinking and the intellectual domains determine the political line of the different organized forces and currents. Moreover, the whole of the Palestinian political map is a product of the Palestinian thinking structure. Today, this map is facing new serious pressures, which could lead to its redefinition … suffice it to remember that the defeat of the revolution of 1936 brought the liquidation of the six or seven Palestinian parties and the birth of new movements in the forties, which were liquidated by the events of 1948. The same thing could be said about the massacres of September in Jordan, where there were almost 72 Palestinian organizations (p. 4).

The transformational intersections of the Palestinian national movement in the early 1990s were represented in "Introductions" as tragic events that necessitated a critical re-analysis of the Palestinians' thought structures. Moreover, modern Palestinian history could be seen as ruptures of tragic events in which each event redefined the boundaries of the political map. The subtext of "Introductions," then, is that through critical analysis of the intellectual domain one can foresee the course of upcoming events, and this positionality can enable the intellectual to make his political interventions. This thesis of Ahmed Qattamish in many ways contradicts the hegemonic national ideology, which pursued the struggle for liberation through political activities while relegating the



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social and the cultural as secondary to and supportive of national politics (Ashrawi, 1978; Daraj, 1996; Muhammad, 2002). It could be argued that two main constitutive processes gave rise to the critique of the hegemonic national ideology. First, the unique communal institutions that developed in the political captives' community were based on the praxes of reading/writing as the main domain of liberating the national "I." Moreover, the location of the Israeli colonial prison in the web of Palestinian -Israeli relations as a locus of intense crisis for the political captives, as individuals and as a community, enabled, and at times forced, them to ask, articulate, and reconstruct the basic axiom of the political taking precedence over the social and cultural.

Second, the Marxist tradition of the Palestinian Left was elaborating and accumulating its analytical tools through its daily engagements with the crises and conflicts produced by the colonial relations (Jaradat, 1999). By the early 1990s, these analytical tools were established as a distinctive 'language' in the many tongues, if one may say so, of the Palestinian national ideologies. These two grounds, the language of the Left and the colonial prison, enabled Ahmed to take a panoramic view of the locality of the occupied territories in the more general Palestinian national movement, and its relations to the regional Arab and the wider global social histories.

This chapter is concerned with the materialization of these different processes as textual representations. On the one hand, the publication of Ahmed's prison lectures in the form of a book for the general Palestinian public



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outside the confined audience of the prison was part of the circuits of knowledge being transported between the different Palestinian social divisions enforced by the colonizers. On the other hand, the textual strategies and techniques of representation, articulation, and determining the horizons of meanings relevant to the Palestinians seem to rely more on ideological coalitions that have their own socio-economic determinants in the social formations of Palestinian society. Hence, one of the aspects explored in this chapter is the intricate and complex relationship between the Palestinian world's body and its parallel body of the text (Said, 1983). "Introductions," like any text, takes a position towards the body of the world by claiming to contain the determining coordinates of the body of the world discursively. The manner, the form, the content, and their crystallization into a coherent body of text are an intervention in the body of the world that this study seeks to understand.

The topography of "Introductions" is built around three axes, each one comprising several lectures. Each axis has a thematic aspect, which fabricates each of the three parts while linking them as a whole. The first part is concerned with the social individual and his/her relations with the 'immediate' socio-historical surroundings. The second explores the dynamic and the techniques of organizing these social relations into a collective tool for change. The third part attempts, through analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli peace accords, to present a case study of the historical failure of organized collective actions and tools, emphasizing the structural inabilities of the historical constellation that



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dominates the Palestinian national movement, as represented by the PLO. In doing so, it offers an alternative path of collective actions, strategies, coalitions, and more interestingly, a different system of morality, a different type of Palestinian ideology and identity for the individual as well as for the Palestinian collective.

Hence, the question becomes, what are the changes in the 'body of the world' that brought about this kind of intervention in the body of the text?

Many scholars of modern Palestinian history see the Oslo Accords as the stage marking the decline of the Palestinian national movement as led and represented by the PLO. Mostly, these scholars, both Westerners and Palestinians, seem to accept the boundaries of the dominant Palestinian/Israeli national/colonial ideologies, which reify the political, the struggle for power over the land. In doing so, these researchers, intentionally or not, become part of the race for power on the national ground. The argument of this study is that such an academic endeavor could not enable us to understand the deep structures and historical processes that constitute the surface of the conflict, namely, the political. In this chapter, I will attempt to position "Introductions" in the socio-historical phase of Palestinian society that is, I will argue, mainly characterized by collective and individual social processes that lead to a Durkheimian anomie and an acute atmosphere of social alienation. As an intellectual, Ahmed Qattamish could not fail to see the culmination of such processes, and out of such a Gramscian organic position he engineered his "Introductions."



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The immediate social context of the colonial prison, the structural textual dynamics and mechanisms, and the larger context of Palestinian society are the main sections of this chapter, through which I will try to read and position Ahmed and his "Introductions." The conditions in the colonial prison generated in the political captive certain perceptions of self and agency. The intellectual activities, of which the lectures were a part, were conducted in the redefined social space of the prison. The analysis of the textual dynamics of "Introductions" will be based on Bourdieu's theoretical interventions and constructions, namely the habitus, linguistic markets and symbolic power and capital. These will enable us to interpret the structure of the lecture in the context of the historical processes occurring in Palestinian society. The last section will address the constitutive state of alienation that dominated the Palestinian social scene in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the early 1990s. The alienation was reflected differently in different intellectual groups. Based on Fanon's (1963) understanding of the colonial condition as colonizer, colonized, and decolonization processes as the main constituents of the struggles and tensions in Palestinian society, I will argue that Ahmed Qattamish represented the more fundamental, organic social intellectual group that was more attuned to the Palestinian masses, at least at that stage of history. The understandings of Fredric Jameson (1981), which were addressed in the previous chapter, further illuminate this analysis of "Introductions." The second phase of interpretation in Jameson's three stage model points to the fact that the main social conflicts, which are not resolvable



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on their own social terms, become so on the symbolic level, be it intellectual or otherwise. The analysis of "Introductions" according to these theoretical lines will help us to understand the deep fractures in Palestinian society at the historical junctures of the Oslo Accords.

## 6.2 Lecturing in Captivity: Agency, Self, and Linguistic Activities

As we saw in the previous chapters, the realities of the Israeli colonial prison were not a settled issue for the Israeli colonial authorities, nor were they a given for the Palestinian political captives. Each side in the ongoing realities of the colonial conditions could not avoid contesting the other side's rules and achievements. While the Israeli colonial authority controlled the material space and time, and channeled them to its advantage, the political captives relentlessly strived to regain their agency (Abdallah, 1994). The major domains of such activities on the part of the captives were their inner communal relations. The intellectual activities were a part of these attempts to redefine and reorganize the community of political captives. Ahmed Qattamish in *Ansar 3* played a part in this endeavor, and he developed certain aspects of it to horizons of thinking which suited his own revolutionary intellectual 'career.' In this sense, "Introductions" was the fruit of such activities, but at the same time it elaborated and enhanced certain perceptions of the self and the intellectual practices.



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The publisher's introduction to the book provides us with some more factual information about the conditions under which these lectures were prepared.

> These talks were given by the struggler Abu Hanin in one of the Zionist jails. There were around 40 interventions, which were given around the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994, each day or two for one hour or more according to the circumstances …. And there were no books in the tent's library that he could use, and later when there were some books, they were irrelevant to the topics discussed. The struggler Ahmed presented his topic while one of the comrades would summarize it, which would be edited later …. The comrades themselves chose the topics of the talks (p. 3).

The regularity and the almost course-like arrangement of the lectures were part of the captive community's cultural practices that had become institutionalized in the long process of community building, starting in 1967. The tent library is also part of the history of Palestinian political captives in the Israeli colonial prison. What is interesting, though, is the division of labor in the process of producing knowledge inside the political captives' community. Choosing a topic, lecturing, and summarizing the lectures are part of a larger process of producing knowledge. The publisher's introduction does not describe the communication system that circulated these lectures in written form to the outside world, or the criteria that decided who was allowed to attend the course. The unique conditions of *Ansar 3* as a military camp/prison forced the political captives to reorganize in different ways from the regular prison that they were accustomed to (Abdallah, 1994; al Hindi,



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2000; Qaraqi', 2001). Ahmed describes the prison conditions in *Ansar 3* and the techniques of coping with them regarding reading/writing, as follows:

> ***Unfortunately I spent most of my administrative detention, at least the first three years of it, … in Al Naqab Detention Center, … There were no references or books, so much so that I wrote two books, "Introductions to Carving the Alternative" and "No, I Won't Wear Your Turban," about the interrogation experience, and I wrote them with no references at all. The first is a compilation of lectures and the second is a living report. The isolated life behind the walls, yes it is right, it takes you out of society, but the mind is partly free, you could think, you could imagine, you could try to be creative … So you, as a captive, are isolated from your society, but you are in a very complex situation, too. What is the complex situation? You were living with no minimal privacy, whatever the meaning of privacy is. This means that you live in a tent which contains 20 to 23 prisoners; now imagine the complexities of everyday life activities … some play dice, the TV is on most of the time for example … there is no dividing*** [thing] ***between you and your tent mate, the mattresses are so close to each other, so you are isolated but at the same time in a very dense reality … in this way you lose the solitary conditions needed for writing and thinking … You may find it strange, but when I wanted to write or read, I would do it on the mattress … I used to put blankets around me … like a coffin just to get the sense of some privacy …*** (Qattamish, Dec., 2000).

The functional redefinition of materiality and physical surroundings is one of the major characteristics or tropes of the 'story' told by Palestinian political captives about their daily life in captivity. In this way they could not only cope and survive their dire conditions, but also regain their agency. Reading, writing, and lecturing were impossible for Ahmed unless he could regain his sense of privacy by putting walls of blankets around him. The prison authorities, on their part, worked systematically to annex the agency of the



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political captives by constantly interrupting their daily activities with sudden searches, reshuffling captives to different sections and tents, and confiscating personal belongings, among other subordinating activities. In this regard, one could speak of a dynamic of contestation, focused around divisions. The prison authorities have their own spatial grid. Each prisoner must occupy his own square, and his placement entails certain functions and activities. On the other hand, the political captives have their own counter-perception of how they should divide the space allotted to them by the prison authorities. The bold example of turning the tent into a lecture hall is a case in point. But this type of dynamic between the prison authorities and the captives interacts with the communal relations, whether conflictive or not, among the political captives themselves. The limited surroundings, the regulated use of time, the typical recurring social and cultural stimuli could be seen as objectivities largely determining the political captives' social experiences. The context of captivity produces its own language, a language of monotonous reality of the surrounding space and linear repetitive divisions of time. In contrast to most of the published documents of the political captives' movement, Ahmed sees the daily realities of captivity as major issues to be addressed. In his critical attitude, he formulates the problematic as follows:

> ***The mind, as a living factory, dies down in captivity, and this is contrary to what most people say. Usually, they think that there is not much time for thinking and contemplation***



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> ***outside the prison. No … in the prison the chances for thinking and contemplation are much less, much less … because the elements, which could stimulate your mind, are almost absent … You live a monotonous life: you wake up at 6, the count, the same spatial and temporal conditions, after one hour there is breakfast, which is the same bad food, after one hour you take a break to walk in the same place, and lunch, and break, and dinner, and the count, and sleep, and TV … the vocabulary is very dull … what would excite the mind? The very limited vocabulary is repetitive, more than monotonous … you were besieged; your mind is besieged, so if you want to be creative you need to isolate yourself from yourself, to dive into yourself, and this is a hard existential and cognitive condition. Due to these conditions, while hundreds of thousands were captured, and many of them were well educated and brilliant, but very few could be said to have written creatively*** (Dec., 2000).

The siege of the mind, by highly regulating and draining the physical and social surroundings, is the problematic of both the individual political captive and the community of captives. The isolation is multifaceted and encompasses the material as well as the social (Foucault, 1978). When language is seen as a repertoire of thinking tools, as in Ahmed's case, the resulting sociolinguistic conditions reach such a degree of bounded localism that the "living factory" ceases to be active, engaging, and generating creative work. The main strategy proposed by Ahmed to cope with the problem is defined in psychological terms, as if the self has, as the last resort of resistance, a core unreachable by the conditioning daily activities. In order for the political captive to surmount the realities of incarceration he must, by force of will and intention, reach the depths of his self in order to regenerate



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the praxes of creativity (Feldman, 1991).[3] This is done by 'isolating' the outer layers of the self, which means the self of direct daily activities, from the more permanent and coherent self that is usually unaffected by the regulated and draining daily life of captivity. But what does it mean to isolate? And is the inner self thus protected or even immunized against the mundane, the common, and the earthly?

From Ahmed's metaphor of diving into the self, one can sense that he is, in fact, pointing to a process of re-relating to the self that does not necessarily exist as a core but as processes of accumulation of knowledge and skills. By skills Ahmed means personality traits and experiences accumulated through the struggle against the hardships of occupation. As an intellectual revolutionary, the moment of arrest is inevitable in the realities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The moment of capture, then, is another moment in the realities of colonial relations, and is not a new condition. Hence, the accumulation of knowledge and skills is one of the basic laws of survival for the avant-garde revolutionary intellectuals. The main issue is to extract, and then to formalize the rules that activate the dynamic of colonial relations in order to win liberation (al Qaymari, 1984). Ahmed analyzes, retrospectively, the pace of his thinking as part of extracting survival techniques in the context of revolutionary activities, in particular the

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[3] Feldman's work on Irish political prisoners shows many similarities between the two experiences. Prominent among these similarities is the dynamic of agency among the prisoners, which become more active the harsher the confinement conditions set by the colonizers. See chapter 4 for detailed comparison.



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underground activities, which continued throughout the political captivity experience.

> ***The whole of my experience taught me to think fast, and this is relevant for the stages before captivity and during the experience of being captured by the colonials … Take an example of that way of thinking: the book "Introductions for the Carving of the Alternative" is a series of lectures … they were spontaneous lectures … when they were edited, the process of editing kept them the way they were when I lectured. While I was lecturing, somebody was writing down the words and the ideas that I was throwing out. Then I would edit what he wrote, but I kept the good and the bad in it*** [the written text] ***… for scientific integrity ... How did I prepare the lecture? I didn't have references … especially the intellectual issues I dealt with were not discussed in the Palestinian literature that was available to me. For example, nobody wrote about the organizational issue; another example is the left and the women's issue in the Palestinian reality, the left and the religion issue, the left and the morality problematic … nobody wrote about these issues in the occupied territories, everybody was concerned with politics and survival … I was answering questions: 'What is the issue for today comrades?' They*** [the political captives who gathered for the lectures] ***would bring up an issue, the democratic issue for example, so I would talk directly, I wasn't ready, I didn't have prepared stuff … what would gather in my head I would lecture, because it needed fast thinking … sometimes certain topics would be part of lectures that I gave in the different colonial jails that I was in before Ansar 3. This of course would help me, but there were no notes or books. Some other times, when I knew the topic during our breakfast, I would enter the tent, cover my head with a towel for five to six minutes, and organize some of the key ideas then go and lecture it for the comrades*** (Dec., 2000).

The realities of the occupation in the Palestinian territories determine the ways of thinking, and to a large extent the content of thought. For Ahmed, the underground activities and the experiences of political captivity formed



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certain ways of thinking; especially what he calls fast thinking. In point of fact, his detailed description of "fast" indicates the way more than the pace of thinking. It is in a sense the ability to improvise on certain themes and topics that are already circulating among the Palestinian political captives. Improvisation in this context means that after years of reading and writing in many revolutionary intellectual activities, one acquires the knowledge and the skills to deliver a lecture on a certain topic requested by an audience. In addition to these abilities, or maybe as a constituent part of them, are leadership qualities and skills. Ahmed was seen by most of the captives as an intellectual and a political leader. Hence, he could not just choose a topic; rather, he had to address any topic that the political captives raised as a question for the day's lecture. *Ansar 3*, as one of the military camps turned into jails during the Intifada, lent its inmates a sense of the impermanence of their condition in comparison to the central prison system; it gave added value to improvisation as the main course of public intellectual and creative activity.

In the context of siege, through highly regulated social activities and draining physical realities, improvisation necessitates a certain perception of the self. The division that Ahmed describes between the outer and inner layers of the self leads us to think of the self as dynamic, less rigid and more fluid. The metaphor of diving into the depths of the self is illuminated by the concept of improvisation as a movement in two seemingly opposite directions



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simultaneously. Usually one dives in order to come back to the surface carrying the depths into the daylight. In the case of political captivity, the coming back to the daylight through improvisation is aimed at changing and redefining the conditions of the daylight of the colonial prison and realities. The assumption in such a dynamic is a highly self-oriented agency of the captive. The agency has the self both as its main reference and as the main domain to act upon.

The dialectic relationship between the siege and the agency characterizes the realities of occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the colonial prison is such a reality par excellence.[4] This relationship largely channels the formation of the collective Palestinian self as perceived by the Palestinian society under occupation (Al Dyk, 1993; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994, among others). For us, in this chapter, the linguistic practices and textual realizations, as domains of intellectual activity, are of prime importance for the exposure and analysis of the dialectic relations of siege and agency. On the one hand, the ethnographic data, which are mostly verbal, indicate a certain mode of language use; one could call it the abbreviated mode. On the other hand, once Ahmed's lectures were written and published as a book, they took the shape of full coherent units readable by the general public. Although the main focus of this chapter is the

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[4] See Beresford, 1987, for a detailed comparative case of the Irish political prisoners.



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textual realization of these lectures, one cannot ignore the fact that they were originally delivered orally.

The orality/literacy dichotomy in the literature of the social sciences in general, and of Arab-Islamic studies in particular, is well researched and has some specific colonial histories (see, for example, Ferguson, 1959; Saiyd, 1963; Goody, 1968; Febvre & Martin, 1976; Ong, 1982; Hafez, 1993). The problematic of binary relations in western academia aside, the complexities of the interaction between colloquial spoken Arabic and the standard written versions, at least as experienced in Palestinian society, bring us to reconceptualize their relations as a highly interconnected, intertextualized, and hybridized continuum. The use of ideal-type binary relations to analyze these complexities would undermine and conceal the fluid hybridity of a much more interesting academic sociolinguistic situation (Romaine, 1994; Duranti, 1997). The lectures that compose "Introductions" seem to rely on and benefit from several traditions and histories of language use and linguistic performance that combine to make the uniqueness of the Palestinian, as part of the larger Arab-Islamic, culture. On the one hand, in these lectures, in their written form, we find the use of a story to open a lecture, the welcoming of a foreigner in a family-like setting, the phrasing of criticism in tender and fatherly terms, and other sociolinguistic strategies that are part of what could be characterized as the Palestinian oral tradition. On the other hand, these strategies are combined and intermixed with practices



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such as enumeration, developing arguments, naming authors, citations, and presenting and comparing historical events. Thus the texture of the text is woven from many cultural and historical sources that can be found in Arabic literature in general (Mitchell, 1991; Hafez, 1993; Allen, 2000).

In this section I have tried to delineate the social circumstances of the production of "Introductions." These circumstances are crucial for an understanding of the text in its written form, in the sense that the lectures were composed not only as a response to the realities of the colonial prison, but as part of a larger process of regaining agency. The prison settings, with the self-centered on agency, enforced on the political captive in general and on Ahmed Qattamish in particular certain patterns of thinking and intellectual activity. These could be seen as survival techniques derived directly from the experience of being colonized. Intellectual improvisation is one such pattern that was used by Ahmed to conduct his lectures in *Ansar 3*. These conditions of textual production had direct impact on the structure, narrative, and themes articulated and elaborated in the lectures. Moreover, these intellectual interventions of Ahmed Qattamish are directed toward, and in a dialogue with, the realities of Palestinian society. These two major groups of characteristics of the lectures as a text will be discussed in the next sections.



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## 6.3 Textual Strategies and Structures: The Architecture of the Lecture

In this section I will try to analyze the formal strategies and structures of the basic unit of "Introductions," namely, the lecture. As mentioned in the introduction, the book is built of three topographies, which the author calls "axes," numbered consecutively as the first, second, and third. The title of each chapter does not indicate the content of the lectures, but gives the reader a sense that the alternative path, which he is offering to the reader, is one whole with different axes. The first chapter contains eight lectures, the second, ten, and the third, nine. Each lecture bears a title that indicates its content, and is not numbered. Moreover, a lecture may have spread over more than one meeting, in which case the second part of the lecture is not given a different title but continues from where it left off.

The lectures in the first chapter explore the social individual in his/her relations with the immediate socio-historical surroundings as expressed in the domains of personality, morality, love relations, and the gender issue. These opening lectures might be seen as an attempt to investigate and offer a model of individual-collective relations. The lectures in the second chapter explore the dynamic and techniques of organizing these social relations into a collective tool for change. This is done by raising intellectual issues from what Ahmed describes as a critical leftist viewpoint. So we find titles such as "The Left and Revolutionary Theory – Reproduction or Stagnation", "A Leftist Attitude towards Religion," and "A Leftist Opinion on the National Issue." The



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third chapter tries, through analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli peace accords and the Palestinian national organizations, to present a case study of the historical failure of organized collective actions and tools. It contains titles such as "A Reading of the Cairo Accord", "An Answer to a Question: What Will be the Future of the Contemporary Revolution?" and "The Expected Policies of the Autonomy and the Confrontation Program". Most of the lectures in the third chapter emphasize the structural inabilities of the historical constellation that dominates the PLO to achieve liberation.

Despite the differences between the three chapters, one finds several recurring themes in all of the lectures. Also, the lectures are structured in a specific pattern that signifies a scheme of articulation and intellectual elaborations. The themes and the structure combine into what could be called a narrative of the alternative. The proposed narrative, as represented and practiced in the lectures, is a different story of individual and social identities, which Ahmed refers to as revolutionary. To understand and deconstruct the complex sign of "Alternative Revolutionary Left," we need to scrutinize more closely the themes, structure, and narrative of the lectures.

### *6.3.1 Themes*

The political captives chose the themes of the lectures to be given by Ahmed Qattamish. The same themes had arisen in the various colonial prisons that he had stayed in before arriving at *Ansar 3*. The process of



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selecting topics and the purposes of this collective manner are described in the introduction to the book as follows:

> Those who decided to choose these themes were the comrades themselves. They brought up several issues that the struggler Ahmed Qattamish faced among the left masses in other jails too. And it is possible to say that these themes contain beginnings for programmatic visions. It would be useful if these themes could stimulate the minds into dialogic discussions, for only in the context of collective dialogue could the idea crystallize and the visions be corrected (p. 3).

The emphasis on the collective manner of selection and discussion indicates the general relevance of these themes. The Palestinian national movement has developed its own thematic and discursive formations throughout its different stages. As we will see shortly, the themes of the lectures are simultaneously part of these formations and a genuine critique of them.

The themes of "Introductions" can be classified into six groups as follows:

1. Themes that explore the individual in society.
2. Themes that address the meaning of revolutionary in contrast to reactionary.
3. Themes that cite world historical events as examples.
4. Themes presented as ideals and thoughts.
5. Themes that address organizational issues.
6. Themes concerned with the day-to-day political issues in Palestinian society.



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It is important to state at this stage that these themes are interwoven throughout the text and are not presented as separate from each other. Still, we can discern that some lectures highlight certain themes more than others. Moreover, these themes often appear as the shadow behind the highlighted theme.

The theme of the individual in society has several variations that address the codes of social behavior by which the individual Palestinian should abide. For example, the third lecture in the first chapter is entitled "The Left and Relationships of Love."

> And it is well known that mixing [between the two sexes] is an existing fact, and so are the attraction, the liking, the lust and the faithfulness. The emotionally stable and harmonious relationship could develop to the level of marriage .... So, the left refuses the use of women as sexual slavery ... as it refuses open sexual relations and the theory of the water glass ... it also refuses arranged marriage and one that is not based on mutual choice and warm feelings (p. 35).

In this paragraph Ahmed states the acceptable and unacceptable patterns of behavior for the leftist. In this manner he can guide his audience to accept certain codes of behavior that the individual has to internalize and act accordingly. Moreover, Ahmed's hidden assumption is that the audience retains a patriarchal morality that prevails in Palestinian society. But this type of morality is not uncontested. The confusion and disorientation of some sections of Palestinian society are met with determination to generate a new



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code of morals and behavior. (See Sharabi, 1988 on the subject of confusion and disorientation in neo-patriarchal Arab societies).

The theme of the revolutionary recurs in most of the lectures, either directly or as a background to expose and contrast it with the reactionary premises. Often, the adjective "true" is attached to the term "revolutionary" in order to distinguish it from the Palestinian right wing organizations, which also claim to be revolutionary. In his lecture on socializing the leftist revolutionary personality Ahmed asserts that:

> … the left is revolutionary in its basic constituency. It surrenders neither to the hangman nor to tyranny and backwardness. And it has no patience with oppression and suppression; it will not stand by if the dignity of the human and his sacred right to live freely are attacked.… Man makes happiness as he makes slavery; the leftist accepts any reforms and achievements as long as it does no harm to his program … Every achievement is good, but the true revolutionary is not satisfied with that, he must concentrate on the completion of his mission of total change (p. 10).

In this paragraph Ahmed delineates the lines between the triad of a reactionary, a reformist and a revolutionary leftist. The resistance to oppression in all its variations with no compromises, and the total changing of the existing social order are the main coordinating points that direct the revolutionary in his relation to the reactionaries. This theme is well debated and discussed among intellectuals in the Palestinian national movement (al Sharif, 1995), and among Arab intellectuals in general (Boullata, 1990).



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The theme of world history is very prominent in Ahmed's lectures. Each argument is supported by an example from outside the Palestinian context or even the Arab World. Most of these examples are from socialist revolutions across the globe, such as those in Vietnam, Russia, and Cuba.

> And China was a peasant and feudal society in which the medieval tradition reigned (primitive production tools + illiterate man with primary professional and productive skills + economically dominant feudalism and a totalitarian emperor like the religious clerks of the western and middle eastern societies + mystic Confucianism built upon obedience to the rulers and the traditions + a China divided between the war lords and the colonial influence through foreign companies and their commodities + bourgeois beginnings in the city based on narrow industrial structure and what comes out of it as social forces …) (p. 136; parentheses in original).

This example is meant to illustrate how, from a backward condition, a society with revolutionary forces can overcome these circumstances and start a revolutionary transformational process once the primary contradiction and conflicts are diagnosed correctly. The international horizons of these examples reconnect the Palestinian captive and revolutionary beyond the literal and metaphoric sieges of the occupation. Throughout its history, the Palestinian national movement as represented by the PLO succeeded in entering the international scene through its multiple doors. Prominent among these are the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the socialist states (See Sayigh, 1997 for more details).



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The main intellectual tradition that Ahmed relates to is the Marxist Leninist tradition. Therefore, ideas and thoughts are articulated using Marxist analytical and discursive tools. Concepts such as mode of production, class, workers, forces of production, relations of production, history and dialectic materialism are the main tropes that constitute the theoretical theme of the lectures. For example, Ahmed defines class as:

> A big group of people that have a certain position towards the means of production, which means either they own them or not. The means of production are the factories, the lands, the hotels, the banks … And this group has a specific function in the production process, which means either it works or not, and a specific share in the produced, a wage for the workers and profit for the class that owns the means of production. The position furnishes the way for a status in the social order, the one dominant economically will be dominant politically, culturally … he will rule (p. 229).

The Marxist Leninist tradition, with its different colorings, although always present in the Palestinian national movement, did not become the declared ideology of some of the PLO organizations until the early 1970s. Since then, it has permeated even the right wing national discourse (Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994). Ahmed is an undeclared PFLP cadre who came to intellectual maturity in the 1970s' heyday of the Palestinian Marxist Leninist organizations.

The themes that address organizational issues relate to the practical building of institutions for collective action that will lead to national liberation, and the larger socio-historical class revolution. The basic skills, tactics and



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strategies of organizing the avant-garde and the masses are the core of this theme. These topics are integral to the reading of the current social and historical realities in the Palestinian and Arab societies.

> **What is the avant-garde party?**
> It is the political avant-garde for leading the masses, which directs the whole of the social revolutionary process, be it in the political or economic or intellectual or literary and art fields …. It is obvious that the revolutionary party is the most organized form that is ruled by the law of the unity of thinking, politics and organization; the unity of will and practice that doesn't negate dialogues, the freedom of opinion, interpretation, and the inner debates that are controlled by the accepted channels and codes … (p. 83; emphasis in original).

The party is the social space where the coherence of thought, politics, and organized action can best be achieved. It must lead the rest of society toward new progressive horizons in all the domains of society. For Ahmed, this can be achieved through agreed upon rules of conduct and centralized processes of debating and exchanging ideas. The traditions of organized action in modern Palestinian history have yet to be researched. Most of the literature compares the dichotomy of traditional filiations with modern affiliation (Said, 1983; Taraki, 1990; Swedenburg, 1995; Daraj, 1996; Sayigh, 1997).

The day-to-day Palestinian politics is a theme that contextualizes all the lectures in varying degrees. It addresses the burning issues for the audience hearing or reading the lectures, particularly the question of how one should behave in light of the current situation of the Oslo Accords.



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> For the [Palestinian] bourgeoisie the main and primary contradiction is still today between our people and the occupation, and the revolutionary response must be according to the reading of the reality and not according to our personal wishes, because we will not be able to mobilize the masses without managing the conflict on the right basics. So, it is a misrepresentation to present the bourgeoisie as if it were the direct enemy of the revolutionary forces, and if we worked according to this presentation the masses would ostracize us … not to mention that practically speaking the opening of a direct public frontal conflict with the bourgeoisie would lead to horrible damage. The fighting between the Palestinians themselves has no concluding dynamics (p. 281).

In this passage Ahmed attempts to address a political issue faced by the Palestinians with analytical tools from the Marxist tradition, that is, primary and secondary contradictions. Through this reading of reality, the decision on how to react sounds simple and easy. The Palestinian bourgeoisie is still in conflict with the occupier regardless of its last move towards what appears as a solution.

To summarize the thematic mapping of "Introductions," it is possible to point to these themes as marking boundaries of fields of meaning, which are layered in a hierarchical manner. The importance and the values attributed to them vary conditionally, and they appear to be ruled by the idea of primary and secondary at different junctures of the book. In addition, although the six themes are present in each lecture, their presence is not equal. The relations that determine their varying value in each lecture tend to be structural. This is a tendency because the structural dimension is articulated in a dynamic, mobile manner. For example, the thematic pole of individual/society is



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illustrated by contrasting possible variants of the individual–society relationship; some of these relations should be adopted while others must be rejected. In this manner the reader/listener is in a constant motion of contrasts and comparisons that is structurally determined.

> And the Islamic movement understands religion as a totality, it includes everything, has the answers and the interpretations for all phenomena … it is applicable to all times and places; and it is a legitimate right for anybody to believe in whatever pleases him, but for us, the left, we understand religion differently …. The principle of secularization, which means the separation of religion from state, through referring to the ideas and theories that were achieved by human talent and genius and utilizing the intellectual inheritance, was the main developing mechanism for Europe, and later America and Japan (pp. 175-176).

The representation of these two socio-historical models of community building creates a contrasting and a comparing dynamic whereby the audience must move actively between deciding to adopt or reject one side or the other. This manner of representation runs through the entire book; it is a process of distinction.

### 6.3.2 *Structured narrative: Moments of a continuum*

The dynamics of the structured field and the relations between these fields of meanings that constitute "Introductions" are in fact part of the general linguistic markets of the Palestinian national movement in particular, and of Palestinian society in general. The positioning of the lectures in these larger horizons of meaning is obligatory in order to explicate their inner



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dynamism as well as their relations to the other social domains (in addition to the linguistic one). Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical interventions seem more appropriate than other models of analysis for understanding these textual dynamisms and their relations to the social realities of the Palestinian society because of Bourdieu's attempts to (re)socialize language, and his acute critical sense that dichotomies are 'ideological' logical fallacies. Still, the absence of history as an analytical tool in Bourdieu's model leads us to look for different theoretical tracks in order to deepen our understanding of intellectual praxes in general and of the Palestinian case in particular. Such tracks as were taken by Jameson and Fanon are the fuel of the changing habitus of Bourdieu. Let us juxtapose Ahmed with Pierre, and then come back to the history and historicity of the Palestinian linguistic markets.

For our purposes here, two of Bourdieu's theoretical formations are of prime relevance for the understanding and interpretation of "Introductions" as linguistic activity with structural tendencies. These are the habitus and its variant, linguistic habitus, and the cultural market/field, especially the linguistic market. The centrality of the habitus in Bourdieu's scheme justifies this lengthy quotation:

> The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the



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> product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor .... The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations (1977, pp. 72, 78).

From this articulation of the habitus, we understand that the individual is endowed with structures in the Straussian sense. But these structures do not necessarily take the agency from him or her. Although limited in the broad general conditions of the socioeconomic constellation, the social agent improvises, albeit unknowingly, through these lasting generative principles. This general scheme, which governs practices, is specified for linguistic practices and expressions. Linguistic habitus is then seen as a

> ... specific instance of the system of dispositions which governs practices. Acquired in the course of learning to speak in particular markets (most importantly, in a family occupying a determinate position in the social space), the linguistic habitus governs both our subsequent linguistic practices and our anticipation of the value that our linguistic products will receive on other markets, such as the school or the labor market. 'The system of successive reinforcements or refutations thus constitutes in each of us', observes Bourdieu, 'a sense of the social value of linguistic usages and of the relation between different usages and different markets which organizes all subsequent perceptions of linguistic products, tending to give them a high degree of stability' (Thompson, 1984, p. 54).

The linguistic habitus is that generative principle that is responsible for the individual sociolinguistic activities, not only in internal linguistic praxes, but also in the ways the utterances are valued in the different markets. Up to



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now, I have been using the term 'market' or field without directly explaining its grounding in the Bourdieuian scheme. First of all, the market is a social space, a space that is structured through the conditions of existence of the society. The positions that one may or may not occupy in these social spaces are largely determined a priori by the objective condition of existence (e.g. one's family). Nevertheless, Bourdieu sees some dynamics of mobility that are constantly contested by the different position in the social space.

> A market or field may be seen synchronically as a structured space of positions, such that the properties of these positions depend upon their location within the space and not upon the personal attributes of their occupants. However different the fields may be … there are certain general laws, which commonly obtain (ibid, p. 49).

Bourdieu describes some of the general laws, which include, among others, assimilation, dissimilation, and distinctive deviation. These laws pertain to class society. In the context of class relations, Bourdieu argues that the petite bourgeoisie assimilates manners and resources from the bourgeoisie itself, and at the same time dissociates and dissimilates itself from the resources and manners of the working class. The distinctive deviation is that mechanism by which the upper classes are able to differentiate themselves from the middle classes through the concept of the profit of distinction. It goes without saying for Bourdieu that this is the line, that is to say, the laws of the market, which interconnects the linguistic and



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the social domains through the linguistic market and the objective conditions of existence.

> Thus, through the medium of the structure of the linguistic field, conceived as a system of specifically linguistic relations of power based on the unequal distribution of linguistic capital (or, to put it another way, of the chances of assimilating the objectified linguistic resources), the structure of the space of expressive styles reproduces in its own terms the structure of the differences which objectively separate conditions of existence (Bourdieu, 1991, p.57).

The linguistic field is largely determined by the objective conditions of existence in which it exists and operates. In its turn, the linguistic field reproduces these conditions in its own terms, linguistic terms.

From this brief and schematic exposition of Bourdieu's theoretical constructions, one has the sense of over-determination, meaning that structures materialize differently at different junctures of time, on the one hand, and in the final analysis structures do rule social individuals as part of their sociality, on the other hand. But Bourdieu's interesting juncture seems to rest in his understanding of the meeting on the practical level of a specific linguistic habitus with a specific linguistic market. By his definition, the relational dynamism is one of contest and competition for more distinction, and hence, a structured mobility. The power relation that Bourdieu describes and inscribes in the concept of market should be elaborated further by using concepts such as conflict, subordination, suppression, and oppression, and others that bring history into its real realities, which Bourdieu is so eager to



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represent analytically. These concepts would render the market, like any 'real' social one in the Bakhtinian sense, more vivid, lively, and less 'abstract,' but more humane. In his introduction to "Language and Symbolic Power" (1991), he states (what later in the book he struggles to actualize, with less success), that:

> It was therefore necessary to draw out all the consequences of the fact, so powerfully repressed by linguists and their imitators, that the 'social nature of language is one of its internal characteristics', as *the Course in General Linguistics* asserted, and that social heterogeneity is inherent in language. This must be done while at the same time being aware of the risks involved in the enterprise, not the least of which is the apparent crudeness which can accompany the most rigorous analyses capable – and culpable – of contributing to the return of the repressed; in short, one must choose to pay the price for truth while accepting a lower profit of distinction (p. 34, italics in original).

Bourdieu's self-imposed trap, that the crudeness of the return of the oppressed results in the lower profit of distinction, is in fact an indication that Bourdieu has not abandoned the distinctive neatness of structure; while critically aware of its limitation, he hesitates as to whether or not to enter the dirt of history. As we saw above, and in contrast to his statement in the introduction, the Bourdieuian scheme comes to draw laws of the market that are linear and upward in direction, namely, assimilation, dissimilation, and distinctive deviance, spatially and temporally, as if there were no recognized bottom, or even worse, everyone tries to ignore the bottom ness of his social being. Researchers working on different cultures and histories have pointed



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to the limitations and the ideology-burdened analysis of such models when it comes to understanding, let alone transcending, cultures in time (Bakhtin, 1984; Stallybrass & White, 1986; Armbrust, 1996; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996; among others). As an example, let us look at Stallybrass and White's intervention.

> We have tried to see how high discourses, with their lofty style, exalted aims and sublime ends, are structured in relation to the debasements and degradations of low discourse. We have tried to see how each extremity structures the other, depends upon and invades the other in certain historical moments, to carry political charge through aesthetic and moral polarities. Indeed, the oppositions, interpenetrations, and transgressions of high and low bear such an enormous weight of cultural organization that one marvels at the sheer labor of transcoding, displacement and partition involved in the elaborate networks of the *super-* and *sub-* in our cultural history (pp. 3-4, italics in original).

The 'dirt' or, if you wish, the 'hybrid' nature of history and culture is not a linear one, a movement toward the 'better.' The dynamics of oppositions, interpenetrations and transgressions render the highbrow/lowbrow distinction merely a starting point, and not a good one at that, for it could drag one into loop dichotomies. From the analytical frame of Stallybrass and White, as well as from the concept of hybridity as developed by Lavie and Swedenburg, it appears that the idea of culture is a continuum with different domains/markets/fields and layers, which materialize at different socio-historical moments that are more appropriate to the analytical endeavor. The concept of continuum does not necessarily contradict Bourdieu's habitus and



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market. On the contrary, these analytical tools are of prime importance as long as they are put in relational positions in such a continuum. My argument in this chapter is that Ahmed Qattamish's lectures are best seen as a continuum of different markets and habituses that constitute the Palestinian society at a specific historical juncture. The concept of continuum can be illustrated through its empirical manifestation on the level of the lecture as a unit for analysis. Let us take one of the lectures from "Introductions" and explicate its different linguistic markets.

The lecture entitled "The Upbringing of the Leftist Revolutionary Personality" starts, after the "good morning" opening, with a story about a Soviet officer and his army unit in the Second World War. The officer and his soldiers were trapped in a peninsula, and the German forces surrounded them and cut off the supply routes. Strategically, they were in no position to fight and win. A discussion took place between the officer and his men in order to decide whether to surrender or continue fighting while they were being bombarded. Against all odds, the officer decided to continue the fight. Luckily enough, in a short time the Soviet army started to defeat the German forces and rescued the trapped unit (p. 7). Then, Ahmed casually mentions 'Umar al Mukhtar. To an Italian general's question, "Why did you continue the fight against us, the modern well equipped state, when you knew that you would be defeated?", the Libyan leader responded briefly, "It is enough that we fought you."



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Several linguistic fields are layered in opening the lecture with a story, and not any story but one about the steadfastness of troops. The fact that the two stories are about the troops of the revolutionary Soviet Union against the German Nazis, and the revolutionary figure 'Umar al Mukhtar, relates more fields of meaning to those of the local Palestinian. Storytelling, with its linguistic capital and habitus, is located in the Palestinian context in the market of cultural tradition and is represented by the work of Muhawi (1989). Moreover, the linguistic market of storytelling is reincorporated as part of reinstalling the Palestinian national identity in the current context of colonial relations (Christison, 2001; Muhammad, 2002). These markets are layered with the informal pedagogical market, through which the transmission and inculcation of cultural schemes in the neo-patriarchal Arab society take place (Sharabi, 1988). Alongside, and in continual relation to them, is the linguistic market of resistance to the colonial situation in Palestine, which uses certain linguistic capital in a very specific discourse or linguistic power relations. The debate over the differences and similarities between the Palestinian Left and Right organizations can be traced through the content, or the main figures that Ahmed brings into the Now of the prison, that is, the Soviets and al Mukhtar. In the historical moment of the colonial prison, the linguistic market of resistance comes to the forefront, and even subordinates and uses the other available linguistic markets. The linguistic strategies, or laws as Bourdieu calls them, of assimilation and dissimilation are at work through the



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modeling technique that Ahmed uses by citing these stories. Revolutionaries fight their enemy regardless of the unfavorable conditions. This is the main characteristic of the leftist revolutionary personality.

In this way, at the beginning of the lecture we are confronted with a conditioned continuum of markets that constitutes a determinant pole in the structure and architecture of the lecture as a whole unit. Then Ahmed moves in different directions, based on these markets, namely, the traditional Palestinian market of storytelling, of informal education, of the Palestinian national identity, and of models of resistance. These markets materialize differently at different moments of emphasis as the lecture develops.

The second part of the lecture concerns the ideals and thoughts that are *presented in contrast to the realities of defeat that characterize the post-Oslo Palestinian and Arab context.*

> For that we should defend the Left and its program… and it is not out of coincidence or an intellectual privilege that we are biased to the Left's vision and we distribute and generalize it … it is the saving wood and the solid bridge for the humane and happy future … or the opposite of what would be political, social and moral doom …. And moral defeat, as is well known, is more dangerous than the other type of defeats because the morally defeated will give up their goals, dreams and their elevated values; decay and hopelessness would leak into them (p. 8).

So, after presenting the defeated realities and emphasizing the alternative morality of the left, Ahmed goes on to describe and inscribe the basic unit of the alternative, the leftist revolutionary personality. He does this



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by defining the triad of left, revolutionary and personality, and then presents the specific vision and the path to that vision. The centrality of these concepts necessitates a somewhat lengthy quote.

> **The personality:** the characteristics, the constituents, and the contents that differentiate one person from another …. For example, the revolutionary is differentiated from the reactionary by his awareness, behavior, action, measurements, and consciousness that distinguish the permitted from the forbidden.
> **The Leftist:** the most progressive that expresses the movement forward … which combines the authentic and the modern through the upward development process…
> **The revolutionary:** not to be satisfied with the reality and uncovering its contradictions and tyrannies, but restlessly, actively working towards its fundamental change …
> The message of the revolutionary Left is to settle the contradictions by removing oppression and building the socialist justice, removing the national suppression and bringing equal relations between the different nations, uprooting violent repression and bringing democracy, and finally releasing the creative energies …. This is possible by changing the existing socioeconomic formation (pp. 9-10, emphasis in original).

Although on the surface these definitions seem monolithic, they are not so at all. Ahmed invokes several fields of meanings that are constituted linguistically. First, the definitions themselves inscribe a certain position in the field of individual social relations. The individual is an active agent who can change society fundamentally. Second, the linguistic field of morality is presented in the form of progressive upward movement of the social and the individual. Third, the Marxist analytical framework with its specific linguistic field is both an interpretation and a tool for change. Fourth, the national liberation values and ideals are contrasted with certain colonial mechanisms



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of controlling others to represent the colonizers' own linguistic market. Thus, we see that a field is constituted from different combinations and layers of other fields to reproduce them in a moving continuous whole. After setting the frame and the content of such a personality as a whole, Ahmed moves on to lay down the organizational techniques and strategies required to achieve the desired type of personality.

In the third section of the lecture, Ahmed starts his argumentation with a question, "What are the most important ways to build the leftist personality?" (p. 12). In answering this question he points to four main techniques: cultivation of the mind and expanding the consciousness, intellectual and behavioral pedagogy, the scientific praxis, and the power of modeling. The first refers to the intellectual cultivation of the ideas and the study of leftist philosophical premises in contrast to other philosophies. Pedagogy, for Ahmed, has to do with the continuous party efforts to plant the methods and judgments of the left in the individual mind. The scientific praxis is advocated because:

> … the praxis is the best training school, not only for its share in crystallizing the leftist personality, but because it is a laboratory to check the correctness of the thoughts, and in addition to that, it enriches and adds to it … And Castro was right when he said 'we learned Marxism in the mountains … through the practical struggle'. The skills of work and expertise accumulate in the context of implementation, and will be baptized in the fires of praxis. The leftist personality is tested and actualized through work … in any case, the left humane goals would not be achieved except by the total revolutionary praxis (p. 13).



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In this definition, the scientific is not elaborated, but it is probably seen from the Marxist Leninist view of scientific socialism, which takes its history back to Engels.

The fourth technique of building the leftist personality is that of modeling. The masses and the cadres must have an avant-garde example either as individual or party leadership. In this regard, Ahmed emphasizes the local Palestinian and the international spheres as pools, which could supply such revolutionary models.

After enumerating these ways of building the leftist personality, Ahmed goes on to describe what he sees as the major risks facing such an endeavor. The dangerous leaning towards personal burdens, lack of the weapon of critique, and doubt and desperation are the obstacles, which might undermine the construction process (pp. 15-16).

The third section of the lecture seems to rest in the linguistic market of the communist parties, or more generally, collective organized action for social change. Although this market dominates the section, it incorporates many other related markets. Prominent among these is the linguistic market of world history. John Reed, Lenin, and Castro are presented as model figures, as cases to emulate through their praxes. The scheme of morality, as binary relations of good and bad values, is articulated through the communist discourse, resonates with the dominant Palestinian national right ideology of liberation. The latter's linguistic market is fed by various traditional cultural



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schemes of morality such as the tribal and the familial. In this way of intermixing and transcoding the continuum, relations are constituted, while one moment -- in this section the organizational techniques -- is highlighted more than others.

The final section of the lecture is a return to the Palestinian political domain. Ahmed tries to diagnose the state of the Palestinian left and the difficulties it confronts. The major objective conditions of the crisis of the Palestinian left are the occupation's unceasing attempts to destroy its organizations, the geopolitical conditions, especially those in the surrounding Arab states, the Palestinian society's pre-capitalistic stage of development, the colonial and reactionary propaganda, and the active financial suffocation by different local and international bodies and states. Alongside these objective conditions, there are the inner dynamics of the left, which generate their own factors that accelerate the development of the crisis. Prominent among these is the reckless and ruthless dynamic of the Palestinian left in solving its inner contradictions, the shaky ground of its membership, the meager abilities for creative thinking on the theoretical level, and the recent inability to develop new mass struggles (p. 18).

The last part of the lecture, which deals with Palestinian politics, epitomizes the construction of a continuum of linguistic markets. Ahmed brings the different domains of linguistic activities into his analysis of the Palestinian left, in order to answer existential questions concerning the crisis



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and the defeat of what is called the revolution against the occupation and the socially reactionary forces in the Palestinian and Arab societies. This endeavor forces him to stand simultaneously at different junctures of several markets in order to uncover the complexities of the Palestinian socio-historical condition in the post-Oslo era. The basic need that demands answers in this era is the redefinition of the identity of the individual, the social, and the ideological after such a stark defeat of the vision. In such dynamics, the continuum and the hybrid are inevitable as the basic constituents of the intellectual domain, which is inherently related to the realities it claims to represent.

After analyzing the Palestinian crises, Ahmed, with his incurable optimism, ends the lecture with the following paragraph:

> Recently, the Polish left coalition won the parliamentary election .... In these days, the Italian left won the first place in the municipal elections and took over the most important cities and towns ...and before that, the Yemeni Socialist party won 22% of the first legislative elections after the unification of Yemen (p. 19).

By citing Yemen, Poland, and Italy as examples of the victorious left to end his lecture on the leftist revolutionary personality in *Ansar 3*, Ahmed, while planting hope in his audience, transcends, at least linguistically, the temporary colonial prison. The linguistic markets thus enable the political captive to overcome the harsh colonial realities by discursive constructions that are based on simultaneously regaining and reinforcing agency.



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"The Upbringing of the Leftist Revolutionary Personality" is a lecture composed of four sections: world historical events told as a story, ideals and thoughts, organizational techniques, and the Palestinian case. The lecture as a whole can be seen as a unit of intellectual activity. In order to understand this unit with its complex layered and hybrid constructions, we need to reposition the four sections as moments on a continuum. These moments are actualized in practice through the linguistic capitals, and their relevant habituses, as durable generative dispositions, that were inculcated in Ahmed by three decades of objective conditions of resistance to the colonial condition in Palestine. The dynamic of a constructed moment in the lecture, and in "Introductions" in general, relies on the three basic laws posited by Bourdieu for the dynamic of mobility in the market. Ahmed in fact dissimilates the left from the reactionary and the colonial moralities, traits, and practices. He repeatedly sets lines that distinguish between the left, broadly understood, and the reactionary social organizations. In breaking down these lines into the personal and individual emotional and behavioral elements, the lecture, through dissimilation, constructs the "Left." By contrast, alongside the dissimilation, assimilation takes an active role in bringing in the desired through numerous models and stories. Assimilation is also practiced by direct presentation of the ideal scheme of Marxist intellectual premises, revolutionary morality, and scientific practice. The left works not only by assimilation and dissimilation of others' values, thoughts, and practices. It is



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basically morally superior to the rest of the Palestinian organizations. By using the law of distinctive deviance, Ahmed constructs the left in its relation to the Palestinian right. The creative intellectual and practical activities, the involvement with revolutions around the world, the critique of the Palestinian social order, the claim to modernity and its relevant values, are, among others, distinctive aspects of the left as opposed to the right in the Palestinian context.

The moment, then, is relational to the processes of the continuum on the horizontal axes, namely the four sections of the lecture, and at the same time, its constitutive vertical dimension is constructed by Bourdieu's three laws. The horizon of the continuum with its topographic moments is the 'dirt' of history; it is the immediate context, which can largely be divided into two spheres. The textual context is concerned with the organized and smooth flow of speech, verbal or written. This context relies mostly on the linguistic capitals of the speakers, which are historically bound. The social realities that engulf and produce speech constitute the second sphere of the context (e.g. the colonial prison). These spheres are hardly separated, even for analytical purposes. Moreover, the interfaces of these spheres constitute the sites by and in which the social conditions of producing the habitus and the linguistic markets are themselves reproduced linguistically. Bourdieu claims that the analysis and exposure of the dynamics of these sites are the main goals of sociology worthy of its name.



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> A structural sociology of language, inspired by Saussure but constructed in opposition to the abstractions he imposes, must take as its object *the relationship between the structured systems of sociologically pertinent linguistic difference and the equally structured systems of social differences* (1991, p. 54, italics in original).

The four moments of Ahmed's lecture, as a unit, are linguistic intellectual activities that constitute interventions in the social realities that produced them. Each moment, as mentioned, can be divided into two distinct analytical dimensions: the horizontal and the vertical. The latter is constituted from the existing linguistic markets in the Palestinian national culture. These markets are then layered in a specific way to create the synchronically presented new market. For example, the opening section of storytelling is a new linguistic constellation that is built upon incorporating several 'old' ones. At the same time, the horizontal dimension of the storytelling moment, as a structured system of sociologically pertinent difference, relates to the next moment of ideals and thoughts that are structured upon systems of social differences. The social differences are visionary and intellectual in nature but are based on real social systems, that is, conditions of colonial oppression. But the moment of ideals and thoughts itself has a vertical dimension with a specific constellation of existing linguistic markets. In its turn, this vertical constellation relates horizontally to the next moment of the techniques of organization. The techniques offered differ fundamentally from the tribal and familial ways of organization that exist in Palestinian society. The same



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applies to the fourth moment of the lecture, which represents defeat in contrast to other representations of Oslo as a victory. These different representations seem to rest on deeply divided social classes and systems in the Palestinian socioeconomic formations.

The structured differences on the linguistic level, and the related structured differences on the social level, should be positioned in the dynamics of the Palestinian society at the juncture of the early 1990s, which is characterized, more than anything else, as a transitory contradiction. As such, the transitory stage has its own dynamics and mechanisms of settling the uncertain social order. The unique situation of the Palestinian national ideology, a decaying ideology with powerful sociopolitical institutions behind it, produced a context of festivities with mechanisms that shattered the previously permanent national values. In this sense, the post-Oslo condition may be seen as a caricature of a festival of liberation with social anomie playing its requiem. From these basic dynamics, and from within the most intense site of the colonial situation, Ahmed gave his "Introductions." The almost didactic and prophetic texture of his intellectual activities is illuminated by contrasting it with its opposite reality -- the festival of alienation.



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## 6.4 The Intellectual Colonial Junctures of Palestine: The Unbearable Lightness of Resolutions

The Palestinian national movement has undergone many transformations, changes, defeats and victories in its organized shape since 1965. These transformations were ideological as well as social and political. For example, it started with the total rejection of Israel as a political entity for Jews, and gradually it changed this stance until the 19th meeting of the Palestinian National Council in 1988, which declared a Palestinian state but simultaneously officially recognized Israel's right to exist. After the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the relations between the Palestinian national movement as represented by the PLO, and the Palestinian society in the occupied territories went through four main stages in terms of national identities and ideologies. The secret, mostly armed, activities, the building of declared national mass organizations, the mass mobilization to confront the occupation, and the stage of degeneration of these organizations, which led to the Oslo Accords and accompanied them, constitute the relatively short, but very intense period of direct occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Taraki, 1990; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1994; al Sharif, 1995; Hajjar, 1995; Swedenburg, 1995; Farsoun, 1997; Sayigh, 1997, 2002). These phases corresponded to certain perceptions, notions, and behaviors of "who is the Palestinian?". The process of inculcating a national ideology and identity went hand-in-hand with the process of building



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national institutions in the West Bank and Gaza, (unions, universities, social clubs, women's organizations, newspapers and journals, etc.). In the first stage of secret cells of armed struggle, the notion of national identity was just one among several local social identities, and it was not the dominant one. The second phase in the process of building national institutions, the main dynamic of national identity, was one of publicly declaring identity. The declaration "I am a Palestinian" was addressed not only to the Israeli occupation but also to Palestinian society (See Ashrawi, 1978, & al Barghuthi, 1979, for a critical attitude concerning the declaratory dynamic of the poetry of that era). The third stage of mass mobilization, which culminated in the Intifada of 1987, was collective organized action for the realization of a national identity. The verbal declaration of the previous stage was now combined with concrete actions aimed at realizing the national identity on both the Israeli and the Palestinian fronts (Nassar & Heacock, 1990; Abu Lughod, 1990). Above all, the third phase actualized the notion of national identity, with its ideologies and value systems, as dominant in the market of Palestinian identities (al Dyk, 1993). This process was so fundamental that one researcher described the beating of a young Palestinian by an Israeli soldier as a rite of passage into "Palestinian-ness'" (Peteet, 1994). Retrospectively, the transition from the heyday of the Intifada to the degeneration and decay of the institutional and ideological levels happened quickly. In the course of three years, from 1987 to 1990,



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Palestinian internal politics, Israeli colonial practices, the Arab states' positions and policies, and international developments channeled the dynamics of Palestinian national identity into its degenerative state. The somewhat abrupt transition gave rise to many interpretations and speculations among scholars, both Palestinians and Westerners. Some traced it back to the structural social constellations of the PLO (Daraj, 1996; Farsoun, 1997; Hilal, 1998). Others sought explanations in the immediate historical contexts of power relations in the colonial condition of Palestine (al Sharif, 1995; Sayigh, 1997). For the purpose of this chapter, the important development generated by this transition is the entire body of critical intellectual literature on Oslo, the PLO politics, and the politics of identity in Palestinian society in general, that is still being written by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as by Palestinians in Israel proper and in the diasporas. The list of authors in this tradition of critique starts with Edward W. Said, Faysal Daraj, 'Azmy Bishara, Zakariya Muhammad, 'Aly Jaradat, Said Zydani, 'Adil Samarah, 'Abid al Satar Qasim, Haydar 'Abid al Shafi, Hussein al Barghuthi, and includes many more. Regardless of the different grounds of critique, all these Palestinian thinkers and critics share in their articles, books, and interviews a deep critical questioning of the previously accepted dominant national identity and ideology as represented by the PLO, and later the Palestinian Authority. Ahmed Qattamish, with his unique historical grounds, is part of this tradition of criticism that was



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developing in the early 1990s. "Introductions," then, is not an orphan; on the contrary, it belongs to a critical trend that existed alongside the official PLO policies. During the first three stages of the politics of identity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip the practice of criticism did not take clear and mature shape. However, in the transitory contradictions of the Oslo era it came to maturation (Hilal, 1998; Ghanem, 2002). In contrast to most of the critiques, "Introductions," alongside its critical reading of the Palestinian political realities, offers alternative visions for the basic constituents of society, the individual, and the organized collective actions. Ahmed's sweeping "critique of everything that exists" requires deeper analysis of Palestinian society at the juncture of Oslo. Such an analysis would identify "Introductions" as an attempt to cope symbolically with the irresolvable contradictions in the resolutions of the Oslo Accords.

The Fanonian scheme of reference of colonized, colonizer, and processes of decolonization tells us that at certain stages in these processes the native elite will try to negotiate with the colonizers without the democratic involvement of the native colonized masses (Fanon, 1963; especially the chapter "Concerning Violence"). The Palestinian political culture of patrimonial and cliental relations between the 'leader' and his followers, as Hilal (1998) and Daraj (1996) argue, could not but bring such a form of resolution from above. The subtle divisions between the Palestinian masses and their supposed leadership then became clearer and sharper. These



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divisions were manifested mostly around the issues of land, the right of return, political captives in the colonial prisons, and the political sovereignty of the future Palestinian entity. The Oslo resolutions created a dynamic, in which what used to be called 'the permanent values of the Palestinian national liberation movement' as the binding national morality, were fading away. Slowly but surely, as the masses became more involved in the details of the Oslo resolutions and their variants, the grip of social anomie and alienation took over the caricatural aura of 'liberating the land and its people.' Most of the liberally oriented Palestinian critics and thinkers rearticulated the social alienation between the national leadership and the public as a 'crisis.' Entrenched in their socioeconomic positionality, these critics adopted the neo-liberal discourse in order to reproduce the web of power relations in Palestinian society so as to secure their positions and coalitions with the rising Palestinian Authority. For example, on November 24, 1995, a conference entitled "The Crisis of the Palestinian Political Party" was held in Ramallah. The conference was initiated and organized by Muwatin, an NGO funded by American and European agencies and governments. The speakers were prominent Palestinian intellectuals such as H. 'Abid al Shafi, 'Azmy Bishara, Taysir 'Aruri, and 'Islah Jad. Bishara (1995), as the editor of the collection of papers presented at the conference, diagnosed the Palestinian situation in his introduction, claiming that:



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> The ideological and organizational crisis of the Palestinian political party is the prominent characteristic of the current political stage; the stage of the declining PLO and its political formations .... The alternative to the Palestinian political party is the party of the Authority, and it is not a party by definition. For the party of the Authority, if it exists, is under a system of multiple parties. But if this system is absent, then it is not a party but interests that depend on governmental positions and the security forces .... From here comes the enlightened and modern anxiety, from the absence of the Palestinian political party, and from here the democratic Palestinians are calling for the necessity of revitalizing the Palestinian parties (pp. 9-10).

The reformist position of redefining the political sphere of the Palestinian Authority is one of sharing political power with the ruling party, namely Fateh. Furthermore, confinement of the crisis to the political sphere and the fetishization of things political are part of the problematic of the colonial condition in Palestine rather than a solution to it. In contrast, Ahmed's radical and more organic critique in his "Introductions" calls for changes in the political, social and cultural spheres of the Palestinians. Moreover, and probably more important, Ahmed's critique locates the need for change in the socioeconomic formation of Palestinian society, of which the political sphere, although important, is merely a product.

The Palestinian 'liberal' thinkers are, in fact, a category of intellectuals that existed before the coming to power of the Palestinian National Authority. Gramsci (1971) argues that every essential group coming to power would find traditional categories of intellectuals. In addition, Gramsci found similar



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patterns in the ideological and political activity of these intellectuals, which seem to recur in our Palestinian case.

> The whole of idealist philosophy can be easily connected with this position assumed by the social complex of intellectuals and can be defined as of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as "independent", autonomous, endowed with a character of their own etc. (pp. 7-8).

The reawakening of the democratic Palestinian in order to guard Palestinian politics and democracy in its enlightened and modern variant seems to be the social utopia to which these intellectuals aspire as independents. Ahmed seems to be positioned in what Gramsci calls the organic intellectual, by his rooted intellectual activity in the colonized social group without claiming independence from it. The fundamentally bounded organic intellectual, as Gramsci points out, rises from an essential social group, and works intellectually towards elaborating its homogeneity and awareness (p. 5). As such, the organic intellectual is connected, tuned and attentive to the basic constitutive contradictions that construct the historicity of his social group and their society in general. Viewing "Introductions" as a socially symbolic act may further illuminate Ahmed's intricate position as an organic intellectual.

In his attempt to construct an interpretive model of narratives based on Marxist premises, as we saw in the previous chapter, Fredric Jameson (1981) points to three horizons of interpretation through which he links the



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symbolic with the socio-historical conditions of its production. As the first sections of this chapter concentrated on the political history of "Introductions," and the sequence of modes of production is far beyond the scope of this dissertation, let us concentrate on the second framework. If we accept Fanon's analysis (1963) that the prime conflicts of the colonial condition are the colonizer/colonized conflict and the processes of decolonization, then we must acknowledge that Palestinian society in the early 1990s was in an intense state of decolonization, as discussed in detail above. The Oslo Accords displaced and transformed the colonial contradictions but did not resolve them. Jameson claims that if struggles between social classes are irresolvable on their own terms, they "find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm," which is expressed as a symbolic act (p. 79). Although "Introductions" is not part of the aesthetic realm in the traditional sense of the term, it is a socially symbolic act, which, by using the intellectual realm, proposes a purely formal resolution to the conflictive complex relation of colonized/colonizer as it materializes acutely in an atmosphere of deep social anomie and alienation. In this view of "Introductions," one can easily see the intricate relations of Ahmed as an organic intellectual with his "essential" colonized social group, as Gramsci would put it, from his own experience of captivity.

The linguistic markets and habituses used by Ahmed are part of the social conditions of the unresolved colonial contradictions with which



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Palestinian society was trying to cope in the early 1990s. While these linguistic markets and habituses constitute what Jameson terms 'the inert givens and materials' of "Introductions," the history and the bottoms of the colonial relations constitute the necessary enrichment and enlargement context for the understanding and interpretation of "Introductions" as a fundamental organic attempt to reveal the social anomie of the colonized. In setting the clear coherent alternative social order that will eliminate the tyrannical and oppressive conditions of the colonized, Ahmed, in contrast to the Palestinian reformist intellectuals, does not confine his alternative to certain spheres. The totality of the social anomie dialectically brings a totality of social change.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Texts, as intellectual practices, represent real social relations, but they represent them as symbolic interventions in social realities. Conflictive and fractured socio-historical realities produce, through the variously positioned social agents in the linguistic markets, the relations of textual representation and intervention. As such, text and reality cannot be depicted as two opposing 'domains.' Raymond Williams (1977) puts the dynamic of linguistic and cultural representation/intervention rather vividly as part of what it means to be a real social individual and a usable social text amid the processes of society.



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> Indeed signs [or texts] can exist only when this active social relationship is posited. The usable sign – the fusion of formal element and meaning – is a product of this continuing speech activity between real individuals who are in some continuing social relationship. The 'sign' is in this sense their product, but not simply their past product, as in the reified accounts of an 'always-given' language system. The real communicative 'products' which are useable signs are, on the contrary, living evidence of a continuing social process, into which individuals are born and within which they are shaped, but to which they then also actively contribute, in a continuing process (p. 37).

This chapter tried to explicate the dynamics of producing useable texts as part of the real social relations of colonial Palestine.

The conflictive and fractured social realities and the real relations of colonial Palestine are actualized in the site of the Israeli colonial prison in rather intense and tense fashions. "Introductions for the Carving of the Alternative" is a real communicative product of the actualization of the continuing social processes of the conflictive and fractured realities of the colony, Palestine. At the same time, as an intervention it contributes to the reshaping of these realities.

The real of "Introductions," this chapter argued, is the composition of diverse Palestinian, Arab, and international linguistic markets into a symbolic act communicated to the immediate audience of political captives, and later, to the general Palestinian reading audiences. The lecture, as the basic unit of communicating "Introductions," is built of four moments that have their own vertical sociolinguistic constituents, and the relational horizontal surface that



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constructs the sequence of the lecture as a speech activity. While Bourdieu's theoretical constructions emphasize the vertical dimension, which is the synchronically constructed markets and habituses, the horizontal dimension is composed of the sequence of moments as events in the 'dirt' of history.

Palestinian society, since 1967, has seen many rising and falling moments with regard to its national identities and ideologies. Still, the transformational era of the post-Intifada of 1987, and the implementation of the peace process shattered these national identities and ideologies to a degree unprecedented since the 1948 catastrophe. These dynamics brought numerous intellectuals to represent and intervene differently in their lived realities. While many intellectual reformists tried to reincorporate themselves into the emerging Palestinian National Authority, others saw the unbearable lightness of the Oslo resolutions. Ahmed Qattamish, through his lectures and published books, attempted to resolve the irresolvable colonial conflicts on their own social terms, intellectually through "Introductions." In this way he represented the social realities by intervening in them.

This chapter, and the previous one, tried to address the problematic conditions of knowledge production in the Israeli colonial prison through the perspective of the circulation and the consumption/reproduction/structural circuits built by the captives and the society. While the previous chapter looked into the gate of interrogation as an incoming flow of knowledge, this chapter tried to look into the output of the captives' community to their larger



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society. Each chapter dealt with a different literary genre, while trying to address the same conflictive reality. Looking at the corpus of the literary products of the captives' community, one realizes that manuals and intellectual essays are only part of the body of texts. Literature is celebrated in the Palestinian/Israeli site of colonial prison no less than any other genre. In an attempt to cover the different aspects of the corpus of colonial prison literature produced by the Palestinians, in the next chapter I will (re)present the novel "The Three domains" by Wisam al Rafydi. The same basic constitutive social and colonial issues that are addressed in the manuals and intellectual essays are dealt with in the novel under the sign of the aesthetic. The analysis and interpretation of "The Three Domains" will complete the task begun in the previous chapters, of understanding the processes of constructing national identities and ideologies in the Palestinian context and beyond through textual strategies and practices.



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# Chapter 7: *'The Three Domains': The Aesthetic Representing and Forming of the National*

## 7.1 Introduction

"A Culture that Challenged the Chain" was the title of a series of seven TV programs broadcast by Watan TV that focused on political captives' cultural productions. The series was first broadcast in the third week of April 1999, which coincided with the Palestinian Memorial Day for the political captives, April 17. The programs, which were broadcast nightly at 9:00 pm and lasted an hour and a half, dealt with different genres of literature, art, journalism, and academic research. The first program focused on the short story and its history in the colonial prison. The participants in the program included two former political captives who were known for their creative work in a specific area, a professional on the subject in question, and Hasan Abdallah, who organized and hosted the programs. The audience could phone in and join in the discussion. Many times it seemed as if the audience was present in the studio more than the participants themselves. Acquaintances of the participants from the period of political captivity called to say hello and encourage them. There were so many requests from the audience that the whole series was aired again two weeks later.

The fifth program in the series was dedicated to a discussion of the novel. Wisam al Rafydi and 'Izat al Ghazawi were former political captives who had written novels while in captivity. Mahmud al 'Atshan participated as a literary



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critic and professor of Arabic literature, and, as in all the programs, Hasan Abdallah was host. al Ghazawi, Secretary-General of the Palestinian Writers Union, had written several novels before he was captured in 1988 and jailed for two years. The novel that he wrote in captivity was translated into English by himself with the title "Letters Underway." Wisam al Rafydi had not written any literary work before his time in captivity, although he had studied Arabic literature at Bir Zeit University for three years. He had not graduated, because he had left the university in favor of resistance and political activism. Almost two decades later, when Wisam was released in 1998, he enrolled again in the same department at Bir Zeit University. He is currently writing his Master's thesis in sociology. His novel *al Aqanym al Thalathah* ("The Three Domains") was written during his incarceration in Israeli prisons, and published in 1995. A year later, when I saw the TV program about the novel, I decided to study Wisam's novel. The reason for this decision was that 'Izat and I had been close friends for several years, and I thought that this might obstruct the type of research I wanted to do, whereas I knew Wisam by name only, so his writing was new territory for me. The primary research question for me was to investigate the relationship between the experience of captivity and certain literary narrative characteristics. In the course of interviewing Wisam and reading "Domains," and as the ethnographic fieldwork unfolded in different directions, the research questions concerning the novel changed. The proximities of the real and the fictional, the tangible and the imagined, the rational and the mythical, in the



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national/colonial context of Palestine as represented in literary writing became the prime focus of my investigation. The question that this chapter explores is how the threads of these seeming dichotomies interact and interplay in "The Three Domains" to constitute the national identities and ideologies of the Palestinians.

TV and radio programs, books, as well as articles in newspapers and literary journals, have been devoted to prison literature and the many genres used by political captives to give artistic expression to their experience. The most recent of these publications are two books, one devoted to the study of the poetry written in prison by Faiz abu Shamalih (2003), and the other, edited by al Sudani (2003), about various aspects of the captivity experience, including several articles about literary production by political captives during their captivity and after their release.

One of the main debates among Palestinian political captives, critics, and intellectuals concerns the issue of which literary genre can authentically express the political captivity experiences. This debate, among others, indicates the lively interactions between the supposedly distinct spheres of society. Socio-historical realities, literatures, and national identities and ideologies are remapped in their interrelations by these public debates conducted in the Palestinian mass media. In these debates it is agreed by the majority that the prison conditions are the direct reason for the novel genre failing to develop among the captives, while the poem and the short story flourish. First, the



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political captives feel unstable because of the constant encroachment of the prison authorities into their cells and daily activities. Writing a novel, it is argued, requires long-term dedication and comfortable conditions. Planning and designing a building are the metaphors that are repeatedly used by various Palestinian critics to describe the process of writing a novel. A basic condition for such an endeavor is stability, which is absent from the life of the political captive. Second, the political captives cannot keep these written texts safe, and a lot of effort and coordination is required to smuggle them out of the prison. Many stories are told about authors who spent years writing a novel, only to lose it either in one of the prison authorities' raids on the captives' cells or on the novel's journey to the outside world. A poem or a short story can be written in a short time, and it is easier to send it to the outside world without losing track of it.

The captivity conditions notwithstanding, the question of novel writing seems to be based on socio-historical processes in Palestinian society and the national movement, far beyond the experience of political captivity. The Palestinian modern literary history is known for its poetry more than any other genre. If one scans anthologies of Palestinian literature and writers, one finds a stark difference in the number of poets compared with novelists. al Jayusi, in her Arabic edition of the anthology of modern Palestinian literature (1997), lists eight novelists and no less than 66 poets. Although no serious and comprehensive intellectual attempt has been made to investigate the history of the modern Palestinian literary production and expressive culture, the accepted explanation,



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at least among some Palestinian critics, for the almost total absence of the novel is that the Palestinian narrative is incomplete because the Palestinians are still in the process of building a nation-state, which is the basic condition for the novel to become established as a literary genre. Nevertheless, a close reading of these different anthologies reveals that since the mid-1990s more and more novels have been published in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (al Jayusi, 1997; Shahyn, 2000; The Palestinian Writers Union, 2001). One way to investigate this development is to look at the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority and the subsequent transformations in the Palestinian national movement.

The literary production of the political captives' community does not, then, differ from that of Palestinian society as a whole in this pattern of the dominance of poetry over prose in general, and over the novel in particular. Yet the constitutive and contingent nature of the relations between the novel and the national modern ideologies makes the former the more appropriate expressive cultural site for investigation of the latter (see, for example, Bakhtin, 1981; Anderson, 1983; Daraj, 1999). While this conceptualization of the novelistic genre has been well researched in other parts of the world, including some Arab societies, it has barely been addressed in the Palestinian context. This said, one should bear in mind that genres are analytical tools that are constantly defied by realities due to the intermixture and hybridity of each literary product.



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The novelists who are or were political captives can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The most prominent among them are 'Izat al Ghazawi (1991), Hisham 'Abid al Raziq (1991), Khadir Muhjiz (1992, 1998), 'Aly Jaradat (1998), and Wisam al Rafydi (1998). Despite the small number of novels written in captivity, they are well represented in the Palestinian mass media, and while doing the ethnographic fieldwork for this research I encountered the novels, and the names of the novelists, at many junctures of literary circulation, especially among the reading public. One recurring explanation given to me by many interviewees is that some of these authors are known for their other public activities. For example, Hisham 'Abid al Raziq is a minister in the PA, 'Aly Jaradat is one of the leading political activists of the Palestinian left and was the last editor-in chief of al Hadaf, the main weekly of the PFLP until it was closed down in Ramallah during the Israeli invasion of April, 2001. Of the various novels written in captivity and circulated in society at large, I chose *al Aqanym al Thalathah* ("The Three Domains") by Wisam al Rafydi as the focus of study in this chapter for several reasons, in addition to those mentioned above. First, the novel covers most of the period investigated in my research. The events in the novel are linked, symbolically and at times directly, to the historical processes that I am attempting to investigate and elucidate, especially the ones connected with the relation between the national identities and ideologies. Second, the novel was written between 1991 and 1994, which is the end of the period covered in this research. In a sense, "Domains" is a mature text that builds on



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the previous three decades of literary practice in captivity, but also -- because of the different positions of its author, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter – "Domains" is saturated with the Palestinian national narrative as it developed in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Third, "Domains" presents and represents its protagonist as a problematic conditioned personality, in contrast to the stereotyped national hero in other literary products. Such a representation opens for the social researcher more windows onto the threads that connect the real and the fictional. Finally, but perhaps not least important, my personal taste played a role in choosing "Domains" as the novel to research. I enjoyed reading it, and I hope that the following sections will analyze the pleasures of this text and transmit its tense aesthetics to the reader.

## 7.2 The Context of Novelizing the Hidden

After nine years of living underground, hidden but engaged in active resistance, Wisam was arrested on September 1, 1991. There were no formal charges against him, so he was put in administrative detention for seven years, most of which he spent in *Ansar 3*. In the colonial prison, Wisam wrote his first novel, "The Three Domains." Although he had no previous experience of literary writing, Wisam had written political and theoretical essays, in addition to the party's daily correspondence during his nine years underground. This familiarity with reading/writing in the almost solitary life underground, Wisam projects onto



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Kan'an, the protagonist of his novel. After a year of this solitary underground life,

Kan'an routinized his daily activities as follows:

> He wakes up around nine in the morning, eats breakfast and begins his work. The party activities are expanding to new domains … and the work needs more pens to write and write … Usually after lunch he takes a siesta, then he wakes up to return to reading and writing (p. 54).

From this description one may conclude that the daily activities of the underground life were centered on reading and writing, at least as this life is represented textually. The underground life is strictly patterned, rigid, austere and harsh on the daily level of practices in terms of social relations. One is taken out of society, cut off from the daily influxes of social processes and practices, to be put behind the visible and tangible collective arena. The distinctive characteristics of the relations between the occupier and the resistance movements in the early 1980s, the time when Wisam went underground, were interpreted by him as a critical stage, in which it was imperative to avoid the arrest of party activists. After the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, each time the party built an infrastructure and accumulated knowledge and skills through its cadres, the occupation forces would attack them and destroy these structures and arrest their members. The conclusion was that the cadres should avoid being arrested in order to protect the party's achievements and develop them into new horizons of struggle. At this juncture the possibility of going underground, instead of the common options of being arrested, killed, or



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crossing the borders to neighboring Arab countries, rose as an alternative technique of struggle.

> After one week, he received a letter from the party. He read it very carefully, line-by-line, word-by-word. The letter wasn't a usual one by any standard. The party in this region of the country is in the midst of a clash with the occupiers, which has changed the flow of its life. The letter bore the flavor of clash and confrontation. It included an evaluation of the attack on the organization, followed by lengthy explanations about the importance of 'staying of the comrade, any comrade' in his position to complete his missions. In this way the party would prevent the occupation from imprisoning the energies of the cadres... At the end of the letter was the formal message to him: It was decided that you will not deliver yourself up, instead you will move to the underground. The secret life has its own procedures, precautions, demands and rules, which you must follow literally. The first one, don't let anybody visit you, and don't visit anybody (Domains, p. 15).

One segment of the history of the clashes and confrontations between the Israeli occupation forces and the different Palestinian organizations working in the occupied territories is represented vividly in this letter to indicate the inception of one of the major battlefields in the war for Palestine. This battlefield, namely the underground activities, would become the choice of many Palestinian political activists during the 1987 Intifada. But the occupied territories in the early 1980s are usually represented in the academic historiographies of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict as the heyday of institution building processes (e.g., Taraki, 1990; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1993; Swedenburg, 1995). Samih Farsoun argues that the territories were mainly characterized by a 'war of position,' applying the Gramscian concept to the Palestinian context. Arguing that the 1967 war and the Israeli military administration changed the traditional



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structure of the society and its leadership, Farsoun (1997) describes the aims of the new leadership:

> Their aim … was to "outadminister" instead of to "outfight" the occupier by establishing a parallel hierarchy within the territories and hence undercut its ability effectively to rule the population. In Gramscian terms, Palestinians engaged in a "war of position" by attempting to surround the dominant state apparatus through the establishment of counterinstitutions and transformation of existing institutions within civil society toward an alternative ideological and material base articulated by political activists. The state apparatus was to be won in the final moment, in the "war of maneuver" (pp. 220-221).

While, on the one hand the description by Farsoun and other researchers appears to capture the visible and readily available socio-historical processes, on the other hand it builds a representation that stands on air. Not telling the stories of the war of maneuver doesn't mean that the war did not exist. Such an application of Gramsci's outline of the relations between politics and military science seems reductive for several reasons. First, Gramsci describes the position/maneuver dichotomy as a continuum and not as two mutually exclusive events. Second, Gramsci's understanding of civil society as a precondition for the war of position is built upon the Western industrial societies, hence the application of the concept needs to be adjusted to match the case of Palestine. Third, Gramsci indicates a third category, that of underground warfare, which is totally neglected by most historians of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. These three categories of relations could materialize differently in different historical configurations.



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> Thus India's political struggle against the English (and to a certain extent that of Germany against France, or of Hungary against the Little Entente) knows three forms of war: war of movement, war of position, and underground warfare. Gandhi's passive resistance is a war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at others underground warfare. Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes are war of movement, the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops belongs to underground warfare (pp. 229-230).

In light of this line of argumentation that Gramsci develops at length, the question for the Palestinian society in the territories since the direct confrontational war of movement of 1967 and the total defeat of the Arab armies, concerns the configuration of several types of war. More specifically, the emerging socio-historical relationship after the 1967 War gave rise to a certain set of relations between the colonizer and the colonized in the neo-colonial situation of the occupied territories. This set of relations included a war of position, which was manifested in different domains but mainly through the development of a certain form of political consciousness (Taraki, 1990; al Dyk, 1993; Farsoun, 1997); it also included a war of maneuver (movement) -- through strikes, demonstrations, and guerrilla warfare (Sayigh, 1997); and finally, an invisible underground warfare that was not confined solely to piling arms and ammunitions. In a historical retrospect, the underground warfare in the occupied Palestinian territories was an imperative condition for the Palestinian resistance movement if it wanted to survive the enormous imbalance of power relations between the colonizer and the colonized.



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The Israelis won the battle of the visible public geopolitical trenches and the politico-military equilibrium, as Gramsci phrases it. However, the Arab defeat in 1967 was a decisive turning point for the PLO in gaining its independence from the grip of the Arab state (Ajami, 1981). Kimmerling and Migdal (1993) describe the direct consequences of the 1967 War on the major Palestinian organization, Fateh, which subsequently came to lead the Palestinian masses.

> As humiliating as the 1967 war had been for the Arabs, it gave Fateh new opportunities in two important areas. First, the humiliation quieted the gales of Nasserite pan-Arabism. Fateh's opposition to Nasser's philosophy-i.e. Arab unification as a prelude to the liberation of Palestine- had previously seemed a form of spitting into the wind. Now the opportunity existed for alternatives … Second, by reuniting the Palestinian majority-this time under Israeli occupation- the war made it much easier for Fateh to penetrate Palestinian society. The combination of its universal antipathy towards the Israelis with this shift from logistically difficult fragmentation seemed to open the way for tactics reminiscent of Mao Zedong's or Ho Chi Minh's: Fatah could provide key social services and organizations to the people and, in turn, finally develop its means of mobilization and control (pp. 220-221).

These two main consequences of the war interplayed with the receptive conditions in Palestinian society itself. Inside the newly occupied territories, the defeat was on the surface, in the public arena. The guerilla war continued (Sayigh, 1997); the ideological consolidation of the Palestinian masses accelerated sharply (al Dyk, 1993; al Sharif, 1995); and the building of the underground structures of resistance took on increased importance. Many observers and researchers describe the situation in terms of day versus night. The Israelis controlled the streets of the Palestinian cities and villages during the



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daylight hours, while the Palestinians controlled them during the night. The dichotomy on the ideological level of surface and depth found fertile national ground. The Palestinian national ideology(ies) that developed after 1967 started to articulate and express an essence, a deep-seated essence, of a Palestinian I inherently linked to the land (al Barghuthi, 1979, 2001).

The construction of the national I as a permanent ahistorical essence went through different stages. In the first decade of the occupation there was over-investment in the spheres of declaration and stating of the I. The unsettled, anxious, and threatened national identity was expressed in rigid, static, and shouting images on the textual level. For example, Ashrawi (1978) describes the trap of the critic in dealing with the Palestinian poetry of the 1970s.

> It has become almost imperative for any study of this nature to offer a literary "apology" or "defense" in an attempt to justify any shortcomings or literary defects in the subject at hand. After all, the literature is "Palestinian," and unfortunately this national definition has become the rationalization for the lack of any objective study or criticism of the literature which is itself a source of national pride, a symbol as well as a means of resistance … a field that has long been denied its rights to responsible criticism, like a child or a mentally disturbed person who is not held responsible for his action (p. 83).

In this acute description, Ashrawi applies her analytical tools to the problematic of not criticizing the I as expressed in the national poetry, but her criticism is confined to the sphere of academic criteria of the aesthetic, and she does not ask about the constitutive socio-historical dynamics that absolve the "child" of responsibility for his actions. The Palestinian literature of the 1970s



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could not transcend its own conditions of production. It came, aesthetically and functionally, to express and to inculcate the unsettled, anxious, and threatened national identity. The praising critique referred to by Ashrawi is part of the process of rebuilding the Palestinian identity, and does not go beyond that positionality.

The stage of institution building and the establishment of mass-based networks dominated the public arena of the occupied territories in the early 1980s. Parallel and connected to the public institutionalization of the national identities were the clandestine circuits and networks of the previous stages, which were rebuilt and strengthened with new infrastructures. At this juncture, Wisam al Rafydi went underground. The struggler as a fugitive was the main image and practice of the first stage of building the national I. In the second stage of institutionalization, the image of the fugitive as a struggler always on the run was replaced by that of an underground struggler engaged in building the invisible resistant infrastructures that would be beyond the reach of the colonizer's military forces. Three main characteristics differentiated the new stage for the underground: the systematic building of an underground network of undercover apartments and hiding places; the underground cadres occupied positions in the structure of their parties, in which they worked and produced with their full capacities; and more and more activists were recruited systematically to go underground. Symbolically, and at times literally, the underground activities came to be seen as a liberated zone, which resonated



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with the ideological divisions of surface/occupation versus essence(depth)/Palestinian. Kan'an expresses these ideas as he felt them while lying on the floor, blindfolded and handcuffed after his arrest.

> They abuse his home, his world. The home that disobeyed them for years has become a place broken into by their ugly shoes. His life that was a secret unrevealed to his closest persons is exposed to them. He felt their legs moving and stepping on his past years; the years he lived out of their tie, and out of their bounding procedures. He was the property of the party and of the struggle … His home was a liberated spot over which he exercised sovereignty in the midst of an occupied land; day after day he was elated while the feeling of challenge overwhelmed him as he lived on his liberated spot (p. 93).

The elation of sovereignty and challenge was the feeling that dominated the Palestinian liberated from the grips and shackles of occupation. Although the moment of arrest was unavoidable in their perception of the struggle, the memories of a liberated underground still fed into the general hope for liberation. In many ways, the liberated spot of the underground is an expression of the essence of the unoccupiable Palestinian that these struggles believed in from the start.

These feelings and perceptions were simultaneously channeled through the processes of institutionalization of the Palestinian I and produced by the newly built institutions of identity. Salient among these institutions were the changed procedures for the production of knowledge, and the artistic and literary forms of expressing the national identity. (For a general theoretical discussion, see Anderson, 1983, and Gellner, 1983; for the history of these institutionalizations



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in the Palestinian context, see Kanaanah S., 2000). Both of these -- the expressive culture and knowledge production -- were achieved through reading/writing, which took a rather different path and a different position in the newly established national identity from those of the pre-1967 era. These transformations could be compared to the changes in the same domains in the other Arab countries earlier in the 20th century, when they were suffering the burden of direct colonialism. Hafez (1993), in his seminal work, "The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse," describes the linguistic changes in Arabic and their connection to the newly emerging reading public in the Arab world since the early 19th century, with its distinctive sensibilities. He argues that these transformations of Arabic and the sensibilities of its users were precursors of the institutionalization of a distinctive national identity. Moreover, the development of the national identity led to and was accompanied by the introduction of new forms of art and literature that expressed these identities.

> The new narrative discourse rapidly came of age with a clear demarcation between its various genres in the cultural climate engendered by the fervent quest for national and political identity… This was not only because the national and political fervour inspired Arab intellectuals to create art worthy of their countries' ambitious aspirations, but also because the new forms of literature, as well as other forms of expression, were evolved to fulfill a need for an art form which would reflect the consciousness of a distinctive national identity (p. 157).

The complex interrelations of language use, new reading publics, forms of expression, and the distinctive national identity had been forming and taking shape in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since direct colonial rule was



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instated after the War of 1967. But these interrelations began to reach maturation with the accelerated processes of institutionalization that occurred in the consciousness of a distinctive Palestinian national identity in the early 1980s. The texture and characteristics of these interrelations are expressed by Wisam through his protagonist.

Alongside the formal duties that the hidden struggler, Kan'an, performs through reading/writing, there is also literature as another activity, less formal, but still part of the daily domain of reading. It is to literature in general, and novels in particular, that the protagonist of "Domains" retires each time he leaves the public for the private self.

> He was reading a lot, which reinforced his convictions and choices in life. Specifically, he was drinking in literature: George Amado, Hanna Mynah, Ghassan Kanfani, Mahmud Darwish… the Soviet writers. He would read for hours and hours, and the novel he liked he would reread twice and even three times. This he did with 'The Quiet Don" by Sholokhov, 'How Did We Water the Steel' by Ostrovsky, and 'The Snow Comes through the Window' by Hanna Mynah. The latter played an important part in his secret life. When he read it, with each page he used to say "Hanna Mynah wrote about me, he is talking about me" (p. 61).

The distinctive consciousness of the national identity, which is intensified to its utmost limits by the underground struggler, in the sense that he abandons the rest of his identities and dedicates himself entirely to the national one, is materialized through the act of reading a specific literary genre, the novel. The constitutive mirroring/projection between the national self and its representations through the novel indicates the inherent interrelations between the specific



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social formations of the national identity and the novel as its form of expression par excellence. In one of the interviews I conducted with Wisam Al Rafydi, I asked him a direct question, and his answer -- no less direct and explanatory -- illuminates these interrelations.

> ***Why did you write "Domains"?*** I asked him.
>
> ***In fact there were two main reasons in my mind when the idea of writing my experience of the underground as a novel started to take shape. First, the underground experience has, by its nature, novelistic traits … The experience of hiding, the position of woman in it, for example … the weak and the strong points*** [of the protagonist] ***at the beginning of the experience, and the long-term conflict which developed from them that led to the victory of the strong ones. In these I felt novelistic traits, so I couldn't write about the position of woman in a regular mode of writing … It*** [the experience of hiding] ***is novelistic in the first place in reality… and the second reason was didactic. I wanted to show other Palestinians that we can resist in the deep sense of that meaning …*** (November, 2000).

In articulating the underground experience as a novelistic one, and hence writing it as a novel, Wisam interlocks the relations between the social and the literary forms; at the same time, this articulation is an indication of the maturation of a coherent distinctive Palestinian national identity. The novel and the nation-state are the twins of modernity, both in its European version and elsewhere, but how can we conceptualize these relations between national liberation movements, in our case the Palestinian one, and the novel?

While these interrelations are well established in European societies (Lukacs, [1920] 1971; Goldmann, 1965), and Arab ones (Badir, 1968; al Sa'afyn, 1984; Hafez, 1993, among others), for many reasons they are far from



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being even well studied in the Palestinian case as manifested in the literature produced in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the following sections I will attempt, through a sociological analysis of "Domains," to peel and expose such interrelations between the national identity and the novel as its form of expression and constitution.

## 7.3 Tracing the Threads of the Novelistic Practices

It was an easy task to find a novel written in the colonial prison and published in the colonized society. One night in late June 2000, I was watching TV with Butrus, the landlord of the apartment I rented in Ramallah. Watan TV was broadcasting an interview with Wisam al Rafydi about his novel "The Three Domains." I followed the interview attentively, while Butrus told me that Wisam was his nephew on the mother's side. He went on to tell the heroic history of Wisam in the underground and in the colonial prison. At that time, I didn't know much about the underground resistance, except that it existed and that many myths were circulating among the Palestinian public about such activities. The televised interview seemed like an introduction to the intellectual and creative activities of the political captives. The interviewer's assumption was that the post-Oslo generation didn't know the traditions of the struggle that the Palestinian national movement in the territories had waged against the Israeli occupiers. This assumption was mingled with the mysterious aura that the national discourse attributed to the captive/writer image. But Wisam presented



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himself as an ordinary Palestinian, hinting that every Palestinian should resist and endure suffering to put an end to the occupation. The interviewer did not accept Wisam's line of argumentation, and continued to invoke the discourse on national heroism and sacrifice. There were several phone calls from the audience. The callers did not ask short, direct questions; each phone call was an intervention about the relation between captivity and creativity. All of the speakers, both those in the studio and those who phoned in, asked: "What is the best literary form suitable for expressing the captivity experience?", and: "Does the prison literature meet the aesthetic criteria that are applied to literature and art in general?" The program went beyond the introductory level intended by its organizers. Butrus was annoyed.

> ***These people are so rude, the program is about Wisam, so let the man talk. Look, they catch the phone and start a speech not a question … we don't have respect for others … this man, al Rantysi, he has been talking for 15 minutes … God.***

The debate heated up when al Rantysi claimed that many captives wrote literature unworthy of publication. He continued to describe his experience, explaining why he had stopped publishing in the last five years. The interviewer tried to cut al Rantysi off politely, but with no success. Again, al Rantysi, speaking loudly:

> ***I am not talking about Wisam … but look around you, look at the rubbish that is being published under the title of 'prison literature' … there must be criteria, serious ones, which text can we publish and which not … being a captive doesn't make one a writer … not even a small one … writing is a***



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***profession, one must study and experience it, not just write ...***

The interviewer assertively cut him off at this point, saying that the program had run out of time. He thanked the audience, and promised to meet them the next day. Butrus and I continued to chat. I asked him if he had read Wisam's novel.

***No, I haven't read it, I don't read in Arabic ... you know after thirty years in Brazil I have almost forgotten even the letters ... but I am good in Portuguese, I read and write fluently ... sometimes I look at the newspaper headlines in Arabic and I can figure it out ... I haven't read the novel, but you know Wisam is a real man; he has done so much for the issue*** [the national cause]***... you won't find many Palestinians like him. These days everybody is a thief, anyone who has a position in the Authority*** [Palestinian Authority] ***is getting rich, and suddenly they get rich...***

Butrus is a returnee from Brazil. After the establishment of the PA, thousands of Palestinians came back from the Diaspora. They are multilingual, multicultural and live in their own imagined borderlands.

Early the next morning I went to the offices of Watan TV. It is located in the building of The Committees for the Rescue of Palestinian Agriculture (CRPA), a mega non-governmental organization. I knew several people who worked in Watan TV, including Hasan Abdallah. At the front desk of the offices I met 'Ibrahim al Husari. I explained to him that I was interested in getting a copy of last night's program.

***You know I can arrange it for you here ... I mean you could watch it here ...***



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***No, I want a copy of the tape … and it's not the only program about the prison literature that you broadcast, is it?***

***No no, man we have like 20 or even more than 20 programs … are you interested in the others too?***

***Yes, of course, could you arrange them for me? I will copy them and return them the same day …***

***It needs some work in the archive … you know, we arrange them in numbers, there are no titles on the videos … but I will look for them, just give me a couple of days …***

***No problem, I will call you tomorrow noon, is that OK?***

***Yes, don't worry I will get them for you…***

This was one way to gather the material I was looking for. Leaving CRPA I was thinking about the quickest way to get the novel itself. Two years have passed since its publication, I thought, so it won't be easy to find it in the regular bookshops of Ramallah. The best thing to do is to ask Wisam if he has a copy. I had his phone number, and I could have phoned him directly. But I didn't, instead I went through intermediaries. I had several acquaintances from Wisam's party. I thought the introduction through the party would be more reliable and trustworthy. Through this argument with myself, I reached 'aly, a friend of mine, and a member of the party. I phoned him; he was enthusiastic about the idea of my research and promised to get a copy for me before the afternoon of the same day.

My access to the data that I was looking for encouraged me. Novelizing the story of the prison literature seemed to be important not only for my research but



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also for the former captives and the social networks around them. The snowballing in the fieldwork was working, one friend leading me to another.

## 7.4 The Plot

The present of the novel, and its apex, is the moment when Kan'an, the protagonist, is arrested in his undercover apartment by the Israeli occupying forces. The story of the arrest is told in segments throughout the novel; each chapter starts with the scene of the arrest, describing how the event unfolds at a particular stage until the last chapter, when the soldiers leave the apartment with Kan'an. He goes back and forth within the time line of the arrest and between different time lines to weave the Now of the novel. Each chapter has two main time lines; it starts with a certain stage of the story of the arrest, and then Kan'an travels in his memory to the different stages of his life in political activism, mainly to his experiences as a hidden activist. Early in his personal history of engagement in resisting the occupation, the party decided that he should go underground and not fall into the 'cement sacks' of the colonial prison. The experience of nine years of undercover activities, as the second parallel time line, develops through the successive chapters. Both time lines proceed in a linear fashion, starting in the past, continuing into the present, and then proceeding to the future. In the final chapter the two time lines converge into one moment, when Kan'an is taken out of his safe house by the soldiers, and thrown into the military truck.



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The first chapter starts with the scene of soldiers trying to break into the apartment through its front door. The violent act of breaking down the door is described by Kan'an as a pagan cannibalistic ritual.

> The way they were banging on the door seemed like a collective primitive pagan ritual. They looked like a cannibal tribe, its members dancing a mad erotic dance accompanied by shouting and stupid screaming which broke the silence of the forest; the screaming was mixed with drum beatings which indicated a hungry appetite crying for prey (p. 9).

The story of the arrest in the first chapter stops at this stage of a group of soldiers beating on the door. Kan'an senses that a new stage in his life is forming with the beatings of the soldiers. Then he moves on to narrate the main turning point in his life. It was in December 1982, when he received a message from the party telling him that "his man" had been arrested and could implicate him, so he must change his activities until things became clearer. The second message was that he must go underground and dedicate his life to one purpose: the revolutionary party. The chapter then continues through three main sets of Kan'an's relations: the party, his family represented by his mother, and the larger society, represented by his girlfriend Muna. The chapter concludes as Kan'an ranks the latter two as secondary to the first. He enters his first safe house and closes the door.

In the first chapter there is already a visual distinction between the narrator and the other actors, and the voice of Kan'an talking to himself. The distinction



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*is made by printing Kan'an's inner dialogue in bold and using a regular printing style for the third person narrator.*

Chapter two starts with Kan'an looking through his bedroom window into the street to see a lot of soldiers gathered at the main entrance of the building, with their booted feet trying to kick through the door. Kan'an and his assistant, Hisham, discuss their situation briefly and decide that Kan'an with his papers and documents will go into the hidden alcove while Hisham stays to face the soldiers. Sitting in the hidden alcove, behind the walls of the apartment, Kan'an enters his memory and continues to narrate the story of his underground life, starting from the point at which he ended the first chapter. The first months in his hidden life were characterized by the conflict between his personal needs and desires, which he names his I, and the We of the collective group that he belonged to. His former lover and his mother are positioned in the sphere of the lost personal I. He mourns their loss, and continues to trace their whereabouts by asking his comrades to bring him news. He articulates this conflict as one between the mind and the self as an emotional sphere. The inner dialogue seems to develop into a battleground, while the third person narrator tells the story of the first phase of his hidden life with a seemingly 'objective' eye.

The sense of imminent death begins to take shape in Kan'an's mind. The third chapter begins with the soldiers trying to break into the safe apartment from the neighboring apartment. The noise of the banging changes, getting lower and farther away. Hisham calls Kan'an and updates him on the soldiers'



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movements; both agree that the situation is escalating. Kan'an deals with his sense of death as an expected outcome. At least the death would be worth its name, a heroic one.

The second part of chapter three continues the story of the undercover life. The conflict between the We and the I, after a year and a half of being isolated from society, seems to be settled in favor of the We. Kan'an resumes his political activities with a sense of efficiency and importance. After a cooling period of several months, the renewed work gives him the perspective of the party that he did not see at the beginning of his new life experience. The inner dialogue is dominated by the mind, although the I is still demanding but in a lowered voice.

His mother comes to visit him for the first time. Kan'an is excited, and the visit gives him a sense of security and stability. The party is doing everything to comfort him.

Chapter four starts with Kan'an trying to remember what went wrong in their, Kan'an's and Hisham's, behavior that convinced the soldiers that the apartment was suspicious. He reenacts in his memory the following scene: Kan'an and Hisham are standing on the apartment balcony looking at the soldiers and their vehicles, trying to understand the roaring sounds they heard when they were working inside the apartment. At that moment, the soldiers see them. Kan'an, from his hidden alcove behind the wall, tries to reassess the scene and estimate the soldiers' reactions in order to know if they had seen two



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persons on the balcony. He blames himself for being an amateur, letting himself be led by coincidence. The secret, underground activity has no room for coincidence. His memory travels to different events in his undercover life in which coincidences controlled the flow of events. Then he realizes that the soldiers have broken through the front door. Soon enough they will break through the inside one, which is weaker than the main door. They catch Hisham and start beating him badly. Hisham is cursing them. The soldiers are asking him in Hebrew "where is the other person?" Kan'an realizes that it is a matter of time until he is caught. There is nothing he can do but wait. He checks the documents, the lighter and the gasoline container, just to be sure that no written material will fall into their hands. Kan'an's memory retraces events of waiting that he has experienced in the past nine years of underground activities. The screams and the beating of Hisham, and the sounds of opening doors invade Kan'an again, bringing him back to the present. Waiting is the only thing he can do.

The fourth chapter, unlike the first three, is not divided into two separate sections of past and present. The memory and the ongoing events mix and interact almost freely without a formal division.

The story of the arrest reaches its climax in chapter five. The soldiers are breaking the closet that covers the hidden alcove in the wall where Kan'an is hiding. At that moment Kan'an realizes that arrest is imminent and starts to burn the documents. But the closed alcove has a limited amount of oxygen, so the



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flame dies quickly. He starts to eat the papers in frenzy. It is a race between him and the soldiers. Kan'an is eating papers soaked with gasoline and breathing the smoke. He does not feel the pain as much as the sense of urgency and the strong will to defeat the occupiers who have intruded upon his secret life. He finishes swallowing the papers before they break down the closet and reach him. It is a victory; they cannot capture the documents. The moment they see him is one of astonishment. Recovering from their surprise, the soldiers pull him out and start to beat him viciously. He hits back, but they overcome him. He is wounded in his eyebrow. His hands are tied behind his back. Two soldiers with M-16s guard him and the rest continue searching the apartment. The intelligence service man, who seems to command the military unit, starts questioning him, asking his name. Kan'an refuses to answer, and keeps trying to reestablish the power relation in his favor. Then the soldiers cover his eyes and tighten the bonds on his hands and throw him face down on the ground.

Chapter six starts with Kan'an lying on the ground trying to observe the movements of the soldiers. He sees the boots and the sneakers, the former worn by the soldiers, and the latter by the intelligence service men. The occupation is a military boot that oppresses and destroys the occupied. Kan'an thinks of the hierarchy of the occupation system through the ranks associated with the boots and the sneakers. One plans the strategies and gives orders, and the other obeys and executes. This first part of the sixth chapter is separate from the second one, which is a continuation of the story of Kan'an's hidden life.



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Kan'an goes back to 1985. The occupation forces were waging a campaign against the party. He had to move to another safe apartment and freeze his activities for several months. The owner of the apartment was an old lady named Sakynah. She was known as a notorious landlady who kept guarding the apartment and intervening in the lives of whoever rented her property. Kan'an avoided all contact with her, which made his stay difficult and depressing. The neighbors in the next building were peasants who spent most of their day sitting in front of the house. He started to exchange looks and feelings with their daughter, and their relationship developed although they did not exchange a word. Kan'an, in his inner dialogue, talks about his three domains: life, revolution and woman. He is eager to fill the third part. And 'abyr, the girl from next door, is the woman who should become his third domain. Kan'an compares and classifies the two kinds of women: Sakynah and 'Abyr. The first is repulsive and disgusting to him, while the second is the desired lover. After several months the party orders him to leave the apartment and resume his duties. Kan'an mourns the loss of 'Abyr and realizes the gap between him, the revolutionary avant-garde, and the subordinated 'Abyr. He leaves the apartment without telling her.

Chapter seven comprises two sections. The first, the shorter one, is the present of Kan'an lying on the ground trying to visualize what the soldiers are doing. They are breaking through the bedroom walls to the next apartment. Kan'an contemplates his neighbors' reaction. Then he tries to predict the



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reactions of society in general to his arrest. He develops a dialogue with different arguments against his experience in his hidden life.

The second section describes how the party recovered from the occupation forces' attacks on its structure in 1986. These attacks continued until April 1986. The party's policy was to enlarge the circles of the different structures, and it succeeded according to the results of several election campaigns in different national institutions. So, Kan'an was working to full capacity, and that made his year a productive and almost a happy one. The chapter ends with a scene, which disrupts the flow of the year, as Kan'an phrases it. He is going back to his safe apartment after participating in an important meeting. As the car stops at a junction, he looks out of the window only to see his former lover, Muna, with her husband. He thinks that she has not recognized him. But for a passing moment they look at each other. The cars move away, and Muna disappears. Kan'an cannot relax for several weeks after that. He keeps thinking and analyzing his relationship with her, trying to decide if his decision in late 1982 was right and justified. Of course it was right; the revolution comes before love and life.

Kan'an is watching the sneakers of the intelligence man standing near him. The sneakers move around, looking for something. Then he plays with the tape recorder. He puts different tapes on and Kan'an thanks him for giving him the chance to listen to Marcel Khalyfah singing a song by Mahmud Darwysh. From the song, Kan'an's memory travels back to late 1987. The month of December is full of unforgettable days for Kan'an. It seems that December is always a



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pregnant month for him. He hates the winter; it depresses him. But December is full of events.

In December 1987, the Intifada started. The second section of chapter eight describes the flow of events of the Intifada from the point of view of Kan'an and his party. He thinks that his work is coming to fruition. The dream of a mass revolution is materializing. Although his body is undercover, his participation puts him in the front line of confrontation with the occupation. He makes a car tour around the city. The scenes of blocked roads, deserted streets, graffiti all over the walls, bring him a sense of victory. But with time he criticizes the hasty decisions of the PLO. The Palestinian society in the occupied territories is not yet in the stage of building a nation-state. It will take more time to develop the current Intifada to meet the conditions of a nation-state. As 1989 arrives, the mass participation starts to dwindle and guerrilla activities are increasing. In that year his older sister, who emigrated to the U.S when he was 6 years old, comes to visit with his mother. The meeting lasts several hours. They cook, tell stories, laugh, cry, among other things. But mainly, Kan'an receives his older sister and his mother as a mature man, a revolutionary who is part of a larger project of liberation.

The chapter ends with a female comrade bursting into his safe apartment, crying and carrying the news that Yasir abu Ghush, a popular young man and a promising cadre, was killed today by the Israeli forces. Masses of people



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participated in his funeral, and clashes with the occupation army erupted and another comrade, named Raja Muhammad Salih, was killed.

The ninth chapter starts with soldiers finding the printing machines in the safe apartment. Kan'an compares his destiny with that of Fyad, the protagonist of one of the novels of Hanah Mynah. Fyad was also caught with his printing machine. The intelligence man asks Hisham about the printing machines. Hisham refuses to cooperate. Kan'an is proud of his comrade. His memory travels back to 1990, when he first met Hisham.

In 1990, Kan'an asked the party for an assistant to help him with his growing duties and missions. The party agreed and offered Hisham. The relationship between Kan'an and Hisham deepened and they became friends. In the summer of 1990 the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait and the Gulf War started. Kan'an's life was turned upside down by the events of the war. His work stopped and he basically watched television and listened to the radio. The Intifada took a new form, becoming mainly a guerilla war. The Gulf War overshadowed the Intifada, and both the Iraqi and the Palestinian leaderships announced the linkages between the two wars. The Iraqis were determined to hit Israel if they were attacked. They did fire missiles into Israel, but Iraq lost the war. At the same time, the Soviet Union was collapsing, and Kan'an was searching and studying the Marxist Leninist grounds of his thought.

Chapter ten is the first one that starts with the past and not with the present event of arrest. It starts with a dialogue between Kan'an and one of his



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comrades, who seems, according to the flow of the dialogue, to be one of Kan'an's superiors. The dialogue develops around Kan'an's relationships, or absence of relationships, with women. The comrade asks Kan'an about his future experiences and the woman issue in his hidden life. Kan'an sees four possibilities: detention, the homeland will be liberated while he is still alive, he will tire of the experience and ask to leave the party or the party will not be able to protect him, or he will die.

Then the chapter moves on to describe Kan'an's relationships with two women, his mother, and his only woman lover during the nine years of his secret life. His mother kept visiting him every two weeks and became part of his hidden home. He could not continue without her. Hind, his lover, entered his life in the ninth year of his undercover activities. The affair with her lasted for six weeks; he loved her but she decided she had no feelings of love for him. Hind left, and her image stayed with him. Lying on the ground, the inner dialogue between the revolutionary and his self develops into a conflict, and Kan'an feels that this conflict is taking him back to his first year of hidden life. The demands of the self for basic human needs, such as a woman to live with, are in conflict with the austere, cruel, harsh, and oppressive life of the revolutionary. The resolution of the conflict comes as a statement: Before the coming of the revolutionary there is the human, and after the revolutionary phase there is also the human. Kan'an is ready to enter the new phase of detention.



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The last chapter is one whole time line. It describes the soldiers taking the books, the documents, the printing machines, and Kan'an. Kan'an thinks about the workers in the nearby factories. He made a coalition with them a long time ago. He is fighting for the liberation of the homeland, but on the basis of the class struggle. He does not care if the occupation deports, kills, or detains him. He has the basic feeling of satisfaction. The last sentence he says before being thrown into the military truck is: ***It is a new stage, which necessitates new confrontations and new challenges.***

The novel is signed on the last page with the place where it was written and the date of writing: Al Naqab Detention Center – Ansar, February 3, 1995.

## 7.5 Dissecting the Body of the Novel

Many histories have been written, in Arabic and other languages, periodizing the development of the novel in the Arab World. The ones written in Arabic accept national boundaries, and tend to valorize the imagined national borders. For example, one of the seminal works written about the novel in the Arab World is Badir's (1963) "The Development of the Modern Arab Novel in Egypt, 1870-1938." Badir demarcates the typology of the novel, as it developed in Egypt, into three categories: didactic, entertainment, and artistic. Many Arab researchers and critics emulated Badir's work and typology in tracing and analyzing the development of the novel in other Arab countries. al Sa'afyn (1984) "The Development of the Modern Arab Novel in Greater Syria 1870-



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1967" is one such work influenced by Badir. In "The Three Domains," Wisam al Rafydi incorporates the three types of Badir's model of the Arab novel. In fact, Wisam's literary inheritance seems to be subordinated to the political one. Many writers in the Arab World see the novel as an alternative vehicle for expressing their political ideas, which they cannot express in the political arena (al Khatib, 1996; Meyer, 2001). But this somewhat reductive position is developed into the more basic questions by other critics: is there an Arabic novel as opposed to the European one? And, is the novel a suitable artistic form for expressing the realities of the modern Arab World? (al 'Arawi, 1995; Daraj, 1999). These questions were raised in Watan's TV program about prison literature. To Wisam the answer is clear. The two reasons for writing are the didactic revolutionary one, and the nature of the experience itself. Hence, "Domains" is located in the modern Arab tradition of literary writing, and it makes its own intervention and variation vis-à-vis this tradition.

To dissect the threads that form the textual texture and the signifying structure of "Domains," I will analyze it through two main axes: the colonial condition as represented by the events of the novel, and the problematic protagonist. The question for us in this chapter is: how do these elements combine to build the aesthetic structure that signifies the conflictive structures of the Palestinian society in the occupied territories?



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### 7.5.1 *Novelizing the colonial as isolated events*

"The Three Domains" is a novel whose narration is constructed around two main events: the arrest, and its opposite – the unreachable life in the underground. Between these two poles the novel is woven as a movement from one event, or a segment of it, to the other. Mostly, the transitions are abrupt, and have weak thematic relations. Most of the chapters start with a scene from the unfolding event of the arrest, which constitutes the present time of the novel. Then, the second section of each chapter tells the story of one segment of the unfolding event of the underground experience as it is reconstructed in the memory of Kan'an, the protagonist. In this way one feels that the narrator is trying to represent the two events as mutually exclusive. For example, the transition in chapter three runs as follows:

> A military camp is surrounding the house! This means a lot to him about the reasons they came for. They aren't running after stone throwers … nor even Molotov cocktails … from the movement of the soldiers and the positions of their trucks he could, by experience, estimate the importance of the event.
> As the year of 1983 was wearing to an end, the result of the conflict between the opposites was settled. And as the months went by … (p. 50).

The first paragraph describes the event of the arrest, while the second, which immediately follows it, describes the event of the underground as it unfolded eight years earlier.



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This manner of representing the two events calls for interpretation, because the arrest and the colonial authorities, who are behind it, are the major constitutive players in making the underground experience a necessity.

The opening scene of the novel is the beginning of the arrest. A group of soldiers is trying to break down the door to Kan'an's secret apartment. As soon as Kan'an realizes the seriousness of the event he decides not to open the door, and he starts to take the necessary measures to protect himself and his work. He takes his working papers, the party documents, a lighter, and a container of gasoline, and withdraws into the hidden alcove behind a closet. Hisham stays to confront the soldiers and disguise the presence of Kan'an. The preparatory stage for the confrontation and the actual capture of Kan'an is thus composed as a spatial arrangement of the two opposites and an intermediary located on different points of the same track, which will lead to the confrontation. The arresting forces are in the public space, the street and the entrance to the apartment; Hisham is in between the public and the hidden space, in the rooms of the apartment; and Kan'an is in the hidden alcove, deep in the underground.

In spite of the fact that the arrest is one of the two major events in the novel, there is no explanation as to why Kan'an is attacked in his safe apartment at this specific time. When he tries to rearrange the flow of events, he remembers hearing noises in the street, so he and his assistant, Hisham, went to the balcony to see what was happening down below. He assumed that the soldiers had seen both of them. And then they decided to break into the apartment. But



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the number of soldiers and the way they are spread out around the house indicate that it is a planned arrest and not a coincidental one. All of these possible explanations run through Kan'an's mind.

The soldiers, their actions, and the whole event of the arrest are represented and told only by Kan'an. In fact, throughout the whole novel a heavy curtain of silence is imposed on the colonizer. Even in the one exception to this silence, when the intelligence officer who commands the soldiers speaks directly, his speech is a reaction to Kan'an's refusal to deliver his name to him. The curtain of silence as a technique of regaining total agency for the colonized should be seen in the context of the inevitable political arrest and captivity for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Everyone is vulnerable to arrest, interrogation, and sentence to long-term imprisonment, hence the total negation is, symbolically, total regaining of agency for the colonized and voice degree zero for the colonizer. In addition to the total agency guaranteed to Kan'an the struggler by this way of structuring the voices in the novel, two other aspects are emphasized by this manner of representation. First, there is no relationship between the opposites except the conflictive one, and each potential relationship must be geared and channeled into the primary conflict of colonizer-colonized. Second, the colonial condition is a total one, and it should be rejected as such, totally. These relations between the voices continue into the second stage of the arrest, when the violent physical capture of Kan'an occurs.



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After more than an hour of banging on the door of the apartment and trying to break it down, the soldiers succeed in entering the apartment. They find Hisham, and start to beat him. He curses and tries to resist, but they paralyze him. He is thrown on the floor with hands and legs tied. They ask him about the other person they saw with him on the balcony. The soldiers search for Kan'an in a frenzy. They turn the apartment upside down. Finally, they notice the hidden alcove by knocking on its outer cover. When they reach Kan'an, they pull him out and start beating him. He does not surrender and starts to hit back. They overcome him only by battering him with their rifles. While he lies on the floor bound hand and foot, the soldiers and the intelligence men search the apartment for forbidden materials, destroying it in the process. The physical clash and the capture are narrated through the voice of Kan'an. He tells himself that his physical capture will not necessarily be a victory for them. He will not surrender, and will not cooperate. He resists physically, refuses to answer questions, and declares to the intelligence serviceman:

> Listen, I am a Marxist revolutionary struggler. I am optimistic that one day we will overcome you and take our rights. This gives me the energy and the power not to surrender to terror and thugs like the practices of you and your soldiers. Don't think this will help *you in anything; you don't scare me*.
> He was talking in a loud voice. But each word was uttered clearly and assertively. He wanted them to know, from the beginning, his true strength and power with no cover whatsoever (p. 85).

In this manner of presenting himself, Kan'an aims at "winning the battle" of the arrest, as he repeatedly states. The redefinition of the event, right from the



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start, according to his classification system of who is the terrorist and who the freedom fighter, is intended to turn the physical arrest into a defeat for the colonizer. For without his cooperation with the colonizer, Kan'an's arrest is useless. This is accomplished by the curtain of silence in which only the voice of Kan'an is an active agent whose story is represented.

For Kan'an it is of crucial importance to leave his apartment, and his underground life, with his head held high. In the final stage of the event of the arrest, Kan'an is taken out through the main gate of the building and locked in a military truck. The soldier who is leading him out forcefully pushes his head down. Kan'an lifts it up. This battle between them continues until they reach the main gate, where Kan'an, with all his energy and determination holds his head up proudly (p. 204). In this more than telling way of ending the novel, Kan'an reasserts that the physical capture is not the final act of the battle of arrest. His strong will, morals, convictions, and thoughts enable him to overcome the colonizers and turn the physical arrest into a defeat for them.

The division between, and the almost separation of the two main events of the novel run through all the levels of "Domains." It starts with the physical arrangement of the page, and is materialized on the symbolic and signifying levels. The main textual and narration technique that Wisam uses to reach this separation is the curtain of silence imposed on the colonizer. From these relations to turning the physical capture of Kan'an into a moral victory for him, the way is short. Kan'an's voice is the only voice in the novel. The total regaining



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of agency by the colonized is thus achieved by totally silencing the colonizer. From this perspective, the event of going underground, as practiced by Kan'an, is totally giving voice to the colonized and silencing the colonizer.

The Palestinian struggler in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a limited number of choices of action if he or she was pursued by the Israeli forces. S/he could be arrested and sentenced to long-term imprisonment. In some cases the Israeli authorities could deport political activists. He could flee the territories into one of the neighboring Arab countries and join his organization outside Palestine. In all these options, the result was that the activist could not continue working in his immediate social and political environment. In a sense, his activities were frozen. Thus, the social and political achievements of the Palestinian political organizations were curtailed time and again. These objective conditions presented the organizations with the challenge of seeking ways to guard themselves and their achievements. At this juncture the concept of going underground and not delivering oneself to the colonial authorities rose as an alternative course of political activism. The objective socio-political conditions demanded:

> … that not only the experience, and the accumulation of it not be disconnected by arrest and detention; it demands building and educating a group of professional leaders and cadres who will take the responsibilities for the party and the struggle as their main course in life. There is no revolutionary party without a group of professionals. There is a deep-seated conviction that the party cannot be built by amateurs, only professionals can build it. And these professional cadres will carry the revolution from its start to



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> the end as a collective. The revolution is like a wife who could not stand as a second one (Domains, p. 15).

This was the analysis of Kan'an's party when they ordered him to go underground. While it was obvious to the party that the experience and the accumulation of achievements must be guarded from arrest and detention, the analysis took the issue one step further. At the juncture of the early 1980s, the party saw it as imperative that a group of revolutionaries dedicate their whole life and energy to carrying the revolution as a collective professional endeavor. These two lines of argumentation opened and created the option of the full time underground revolutionary.

The constellation of relations that represents the arrest and the underground experience in "Domains," while using real socio-historical materials of Palestinian society, contradicts these realities by separating the underground experience from the arrest. The interactive relations between the real and the fictitious in "Domains" are transformative in the sense that they project onto the horizon new models of social and political existence. The Palestinian regains his full agency to control his life, and his land. Regarding the relationship between literature and the other domains of social practice, M. M. Bakhtin (1978) argues that:

> The literary structure, like every ideological structure, refracts the generating socioeconomic reality, and does so in its own way. But, at the same time, in its 'content', literature reflects and refracts the reflections and refractions of other ideological spheres (ethics, epistemology, political doctrines, religion, etc.). That is, in



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> its 'content' literature reflects the whole of the ideological horizon of which it is itself a part (pp. 16-17).

Two important aspects of Bakhtin's argument should be emphasized in the analysis of "Domains." The novel has a structure that refracts the socioeconomic realities in a specific and unique form. The analysis of "a specific and unique form" should proceed in two directions: the form itself as a set of relations, and the historical conditions that allowed such a construction. In "Domains," as we saw above, the basic form is that of total separate binaries. The colonial mode of production (Fanon, 1963; 'Amil, 1972) as the generating socioeconomic reality in Palestine is hybrid, interrelational, and changing through intermixing with other socioeconomic formations. These historical conditions of hybridity, interrelations, and changing through intermixing are contradictory, oppressive, and suppressive for the Palestinians as a colonized people. By reducing the contradictions of the colonial mode of production in Palestine into one dichotomy of arrest versus underground, "Domains" intensifies the main constitutive relationship of this mode, which is colonizer-colonized ('Amil, 1972). This intensified reduction brings into focus the second aspect of Bakhtin's argument. Literature, as ideological structure, encompasses through reflection and refraction other ideological spheres in society. The two-fold nature of literature -- as ideology in itself, and as a reflection of the ideological horizon of society -- is tangible on the structural level, and not only on the level of content, as Bakhtin argues. The binary relations in "Domains" are



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generative structural ones, to which the rest of the ideological domains are subordinated. The interactive and hierarchical relations between the primary binary of arrest versus underground and the other ideological constructions of Palestinian society are mostly represented in "Domains" through the relations of Kan'an, the protagonist, with the women in the novel. While he is a problematic protagonist on the primary binary, as we will see in the next section, Kan'an does not negate the other ideological constructions, especially the patriarchal one.

### *7.5.2 The limited problematic protagonist*

Kan'an is constructed as the problematic individual par excellence (Goldmann, [1964] 1975), but this is mainly in the national ideological sphere. For Kan'an acts, thinks and feels in an oppositional way to the dominant Palestinian 'exchange values' while striving to reach the 'use values' acknowledged but suppressed in the national Palestinian context of the occupied territories. This central axis of the novel is constituted through the technique of monologue or inner dialogue between the social self with its urgent demands, and the revolutionary self that emerges through Kan'an's interactive relations with the colonial environment.

> Between a night and its morning everything is now behind my back. Five words decided the course of my life, no, they killed it! 'It has been decided that you won't turn yourself in' [to the colonial authorities] … I don't belong to the things around me, neither do they belong to me. Did I struggle to belong to the doors, the walls,



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and to the dishes, and pots? … The loneliness is killing me; I have no mother, no brothers, no sisters, no lover, and no friends. How did I leave all these, what kind of a crazy person was I? There is nothing but these walls and a bunch of damn doors … The prison is a thousand times easier. I would have spent a year or two then been released to struggle again. Everybody does this; what came over me this time? My needs are growing and growing only to bump into the walls and come back to me. My wishes are growing and growing to turn into sharp teeth eating my flesh, my brain, sucking my blood; it becomes the monstrous 'Dracula' … It is the clandestine life that turns my wishes and needs into impossibilities, while in ordinary life they are possibilities; are actualized reality (p. 37).

As a problematic protagonist, Kan'an, throughout the whole novel, dichotomizes the self and the revolutionary struggler. The underground transforms the ordinary, the taken for granted, the possible, and the actual into the unreachable domains of the outside world. These social domains are unreachable because of the conditions necessary for reaching total, or almost total, freedom from the colonizer, dedicating all his energies to the party and the revolt against the occupation. The unreachable is embodied in the novel in one relationship: woman. Woman is the absence that constitutes one pole of the major conflict between the self and the underground revolutionary that Kan'an tries to overcome throughout his entire underground life.

Kan'an's relationships with the different women seem to indicate a much deeper problematic than their absence and his inability to satisfy his needs and wishes, because, except for his relationship with his mother, no other relationship with a woman in the entire novel comes to fruition. Muna, the woman he loved during his university years and before the underground phase,



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is represented as a submissive daughter, an obedient lover, and a social personality who confirms to the dominant 'exchange values.'

- I have brought you some books to read. I will explain to you the difficulties you will face.
- The guys here explain a lot to me. And, for you I read and I care about what is going on (p. 19).

> Politics didn't find a way to capture her thoughts. The struggle remained an outer layer to add some beauty, like a lipstick! She was connected to politics and struggle because of her relations with Kan'an, and the fashion of that time. She must be categorized as belonging either to these or the others; she couldn't be in the nowhere middle. She is the girlfriend of Kan'an and he is known to be with a specific group; so, she is with that group. In fact, she was committed to the objectivity that women belong to their men as the dominant social rule; the women believe in the religion of their men, regardless of what that religion is (p. 23).

In this way of portraying Muna, Wisam invokes the traditional patriarchal structure of relations that positions the woman with no agency whatsoever, and as totally reified for the men's use. Hence, as soon as the party decides that Kan'an will go underground, unsurprisingly Muna breaks off her relationship with him in favor of the 'values' of the social course set for her by her parents and by society. But this linear way of presenting Muna slips out of the author's hands when she argues for her right to participate in Kan'an's decision to go underground, meaning that whatever decision he took, both their lives would be drastically affected by it, hence, the decision should be taken jointly by both.

- ***I missed you; you are a mean one. Why do you do this to me? It is your habit not to care for your love.***



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He played with her hair …

- ***I couldn't see you for your own good and for mine; don't forget that I am a fugitive, and every step I take is calculated.***

- ***How did you live last week?***

She said gently showing her empathy while pressing his chest with her hand.

- ***I was moving from one place to another, one house to another; I was running away from surveillances and raids.***

- ***Until when this situation will continue?*** She asked seriously.

- ***There are certain arrangements that must be made.***

- ***What do you mean by certain arrangements? When will I see you again?***

Her questions were pouring out, while confusion was engulfing her.

- ***Certain arrangements mean a secure permanent secret house; nobody knows it except a few and it will be difficult for them to reach. As for our next meeting, it depends on your position towards my new situation?***

She removed her head from his shoulder, and shifted in her seat.

- ***I don't understand anything of this: an unreachable secret house, my position, your new situation, what are all these riddles?***

… she won't understand what is said to her anyway.

- ***I don't understand why you specifically? Everybody is turning himself in. Is confession so hard for you? I don't understand. Where do you put me in these arrangements of yours? Why do you ignore me? (p. 25).***

This is the scene when Muna decides to leave Kan'an. Although it develops as lovers' talk, Muna leads it into a confrontational scene. She demands and



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then conditions their relationship on what she perceives as her rights. The development of the relationship in this confrontational direction indicates an image contrary to her description by the narrator and by Kan'an's inner monologue as a submissive traditional woman.

Later in the novel, Kan'an remembers Muna at different junctions of his underground life. At these junctions, the recurring question is: did he take the right decision? Couldn't he have been more tolerant and less assertive with her? He collects information about her from his comrades, and from the newspaper. She is engaged, and then married, to a wealthy businessman. One day, roaming the city in a car driven by a comrade, at traffic lights he suddenly sees her with her husband. Painful memories start to overwhelm him. For days afterwards he cannot return to his routine underground life.

Muna stands for Kan'an's previous life before the critical decision, which totally changed his life course. The break with the ordinary, expected set of 'exchange values' as represented by a certain structure of feelings (Williams, 1977) is intensified, and made more vivid and humane by taking the relationship with Muna to stand for it instead of narrating it directly.

The love/life relation recurs twice in Kan'an's nine underground years after the break with Muna. First, he meets 'abyr, who is portrayed as a naïve peasant girl who doesn't know about Kan'an's 'real life.' Second, he meets Hind, an upper middle class career woman, who struggles against the occupation in her own public manner, and knows about Kan'an's real life.



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The window girl, as Kan'an calls 'Abyr, is brought to meet him accidentally. In 1985, the occupation forces were waging a campaign of attacks on the party's structure. As a precaution, Kan'an is ordered by his superiors to freeze his activities for several months and move to another safe house. The new house is owned by an old lady named Sakynah, who is portrayed with all the negative stereotypes an old lady could have. She is intrusive, toadying, stingy, a gossip, and worst of all she visits her tenants daily. Kan'an has to conceal the fact that he lives in the apartment. He doesn't answer her. In the next building there is a peasant family living on the ground floor. He spends some of his days watching and listening to their conversations. One day he discovers the gift of the sky:

> Finally, the sky presented its gift, a human shaped as a girl from the neighboring house. From the eastern window of his bedroom he saw her. She was barely 20 years of age, tall, slim, and with long deep-black hair. She had an innocent baby face, not extraordinarily beautiful but relaxing to the looker. He heard her calling her mother in a gentle, kind voice. Her face and voice combined to assert her belonging to innocent childhood, and not to mature femininity (p. 110).

As a gift given to him, Kan'an plays with his new doll. She is represented as closer to nature than to the social. The narrator's emphasis on the child-like 'Abyr in contrast to mature femininity indicates the impossibility of the relationship developing into mature, fruitful experience. 'Abyr and Kan'an don't talk to each other; they exchange looks that express feelings. The climax of their



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relationship comes in the form of a flower thrown, not handed, by 'Abyr to Kan'an.

> One warm afternoon of March, she left her chair in the garden… heading towards the entrance of his house … He was watching her from his window. She went to the back yard of the house, collecting some flowers. At the window of his kitchen she stood, one step from him. He smiled to her; she smiled back. For seconds, they looked at each other, then she threw a flower to him, turned her back and went away. He said, as if talking to himself aloud: The most beautiful flower from the most beautiful flower (p. 117).

Even when he speaks to her, it is like talking to himself. The decision was taken a priori for him not to be seriously involved with her as a human, but to be with her as a concept of being involved with the absent relationships in his underground life. So, when she makes the first move beyond looking, he doesn't respond with the expected reciprocity. The hesitation "as if talking to himself" is not the shyness and anxiety of approaching a lover for the first time; it is the hesitation of will and intention. And when, after several months in the house of Sakynah, and the freezing of his activities, Kan'an is ordered to leave the house and return to his position in the party to continue his revolutionary activities, he leaves late at night; making no effort to inform 'Abyr. Leaving the house he is thinking how she will be surprised.

If Muna, Kan'an's lover from his pre-underground life, stands for the general 'exchange values' of the Palestinian society under occupation, how can we understand the positionality of 'Abyr?



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The naturalization of the Palestinian countryside and its peasant life as the 'essence' of the national identity are well reconstructed in the Palestinian national memory (Bishara, 1997), and well represented in the artistic, folkloric, and cultural artifacts of the various national symbolic spaces such as museums, calendars, the walls of formal institutions, and private homes (Muhammad, 2002). Wisam al Rafydi in his "Domains," makes a variation of the tradition of essentializing peasant life in Palestine. But this variation, or more accurately, intervention, goes beyond the 'nature' style strategy of nationalization. He is arguing here that the countryside and its peasants are not mature enough to be incorporated into the national revolutionary practices. The paternalistic representation of the village, embodied by ‘Abyr and her family, by the city, namely Kan’an and his party, largely reflects the actual relations that exist in the occupied society.

After Muna and ‘Abyr, Hind is the third lover in the novel. She comes in the last year of his underground life. When the soldiers break into the secret apartment, and Kan’an enters the hidden alcove to hide, he takes with him the party’s secret papers and a letter he wrote to Hind describing his feelings and thoughts about their relationship after she left him. In the hidden alcove, he manages to swallow the papers and the letter before the soldiers reach him.

> His letter to her was in his hand. He had picked it up when he checked the papers while the banging and the attempts to open the door continued. He remembered Hind when he touched the letter. The image didn’t leave his imagination. As if he was touching the somewhat rough, short hair of Hind, passing his



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> fingers over her ever-smiling face. He was collecting her smile with his finger. As if he was passing his finger over her eyes, which were beaming intelligence. She used to probe him with her eyes (p. 65).

Hind is an active social agent. She didn't come across Kan'an accidentally as was the case with 'Abyr. She is part of the public activities of the party. At this stage of the novel, when she appears through the letter he wrote to her, she is represented in Kan'an's imagination and memory as the object of love. The adjectives start with her body, only to move to her personality and active mind. Later in the novel, Hind voices her own agency, while Kan'an retreats into his feelings and thoughts. When Hind abandons him, there is nothing he can do but swallow his pride. Due to her independent personality and privileged class position, Hind is able to experience her relationship with Kan'an for six weeks. In the meantime she clarifies her feelings towards him. She likes him, does not love him, and cannot sacrifice her public life for his underground one.

- Each day I know you better. For two weeks, everyday I discover something new in you… The question will always stay: how can you bear this life? (p. 190).

- I want your world. Today, on my way to your house, the possibility that I won't come again for some reason crossed my mind. My body shivered; I couldn't bear to think of that option…

- I could be engaged to you, to your experience, to your life. All of it attracts me, but won't it affect my life, my career, and my work? (p. 192).

- I told you from the beginning that I fear for myself, and for you from me. You didn't listen to me, she said while apologizing



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as an introduction to her decision! Her accent wasn't the same…

- I would be lying if I said that I have feelings towards you! I am not your third domain; don't torture yourself with me. I feel pity for you, she said.

- I am not looking for pity because I am strong. Solidarity, identification yes, but not pity…

- I am sorry I didn't mean that, but these are my feelings. She became silent (p. 196).

Hind is a different kind of woman from Muna and 'Abyr. It could be argued that she is the new woman whom Kan'an is trying to build with his revolutionary practices. But the new woman is the agent of herself, and as such she can refuse Kan'an as a partner in favor of her independent life. The interesting turn of representing the new woman colors Hind's emergence as a woman who was able to become the new woman because of her privileged social position. While Kan'an and the party call for the transformation of woman's position in society, they are basically working against the class system of that society, which also has the ability to construct the new woman. From this juncture, it seems, stems Kan'an's inability to develop the relationship with Hind. She remains a sympathizer; she isn't the dreamed of lover, or what Kan'an calls his third domain, after life and the revolution, the first and second domains respectively.

Muna, 'Abyr, and Hind, as well as representing lovers, stand for the different segments of Palestinian society. The duality of their position creates the tensions throughout the novel that produce the pendulum-like movement



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between the individual and the collective in "Domains." The sex/politics binary relations are a recurring system of signification in the contemporary Arab novel. The Lebanese critic Yumna al 'Yd, in her important work "About Knowing the Text" (1983), argues that sexual repression stands for political oppression, and not for unrealized sexual desires of the Freudian unconscious, as most critics claim.

> The sexual language hides the politically repressed, the intellectual oppression; and waves it to try and say it to become a political language. The language of the sexual crosses that of the political. One says the other and hides it, and this movement of them looks like a conflict between death and life, acceptance and rejection, and oppression and liberation ... The positioning of the language on this sexual level gives the imagined a realistic presence that the world of the novelistic or the fictional looks real. In this way the fictional leaves the real world without being disconnected from it, and it leaves the world of fiction without betraying it (p. 193).

al 'Yd rightly indicates the pattern of play between the sexual and political languages. However, her description falls short of grounding it in the socio-historical frame of reference and analysis. It seems that her analysis remains at the level of textual techniques. The reality/fiction binary, and the continuum between them, can be seen as part of larger processes that constitute the novel. Moreover, the real and the fictional are dynamic categories of analysis, and they mix and interweave more than they contradict each other. In "Domains" we can identify two major axes on which the fictional and the real seem to intermix: the protagonist's relations with his mother, and the relationship between the social collective and the revolutionary 'I' of the protagonist.



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The caring and compassionate image of the mother accompanies Kan'an throughout the novel. The mother is represented mainly through the function of feeding. She feeds Kan'an with cooked food and with warm, intimate and supportive feelings. At times she feeds him with information about the social atmosphere through the stories that the "regular mundane women" exchange in their social gatherings. The image of the nurturing mother is nothing but pure good for Kan'an. Through her nurturing activities, the mother is the primary source of life, or more precisely she is almost life itself. On the textual level, the mother acts and behaves as expected of a good mother in the Palestinian context, but she is seen through the eyes of her son, and never through her own inner feelings and thoughts unless as a dialogue with the son. The real that one senses while reading the novel is interwoven with and through the intensified puritan concept of a total good. The total good is a fictional ideal that is yearned for out of the real.

After a year and a half living underground, his mother comes to visit him for the first time. He spent the previous day cleaning and preparing the apartment for the visitor. He woke up early in the morning, made the final preparations, and now sits near the window waiting for her.

> At four minutes past nine the expected car is moving up the hill towards his hiding place. His heart is beating rapidly, a light shiver starts to run through his body. He stands near the front door waiting for his comrade to open it. The sound of the key is turning in the lock. The door opens and she holds him in her arms, with the anxiety of a mother who has found her lost son. She rained



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him with kisses on his cheeks, he held her head tightly, and buried it in his chest …

- Come in quickly so the landlady won't see you. I am leaving and I will be back at four. His comrade cautioned them, while they were standing outside the open door. They came in, and he left (p. 57).

Kan'an's meeting with his mother was arranged through the party. The mediating role played by the party between Kan'an and his mother does not make their relations less emotional or more formal. On the contrary, it transforms the primary emotions into more elaborate constellations, as if these emotions were nourished by the party. It protects the protagonist and his mother, and takes on the role of the nurturing protector on the different levels, from the material to the intellectual. These relations between Kan'an, his *mother, and the party do not change despite the transformational events of the* novel. The transformations occur through the personality and activities of Kan'an, but the mother, and the party as the political mother, seem to remain above these processes while nurturing them.

The congeniality between the biological mother and the political one lead us to reposition the triangle of relations between Kan'an, mother, and party on a larger socio-historical constellation. In the national ideological system, the biological mother as a filiative type of social practice represents the land as materiality in its primary condition. The land/nature is pure good; it gives boundlessly all the time. In this manner of novelizing the mother, the writer in fact reenacts the ideological theme of al Watan al 'um, which literally means



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motherland. If, as mentioned above, the woman-lover signifies a social class or segment, then the woman-mother is the whole of land and society. Hence, we can understand the impossibility of any of Kan'an's love relationships coming to fruition in the larger context of the colonized woman-mother-motherland as the archetype of the attachment relationship. This means that if the basic, primary feeding relationship is existentially threatened, no other secondary relation is possible. At this juncture comes the political mother, the party. One doesn't choose one's mother, but one can and must choose the political mother.

The relations with the party as affiliative relations do not exist a priori, as is the case with the mother, but rather are built through rational practices of choice. The main axis of these practices is represented in the novel as a conflictive process between the individual I, and the collective We.

> Between the "I", which demands its needs and wishes, and the "We" which demands its receipt was the conflict. The first one, the damned one, couldn't get anything. For the clandestine life reduces its needs to the minimal required: eating and drinking! … The second has a large receipt, more demands, and it doesn't stop asking for more … (p. 38)

The dynamic of reducing the individual I to its biological needs, together with the continuous expansion of the collective We, is seen as the basic requirement for a true struggler. The clandestine life is the apex of such a dynamic, in which one abandons the mundane I in favor of the almost sacred We. Kan'an's experience starts with the declaration, with the intent to defeat the individual I and dedicate himself to the We. He states that "Only the right [of



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being totally We] holds." The tense relations, though, bring to the surface the impossibility of resolving the conflict once and for all. In each stage of his clandestinity the conflict takes a different shape. We can identify three major stages of development through which the I-We relations are shaped in the course of the novel. The first stage, the one mentioned above, is the direct confrontation and the suppression of the individual I in favor of the collective We. At this stage, Muna, who represents the domain of the individual I, is totally abandoned for the underground experience, the We.

The second stage is characterized by avoiding the individual I, and delaying any engagement with it. At this stage the We is an active, energetic, and all-consuming sphere.

> Towards the end of 1983, the conflict between the opposites, gradually as the months passed, was settled for the "We", the mind, the demands of work and struggle. In his first year his body became so thin … The party absorbed the attack [by the occupier], and life is back into its cells … Kan'an takes more missions; participates in decision-making; receives orders; addresses others; argues and converses with them. He writes, suggests, and moves from one place to the other for security, and work reasons. The work starts to consume most of his daytime hours, and work makes him aware of the importance of staying between the walls away from their [occupiers] eyes and hands (pp. 50-51).

In this way of being totally immersed in missions, decisions, and moving from one hiding place to another, the individual I is relegated to a secondary position. The relationship with 'abyr is an example of this stage. After almost three years, he meets 'abyr, his first woman lover in the underground life. The



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meeting disturbs the balance between the I and the We. The strategy used by the novelist to maintain the I-We distinction in the new context of love is to have Kan'an's activities frozen by the party for security reasons. He cannot be in love, in the I sphere, during his active We.

In the third stage, the conflictive relations between the I and the We take on a different meaning. It is time to integrate them into one constellation. The figure of Hind, as the real woman lover, opens up a possibility for the I and the We to merge into one entity. In the middle of a scene in which he and Hind listen to music, dance, and kiss, the following monologue appears:

> ***For me then you were suffering, and you still are?*** **his self called, discovering what she missed, and continued:**
>
> - ***Finally we are reconciled, you understood my demand and identified with me. Oh, how you tired me, you the revolutionary (Kan'an), Oh oh, how deep in your depths I withdrew, suppressing my wishes, needs, and screams. I rolled into myself, and hid my head so it couldn't reach the world of rules, demands, procedures and precautions. Now I understand you: Before-and after the revolutionary, you are a human, and you didn't give up the human in you. You will win, certainly you will win because you are a human before and after the revolutionary! Despite the fact that a moment of pleasure turned into a moment of pain, you will win!*** (p. 195, emphasis in original).

The self understood the revolutionary as a human who struggles for it. The collective We is a form through which the human I will be redeemed from the injustices of a historical moment, in this instance the colonial condition. This understanding brings reconciliation between the two opposites. The realization of the redeemed human is symbolized through the experience of a genuine love



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affair with Hind. Listening to music, dancing, and kissing are fleeting moments of the social that the underground rigidly prohibits. But this prohibition does not stem from an inhumane state of being, on the contrary these moments are yearned for in a state of liberation, and not in the colonial condition.

## 7.6 The Possibilities of World Vision(s)

The two sets of relations that constitute the main plot of "Domains" are the relations between the colonizer and the colonized, and the socio-political and gender relations between the different Palestinian social groups and classes. Interestingly enough, the moment of confrontation, the arrest, is used as a front stage to inspect, expose, and criticize the social structure of the Palestinian society. In a delicate and subtle way, the novel is more than arguing that, at least, there is a relation between the continuing colonial condition and some social characteristics of Palestinian society. Standing between and linked to these two clusters of relations is the underground protagonist, who is a possible alternative option for both. In this section, I will explain these interrelations between the three pillars of the novel in order to comprehend and explain (Goldmann, [1964] 1975) "Domains" in its larger socio-historical context as a novel situated in a national liberation context.

The Palestinian modern social history is contested and fought for no less than the land of Mandatory Palestine. One can demarcate three broad categories of historical representations for the Arab people living in Palestine.



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First, there is the history as told by the Palestinian national movement. Then there is the history as told by the Israeli mainstream establishment. The third version is the one written and told by Western academics. Needles to say, within each category there are many different, and at times contradictory, voices of representations. Nevertheless, we can find in all three some common ideological and methodological grounds. Moreover, these distinct representations interplay, affect, and sometimes mirror each other's stories. The analysis of "Domains" locates this novel in the processes of representations set by the apparatuses of the Palestinian national movement. And, at least symbolically, it should be located as a negation of the Israeli ones. As for the academic representations of Palestinian history, "Domains" seems ambivalent, and often eclectic on the lines of with/against Us. To fully understand the relational position of "Domains" as part of the Palestinian national representations, albeit a distinctive one, as an aesthetic form and as an intervention in these representations, it needs to be mapped in relation to them.

As a literary genre, the novel form in the Arab World seems to be the most problematic, compared with poetry, for example, yet it is well established socially and politically. Some critics argue for its European origins (Badir, 1963), while others cite the Medieval Arab Islamic genres as a precursor to its rise in the second half of the 19th century (al Musawi, 1988). Still others see the characteristics of the novel, and the way it developed in the Arab World, as the main reasons for the flourishing of this genre in Arab societies (al 'Yd, 1983;



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Daraj, 1999). It appears that the novel's ability to contain and reshape many voices and other literary forms from different historical periods (Bakhtin, 1981), is the basis for the many readings and interpretations that the Arabic novel has yielded. "Domains" builds on this tradition of the Arabic novel, but does not necessarily limit itself to it. In addition to the direct references to various novels in "Domains," and the virtual emulation of Mynah's novel about the life of the Syrian fugitive Fyad, interviews with Wisam al Rafydi and other former political captives reveal that a range of what might be called 'world literature' occupies a central place in the reading materials of the political captives, and beyond that, among the political activists. Similar to the formations of reading publics in the different Arab societies since the mid-19th century (Hafez, 1993), the rise and consolidation of the Palestinian national movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967 led to the emergence of a new reading public, which combined the local Arab Islamic with European and other literary traditions. In this short literary history since 1967, which very few researchers have addressed, the practice of reading and writing poetry seems to dominate the first stages, while prose started to occupy more socially acknowledged space only after the mid-1980s. Wisam al Rafydi is part of these larger national processes of forming reading publics, and he is an active agent in them.

In a recently published article, Faysal Daraj (2003) compares the tradition of historiography with that of the novel in relation to the Palestinian national movement. He argues that historical writing mostly represents the dominant



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political authority, and therefore fails to give voice to the repressed strata of Palestinian society in particular, and Arab society in general. In contrast, the novel manages to expose the imbalances and oppressive social structures of the Palestinian and Arab societies. Building on Bakhtin's interventions, Daraj tries to explain these differences in the Arab context, arguing that:

> Something in the authority of life collapses the life of the authority, and in the free writing there is what will bother the bound one, and in the terrestrial writing one finds an answer for the authoritative writing, which confiscates the meaning of life. Maybe the novel is quality writing that follows the traces of the folkloric archive without building the archive itself, for it deals with the worldly and the multiple and is obsessed with a moral model which confronts the authoritative hierarchy with a lively diverse space, which doesn't accept the reduction and the statuses. The novel starts, while accepting the equality between humans, with the human diversity, which accepts the deviant, the normal, the wise, the madman, the nobleman … Bakhtin wasn't totally wrong, although he generalizes much, when he put the bottom of the social and the novel on the same analytical conception (p. 86).

In this description of the novel's character as a platform for voicing the different, the oppositional, as well as the ordinary and the normal, Daraj's main claim is that this ability basically challenges the established authority, any authority, be it social, political, or historical. While Daraj in his essay presents several novels and analyzes them according to the above quoted paragraph, he doesn't explain the dynamics of presenting challenges beyond the dichotomies of authority versus oppressed. It could be argued, as some Arab critics do, that novels can either give voice to the oppressed and become positive ones, or be passive and negative ones if they give voice only to authority ('Atyah, 1981;



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'Abid al 'Adhym, 1998). But, merely giving voice to the oppressed and silenced strata of society falls short of explaining the intricate interactive and dialectical interplay between the different voices.

"Domains" provides a platform for the voices of the colonized. But this platform is shaped in a very specific way that is relational to the colonial condition in Palestine. So, while it has its own internal structure of relations between the three main socio-historical 'fictional' actors, there are parallel structures of relations between the three socio-historical 'real' actors. The juncture of the parallel between the fictional and the real could tell us more about the possible horizons that "Domains" addresses beyond merely registering the oppressed voices. What does it signify when, on the one hand, the colonizer is entitled to a voice degree zero, while the colonized is totally voiced, and, on the other hand, the fragmented and shattered voices of the Palestinian women, as representatives of different socioeconomic groups and classes, are relevant only through the political activist's national liberation endeavors and aspirations?

This constellation of the voices in "Domains" takes several of the real living voices of the Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and rearranges them according to a specific world vision. The world vision of "Domains," which opens alternative possibilities of action for the Palestinians, and has national liberation as its primary target, is a negation of the existing social and political orders. The existing colonial order, through the inherent



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imbalance of power, gives voice to the colonizer, suppresses the voice of the colonized, and manipulates the socioeconomic constellations of the Palestinian society to serve as resources for its continuation. Or, as the Palestinian national slogan goes, the occupation confiscates the people and the land. The basic negation in "Domains" is realized through Kan'an as an underground struggler. As "a moral model who confronts the authoritative hierarchy," Kan'an confronts two hierarchies: the colonial order, and the socio-historical Palestinian one. The underground experience primarily consists of escaping the fist of the colonizer in order to undermine his mechanisms and apparatuses of control by being totally free to practice organized resistance. This course of action, of going underground, also leads to total freezing of the individual's mundane social relations. In order for the mundane social self not to be an obstacle to the underground struggle, he must reshape, reorganize, and integrate his collective and private spheres of the self into one coherent entity, based on the idea that liberating the I is necessarily achieved through liberating the We. The latter consists of different layers of the Palestinian society, who are represented in "Domains" by the lovers of Kan'an. The peasants, the middle class merchants, and the upper class elites must all become involved in the struggle for liberation. Meanwhile they are not. At this juncture the biological mother, who stands for the whole of land and society, is protected, nurtured, and developed through the political mother, that is, the party. The organized collective action of resistance in the form of a political party is the womb that will carry the revolution to liberate



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the We. The subordination of all the social structures and practices to the national domain is not unique in the dynamics of the Palestinian national ideologies.

Nationalism, as it developed in 19th century Europe and then spread to its colonies, tries to embrace and contain all of the socio-historical formations of the society that it claims to represent. As such, nationalism, and the novel as its expressive form, go hand in hand in their ability to contain under their umbrella the many, the different, and the diverse (Brennan, 1990). But, and perhaps more important, the difference must not reach a limit where it might collapse the podium of the nation-state. In "'Domains," women exist as Palestinian women only. Their history and historicity could be rewritten only on national ground (Sabbagh, 1998). In this regard, the argument of Daraj (2003) concerning the failure of the Palestinian Arab historiography to voice the difference should be grounded in the historical nature of the nation-state. But his over-praising of the novel as the genre of difference seems to be built on one potential ability that it possesses, and does not characterize the novel as a whole, as this discussion of "Domains" and other novels clearly demonstrates.

The threads that connect the real to the fictional in the novel as a literary genre, that developed and crystallized formally in the age of print capitalism and nation-state, have yet to be fully explored in the Arab world in general and in Palestinian society in particular. Nationalism, history, and the novel as practices of both representation and formation of different social groups, if explored as



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interrelated constructions, could be more than telling about the contemporary Palestinian society. From this understanding, this section tried to comprehend and explain "Domains" as a novel located in the Palestinian national practices of representation and formation processes. "Domains," in its larger social agency, is grounded in a world vision that calls for national liberation through indicating and opening new possibilities of action for the Palestinians. Yet the possible consciousness (Hmyad, 1986) it is arguing for is a national one. The trap of nationalism as a liberating force in the colonial context and a reactionary one in the socio-historical context, finds its solution in "Domains" in its "glorious flavor" as a purely liberating force.

## 7.7 Conclusion

The research questions raised at the beginning of this chapter were not answered. Instead, the discussion elaborated on the basic question of the dynamics of relations between the real and the fictional in the Palestinian national context, especially in prison literature. This question led the discussion to focus, as a first analytical move, on the issues of representation and formation in the national ideologies.

"The Three Domains" represents and shapes Palestinian national identities, ideologies, and realities in a specific way. The intricate relations of nationalism, history, and the novel are brought to their intense merging points as different forms of representation and formation. Does this form of expression



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characterize the Palestinian prison literature? Or is it 'national' literature as such?

The colonial/national condition in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, together with different traditions of textuality and expressive writing, largely form the inner architecture of "Domains" as a textual construction. In its turn, "Domains" interplayed with the outer realities, thus blurring the distinction between the real and the fictional, if it was there in the first place. The interactive, intermixed quality of "Domains" as a novel opens possibilities of alternative practices of Palestinian national identities. The trap of these possibilities is their limitation as nationally bounded. Nationalism, like any other dominant ideology, necessarily reduces whatever experiences humans have at their disposal.

Finally, if Wisam al Rafydi had not been captured, it is most likely that he would not have written and published a novel. But he would almost certainly have continued to experience the processes of novelizing the Palestinian national identities and histories with the establishment of the PA, and the transformation of the PLO into a state-like entity. For nation-states cannot be other than real lived novels.

This chapter, in relation to the two previous ones, opened a new window to look at the prison literature produced by the Palestinian political captives. The aesthetic, it is argued in this chapter, could be seen as the form representing the social space between the real and the fictional. But, like any representation, it is



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an intervention that shapes its represented realities in certain ways. Captivity in the Palestinian context seems to allow for an agency that moves closer, textually, to the intricate relations of history, nationalism, and novel by breaking the dichotomy of real and fictional. In the next chapter, while concluding the dissertation, I will elaborate on the general laws, as developed in political captivity, of 'moving closer' to history, nationalism, and the novel.



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## Chapter 8: *Conclusion*

Since 1967 the Palestinian political captives have been engaged in renegotiating the Israeli colonial prison boundaries, borders, and grids of time. These negotiation processes turn the prison into a Palestinian national site for the community of captives, as well as for the larger Palestinian national movement. The conflictive, merging, and transformational relations of colonized/colonizer created dynamics of regenerating some of the Palestinian national identities and ideologies, and transforming others into new shapes, contents, and horizons of meanings. The kernel pattern of these dynamics relates to the objective conditions of imprisonment and how the political captives, individually and collectively, perceived, interpreted and reacted to it. The conditions of incarceration from the beginning in 1967 and thereafter were 'rights degree zero' for the Palestinian political captives. The annexation of the material by the Israeli authorities was interpreted by the Palestinian political captives as a two-fold process. First, this policy was a realization of the larger colonial scheme of taking control of the land and emptying it of its inhabitants. Second, and more important for our discussion here, the dire material conditions of the prison were interpreted as a systematic policy of draining the Palestinian subject of his "Palestinian-ness". The perception that the colonial authorities wanted to turn the Palestinian subject into a cultural wasteland, together with the objective conditions of imprisonment, meaning the captives' inability to change them, at least in the



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early period after 1967, set the stage for building a community mainly through the field of meanings, and the actions, practices, and rituals related to it. These conditions interacted with the national ideologies that prevailed among Arabs in general, and the Palestinian variation of them in particular. In this context, the practices of reading and writing became central in asserting one's "Palestinian-ness" and regenerating variations of it. This dissertation traced these processes of community building through the different aspects of the colonized/colonizer relations; the socioeconomic formations of the Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; the hybrid, and at times conflictive, cultural processes of signification, and their interactive dynamics of constructing the mechanisms of literary production, circulation, and consumption among the Palestinian political captives between 1967-1993.

In historical accounts written by the political captives about their experience of captivity, they classify the material conditions in the colonial prison in three main categories: the living space, the quality and quantity of the food, and the medical treatment. In various Israeli prisons, groups of captives started to organize protests against these material conditions. The captives' representatives negotiated with the prison authorities over every item of these material conditions. Through these organized negotiations the captives emphasized their communal relations by relentlessly seeking to regain agency, and control over their daily lives in captivity. One of the main



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domains in which the Palestinian captives succeeded in redefining the imposed conditions is the communication networks. Crucial to the community to sustain itself, the captives' communication system was based mainly on the use of written materials and the body. The latter, as a contested site, became, in a sense, liberated through the use of the very networks imposed by the authorities -- the regimented movement of the captured body -- to build the communication system inside the specific prison and across the Israeli prison system as a whole. This example of the communication system illustrates the main pattern of weaving the texture of the captives' community through negotiations, conflicts, and at times merging dynamics between the political captives and the prison authorities.

The major domain of social practice that the captives structured and institutionalized was their community educational system. The primacy of the production of meaning, as the main domain of regaining agency, was institutionalized through specific educational actions, practices, and rituals. The political captives' daily activities were scheduled like a school syllabus: two study sessions in the morning, reading time, and a general lecture in the afternoon. Although each Palestinian organization was responsible for the educational activities of its cadres in political captivity, an alternative cultural, social, and political signification system emerged in the colonial prison, demarcating the whole community of captives as a distinct Palestinian national community. While the signification system was undoubtedly built on



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national identities and ideologies with the relevant socioeconomic background, it has specific characteristics and hybrid patterns of generating meaning that distinguish it from Palestinian society at large, and from the Palestinian national movement as represented by the PLO. The institutionalization of meaning production gradually led to the demarcation of the community borders, accompanied by rituals of inclusion in and exclusion from the community.

It may be said that the interrogation phase is the main rite of passage into the community of political captives. Indeed, many treatises were written to instruct and explain to the political activists who would eventually be arrested, how to act, feel, and think during their interrogation by the colonial authorities. Prominent among these is a book entitled "The Philosophy of Confrontation behind the Bars" (PCBB). Written and published by the PFLP in the early 1980s, PCBB is a kind of manual to the novice political activist. One either remains steadfast and enters the community of captives, and hence is initiated into the 'national,' or one breaks down and is excluded from the community. Two important aspects should be noted in this regard. First, the framing of the interrogation as the main rite of passage occurred gradually. After 1967 one could identify two previous stages of frames of behaviors. Until the mid-1970s, the captive was expected to remain steadfast for 24 hours, so that his comrades could reorganize in order to protect themselves and their activities. From the mid-1970s until the early 1980s, the



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arrested Palestinian was expected to give only information that would not harm his organization in any way. From these norms of behavior under interrogation emerged the almost iron rule that one must not give any kind of information to the interrogator. The second aspect is that steadfastness and collapse are built upon meaning: steadfastness in this context is the withholding of any information one has, and not delivering it to the colonial authorities in any circumstances; breaking down is the giving of information, for whatever reason, to the interrogator, and thus selling oneself to the colonial authorities. While this framing of the interrogation has survival functions for the resistance movement, it is important to note that the centrality of meaning is crucial for the whole community. Hence, while the colonization processes are designed to re-inscribe a certain type of Palestinian identity, the ritual of interrogation, seen through the eyes of the captives, is a counter re-inscription of a different type of identity, that of the struggler. Thus, the objective conditions of an acute imbalance of power between the Palestinian captive and the Israeli interrogator are countered by liberating the meaning to redefine the material conditions of power. These dynamics between the material conditions and the production of meaning play a major part in forming the texts of captivity in general, and are not restricted to issues of inclusion\exclusion in the community of captives.

One of the most well-rounded texts that build upon resolving the objective condition of the colonial predicament through discursive techniques



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is “Introductions to the Carving of the Alternative”. Originally delivered as a series of lectures to the political captives’ community in *Ansar 3* by Ahmed Qattamish, it was later published as a book in 1994 and circulated in the larger Palestinian society. Ahmed Qattamish contributed to forming the Palestinian national movement, at least in the West Bank, from the many positions he occupied in it. Starting from the late 1960s he was a political activist, and was arrested several times. In the mid-1970s he went underground for almost two decades. During this period of clandestine activities he came to be one of the high ranking officials of the PFLP. In the early 1990s he was arrested and spent eight years in administrative detention in Israeli colonial prisons. The immediate context of lecturing, as told by Ahmed, calls for improvisation in producing knowledge. Deconstruction of the improvisation of producing knowledge in the colonial prison leads us to see its many layers, which Ahmed reframes and reinterprets into one coherent unit of alternative meaning, namely the lecture. Palestinian, Arab, and international linguistic markets are constructed into one whole as a symbolic communicative act. This symbolic act, both in its oral and written forms, is a two-fold intervention in the realities lived and experienced by the Palestinians in the various colonial locations in Palestine. First, there are the irresolvable objective conditions of colonization, which these lectures deal with intellectually. The intervention here is based on rereading the historical condition as a resolvable one through abstract



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philosophical framing and applications from within this framing into concrete directives for behavior, feelings, and inter-subjective relations. In this way of reordering a certain order, one regains the annexed historical agency. Second, the lectures addressed the problematic Oslo Accords as a certain moment in the Palestinian modern national history. The deep alienation that prevailed in the national movement due to these accords evoked diverse intellectual interpretations and coalitions among the Palestinian intellectuals. While the reformists tried to make coalitions with the ascending political forces, Ahmed Qattamish in his lectures offers to read it critically through analysis of the Palestinian national movement as it developed since 1967. For Qattamish, the organizational, ideological, policy-making, and sociopolitical environment aspects of the Palestinian national movement were built on compromises that reflect the nature of the national leadership's class alliances. Hence, Qattamish's critical reading of the national history traverses the subject, the social, the organizational, and the dynamics of history, only to reemerge as an alternative ground for liberation on the national, regional, and international spheres.

These dynamics of textual and discursive formations are not limited to the direct organizational textual production, such as PCBB, or the intellectual one, "Introductions". While the aesthetic literary productions in the colonial prison all have their own distinctive textual formations, one can clearly discern similar strategies of narrating the colonial conditions. Wisam al



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Rafydi, who was an underground activist, wrote a novel entitled "The Three Domains" while in political captivity in the Israeli colonial prisons. The novel, which was later published in Palestinian society, tells the story of a protagonist from the moment he went underground, for political reasons, until his arrest by the Israeli army some nine years later. The novel is constructed through two major domains and a mediating one. First, the complex colonizer/colonized relations as manifested at the moment of arrest, in which the colonized is the agent of history while the colonizer is given 'voice degree zero.' Second, the domain of social relations between the two genders is reframed as a window into the social structures of the larger society, some of which inhibit liberation while others contribute to it. The mediating domain is the dynamic conflict between the I and the We. The I, the individual self, has its own demands, needs, joys, and pains, which are usually in conflict with the agenda of the We. The latter is presented as an organized collective will striving for liberation through revolutionary strategies and practices that demand total submission of the self to the collective. The I's social, almost mundane, relations and practices such as love relations, education, profession, material acquisitions, and so forth, are relegated as secondary to the organized We in the form of the political party. The political party will protect and shield the land, the individual, and the society in their efforts at liberation from the colonizer. These three axes of "Domains," and their relations, indicate narration strategies that are common to the organizational,



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intellectual, and aesthetic genres of the Palestinian prison literary production in the colonial prison.

The aim of this dissertation was to represent and explore the unique site of the Israeli colonial prison as experienced by its Palestinian political inmates between 1967 and 1993. The exploration of the political captives' community was conducted mainly through the oral and textual representations of the captivity experience by the former captives themselves. This means that the perceptions, interpretations, reactions, and articulations of the political captives were the main sites of investigation for this research. From the ethnographic, textual, and archival data there emerges a narrative that tells the story of the Palestinian political captivity. This narrative could be seen as a realization of the Palestinian national story of a victim who rises to enter history as a hero. But, taken alone, this positioning of the narrative of captivity tells the obvious while neglecting the deep processes of constructing the community of political captives. In this dissertation, I located four interactive spheres of analysis whose end product is a specific way of conceiving socio-historical realities and intervening in them. These spheres are the intense processes of colonization, the socioeconomic background of the Palestinian society, the building of a community, and the different shapes of meanings produced through the communal institutions. The narrative, then, is the articulate and elaborate form of ordering these spheres into one coherent unit of meaning that has



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direct and indirect impacts on the daily lives of the Palestinian political captives and their compatriots in the larger society.

Looking at the community's educational system and the three main domains of articulating the narrative of captivity, namely, the organizational, the intellectual, and the aesthetic, one observes a specific recurring strategy of ordering the colonial realities of the Palestinians. The almost total annexation of the material aspects of the Palestinian social realities left them with the fields of meaning as a last resort of resistance. In the context of the colonial prison, this was the main objective condition of existence for the political captives. These irresolvable conditions in the real became resolvable on the symbolic levels. Moreover, the resolutions on the level of communicative symbolic acts were, in their turn, simultaneously constitutive for and part of a collective organized will that aimed, through these resolutions, to change the real of colonial materiality. The educational system over-invested in reading and writing as the main skills in generating *thaqafah*; steadfastness is the total withholding of information, that is to say, meaning; the intellectual opens new horizons of alternative meaning; the aesthetic hierarchizes schemes of meanings through novelizing the socioeconomic, the colonial, and the resistive aspects of being a Palestinian. These strategies of narration carved a subject who enters the stage of history as a Palestinian agent. He struggles, resists, negotiates, and at times merges with the colonizer to build a nation-state on his land.



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In relation to the larger Palestinian national movement, these strategies are not unique to the captives' community. One finds parallels and similarities in narration strategies, especially those concerning martyrdom and armed struggle. What is unique to the captives' community is that the intense and severe conditions of political captivity made these strategies the dominant and only course for surviving captivity, while in the national movement one could choose between these strategies and many other possible courses of action.

Finally, although this dissertation focuses on the Palestinian case, the colonial condition is not limited to this case, nor is political captivity. The Irish, the South African, and other cases show similar general patterns. While this research was mostly based on ethnographic data, it remains for others to conduct comparative studies between different locations of colonial prisons across the globe. The prison, as one of the prime institutions regulating and spatializing power relations in modern western societies by criminalizing the subjects of the nation-state, has diverse social histories in the colonial lands of the same western nation-states. Hence, one of the intellectual challenges is to compare the metropolitan and the colony through the two variants of the same social institution -- the prison. This comparison may, perhaps, better our understanding of the human condition in late capitalism/ colonialism, and hopefully change it.



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