



With the Dregs at the Sambo Café: The Shrouf Diaries, 1943-1962

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Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf was born in the village of Nuba, located about eleven kilometers north-west of Hebron, in 1913. Though still a child when Britain occupied Palestine in 1917, Shrouf came of age under British Mandate rule and his adult life was later shaped indelibly by the upheaval of the war of 1948. For nearly twenty years, from 1943 to 1962, Shrouf kept a journal, recording his daily activities as well as the developments around him. Though the entries at the beginning and ending of the diary are less regular and more infrequent, the bulk of the entries from 1944 to 1955 comprise an almost daily accounting of Shrouf’s movements and interactions. These diaries follow Shrouf from his days as a policeman in Jaffa under British Mandate rule, to his return to the Hebron area as the inevitability of war loomed in anticipation of the end of the Mandate in 1948. After the war, Shrouf witnessed Hebron pass from Egyptian military control to Jordanian administration. When the ceasefire lines were drawn after the armistice agreement

Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf in his police uniform. *Source: Private Collection.*

of 1949, Shrouf went from owning 169 dunams (almost 42 acres) to just 16 dunams (about 4 acres), the rest falling inside territories by then controlled by Israel.

Under Jordanian rule, Shrouf became a tireless advocate for Palestinians of the front-line villages (*al-qura al-amamiyya*), who were not refugees *per se* but whose lives were significantly disrupted by the loss of lands and their proximity to the newly declared state of Israel. Yet given the economic circumstances, Shrouf found it increasingly difficult to support himself and his family in Nuba. After working for some time on road crews organized by the Jordanian government to provide employment and economic relief in the West Bank, Shrouf was finally forced to leave Palestine in 1955, moving east to al-Rusayfa to work for the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company. It is not surprising that Shrouf writes less frequently in his diary in the wake of this displacement, which removed him largely – but not, as we shall see below, entirely – from the web of social, economic, and political ties that he maintained within Nuba and the surrounding villages.

The Personal and the Public

The diary of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf is a unique text and a rich primary source for understanding daily life for a largely invisible sector of Palestinian society in the period spanning the pivotal moment in modern Palestinian history, the Nakba of 1948. Shrouf’s profile is atypical of the majority of published diarists and memoirists of the Palestine Mandate. The list of prominent Palestinian political and educational figures who left records of their activities and experiences in Palestine during British rule and in the aftermath of the Nakba is long, but it would not include Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf.¹ In this regard, these diaries offer a valuable source for those whose interests extend beyond elites and whose efforts to include subaltern and marginalized voices in Palestinian history help provide a more complete view of Palestinian society and a more complex understanding of the Palestinian experience. To the extent that Shrouf was a prominent figure, his prominence was of a much more local kind, in his home village of Nuba and the surrounding villages. Of the major cities and regions of Palestine, Hebron and Jabal al-Khalil more generally remain understudied and even marginalized in the academic literature. Shrouf hailed not from Hebron itself, but from its hinterlands, making a diary of this kind even more valuable: most written records of Palestinian experiences from this period come from urban individuals. These diaries thus complement the recently published diaries of Sami ‘Amr, a young Palestinian living in Hebron in the 1940s.² But whereas ‘Amr wrote as a teenager living in Hebron itself and ends his diary before 1948, Shrouf writes as an adult (‘Amr was born in 1924, a full decade after Shrouf), fully ensconced in village life, and maintained his diary into the 1960s, with the richest material coming in the early 1950s.

Shrouf’s diary also differs significantly from Sami ‘Amr’s and subverts some traditional expectations of diaries in one principal aspect: it offers very little insight into Shrouf as a private individual.³ This is not to say that Shrouf’s diary is not

personal: in addition to reporting on the larger geopolitical events swirling around him, Shrouf gives precise details on his daily comings and goings, his meetings with others over meals and coffee, his at times tempestuous interactions with local notables and state officials, and his purchases at market. But we are never privileged to learn Shrouf's private assessment of these matters, his internal thoughts or reflections. The closest glimpses we are allowed are in entries like that of 22 September 1952:

Early Monday morning, 22/9/52, Isma'il Teem and I left al-'Arrub camp, myself to Hebron and Isma'il to Bethlehem. In Hebron I went to the *shari'a* court and met with the *shari'a* Judge Shaykh Muhammad Salih al-'Ajluni. I spoke with him about the matter of the al-'Umari waqf plot of land and he showed intolerance and intransigence [*ta'assub wa 'inad*].

Even here, though, the personal judgment is brief and formulaic, and Shrouf finishes the entry without any further development of the nature of his disagreement with the judge: "In the Nile Valley Café, I met with the teacher Husayn al-Kawamila and after noon I left Hebron by car for Bayt Ulla and from there to the village, traveling by foot, accompanied by Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Kafafi."

One is similarly struck by the seemingly cold, impersonal references to his family life, where a present-day reader might expect a diarist to reveal some internal emotion. Events such as the death of his son Ghazi are noted with brevity: "My son Ghazi, may God have mercy on him, passed away and was buried in the village cemetery on Tuesday, 1 August 1944." (To compound matters, Shrouf names his next son Ghazi; when this second Ghazi dies in 1946, after Shrouf had moved with his family to work in Jaffa, he received much the same attention in the diary: "10 December 1946: At four o'clock in the morning today, my son Ghazi passed away and was buried in the Yazur cemetery.")

The most intimate moment of the entire diary comes when Shrouf's oldest son, Faysal, runs away from home in July 1955, after being so upset with his school grades that he tore his grade report. Shrouf spends days searching for Faysal, traveling to Amman and finally al-Rusayfa in Jordan, where he finds him eight days later. On 19 July 1955, two days after Faysal failed to return, Shrouf writes:

I went to Hebron to search for Faysal, and I asked many people about him. I went to the village of Halhul to search for him, and understood from one of the people at the Halhul post that he encountered him [Faysal] yesterday morning between Bi'r al-Najd and Baqqar, heading east. I returned to Hebron and from there I went to the village. In the evening, I went to Kharas village a second time, to ask after him, and after that I returned to the village, but I slept last night and this night on tenterhooks [*'ala aharr min al-jamr*] from anxiety over him.

Beyond this brief, tender expression of a parent's worry for his child, however,

Shrouf's interactions with his family, friends, and acquaintances are all recorded with a uniform dispassion that is equally remarkable and frustrating.

Even in the part of the diary that sheds the greatest light on Shrouf's political views and general assessment of the conditions of those living in the front-line villages in the Hebron area, the book within which Shrouf recorded letters written for publication in newspapers and addresses delivered to various gatherings, the contents are by their nature public. His diaries offer no sense of the thoughts or opinions that Shrouf may have felt were too strong or impolitic to share with others.

The overwhelmingly public character of this diary, a word which itself conjures up the intimate and private, should encourage scholars to further reconsider assumptions about particular kinds of sources, their purposes, and the intentions of those who produce them. Indeed, it is valuable to read this diary in light of the challenges to conventional notions of Arabic autobiography put forward in the ground-breaking 2001 work *Interpreting the Self*,⁴ whose authors argue that the traditional denigration of the Arabic autobiographical tradition

is based on a model so steeped in a particular modern western conception of biography and autobiography that scholars are unable to address effectively an auto/biographical tradition possessed of different literary conventions. This line of thought derives in part from modern expectations that an autobiography should reveal an interior self different from, and even at odds with, the exterior public self.⁵

It is beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate on how the style of writing found in Shrouf's diary fits within a larger Arabic and Islamic tradition of biography and autobiography, an effort that should also entail critical re-readings of memoirs by Shrouf's more prominent Palestinian contemporaries that better conform to certain modern Western notions of autobiography. However, there is much to be gained by shifting the focus from what this diary *is not* and reading it with an open mind as to what it *is*.

In this essay, I would like to underscore how the diary of an individual, in this case Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf from the village of Nuba, is able to unite various public spheres, from the family to the clan to the village to the district, from the regional to the national to the international. In doing so, even the scholar who may feel an initial disappointment as a result of the continued inaccessibility of the individual's private, internal thoughts and emotions, should ultimately realize how such a diary can contribute immensely to our understanding of daily life for Palestinians in the immediate prelude to and aftermath of the immense trauma of 1948. Here I hope to give a sense of the various public spheres and networks within which Shrouf was enmeshed, and how these figured in different phases of his life as recorded in these diaries. The most important, I would argue, is that of the village. Let us turn now to Nuba, to get a sense of the various dynamics that shaped Shrouf's basic relationships with his fellow villagers and those outside it.

The Social Life of a Village

Nuba, as mentioned above, is located about eleven kilometers north-west of Hebron, and as such it is part of the larger economic, political, and social life of the city of Hebron, the district center. As one can easily ascertain from these diaries, Hebron features prominently. It is the location of political authorities, whom Shrouf travels to the city to visit, or who are dispatched from Hebron to Nuba. When in Hebron, Shrouf often goes to the market, which would have been larger and offered more than the village markets. He records going to pray at the Haram al-Ibrahimi, indicating Hebron's importance as a regional center of religious practice as well. It is perhaps worth noting that, despite the enormous disruption to Palestinian society of the war of 1948 and the Nakba that followed, throughout the diaries, whether under British rule or Jordanian, Hebron continues to be the regional focal point for Shrouf, the place to which he travels to engage with administrative authorities and politicians, to buy school supplies for his children, or to advocate for aid to his village and those surrounding it.

Indeed, Shrouf's diaries make clear that Nuba is only one village in a larger group of villages, including Kharas, Surif, Tarqumiya, and Bayt Ulla, that are inextricably linked. Shrouf sometimes refers to these villages as making up *qura saff al-'Amleh*, or the villages associated with the 'Amleh family.⁶ As these diaries attest, rarely does a day go by that Shrouf's activities do not take him to one or more of these villages or bring him a visitor from them. These villages acted collectively to provide services like medical care and education. A health clinic in Tarqumiya served Nuba's residents until 1956, for example, when a clinic was established between Nuba and Kharas.⁷ Likewise, children from Nuba and Kharas shared a single school. Villagers borrowed and lent money within these circles and organized guard patrols together in times of insecurity. Shrouf is meticulous in his recording of which village individuals are from, and was active politically and economically in this group of villages, and as such his diaries offer an extremely valuable source for historians interested in the dynamics on the regional (Hebron and its hinterlands) and sub-regional (*qura saff al-'Amleh*) levels in the period during which he writes.

Shrouf's diaries are also valuable for understanding the dynamics within Nuba itself. Within Nuba there are three major clans (*hama'il*, sing. *hamula*): al-Dababisa, al-Tarman, and al-Shrouf. In the period during which Shrouf maintains his diary, the Shrouf *hamula* was the largest, followed by the Dababisa, and the Tarman *hamula* was the smallest of the three in Nuba. (At various times after 1948, the families come together to take a census of the village. Although these are never complete – sometimes including only the males, sometimes only including poor villagers in need of aid and relief – the numbers always reflect this order within village.)⁸

There is some evidence of occasional conflicts between the major *hama'il*. On 1 August 1944, for example, Shrouf writes:

Falah ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Hajj, Mahmud al-Hajj Ahmad, Ahmad Muhammad ‘Issa, Hasan Salem, al-Hajj ‘Abd al-Salam, Hasan Hamdan, and Ahmad ‘Abd al-Jawad visited us in the guesthouse to undertake an *‘atwa* [truce or agreement concluding hostilities] between us and between al-Tarman. A dinner was made for them, for which Isma‘il Teem slaughtered [a lamb], and they went without having undertaken an *‘atwa*.

And on 26 November 1953, after a delegation of American Mennonites⁹ came from Hebron to distribute used clothing to the needy villagers: “during the distribution, a brawl erupted between individuals of al-Shrouf and some individuals from al-Dababisa because of the distribution of the bundles, ‘the provision bags’.”

But more often than not, the division of the village between the three major *hama’il* did not produce antagonism, but rather served as a means of organizing certain tasks within the village. In the example noted here, and in multiple cases like it in the diaries, the distribution of aid to the villagers after 1948 – whether by the United Nations, the Jordanian government, or third parties like the Mennonite Church – was organized by the *hama’il*. The villagers’ burdens were often shared among the *hama’il*, too. In his entry of 14 September 1952, Shrouf writes:

Thursday 11 September 1952, Muhammad Effendi Badr, the government tax collector, came to the village to collect taxes of fifty-two and a half dinars from each taxpayer for the benefit of the village. He took his dinner the first night with Muhammad Sulayman ‘Abd al-Hafidh at the expense of al-Dababisa and lunch the second day, Friday, with al-Dababisa also. Dinner [on Friday] and lunch on Saturday fell upon al-Tarman and dinner [on Saturday] and lunch on Sunday upon al-Shrouf. In the evening today, Sunday, he took his dinner in the *zawiya* among the dervishes.¹⁰

For scholars whose interests in various forms of bureaucratization and state-society relations, the insights into the on-the-ground manifestations of these relationships do much to both clarify and complicate our understanding of how bureaucratization within government institutions impacts those who are governed. The role of the *hamula* in Levantine Arab societies has been and remains complex and often obscure; the kind of detailed interactions between governmental and non-governmental bodies on the one hand and Nuba’s *hama’il* and individuals on the other that Shrouf has recorded in his diary shed significant light on distribution of power within the village and between the village and regional, national, and international actors.

Further still, each *hamula* was itself divided into subcomponents. With respect to the Shrouf *hamula*, this was comprised of four quarters (*arba’*, sing. *rub’*): the *rub’* of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf, our diarist; the *rub’* of the Teem family, the *rub’* of the Salem family; and the *rub’* of the Thalji family. Indeed, it is between these various factions that one finds more numerous cases of tension in Shrouf’s diaries. Quite a bit of this intra-*hamula* conflict seems to revolve around the Salem family,

which (not coincidentally, perhaps) held the post of Nuba's *mukhtar*. On 13 March 1944, Shrouf records a dispute between 'Abdallah Teem and Sulayman Salem. A few months later, on 26 May 1944, Shrouf files a complaint with the Hebron police against Mahmud Ibrahim Salem, *mukhtar* of Nuba, and the members of Nuba's funding committee for impropriety in disbursing the village's resources. On 11 November 1951, Shrouf files a remarkably similar complaint with the Jordanian government authorities. The recurrence of attempts at reconciliation (*sulh*) between Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi and the Salem family over multiple years attests to the continued tension between the two branches of the *hamula*.¹¹

Sulh is clearly something that Shrouf sees as meriting recording in his diaries, and it occurs quite frequently within Nuba and the villages adjacent. However, it would be incorrect to assume that this method of reconciliation, which involves the gathering of family members and local notables to ensure the end of conflicts between individuals and families, represents the village's reliance on "traditional" and "unofficial" forms of justice. Indeed, even a brief perusal of Shrouf's diaries indicates that village disputes were taken to court and involved state authorities at least as often as they were mediated through families and village notables. Though hardly surprising, these diaries illustrate the degree to which West Bank villagers under the British Mandate and Jordanian administration made use of the many tools available to them – whether local influence or the courts of law – to try to achieve the results that they desired. Often the same conflict would be pursued through both channels until it finally met its resolution.

Far more could be written about the social, economic, and political life of Nuba and *qura saff al-'Amleh* as revealed through the diaries of Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf. Later sections will hopefully further illuminate these dynamics. First, however, I would like to turn to that which first removes Shrouf from the village and Jabal al-Khalil: his work as a policeman for the British Mandate authorities.

Shrouf the Policeman

On 29 August 1944, Shrouf submitted papers to rejoin the Palestine Police (he had apparently served in the force prior to the earliest diary entries). In doing so, he joined some 2,200 to 2,300 other Palestinians in the regular Palestine Police.¹² As Salim Tamari has noted,

the number of Palestinian fighters in the colonial forces, if one also includes Arab members of the colonial police force and Criminal Investigation Department (CID), equaled, if not exceeded, the combined forces of resistance groups, including the militias of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas (Husseini leadership), the Qassamites (followers of Sheikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam) and the Arab Salvation Army (al-Qawuqji).¹³

Although the contradistinction between the colonial police on the one hand and the Palestinian rebel groups on the other need not be so cut and dried (as will become clear below), certainly joining the government payroll in some capacity was not uncommon for Palestinians seeking some form of secure employment, with a regular paycheck and the opportunity for a pension.

Government service also placed Palestinians within new circuits, both socially and physically. In an effort to remove policemen from social pressures that might interfere with the impartial execution of their duties, the British administration posted policemen outside the communities from which they came. In Shrouf's case, he was posted to Jaffa. He began renting a house in the village of Yazur, about six kilometers east of Jaffa, where he brought his family, in May 1946 registering his son Faysal in the Amiriyya school in Yazur. Shrouf's relocation meant more than just a change of scenery from the low hills of rural Hebron to the Mediterranean coast. Indeed, his policeman's notebook from this period illustrates just how different Jaffa, a cosmopolitan city of café culture, nightlife, and political tension, was from village life.

As a policeman, Shrouf went on regular patrols in the mixed al-Manshiyya neighborhood. There, on night patrols that brought him to the café of Ali Muhammad al-Masri, known as the Sambo Café, Shrouf would interrupt groups of card-players, which often included both Jews and Arabs, gambling into the late hours.¹⁴ Characters of dubious intentions (by police standards at least) not only sought out each other in the cafés, but looked to take advantage of the naïve or the adventurous among the influx of out-of-towners who came to Jaffa for commercial or other reasons. On 4 January 1945, Shrouf writes:

At 11:30 a.m., while I was patrolling King George Street in Jaffa, I found one Ahmad 'Abd al-Ra'uf Hamdan, a resident of the Old City in Jaffa, gambling at Three-card Monte with a Bedouin. I observed the Bedouin lay a Palestinian pound note on the three cards. I immediately seized the three cards with the Palestinian pound, placed the aforementioned Ahmad 'Abd al-Ra'uf under arrest, and brought him to the Jaffa police station.

These scenes and others that recount the kinds of activities – criminal and otherwise – that called for the intervention of a policeman offer a kind of window into the social life of the city of Jaffa before the Nakba. Though recorded in a policeman's notebook, these notes help to preserve the full and rich life of a city lost, supplementing the reminiscences of figures like Yousef Heikal, Shafiq al-Hout, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), and Salwa Salem among others.¹⁵

Shrouf's role as a policeman also brings him into contact with the political struggles between the Zionist movement, the British government, and the Palestinian population. On 22 April 1945, for example, the police are called in to investigate evidence of bomb manufacturing. On 15 August of the same year, the police raid a home containing significant amounts of dynamite. Meanwhile, Shrouf makes note of a Palestinian general strike on 3 May 1946, and another strike on the anniversary of

the Balfour Declaration. However, even as the specter of war loomed over Palestine in 1947 and 1948, Shrouf continued in his position as a police officer, something that, as shall become clear below, did not conflict with his vision of the defense of Palestine. Let us now turn to this pivotal period, when Palestine was rent asunder.

The 1948 War

The harbingers of war were evident from early 1948. In a number of entries from January of 1948, Shrouf notes incidents of violence in anticipation of the withdrawal of the British from Palestine. In consecutive entries, Shrouf notes the Jerusalem bombings of Barclays Bank and the Ottoman government building (4 January) and the Semiramis Hotel (5 January) by Zionist militants. Meanwhile, closer to home, on 14 January, Shrouf reported: "Today in the morning, Arab fighters [*al-munadilin al-'arab*] staged an intense attack on the colony of Kfar Etzion and two neighboring colonies in the mountains of Hebron district." Two days later, on 16 January: "A great battle between the Arab fighters and Jewish Hagana gangs took place close to Surif village in the Hebron district. Fifty Jews were killed and their weapons taken." On 25 January, Shrouf wrote from his vantage point as a policeman living in Yazur: "At 11:30 in the morning today, a battle took place between Arab fighters and Jewish criminals on the border of Yazur village and the Agrobank colony, lasting 3 hours."

As a result of the growing instability, Shrouf moved his family from Yazur back to Nuba on 2 February 1948. He himself applied for a transfer from the Jaffa police station to Hebron on 9 February and was transferred to al-Dhahiriyya police post in the Hebron district in mid-March. It is clear that Shrouf was not alone in anticipating the end of the Mandate. On 22 March, Shrouf writes: "After noon today, one of the leaders of the Jordanian Arab Legion, the head of the Hebron municipality, and some notables from Hebron and Dura came and took lunch with us in al-Dhahiriyya police station after they raised the Jordanian Arab flag over the station building." And on 24 April, three weeks before the official end of the British Mandate, Shrouf records:

The Arab assistant superintendent Elias Effendi Haddad, the British assistant superintendent Mr. Williams, and the Arab police officers Shehadeh Effendi 'Anani, Yusuf Effendi 'Amr, and 'Umran Effendi 'Amr came to al-Dhahiriyya police station so that the first could accept the [transfer of] responsibility for the administration of the police in Hebron and its associated stations from the second. And after they took lunch with Badr Abu 'Alan, they returned to Hebron.

On 15 May 1948, the date of the official end of the Mandate and the declaration of the State of Israel, Shrouf writes:

At 12 o'clock at night, the night of 14-15 May 1948, the British Mandate over Palestine ended. Directly after that time, the Arab regime armies, composed of East Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, entered to liberate it from Jewish tyranny.

Later, of course, Shrouf's apparent optimism would fade, and he would describe the Arab regimes' performance in the war with bitterness. On 4 April 1952, when Yusuf Bek 'Abbas al-'Amr, representative of the Hebron district in the Jordanian parliament, brought a delegation of local and international journalists and officials from UNRWA on a tour of the front-line villages, Shrouf addressed them. After describing the difficult circumstances under which villagers in this area struggled, Shrouf described this state of affairs as "a disgrace and a shame for the Arab states and their leaders who were incapable of safeguarding their [the villagers'] lands." In 1948, however, the full extent of the disappointment of the Arab states' collective failure was yet to come, and when the area around Hebron was placed under Egyptian military leadership on 5 June, Shrouf went to inform the Egyptians that he would like to continue to offer his services as a policeman. Given the state of affairs, it is no surprise that he saw this service as part and parcel of the Arab war effort.

Throughout the war, Shrouf was involved in various efforts to organize the defense of the villages around Hebron. On 19 July, for example, he traveled with a group of notables from Nuba to Bayt Ulla and met with members of the 'Amleh family to organize a village guard for the surrounding villages. On 14 August, Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi al-'Amleh came to Nuba to meet with Shrouf to discuss "organization of a guard and the purchase of weapons." These efforts to defend the villages in the area involved village notables, sometimes members of the Arab military forces, and quite often other policemen. This should not be particularly surprising, since Palestinian policemen had some relevant training, some coordination with the Arab militaries, and possible access to weapons. From Shrouf's account, it seems that certain police stations, such as the station at Bayt Jibrin, became hubs in the attempts to organize a defense of Palestinian villages. On the evening of 13 August, for example, "a group of Palestinian volunteers, the majority of them from Jaffa, came to the Bayt Jibrin police station."

Later, on 24 October, "Jordanian forces with artillery and armored vehicles moved into the Bayt Jibrin police station." During the ensuing days, heated fighting took place in and around Bayt Jibrin. Although Shrouf makes no mention of the al-Dawayima massacre of 28-29 October,¹⁶ his descriptions of the intense fighting in nearby Bayt Jibrin on 27 October and his description of joining with the armed defenders of al-Dawayima, including its *mukhtar* Hasan Mahmud Hudayb, in early September 1948, provide some sense of the regional developments and the context within which the massacre took place.¹⁷ Shrouf's accounts of the movement of the front between the Zionist and Arab forces and the coordination of various Arab forces can also help supplement sources like the memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya,¹⁸ with whom Shrouf met on 20 November 1948.

Ultimately, though, Shrouf's diary gives us a perspective of the Nakba that differs in various respects from both the political and military histories of 1948 and those narratives of refugees for whom the moment of displacement could be encapsulated in the decision of their families to flee their homes in Jaffa, Haifa, or any number of Palestinian cities and villages. Unlike the former, which recount the violence throughout Palestine as it reaches its frenzied pitch, moving from confrontation to confrontation, tracing the shifting front lines over the series of spirited defenses, massacres, and defeats, Shrouf's account remains largely rooted in one location. In this way, the reader comes to experience the pace of the 1948 events on an individual and localized scale, with moments of activity and others of inactivity, moments of confrontation interspersed with long, uneventful nights of guard duty, days of patrolling, and the intermittent attempts to maintain some semblance of "ordinary" life. In an entry from 5 June 1948, for example, the same day that David Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary that "the cleansing operation continues,"¹⁹ Shrouf's diary reflects the overlapping concerns of a Palestinian villager:

I applied sulfur to the tomatoes a second time and to the zucchini a first time. I also applied sulfur to the last section of grape vine. The Egyptian military governor Ahmad Salem Pasha arrived and assumed the duties of his position as military governor of Hebron and the district. A solemn ceremony was held for him.

This juxtaposition of the mundane tasks of farming with the political developments within the war for Palestine embody the reality of war for somebody in Shrouf's position, for whom a successful crop and the salvation of Palestine both held great significance and were not at odds with one another but two facets of the ultimate goal: to remain on the land.

Shrouf's success in doing just that also gives this diary a different kind of perspective than those memoirs of the Nakba that were written by Palestinians who were made refugees by the Zionist military forces. These memoirs often present the Nakba as a clean break, dividing a pre-Nakba life from the life of displacement, exile, or estrangement that followed it; their authors often recall the day and even the hour that marked the movement from the former to the latter. In the case of these diaries, the Nakba plays out in slow motion, both during the war and in the steady oppressive degradation of the living conditions of the Palestinian villagers in Nuba and the surrounding area in its aftermath. As an individual, Shrouf focused his efforts on improving the lot of these villagers, an advocacy that brought him into frequent contact with the Jordanian authorities that had asserted their control over the West Bank. The following section will explore the sometimes contentious relationship between West Bank Palestinians and the Jordanian authorities and the one after will explore Shrouf's efforts on behalf of his village.

Chafing under Jordanian Administration

On the last day of April 1949, Egyptian forces withdrew from the areas in the West Bank that they had commanded during the war and turned them over to Jordanian authority. Shrouf writes: “After noon, a caravan of Egyptian cars came from the Bi’r al-Saba’ road to transport the Egyptian forces from the regions of Hebron and Bethlehem. At 5 o’clock in the evening, the Egyptian flag was lowered from the government headquarters in Hebron and at the end of this day, Egyptian administration of this region ends, to be replaced by Jordanian administration.” On 1 May 1949, Shrouf’s diary registers his resignation from the police force:

Today in the early morning I left Abu Taysir’s house for the market and from there I went to the police station in Hebron and submitted my service record, thereby ending my service in the police by my own free will. After noon, I left Hebron by car for Tarqumiya and drank coffee and tea in Abu Fathi’s shop. After that, I left them for the village and we planted another section of tomatoes. On 1/5/1949, the first regiment of the Egyptian forces departed, returning to their country.

There is little to indicate Shrouf’s motivation for leaving the force, but one might gather from the timing – coinciding as it did with the end of Egyptian rule – that Shrouf preferred not to serve under the Jordanian administration. Indeed, Jordanian rule got off to a rocky start when on 29 March 1949, Jordanian armed forces occupied the *shari’a* court and searched the girls’ school in Hebron. This prompted a meeting of former employees of the Egyptian administration who agreed on a three-day general strike. The next day:

At 9 o’clock in the morning, all of the employees of Hebron’s administrations held a meeting in the hall of Hebron’s secondary school regarding the actions of the Jordanian army in the *shari’a* court and the girls’ school in Hebron. After the meeting adjourned, all of the employees launched a peaceful demonstration that permeated the streets of Hebron. Close to the Haram al-Ibrahimi, a number of shots were fired on the demonstrators by followers of the Jordanian government. Then the demonstration returned to the Egyptian headquarters and protested to the Egyptian governor.

Eventually the situation calmed down, and with the Egyptians ceding administrative authority to the Jordanians, there was no ready alternative. However, residual tension between the Jordanian authorities and the West Bank Palestinians under their administration continued and exploded into the open with the 20 July 1951 assassination of King ‘Abdallah.

There are no entries in Shrouf’s diary between that of 16 July 1951, in which Shrouf notes the assassination of Riad al-Solh, the Lebanese former prime minister

whom ‘Abdallah was meant to eulogize in Jerusalem on the day of his own assassination, and 3 August 1951.²⁰

However, one of the most intriguing entries in the diaries is the entry of 27 August 1951, one day before the sentencing of those accused of plotting the assassination.²¹ In this entry, Shrouf mentions being accused of conspiring to overthrow the Jordanian government:

While I was working, a request for me came from the Surif guard station. I went there immediately and did not stay there long, going from there to Hebron by way of Bayt Umar. And in the government building I found Isma‘il ‘Abd al-Fattah Teem, al-Hajj Muhammad Teem, ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Abd al-Rahman, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Abdallah, Mahmud ‘Ali Mahmud, Muhammad al-Haj ‘Abd Rabbuh, Yusuf al-‘Abd, ‘Awda Ibrahim ‘Awda, and Salim Mahmud Ibrahim, all of us from Nuba, except for the seventh who is from Zakariyya village. We were all summoned by the regional commander, who levied against us the accusation that, on the evening of 23–24 August 1951, we held a meeting in our village and conspired against the security of the Jordanian government and to undertake a revolution to overthrow it. This was the result of false information on this having been given to the government authorities. After this, we were referred to the office of investigations, which took our statements before deputy officer Muhammad Effendi al-Nadhir. I myself confirmed that on the night of 23–24 August 1951, I was sleeping in the vineyard of ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-‘Ar ‘ar to the east of Surif, as witnessed by Ahmad Muhammad Qa‘qur of Tarqumiya. After that, we left the government building for the market and I rode with the first, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and ninth [of the abovementioned] in a taxi to the Halhul checkpoint. I slept by myself in the house of Mahmud Salama Ahmad of Tal al-Safi and the others slept in various places.

A few days later, on 31 August, one of the alleged conspirators, ‘Awda Ibrahim ‘Awda, apparently accused others of the group of threatening to kill him:

I was at work and Isma‘il ‘Abd al-Fattah Teem came to me and I went with him to the Surif guard station where Muhammad ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Abdallah was waiting for us. The station sergeant took from us [...] a pledge not to attack ‘Awda Ibrahim ‘Awda. The aforementioned ‘Awda had presented false information against the three of us mentioned and al-Haj Muhammad ‘Abd al-Fattah Teem, to the regional commander in Hebron, saying that we four had threatened to kill him. This pledge was for fifty Palestinian pounds each.

Although Shrouf makes no explicit connection between the two allegations, given the involvement of all of those implicated in the earlier accusations of insurrection against the Jordanian government, one cannot help but link the two. The only additional

mention of the matter is the rather vague entry of 2 September:

al-Hajj Muhammad ‘Abd al-Fattah Teem, Isma‘il ‘Abd al-Fattah Teem, Mahmud ‘Ali Mahmud, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Abdallah, ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Abd al-Rahman, and Salim and Muhammad, the sons of Mahmud Ibrahim Salem met at my house and we discussed the issue of the false information that had been presented against us to the regional commander of Hebron. And after they drank coffee, they left.

Whatever the unknown details of this particular case, as with other matters, it sheds light on the political repression of Palestinians at the hands of Jordanian authorities in the wake of ‘Abdallah’s assassination. At the same time, it is illustrative of how the various public spheres of Shrouf’s life are intertwined: the regional politics that included the Jordanian administration of the West Bank and the assassination of King ‘Abdallah take on meaning for Shrouf and other individuals through their interactions with local authorities, such as the regional commander of Hebron, while ultimately the details of the contentious relationship between individuals and the state are shrouded in the village politics of Nuba and Surif and the internal dynamics of the Shrouf *hamula*.

Whatever the degree of his antipathy toward the Jordanian rule over the West Bank more generally, Shrouf was well aware that Jordanian rule was a reality that had to be faced and he had no choice but to come to some accommodation with it. Indeed, it is interesting to note Shrouf’s sensitivity to his audience in two different speeches on education. In an address to locals gathered at the end-of-year party for the village school serving Nuba and Kharas, he exhorted the students: “The goal of education is not just the elimination of illiteracy and the teaching of students reading, writing, and arithmetic. Rather, it is preparation of the new generation for freedom and full independence.” However, when the governor of the Hebron district, Mahmud Bek al-Dhahir, and the district inspector of education, Muhammad Bek al-Tahir, visited the school, Shrouf carefully wished them luck in their work, “and progress and flourishing for our school, and for our country freedom and independence under our sovereign, His Majesty Talal the First.”

This gives some glimpse into Shrouf’s savvy as a proponent of what he saw as the rights and necessities of the villagers of Nuba, of the front-line villages in general, and of Palestinians more broadly. In the aftermath of the Nakba, Shrouf emerged as a tireless advocate for his neighbors and associates, and for his fellow Palestinians.

The Plight of the Front-Line Villages

The villagers of Nuba and the surrounding areas, though they fell outside the borders of the newly declared State of Israel, faced continued difficulties in the wake of 1948. As mentioned earlier, Shrouf himself lost the majority of his lands in the war, and he was not alone. In entries for 18 and 21 April 1949, Shrouf mentions drawing up a

register of those villagers whose lands had been cut off from them. On 3 November 1952, Shrouf wrote that “the area of the land of Nuba village under occupation by the enemy is 16,000 dunams of land,” or almost 4,000 acres. In the entry of 8 April 1954, Shrouf writes that 980 landowners from Nuba – or roughly half the population of the village – lost their lands to the state of Israel.

Placing additional economic and social pressure on the villagers was the influx of refugees: in the abovementioned address to the governor and the district inspector of education, Shrouf stresses the necessity of expanding the school shared by Kharas and Nuba, “because one room for the school of the two villages of Nuba and Kharas, whose residents number almost two thousand five-hundred individuals and adding the refugees whose number amounts to half the number of residents of the two villages, is not sufficient.” However, whereas there were provisions put in place for refugees by organizations like the United Nations, the villagers of Nuba and others who were not technically made refugees received no such attention. This is a theme that Shrouf came back to time and again in his various addresses to audiences, be they government officials, members of the press, or representatives of these same international aid organizations. In phrasing that he repeated in a number of these speeches, Shrouf compared the plight of his fellow Palestinians in the front-line villages to those of the refugees from displaced villages in Israeli-conquered territories:

For the majority of the residents of these villages are pained by the intensity of hunger and deprivation and the loss of work. And many of them have come to sleep in the dust under the open sky, humanity bearing witness to their half-naked starvation. Painful and tragic scenes, arousing grief and sorrow in the heart. They live in small houses that you would imagine from afar to be tombs if not for these ghosts that come and go from them and move around them. And deadly diseases spread or are on the verge of spreading widely among their ranks.

For the true refugees are in better condition than them and have greater peace of mind than them. Because the true refugees receive their monthly supply of rations, so they have enough most days of the month if not all of them. As for the residents of these villages, a day or two days pass for some of them or most of them without finding a mouthful of bread or a single date to stem their hunger, with no morsel except for grass. For he who lost his land and all he owned in terms of moveable assets, for whom nothing remains except for the despicable house in which he lives, where will he find his livelihood? Because the despicable house in which he lives does not yield milk or bread for him.

In a large meeting of government representatives from the Hebron district and *mukhtars* and notables of the front-line villages held on 17 February 1952, Shrouf outlined a quite comprehensive five-point plan to provide some economic relief for this particularly aggrieved population.

- (1) An immediate telegram to the Secretary of the United Nations and to the head of UNRWA in Beirut, explaining the situation of the residents of the front-line villages in the Hebron district and recognizing them as refugees.
- (2) Request that the Jordanian government form a committee composed of the government, the [parliamentary] representatives of this region, and men from UNRWA to tour these front-line villages in order to see with their own eyes the poor condition of their residents.
- (3) Request that the [Jordanian] government launch construction projects to rebuild the roads and other projects in this district, to give unemployed men the ability to work on these projects.
- (4) Request that the government give the residents of the front-line villages in this district large and extended agricultural loans now, in an urgent manner, for the management of their agricultural and other affairs.
- (5) Request that the government distribute wheat free of charge to the residents of these villages, evenly in proportion to the number of villagers, because they are all in this catastrophe equally.

Although the impact of this particular meeting is unclear, it is interesting to note that a number of these conditions were actually met in one way or another. On 4 April 1952, for example, a delegation comprising journalists but also representatives of UNRWA and the Jordanian parliamentarian Yusuf Bek ‘Abbas ‘Amr came on a tour of the front-line villages, to see with their own eyes (and hear with their own ears from advocates like Shrouf) what conditions in the villages were like. Similarly, the Jordanian government did put unemployed West Bank Palestinians to work rebuilding roads, and Shrouf himself found employment on these road crews in the Hebron district. While the United Nations did not recognize the front-line villagers as refugees, Shrouf himself made efforts for years to achieve this recognition for himself and his family. Similarly, although there was no comprehensive agricultural loan program put in place by the Jordanian government specifically for villagers of the front-line areas, Shrouf continued to press the government and its representatives on this issue.

On top of the poor economic conditions under which the front-line villagers struggled, Shrouf’s diary makes clear that, although the war was over, the region itself remained in a state of insecurity. The area continued to face cross-border attacks from Zionist forces in 1949 and into the early and mid-1950s. On 9 October 1952, Shrouf records meeting with a representative in the Jordanian parliament, Yusuf ‘Abbas ‘Amr, and the *mukhtars* and notables of Surif in the village’s National Guard headquarters to discuss “the matter of the assault staged by the Jews last night on the outskirts of Surif.” Shrouf also notes that from Surif, Yusuf ‘Abbas ‘Amr proceeded to Idhna village, “to take information about the incident of attack that the Jews staged against the village of Idhna three days ago.” As a result of these attacks, the villagers of Nuba met on 12 October, where they made a list of ninety men of the village to do guard duty at night. On 27 February 1953, two members of the Jordanian army arrived to train twenty-four youths of the village for the National Guard. However, this did not prevent continued assaults from Israeli forces. On 17 February 1954, as Shrouf spent

the night playing cards with the village schoolteachers,

A group of Jewish infiltrators attacked the house of Ibrahim ‘Abd Rabbuh Jibrin from Kharas, located on the western side of Kharas village. They destroyed the threshold of the house and the wooden door and entered upon Ibrahim, opening fire on him and on his twelve-year-old son. The first died on the spot and the second was injured and taken to the hospital in Hebron.

Despite further attempts to organize and train villagers for local and National Guard duty, the Israeli government was able to stage raids with seeming impunity.²² And indeed, Shrouf is quite adamant that the path to Palestinian empowerment was not primarily through military or paramilitary organization, a cause that in any regard was dependent at this juncture on the Jordanian government for training and weapons, but through education.

Of particular interest is Shrouf’s sense of education as a transformative process, one in which knowledge and modernity were intertwined, and one that would transform the local – the village – as a means toward a transformation of society more generally. In his address at the end-of-term celebration for the village school of Kharas and Nuba on 19 June 1953, Shrouf lays out this understanding quite eloquently:

My brothers, I am not exaggerating if I say that ignorance and savageness [*al-jahl wal-haywaniyya*], though they differ in pronunciation, they are twins or two sides of the same coin. And all that orients the path toward knowledge distances it from savageness. And all that distances itself from ignorance and indolence draws closer to humanity. For a human is only human through thought and knowledge. We want our sons to be educated and not ignorant and indolent. We want the Arab village to have the best conditions and most peace of mind of the world’s villages. . . . And if those responsible are dedicated to performing this hallowed duty of educating the children of these villages, they will be able to revitalize their villages and defend their interests. The first priority is for the teachers themselves to take this responsibility and to experience it in their daily lives. To know which methods are right and which are corrupt. To see the results with their own eyes. For they are the trustees of our children and they are responsible before God and history in the performance of this duty. Because the village is the nucleus of national life and the pillar upon which the country’s progress and development are based. And if a nation wants to lift itself up and occupy its appropriate place among the nations, it is necessary for it to take interest in its children and to educate them properly.

First, it is worth emphasizing once again that the center, indeed the foundational building block of the nation in Shrouf’s worldview was the village. In this conception, there is nothing parochial about Shrouf’s advocacy for the specific interests of Nuba. Rather, it was only through progress and transformation on a local level that

progress and transformation were possible on a national level. The meaning of being Palestinian, for Shrouf, was inseparable from his experience as a villager from Nuba, and without really understanding the latter (something into which this diary gives valuable insight) it is impossible to make sense of the former.

Second, it is important to consider the multiple aspects of education in Shrouf's address. Education meant more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. The pairing of ignorance with indolence is indicative of the degree to which proper education was a comprehensive project of producing a new generation of villagers. It is perhaps no surprise that Shrouf was also an advocate for the establishment of branches of the Sporting Club (*al-nadi al-riyadi*) of Hebron in the district's villages "to encourage and disseminate the sporting spirit amongst the youth of the villages."²³ The complex intertwining of education, sport, and social progress can also be read in entries like that of 14 June 1955:

I went to Hebron to attend the sports festival for the schools in Hebron district as a result of an official invitation, also extended to Salim Mahmud and Mahmud 'Ali. After the end of the exhibition, I returned to the village, and [my sons] Faysal and 'Abd al-Hadi were with me. The festival was magnificent and in it appeared student girl scouts in scout uniforms carrying light arms for the first time in the history of Hebron and the district.

Given Hebron's reputation for social conservatism, this display is of particular interest. It is also worth noting that the villagers of Nuba and Kharas – who, being both rural and from the Hebron region, might have been written off as doubly "afflicted" by conservatism – met and decided to press the government to open a girls' school for the villages on 17 May 1952. If we move away from stereotypes or facile associations of progress and modernity with urban elites, however, and consider the comprehensive view of education that Shrouf put forward, these entries may seem less surprising or unusual.

Finally, Shrouf's diaries make clear that education was not something theoretical to be discussed or paid lip service. The affairs of the school required constant attention and the basic logistics of its expansion – including renting additional classrooms, hiring additional teachers, expanding the number of classes offered – often demanded mediation between the villagers and the Jordanian government. Thus, Shrouf's commitment to education is found not only in his public addresses, but in his constant negotiation with authorities and the pressure he put on them to provide the resources needed to sustain education in the villages and in acts like digging a well for the school or donating 500 fils at a fundraiser for the school held on 23 January 1952. It also at times placed him in opposition to other villagers and other members of the *hamula*. In a diary entry for 9 October 1952,²⁴ Shrouf describes going to Hebron with a number of other villagers to meet with various officials from the department of education in order to offer a sixth-grade class at the school. After various meetings, "we met with the governor's secretary, Sa'di Effendi Tahbub."

We presented to him the rental contract for Shaykh Hasan Khayr al-Din's room [to be used] for the sixth-grade class. He showed it to the governor and informed the two villages' treasury of the governor's approval for opening the class in our village's school. With this act, we thwarted the movement of those opposed to opening the class. Those opposed were 'Abd al-Latif 'Abd al-Rahman and all his relatives among the Thalayija, Mahmud Ibrahim Salem and all his relatives, and all of the Shrouf family except me.

Shrouf's commitment to education amongst the villagers clearly trumped any effort to fall into line with his family members and not for the first time put him into conflict with Nuba's *mukhtar*, Mahmud Ibrahim Salem. Whatever the root of this faction's opposition to the expansion of the village school (most likely it stemmed from the additional costs attached to such an expansion), it is no surprise that, given the relentless energy and effort that he devoted to this cause, Shrouf emerged triumphant. And given his view of education as the cornerstone of the development of the village, which was the nucleus of national life, it is perhaps no surprise that he was willing to devote so much of his time and energy in this way. If this reflects Shrouf's commitment and dedication to the village of Nuba, it is with a certain sense of tragedy that we now turn to the final period of his diaries, those written primarily in al-Rusayfa, an industrial city located between Amman and Zarqa' in Jordan.

From West Bank to East

In the 4 April 1952 address to journalists and UNRWA officials mentioned above, Shrouf warned that the intolerable conditions in the front-line villages were forcing Palestinians from their homes and their villages in the West Bank across the Jordan River and into Jordan proper. He informed his audience:

As for the residents of my village, Nuba, it is no less bad than the conditions for the residents of these villages and even more so. Over the past two years, nearly half of its residents have emigrated from it and sought refuge on the East Bank of the Kingdom [of Jordan]. Some of them live in grottos and caves and under cover of tents and some of them wander aimlessly, unable to find their daily sustenance. . . . And if conditions continue like this for another year, the remainder of the residents of this village of mine will be forced to leave their village and join their brethren, the sons of their village, who were made wretched by ill fortune and sought refuge in the East Bank of this kingdom, to live together or die together.

One can read in Shrouf's statement both a tenderness and sympathy for those West Bank villagers forced to seek refuge across the Jordan as well as a warning: that what was left of Palestine under Arab rule could also be lost. Shrouf's apprehension

also presages his own move to Jordan in August 1955, when he left Nuba to seek employment in al-Rusayfa.

On 7 August 1955, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf officially became an employee of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, registered as a clerk in the transports office, drawing a daily salary of 300 fils. (To give some indication of the value of this salary, the taxi that Shrouf took from Jerusalem to Amman earlier in the month – which he surely would have shared with others – cost 500 fils.) From this point on, Shrouf’s diary entries become less frequent and less engaged in the rich web of relations that characterized his life in Nuba, instead focusing on his finances, his work, and the all-too-infrequent visits from his family.

Shrouf is still a keen observer of political developments, though. In late December 1955, for example, Shrouf noted the Jordanian king’s decision to dissolve the cabinet of Hazza’ al-Majali and to form a new government with Ibrahim Hashim as prime minister. “As a result of this,” Shrouf wrote, “the strike and demonstrations in all areas of the country came to an end and all those arrested were released.” Unrest continued into early 1956, however, and when on 8 January the parliament’s dissolution was ruled unconstitutional and the former parliament reinstated, a general strike was called. According to Shrouf: “In al-Rusayfa a demonstration was held and clashes took place between the crowd and some of the members of the Jordanian Army, during which the army opened fire, killing two and wounding two others from among the crowd.” A curfew was put into place, which was then eased on 11 January.

The diaries from Shrouf’s time in al-Rusayfa also give a glimpse into workers’ attempts to organize at the Phosphate Mines Company.²⁵ On 6 March 1956, Shrouf writes: “I and all the employees of the Phosphate Mines Company presented statements for the employees, that is, each employee presented a statement for himself, and this for the sake of job security and increased salaries.” It is not possible to know the direct impact of this action by the company’s employees, but on 28 May 1956 Shrouf records that he has received a raise and will now work for a monthly salary rather than a daily rate, giving the impression that the workers’ demands were met. On 12 August 1957, Shrouf was elected to the membership of the Cooperative Society of Employees and Workers of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (*al-jam‘iyya al-ta‘awuniyya li-muwadhhaḥfi wa ‘umm al-sharikat manajim al-fusfat*). These elections, interestingly enough, were held under the observation of the director of the mine, Dr. Qasim al-Rimawi, a Palestinian from Bayt Rima who would briefly serve as Jordan’s prime minister from early July to late August 1980. On 19 November 1957, the Cooperative Society held another election, the results of which indicate the growth of the society’s membership within the company: whereas the candidate with the highest number of votes in the August vote had received just 111 votes, in the December vote he received 267 votes. Shrouf himself earned 97 votes as compared to 45 votes in the earlier election, though even this did not earn him a spot on the nine-member leadership body.

From then on, Shrouf does not mention the Cooperative Society again. However, he does describe a more contentious atmosphere of labor organizing. On 16 May 1959,

Shrouf notes that a petition was circulated, “signed by a number of engineers, heads of departments, employees, and workers in the Mines [Company], asking for a raise and other requests.” Shrouf was presented with the petition and refused to sign it, in part because of a debate over the period within which the petition demanded a response. The next day, Shrouf writes: “A second petition appeared against the first petition and signed by some of the engineers, heads of departments, employees, and workers. The other was presented to me, and I refused to agree to it because I perceived that there was a dispute between some of the officials in the Mines [Company] and I was satisfied to remain neutral.”

It was not possible for Shrouf to remain neutral in all matters, however. In late January 1960, he was attacked while leaving work by about seven (by his count) individuals from the Bani Hasan tribe, one of the largest tribes in Jordan. The attack landed Shrouf in the hospital and was resolved on 5 February, when: “Before prayers, Malham ‘Abd al-Rahman, the *mukhtar* of Halhul, and Sahir Da‘na, the *mukhtar* of al-Halayila in al-Zarqa’, and al-Haj [. . .] Abu Musa from al-Da‘ayima and a businessman from al-Zarqa’ came from al-Zarqa’ with a large number of people from Nuba and Bayt Ulla and Kharas and Halhul living in Amman. After prayers, the shaykhs of Bani Hasan and a large number of their tribe came with Abu Nusuh, the head of the guard station of al-Rusayfa.” Ultimately the two parties came to an agreement and the conflict – the origins of which are unclear from the diary entries – was put to an end after the Bani Hasan agreed to give Shrouf thirty dinars to pay for his hospital bill and injuries and the assembled parties ate together. Shrouf provides a list of thirty attendees from among his contingent at the reconciliation, one each from Halhul, Kharas, and Bayt Ulla, and the rest presumably from Nuba itself.

The episode thus gives a sense not only of the way extra-legal reconciliation sessions were important in resolving disputes in Jordan much as they were among villagers in the West Bank, but also the degree to which networks of village and *hamula* persisted even after the dispersal of Palestinians outside of Palestine. Shrouf remarks upon several other incidents that illustrate the same point. On 3 September 1957, Shrouf records a long list of individuals who gathered at his house, from whence “I went with them to a meeting of the Shrouf *hamula*.” In a second entry for the same day, Shrouf writes: “This evening, 3 September 1957, I took a lunch of meat and rice at a meeting of the *hamula*, attended by a large number of individuals from the *hamula*.” On 9 November 1957, according to Shrouf’s diary:

At two o’clock in the afternoon, I went with Abu Samir to Amman and when we arrived in the Zarqa’ garage on our way to Jabal al-Husayn [in Amman], we encountered no small number of youths from our village. All of us went by bus, at the expense of Muhammad al-Jayyali, to the house of Abu Taysir. There a big meeting was held bringing together people from our village Nuba and Bayt Ulla, Kharas, Tarqumiya, and Halhul, and discussion turned to the case of the assault against Ahmad ‘Abd al-Rahman Firash, Abu Taysir’s brother, carried out by individuals from Qalqiliya.

On 22 November: “In the morning, I went to Amman to the house of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahman Firash. There, the *sulh* was undertaken in the tribal manner [*‘ala al-tariqa al-‘asha’iriyya*], the aforementioned and his father and his brother on one side and a group from Qalqiliya village on the other side.” Here again, it is possible to see how in the aftermath of the Nakba, Palestinians both preserved previous forms of social order (the organizational form of the village, the *hamula*, and traditional methods of reconciliation) and were forced to adapt them in new circumstances (families from Jabal al-Khalil and the village of Qalqilya, just south of Tulkarm, meeting in Amman).

Although these social networks were activated in moments of conflict, at the same time one can feel that they were dissolving in other ways. At the diaries’ peak, there was a daily flow of individuals to and from Shrouf’s house, just as he was constantly taking meals, tea, or coffee with others in Nuba, *qura saff al-‘Amleh*, and Jabal al-Khalil. Having moved to al-Rusayfa, the thick network within which Shrouf had been enmeshed was stretched thin and unraveled. These diaries thus capture in all its complexity and nuance the slow but on-going Nakba experienced by Palestinians of Shrouf’s standing, villagers of the West Bank who were not made refugees immediately in 1948, but who nevertheless came to know the Palestinian experience of displacement.

Conclusion

In many ways, the diaries of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf are both representative of the broader Palestinian experience and reflective of an uncommon perspective on this experience. They speak to the dispossession and political frustration that accompanied the loss of Palestine, though Shrouf was neither a refugee nor a member of the political elite. While they record the daily life of a villager over two decades spanning 1948, Shrouf’s diaries stand in distinction to the romanticization of rural Palestinian life and the iconization of the Nakba that have become key tropes in Palestinian national narratives. In Shrouf’s diaries, these aspects are not symbolic pillars but are integrated into a rich and complex record whose format and style give nearly equal importance to each day’s events, whether they be the rental of an extra room to expand the village school, the purchase of flour at the market, the planting and harvesting of crops, an attack by Zionist forces on a nearby village, or the decision to seek employment in Jordan. In this, as in so many other ways, they constitute an invaluable contribution to those interested in Palestinian history from below.

The story that unfolds in Shrouf’s diaries is particularly complex in the multiple levels of social interaction – the multiple public spheres – that he as an individual was engaged in. These diaries constitute at once a kind of family history, a history of the village of Nuba, a history of the villages of *saff al-‘Amleh*, of the Hebron district, of West Bank Palestinians, and of those Palestinians forced by necessity to abandon their homes to seek their livelihoods across the Jordan River. It is also a history of

Palestinian civil servants and government employees under the Mandate, of village notables, of agriculturalists, and of an evolving industrial workforce in Jordan. It is a history of disputes large and small – disputes resolved between families, in the courts, in international conferences, or left unresolved and festering. It is a record of the incalculable social interactions – the sharing of tea, coffee, meals, money, housing, and transportation – that constituted the daily lives of Palestinians before and after 1948.

As Irina Paperno has noted in her insightful reflection on the scholarly uses of diaries: “A narrative template that represents the flow of life while anticipating and absorbing the future, the diary can be used to construct continuity as well as to deal with personal and social rupture.”²⁶ The diaries of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf offer an absorbing account of the continuities and ruptures that taken together comprise the life of an individual as well as the history of a society. The richness of detail with which Shrouf recorded these continuities and ruptures allows us to reconstruct histories that have been overshadowed or marginalized in dominant nationalist and elite-focused narratives, to feel the push and pull of the numerous sub-currents flowing and churning within the overall tide of history. For this, we – as scholars and as human beings – are in his debt.

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Endnotes

- 1 See, for example, the memoirs of ‘Arif al-‘Arif, Muhammad ‘Izzat Darwaza, Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, Khalil al-Sakakini, Khalil Totah, and Akram Zu‘aytir, to name just a few.
- 2 *A Young Palestinian’s Diary, 1941-1945: The Life of Sami ‘Amr*, trans. Kimberly Katz (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).
- 3 Irina Paperno, for example, describes diaries as “archived intimate writings of potential historical as well as literary value,” and writes: “The diary is also firmly committed to the first-person narrative; but not to an addressee. What follows is the diary’s special relationship to privacy, intimacy, and secrecy.” Further, “In recent decades, a new branch of historiography claimed diaries, along with letters and other forms of personal writing, as elements of the ‘private life,’ constituted by forms of intimate (as opposed to public) existence.”
- 4 Irina Paperno, “What Can Be Done with Diaries?” *Russian Review* no. 63 (2004): 561-64. Anita Shapira, writing on diaries of Jews in Jerusalem in 1948, also associates diaries with intimacy: “Among the questions one can pose with regard to such writings are: How did the writers internalize the ethos of the period? How did they interpret reality? What was their emotional and physical habitus? How did they react to situations of stress, changing realities, and personal and national problems? The culture of writing diaries or letters is part of the culture of literacy, education, and appreciation of the written word as a means of interpersonal communication and as a means of internal dialogue between a person and him- or herself.” Anita Shapira, “Jerusalem in 1948: A Contemporary Perspective,” *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (2011): 79-80.
- 4 Dwight F. Reynolds, ed., *Interpreting the*

- Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). The book's text is coauthored by Kristen E. Brustad, Michael Cooperson, Jamal J. Elias, Nuha N. N. Khoury, Joseph E. Lowry, Nasser Rabbat, Dwight F. Reynolds, Devin J. Stewart, and Shawkat M. Toorawa.
- 5 Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self*, 29.
 - 6 For an historical analysis of the 'Amleh family and its place in the social, political, and economic life of Jabal al-Khalil in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Johann Büsow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 194-210.
 - 7 "Nuba Village Profile" (Jerusalem: Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem [ARIJ], 2009), 9, available online in English and Arabic at proxy.arij.org/vprofile.
 - 8 See, for example, the census taken by the villagers on 11 June 1951, in which Shrouf records that the Shrouf *hamula* comprises 65 families (and 179 males), the Dababisa *hamula* 57 families (159 males), and the Tarman *hamula* 40 families (and 115 males). On 6 February 1954, Shrouf describes the distribution of wheat donations among 490 individuals in the village, 192 of them from the Shrouf *hamula*, 167 from the Dababisa *hamula*, and 131 from the Tarman *hamula*. On 8 June 1955, Shrouf divides the village population of 1,818 into 408 from al-Shrouf, 384 from al-Dababisa, and 226 from al-Tarman.
 - 9 The Mennonite church is a Protestant Christian denomination characterized in part by pacifist beliefs. The Mennonite Central Committee was formed in 1920 as a service branch of the church to provide relief in international crises and support for social justice causes in the United States; it established a branch in Hebron to provide aid to Palestinian refugees in 1949. For an internal history of the Mennonite role in Palestine, see Alain Epp Weaver and Sonia K. Weaver, *Salt and Sign: Mennonite Central Committee in Palestine, 1949-1999* (Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee Canada, 1999).
 - 10 The *zawiya*, administered by and serving members of the Khalwatiyya Sufi order, was established in 1933 by Shaykh Husni al-Qawasimi, whose death Shrouf records in a diary entry for 21 January 1944. The structure is now known as al-Zawiya al-Sharqiyya (the Eastern Zawiya) Mosque, after the construction of al-Zawiya al-Gharbiyya (the Western Zawiya) Mosque in 1990. More information on sites of religious significance and practice in Nuba can be found in ARIJ's "Nuba Village Profile" and on the village's official website at www.nuba.ps.
 - 11 See, for example, the diary entries for 9 September 1946, 22 February 1952, 8 January 1953, and 8 April 1954.
 - 12 This figure is based on the "Palestine Police Force Annual Administrative Report, 1945," republished in *Palestine and Transjordan Administration Reports, 1918-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 1995), vol. 2, 723-798. See pp. 727-28 for figures; these do not include supernumerary police, special constables, Jewish settlement police, municipal police, or ghaffirs. Although the majority of these irregulars were Jewish, they also included a significant number of Palestinians.
 - 13 Salim Tamari, "Away from Dura (or Life in the Margins)," foreword to 'Amr, *A Young Palestinian's Diary*.
 - 14 See, for example, the entries of 22 November 1944 and 22 December 1944.
 - 15 See Yousef Heikal, "Jaffa . . . as It Was," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13 (1984): 3-21; Shafiq al-Hout, *My Life in the PLO: The Inside Story of the Palestinian Struggle*, trans. Hader al-Hout and Laila Othman (New York: Pluto Books, 2011); Abu Iyad [Salah Khalaf] with Eric Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle* (New York: Times Books, 1981); Salwa Salem and Laura Maritano, *The Wind in My Hair* (Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2006).
 - 16 It is difficult to speculate as to why this massacre goes unmentioned in Shrouf's diaries. Shrouf does, for example, record the most notorious massacre, that at the village of Dayr Yasin, in his entry of 9 April 1948: "Jewish criminals committed a criminal act in the Arab village of Dayr Yasin: they wiped it out and killed a great number of men, women, and children of the village." He is not completely consistent, however, in recording the tragedies of the ongoing war. Although Dawayima was located much closer to Nuba, it may be that news of the massacre did not reach Shrouf until much later; or, perhaps he was occupied with other matters at the time, given the proximity of the combat to Nuba.
 - 17 For a summary of Hudayb's statement describing the massacre, see United Nations

- Conciliation Commission for Palestine, Technical Committee, "Report Submitted by the Arab Refugee Congress of Ramallah: The Dawaymeh Massacre," 14 June 1949, United Nations document A/AC.25/Com.Tech/W.3, available online through unispal.un.org.
- 18 *Fi khidamm al-nidal al-'Arabi al-Filastini: Mudhakkirat al-munadil Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, 1916-1949* [In the Midst of the Palestinian Arab Struggle: Memoirs of the Fighter Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, 1916-1949] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993). For Abu Gharbiyya's account of events in the region around Nuba, especially in Surif, see chapter 41 ("Moving to the Bethlehem Region") and chapter 42 ("Days and Nights in the Ruins of Surif and Wadi al-Sur"), pp. 350-364.
 - 19 Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 147.
 - 20 Shrouf makes several mentions of discussions he has with others regarding the parliamentary elections that followed 'Abdallah's assassination, but never explicitly references the assassination itself.
 - 21 For a fairly comprehensive account of the trial of the alleged conspirators, which also sheds some light on political discontent with Jordanian rule among Palestinians, see S. G. T., "King Abdullah's Assassins," *The World Today* 7, no. 10 (1951): 411-19.
 - 22 Correspondence within the British Foreign Office indicates that the British saw frontier incidents as the result of a deliberate policy of reprisals against Palestinian villagers. The British Public Record Office (PRO) includes documents relating incidents in May 1953, including one in Bayt 'Awwa, a village southwest of Nuba along the 1949 armistice line. A 29 May 1953 telegram from the British embassy in Amman to the Foreign Office reads: "Arab Legion state that the incidents reported in the two telegrams under reference resulted from Arab villagers at Eait Awa [*sic*] attempt to harvest crops which they had sown on land adjoining their own, but just the other side of the border. On May 27 a company of Israel infantry approached and burned these crops, but on attempting to carry out burning operations over the border were engaged at long range by National Guard and Arab Legion and eventually withdrew. On the morning of May 28 another company supported by six armoured troop carriers returned to the area for the same purpose but were again engaged and driven off. The Legion regard incidents as typical in harvest time. I understand unofficially that the United Nations Observers generally support their version." See PRO FO 371/104782. See also Arab Legion reports of border incidents and a British Foreign Office account of a failed cross-border incursion by Israelis into Surif on 9 May 1954, PRO FO 371/111101.
 - 23 See the long entry of 17 January 1952. For more on sports clubs in Mandate Palestine, see Issam Khalidi, "Body and Ideology: Early Athletics in Palestine (1900-1948)," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 27 (Summer 2006): 44-58.
 - 24 The entry is actually one of two entries dated 8 October 1952. One of these gives the day of the week as Tuesday and the other as Wednesday. Because 8 October 1952 fell on a Tuesday, I have made the assumption that the second entry, quoted here, was actually for 9 October.
 - 25 For general histories of organized labor in Jordan, see Mansur Ibrahim 'Atum, *al-'Amal wal-'ummal fil-Urdun* [Labor and Workers in Jordan] (Amman: Lajnat tarikh al-Urdun, 1993); 'Umar Kharyush Hamayil, *al-Niqabat al-mihaniyah al-Urduniyya: Khasa'isuha al-mu'assasiyya wa dawruha al-siyasi* [Jordanian Trade Unions: Their Institutional Specificities and Their Political Role] (Amman: Markaz al-Urdun al-jadid); and Hani Hourani, *The Jordanian Labor Movement: History, Structure, and Challenges* (Bonn, Germany: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2001).
 - 26 Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries?" 572.