Tegart's Modern Legacy:

The Reproduction of Power, a Timeless Paradox

Yasid El Rifai, Dima Yaser, and Adele Jarrar

The new time of architecture is thus that of memory, which replaces history . . . With the introduction of memory into the object, the object comes to embody both an idea of itself and a memory of a former self.[1]

Tegart forts, constructed by the British colonial regime as military installations near or within Palestinian cities during the 1936–1939 Arab Revolt against Jewish waves of immigration to Palestine and British support for the Zionist project, stand as monuments of power.[2] These forts endured continuous physical restructuring and reshaping to accommodate the shifting regimes over the past century. The Tegart forts that have penetrated the Palestinian landscape as monuments of power and machines of control and territorial expansion stand as haunted structures to this day – in a state of transformation accommodating both colonial and national authorities. These inherited monuments of British colonialism in Palestine manifest the power of architecture in the representation of successive political patterns. As architecture represents itself through monuments, it embraces a direct expression of power/control relation between authorities and society. Georges Bataille asserts that monuments are the way authorities speak and impose a state of silence, fear, and acceptable behavior on the multitudes. Thus, "the storming of the Bastille is symbolic of this state of affairs: it is difficult to explain this impulse of the mob other than by the animosity the people hold against the monuments which are their true masters."[3]

Figure 1. A map illustrating the locations of the Tegart forts, which dotted the Palestinian landscape, with the greatest concentration in the northern and coastal regions, from Kevin Connolly, "Charles Tegart and the Forts that Tower over Israel," BBC, 10 September 2012.

Monuments of Power, Instruments of Suppression

The British Mandate regime in Palestine was a "temporary" commissioning by the League of Nation for Britain to administer Palestine. The British governance demonstrated a militarized legal and administrative instrument in Palestine aiming at "maintaining peace," while in reality facilitating the Jewish immigrations and the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. After the outbreak of the *fallahin*-led revolt in 1936, Britain found it imperative to find an effective way to control Palestinians. Britain thus drew on its rich and vast experience in power, control, and repression in its colonies, especially in India, and in 1938 commissioned Sir Charles Tegart, former commissioner of the Calcutta Police, to design about fifty-five forts throughout Palestine based on his experiences in India.[4] They were located on elevated terrain, exposed and isolated from their surrounding but remotely controlling and dominant. The forts were autonomous and self-sustained at their strategic locations (figure 1).

These forts, which were mainly used as police stations, were designed to resist attacks and bombardment. The buildings were fortified and supplied with water and storage in case of siege or attacks. They were built of reinforced concrete, with high walls, small openings, and armored doors. They had a rectangular or square-shaped plan, with internal courtyards that sometimes housed a smaller building, usually a jail (figure 2). They had also two giant observation towers.[5] The architectural language was brutalist and repellent, expressing military iconography par excellence. The architectural design imposed power and control over the observer, as well as a real ability to control and survey through their panoptical design.[6] These stony white structures that dotted the landscape were brutal both in image and in use, serving as centers of torture, interrogation, and investigation.

These forts were not only used by policemen or military personnel, but sometimes were also inhabited by their families. In accordance, the inner courtyards were not only used for exercising control, but also served as social spaces for military and their families

away from the eyes of the Palestinians and adjacent inhabitants. They hosted wrestling games, musicals, and parties; some also had swings for children and regular spaces for training (figure 3). Inside the buildings, which also had secret emergency exits, we find sleeping quarters, laboratories, investigation rooms, and telecommunication facilities (figure 3). The deliberate, comprehensive, and conscious design of the Tegart forts, in terms of space and geographical location, played a key role in assisting the British Mandate to dominate and control the Palestinian population, despite repeated uprisings, until the Nakba.

Monuments in Transition

These forts, which stand as monuments of a lost empire, also played an important role in the 1948 war. Between 1947 and 1949, in a move that illustrates the strategic alliance between the British

Figure 2. Plans of a number of Tegart forts, illustrating the different spatial typologies and scales of the forts according to location and function, from Gili Merin, "Tegart Forts in Palestine: Adopted and Adapted Monuments of Supervision," *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*, March 2015.

Mandate and Israeli occupation, British colonial armies evacuated several Tegart forts located along the Palestinian coast, where Jewish immigrant communities settled. As Israeli sources claim, about thirty-three forts were handed to Israelis who served as police groups for the British Mandate.[7] Among these were the Tegart forts of Qatra, 'Iraq Suwaydan, and Metulla, the latter being abandoned by the British in 1941. Other forts witnessed heavy battles during the 1948 war; a significant example is the Latrun fort along the road between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.[8] The British handed the fort to Jordan's Arab Legion and it was subject to several unsuccessful Israeli attacks during 1948 and 1949, marking a victory of the Arabs and maintaining control over this area until 1967.[9] The symbolic use of the Tegart forts on the Israeli border patrol insignia (figure 4) demonstrates the essential role played by the forts in establishing the Israeli border (the Green Line) during the 1948 war.[10] The effectiveness of the network of forts was demonstrated by their performance during the war.

After 1948, Tegart forts were used as centers for the Jordanian military forces and governors in the West Bank. The existing infrastructure enabled these architectural monuments to function as administrative headquarters, military bases, prisons, and sometimes accommodation for Jordanian governors.[11] In reference to the matrix catalogue drawn by British Mandate architect Otto Hoffman,[12] Tegart forts vary in their structure,

Figure 3. Screenshots from the film Palestine Police, from the Imperial War Museum's collection, which depicted the forts as heterotopias – spaces accommodating different social activities for the military and policemen and their families that inhabited these forts.

Figure 4. The Israeli Border Patrol insignia bears an image of al-Nabu Yusha' fort, from Kevin Connolly, "Charles Tegart and the Forts that Tower over Israel," BBC, 10 September 2012.

category, and function from one location to another. In main cities like Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm, the forts were classified as divisional headquarters and were introverted structures. In Jenin, the building was a rectangular modern structure with an open court, within which another rectangular building containing yet another court, accentuating an extreme superimposition of spatial control and separation, a sort of panopticon within a panopticon. In Tulkarm, the fort was a rectangular building with a huge open court divided into two parts, where one part has a centrally placed watchtower.

Such a mix of structures led to different uses of the buildings during the Jordanian era, including as residences for the governors. The Jordanians maintained the forts' original structures and spaces during this era. Their locations, which were remote from urban and rural population centers and strategically placed on a sensitive network, served the Jordanian notion of *wisaya*.[13] This kind of remote relation, which aimed at managing the conditions of everyday life without being integrated into society, aligned with the British Mandate strategy of controlling the area from a remove, a core idea reflected in the architectural composition and location of the forts.

After the war of 1967, Israel took control of the remaining Palestinian areas. In many cases, Jewish settlers moved initially into the Tegart forts, taking advantage of the residential facilities and their defensive qualities. In the 1980s, the building of Qatra fort was used as temporary housing for Ethiopian Jewish immigrants.[14] In the West Bank, Israelis used the forts as centers for the Civil Administration, prisons, military courts, and military bases. The forts' walls maintained the military visual language of the structures and functioned well in portraying a message of power to the local inhabitants. The Israelis made minimal interventions on these structures.[15] New additions were built using two different materials: steel for some temporary functions, and stone for the civil administrative functions. The use of stone was a direct representation of the Israeli occupation attempts at normalizing and localizing its relationship to the Palestinian occupation. From another side, the Israeli use of permanent materials in these additions demonstrated an attitude opposed to temporality and an admiration for these monuments as having played a key role in the historical resurrection of the "state of Israel."

Unlike the British Mandate's remote relation to the local Palestinian context, Israel's willingness to open the forts to the public, by placing civil administrative centers within the forts, indicated the Israeli occupation's intention to penetrate the local Palestinian community and thus control it. Tegart forts' reuse – including their material use, their functional use, and the establishment of new networks around them – clearly demonstrates such concepts. The Tegart forts' representation of power persisted, especially after Oslo accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

When the Palestinian Authority took over in 1994, they established their headquarters in the Tegart forts in the Palestinian-administered areas A and B. Some buildings were added to accommodate the spatial needs of the newly established authority during the Arafat era. The official headquarters of the PA were based in the Ramallah *muqata'a*.[16] Several facilities were added: a residential block, a helipad, a VIP guesthouse, a prison, offices of security services, sleeping quarters for guards, a large kitchen, a car repair shop, and a large meeting hall.[17] These structures' signification within the growing

fabric of the city was later amplified by the higher walls that surrounded them. Other *muqata'at* witnessed similar additions and upgrading in order to serve and reinforce its new "old" role. Although at the beginning this seemed to many Palestinians – recalling the cheering crowds and the celebration of the "victory" – to be one of the liberating efforts in reclaiming and repossessing the legacy of the colonizer, this submissive attitude toward these potent structures established a sense of continuity from the previous administrative and colonial powers rather than change and rupture.[18] The notion of "inhabiting the house of your enemy" has always been present in the postcolonial reuse of colonial structures.

Destruction and Reconstruction – Resurrection from the Rubble

In 2002, the Israelis bombarded and destroyed these headquarters in an attempt to erase the presence of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, which was signified by the presence of these structures. Thus, these complexes became the stages of a major attempt to delegitimize and demoralize Arafat, the PA, and the project of an independent state. The *muqata'a* in Ramallah, which became the Israeli-imposed home/prison/exile of Arafat, was brutally bombarded on live television. The architecture of the colonizer and the colonized together became a homogenized site of concrete rubble, which to many at the time marked an end of a nationwide dream.

The European Union and the ministry of public works under Prime Minister Salam Fayyad initiated the reconstruction of the demolished structures. Six sites – Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Hebron, Jericho, and Bethlehem – were commissioned to local architectural firms. What was interesting in the reconstruction attempts was the architectural representation used for the reproduction of power in these sites. The walls became higher, so that no one could actually see what lies behind them. This time they were dressed in stone, a more permanent, though local, material. New watchtowers were installed along these walls, thus mimicking the architecture of the Israeli occupation and reinforcing the alienation between the authority and the people, both physically and psychologically. Some of the original functions of these forts were brought back, mainly the prisons and administrative offices. Ramallah remained separate from these as it held a more official representation of the authority. An elevated green buffer zone was introduced at the main entrance of the complex, replacing the original street level entrance, which was, although monolithic in structure, to some extent accessible and "humble" in Arafat's time. New functions were introduced, including the Arafat Mausoleum – a temporary burial place for the late Arafat – and a museum, both built in a modern typology, and other administrative buildings that were more eclectic in their typology and reincarnations of historical references.

The new image tends to replace and erase the past, "the collective." The eclectic yet meticulous architecture erases the dark history of these military machines, stripping down the overarching colonial attire. The new architecture assumes emergence from a tabula rasa, wiping out the blood of thousands of oppressed Palestinians that once
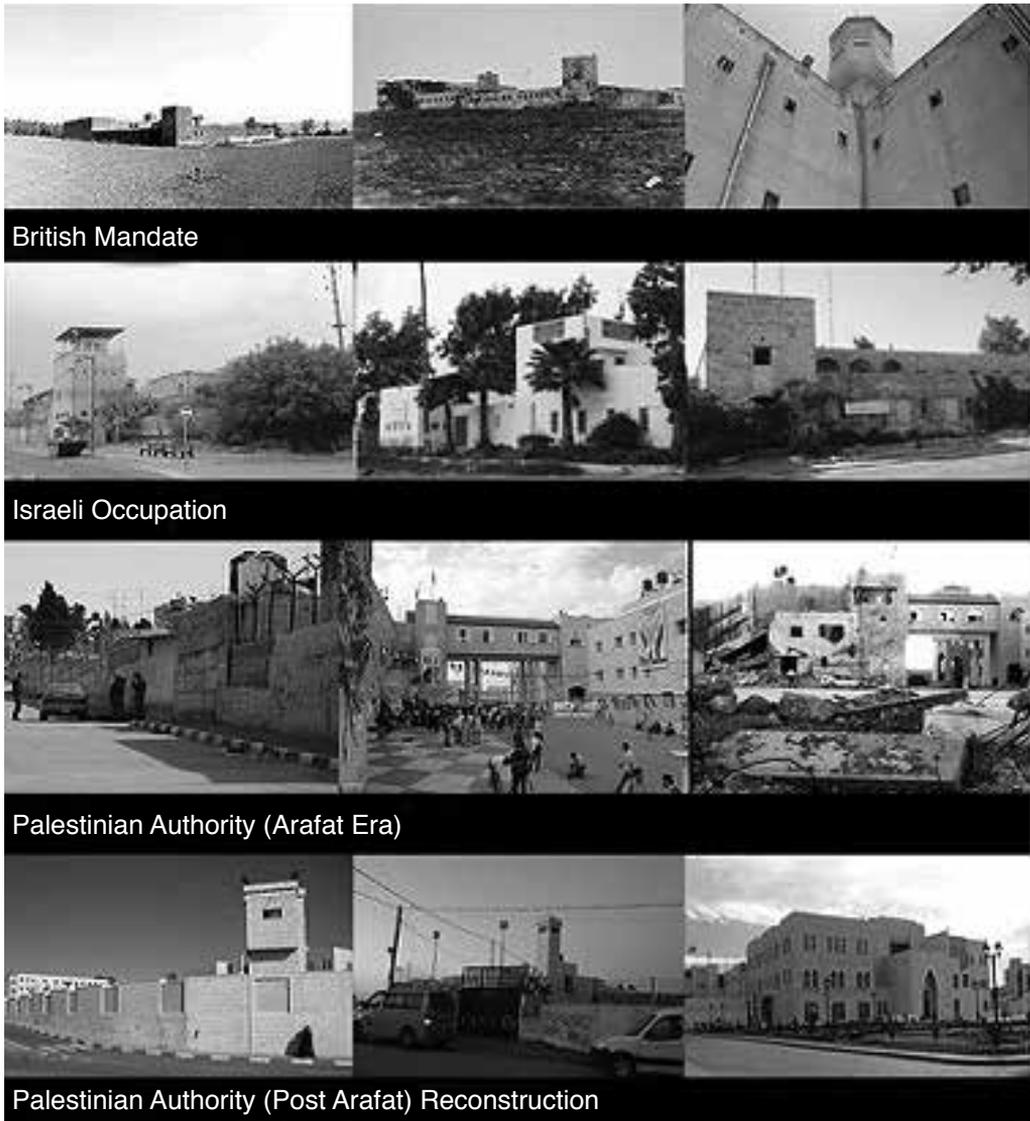
Figure 5. The emergence and evolution of the Tegart forts during different regimes.

"inhabited" these sites. As a former prisoner recalls: "these sites have always been associated with oppression, atrocity, and colonization and continue to be so . . . it is too sad to see all this history being cleansed, wiped out and replaced with what supposedly is national."[19]

The persistence of Tegart forts, as monuments of power, over the century was crowned by the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. Yasir Arafat used these colonial structures as the official headquarters of the PA, thus "liberating" them from their haunted realities as prisons and interrogation centers, assuming power from what originally intended to destroy and displace them. Palestinian control over space has always been conditional, fragmented, and provisional, so the very basic notion

of controlling something that was never yours and has always had a potent presence and a symbol of power had a satisfying impact on the very existence of this "interim" authority. The iconography (figure 5) used over time, whether brutalist and harsh concrete facades used by British Mandate for *direct and physical representation of power*, or the Israeli iconography of *normalization*, which manifested in the addition of stone cladding, greenery (especially palm trees), and, later, public seating areas around forts inside the areas of 1948, and finally the PA's use, especially after rebuilding the *muqata'at* and the dreamt-of "nation," of a modern military element, including, for example, watchtowers and high fortified walls. This narrative of different architectural representation and language in accordance with different attitudes of political regimes has always been an instrument in the hand of the rulers to maintain their power. The important question is: could this circuit of power have been broken at some point under the PA regime by the subversion of these sites? Perhaps this question had to be answered at the moment we rebuilt these forts after their destruction in the second intifada.

Yasid El Rifai is an assistant professor in the Department of Architectural Engineering at Birzeit University. His fields of research include the notion of architecture and the city, modern architecture and the city, urban design theories, and environmental psychology.

Dima Yaser is a lecturer at the Department of Architectural Engineering at Birzeit University. Her research focuses on issues pertaining to architecture and the city, the social, political and economic dimensions of the city.

Adele Jarrar is a teaching and research assistant at the Department of Architectural Engineering at Birzeit University. She is an architect interested in examining different types of political, social, and economic systems, and their effect on architecture, cities, and urbanism.

Endnotes

1   Peter Eisenman, "The Houses of Memory: The Texts of Analogue," editor's introduction to Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 7.

2   Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

3   Georges Bataille, "Architecture," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 20.

4   Kevin Connolly, "Charles Tegart and the Forts that Tower over Israel," BBC, 10 September 2012, online at www.bbc.com/news/magazine-19019949 (accessed 22 December 2016).

5   Dalia Karpel, "Potent Presence," *Ha'Aretz*, 17 June 2010, online at www.haaretz.com/israel-news/potent-presence-1.296813 (accessed 20 November 2016).

6   The panopticon was a concept developed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham. It consisted of a circular building with an observation tower in the center of an open space surrounded by an outer wall. This design would increase security by facilitating more effective surveillance. Occupants of the cells, while invisible to each other, would be readily distinguishable and visible to an official invisibly positioned in the central tower. Michel Foucault famously developed Bentham's concept as a metaphor for modern form of surveillance; see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1977]).

7   Seth J. Frantzman, "Tegart's Shadow," *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 21 October 2011, online at lisa.biu.ac.il/files/lisa/shared/4444.pdf (accessed 27 November 2016).

8   Connolly, "Charles Tegart."

9   Connolly, "Charles Tegart."

10 Gili Merin, "Tegart Forts in Palestine: Adopted and Adapted Monuments of Supervision," *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*, March 2015, online at quaderns.coac.net/en/2015/03/tegart-forts/ (accessed 27 November 2016).

11 "Inside Arafat's Compound of Rubble," *BBC*, 22 September 2002, online at news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1902566.stm (accessed 26 November 2016).

12 Merin, "Tegart Forts in Palestine."

13 Arabic for custody, *wisaya* implied that the Jordanian administration of Palestine was an act of safekeeping, exercised by the Jordanian government until the effects of the 1948 war could be undone.

14 Merin, "Tegart Forts in Palestine."

15 Author interview with Tawfiq Jarar, 16 November 2016.

16 *Muqata'a* (pl. *muqata'at*) is an Arabic term for headquarters or administrative center. *Muqata'at* were mostly built during the British Mandate as Tegart forts and were used both as British government centers and as dwellings for the British administrative staff. Other names such as *saraya* and *'amara* (building) were used for these headquarters in other cities such as Gaza and Hebron.

17 "Inside Arafat's Compound."

18 Weizman, *Hollow Land*.

19 Author interview with M. Z., a former prisoner who was imprisoned in both Ramallah's *muqata'a* and Hebron's *'amara* during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, 18 January 2017.