

INTRODUCTION

Honoring Salim Tamari

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Guest Editor

This special issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, and the next, celebrate the distinguished work that renowned sociologist Salim Tamari – *JQ*'s founder – has made toward the social history of Palestine. Here, a number of his colleagues and former students contribute writings that reflect on themes Tamari explored throughout his distinguished career.

Tamari's work spans decades, providing groundbreaking insights into Palestinian history and society. In the 1980s, he examined the integration of the Palestinian peasantry into the Israeli economy and explored issues such as factionalism, collaboration with Israeli authorities, and the political role of Palestinian communists. His work also addressed the 1987 intifada, and the involvement of the merchant class in resistance during the uprising.

In the 1990s, Tamari focused on the position of Palestinian refugees and the history of Jerusalem's western neighborhoods before and during the Nakba. His later work explored Palestine's social history more deeply, utilizing memoirs, diaries, and photography to examine daily life under the Ottomans and the British Mandate, and the cultural dimensions of Palestinian resistance. Through these innovative approaches, he redefined the field of Palestinian social history, expanding the focus and including an eclectic range of characters and groups who made up Jerusalem's varied social fabric prior to the Nakba.

Beyond his own scholarly work, Tamari founded the Institute of Jerusalem Studies in 1997 and launched the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, a much valued

journal now publishing its one hundredth issue, and a key resource for the study of Jerusalem's history and politics.

Tamari's contributions to the social history of Palestine are particularly significant. His scholarship shifted the focus of Palestinian studies beyond political events to the everyday lives, memories, and cultural expressions of Palestinians. His use of personal narratives – such as diaries and letters – humanized Palestinian history, offering nuanced perspectives on colonial rule, displacement, and social change.

Tamari has also critiqued traditional nationalist historiography by emphasizing the complex social and cultural transformations within Palestinian society, moving beyond monolithic narratives of victimhood and resistance. His work situates Palestine within broader global contexts, connecting local experiences to Ottoman reforms, European colonialism, and Arab nationalism.

Additionally, Tamari's research on nostalgia, memory, and modernity has reshaped how Palestinians relate to their past, especially the pre-Nakba period. His exploration of urban history in Jerusalem, particularly its western suburbs, underscores the city's social and cultural life before displacement and occupation, revealing the impact of colonial policies on Palestinian communities.

Tamari's pioneering work in social history, his use of diverse sources like photography, and his interdisciplinary approach have enriched Palestinian studies, offering new avenues for understanding the complexities of Palestinian life. His legacy as a scholar, mentor, and institution-builder continues to inspire and shape the field.

In this issue, Penny Johnson, a longtime friend of Salim, provides an overall review of his writings and political contributions, while Falestin Naïli describes how stories and voices of the past guide our perceptions of the present, as she examines similarities between Amman and Jerusalem. As Naïli walks us through Amman, scenes from Jerusalem are evoked – architecture, scents, and experiences, such as the aroma of Zalatio's traditional pastries. Her contribution highlights how, after 1948, Amman evolved into an Arab metropolis, filling a role that Jerusalem could not, due to its geographic and socioeconomic divisions under Israeli colonialism.

Tarif Khalidi's essay, on the other hand, explores critiques of early Arabic Islamic historical sources, focusing on their perceived teleological nature (“salvation history”), the time gap between events and their documentation, and the lack of contemporary historians. While some argue these issues undermine reliability, recent research highlights the coexistence of oral and written traditions and argues that temporal distance alone does not invalidate historical reports. The text concludes that despite flaws, early Islamic sources remain valuable and should not be dismissed outright.

In Adel Manna's essay, the life of the prominent yet overlooked Palestinian leader of the early twentieth century, Ahmad Hilmi Pasha 'Abd al-Baqi, is explored. Manna highlights the diverse career of 'Abd al-Baqi that spanned political, economic, cultural, and military roles, including defending Jerusalem during the Nakba in 1948. As the sole Arab Higher Committee member in the city, he provided crucial leadership and avoided divisive politics. He is remembered primarily for his role in the short-lived All-Palestine Government in Gaza, which faced opposition from British, Zionist, and

Hashemite forces, while his significant earlier contributions remain underrecognized in historical accounts.

Stephen Sheehi's contribution critically highlights the work of Nicola Saig (1863–1942), a prominent iconographer and painter in Jerusalem, who played a central role in shaping the city's distinct Qudsi style of Orthodox iconography. Saig bridged religious and secular art, blending iconographic techniques with European secular painting to create a hybrid style that reflected his generation's multifocal identity. His atelier became a hub for producing religious icons and training future artists. His historical paintings metaphorically interpreted Palestinian political struggles, embodying the transformations of modernity in early twentieth-century Palestine. Sheehi credits the late Kamal Boullata for his role in highlighting Saig's innovative synthesis as a cornerstone in the evolution of Palestinian and Arab art.

The various contributions mentioned above align with Salim Tamari's emphasis on micro social history, memory, biography, and visual culture – each a central theme. Together, they serve as both a tribute to his work and meaningful contributions to the study of Palestine.

The next *JQ* issue will present additional contributions honoring Tamari's work, including essays by: Anton Shamma on Israel's appropriation of Palestinian cuisine; Talha Çiçek on state and society in late Ottoman Gaza; Alex Winder on the legacy of Abu Jilda, the rebel bandit from British Mandate Palestine; and Issam Nassar on the war memoirs of Anwar Nussiebeh.

Issam Nassar is a professor of modern Middle East cultural history with an interest in visual culture, in particular photography. Nassar chairs the history program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and has served as a professor of history at Illinois State University and other universities.