

Cinemas and Checkpoints

This issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* ranges from the intimacies of cinema to the non-places of checkpoints, to new perspectives on Mandate history, including the unsettling of a Palestinian hero, an innovative reading of a Palestinian newspaper, and a revealing look at urban planning in Lydda.

“Geography of a Non-Place,” by Helga Tawil-Souri, highlights what is becoming a permanent condition in the Palestinian habitat. Checkpoints, argues Souri, are now pivotal in enforcing closures as the physical barricades that imprison Palestinians into their segregated cantons. Her essay about Qalandia (our own Tora Bora) continues the theme of a trilogy which began with an essay by Rema Hammami in a recent issue of *JQ*, about the global dimensions of the closure regime, and will be concluded in a forthcoming issue on the political economy of closures and barricades.

Mir’at al Sharq, one of the leading newspapers of pre-1948 Palestine, was primarily known as an oppositional paper, that is, it took positions critical of the leadership of Haj Amin Husseini and his party, and in support of the the Defense Party. In a sweeping review of the paper’s content during the formative years of the 1920s, Zachery Foster, shows in “The Eyes of Mir’at al Sharq” how this paper kept abreast of important developments in neighbouring countries, particularly in Turkey, Syria and Egypt, in order to draw lessons for Palestine. More broadly the essay attempts to recast the debate about an earlier Palestinian nationalism which has been persistently framed as a reaction solely to the Zionist paradigm, into a regional Arab context, where the politics of Sa’ed Zaghloul, Prince Faisal, Mustafa Kamal

Ataturk, and the mass movement in Egypt, the Battle of Maysalun near Damascus in 1920, and Anatolian resistance against the Anglo and European occupation forces in Turkey, became markers for local debates within the Palestinian national movement.

In *Sakakini Defrocked*, Nadim Bawalsa uses the conceptual frame of ‘cognitive dissonance’, to cast a new and perhaps a less flattering perspective on the towering figure of Khalil Sakakini and his role in the Arab cultural scene during the Mandate period. Sakakini’s career and work, after years of neglect, have witnessed a sudden rise of hagiographic studies, crowned by the publication this month of the last and final volume of his memoirs. Bawalsa provides us with a necessary iconoclastic antidote, which we hope will provoke a response among Sakakini aficionados.

The City of Lydda witnessed one of the major massacres during the final days of the war of 1948, provoking a major exodus of Palestinians from the central region. During the Mandate, Lydda was the subject of major urban planning schemes, as Haim Yacobi demonstrates, becoming a hub of Palestinian communication (through its railroad junctions) and through connecting Palestine with the world (through its international airport, the only one in the country). But Yacobi goes beyond those to discuss planning schemes for the citrus city drafted by Polcheck, a Jewish immigrant and Mandate employee, which aimed, among other things to create a ‘garden city’ in the British tradition. In practice, the planning of Mandatory Lydda, argues Yacobi, had two strategies: the separation of the railway district and the Arab city from the new neighbourhoods, and the introduction of Western urban regulations.

Finally visual artist Inass Yassin takes us into an exciting excavation of the cinematic modernity of Ramallah beginning with the 1950s. This is a period and a theme which has hardly been touched. Instead of a *Cinema Paradiso* we encounter an acute nostalgia reminding us how much modern technology, while potentially and actually giving access to a much wider and versatile cinematic experience, has often been a step backward. That earlier experience was marked, in Yassin’s review, by an intimate sociability, and sense of communal interaction, which has all but disappeared.