

# The Kidnapping of 'Abdullah al-Masri Archaeology, Labor, and Power at 'Atlit

Sarah Irving

## Abstract

This article draws on the archives of the British Mandatory administration's Department of Antiquities to consider archaeology not as an increasing body of literature does, as a source of discursive power for the colonial regime, but instead as an employer of working-class Palestinians. Through a close study of the correspondence between the department and its antiquities guards, men employed to look after important sites, protect archaeological finds and government premises, and guide visitors, Irving examines the conditions of ordinary Palestinians employed by the department, highlighting the situation of 'Abdullah al-Masri, an antiquities guard at 'Atlit castle. The author examines the abuses of colonial power that occurred within this relationship, but also the ways in which Palestinian workers at times managed to manipulate their working environments, using a variety of narratives to subvert and push back against exploitative practices, and derive pride from their role in caring for their historical patrimony. As such, this study provides a rare glimpse into the details of working conditions for manual laborers in Mandate Palestine, and how these were affected by the wider political and social situation surrounding them.

## Keywords

'Atlit; archaeology; labor; employment; Department of Antiquities; Mandate Palestine.

On 17 September 1938, ‘Abdullah al-Masri, the resident guard at ‘Atlit Castle, south of Haifa on the Mediterranean coast of Mandate Palestine, reported that two nights earlier he had been kidnapped from his bed by five armed men. According to his letter, written to the regional Inspector of Antiquities, Na‘im Makhoully, they had woken him from his sleep and threatened to kill him if he did not hand over the gun allocated to him by his employers. They then accused him of being a spy for the government and claimed that the gun had been given to him “to kill the rebels when they came to me.” The men tied al-Masri up, taking his gun, license, and ammunition supply of twenty-five shotgun cartridges, and kidnapped him. Twenty-four hours later, with the warning that he would be shot if they heard that he was spying for the government or “the Jews,” he was returned, shaken but unharmed, to the village of Tantura.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, the scholarship of Nadia Abu El Haj, Albert Glock, Amara Thornton and others has started to show the importance of archaeology to multiple aspects of our understanding of Mandate Palestine.<sup>2</sup> Abu El Haj and Glock have highlighted its ideological role in British and Zionist colonial endeavors, while Thornton and others have catalogued the institutions and structures that entwined archaeological research with imperial domination. My own work has also considered the role of Palestinian professional archaeologists in the Mandate antiquities authority.<sup>3</sup> These works deal mostly, however, with the institutional and the elite in Palestinian society and Mandate politics, something that can also be said of, for instance, D.M. Reid and Elliot Colla’s works on Egyptian archaeology. In another way of viewing archaeological labor in colonial settings, Stephen Quirke has tracked the presence of Indigenous and local workers in the Egyptian excavations of W. Flinders Petrie, noting that Petrie’s daybooks and diaries contain important information on who engaged in archaeological labor and the kinds of relationships they had with European bosses, visitors, and officials.<sup>4</sup> Allison Mickel’s combination of archival work with ethnography among present-day excavations also yields valuable insights into the skills and knowledge accumulated by so-called unskilled workers in archaeology, and the ways in which they interact with and are viewed by the professionals employing them.<sup>5</sup>

In most cases, however, the nature of archaeological labor, with its short-term seasons and casual pay, makes it difficult to trace the long-term careers of subaltern workers in archaeology. One exception is Yusif Kana‘an, who worked for the Palestine Exploration Fund for twenty-three years before World War I and part of whose life story I have traced elsewhere through the scattered references to him in the PEF archives.<sup>6</sup> The archives used for this article offer a similarly rare opportunity to follow a single individual over a comparatively *longue durée*. I perhaps step over a disciplinary line from the history of archaeology to a more general social history for an examination of the changing experiences of a so-called unskilled laborer in a colonial setting. The ways in which I interpret and understand the documents which tell a partial story of a decade of ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s life owe as much to broader considerations of mass labor under colonial rule as they do to works in the history of archaeology.<sup>7</sup>

This article therefore takes a different approach, emphasizing the role of

archaeology's embeddedness in the everyday life of Mandate Palestine – not its significance for Western and Israeli scholars living in Palestine or for the growing Palestinian middle classes, including those working at the higher levels of archaeological institutions – but for ordinary, working-class Palestinians. It has been recognized in the historical literature that, at levels below the educated, highly literate, culturally cosmopolitan staff of the Department of Antiquities, the Mandate government's archaeological wing employed hundreds of museum and site guards, manual laborers, delivery staff and other workers, usually unnamed and voiceless, and that the vast majority of these were Palestinian (usually referred to in the files as "Arab").<sup>8</sup> However, the archives of the Mandate Department of Antiquities, partially digitized by the Israel Antiquities Authority,<sup>9</sup> represent a valuable source for social historians as well as those researching the history of archaeology itself. Although fragmented and patchy, these documents include personnel files and other material from the day-to-day workings of the Department of Antiquities, and the letters in them – while mediated by translators and, in the case of letters from manual workers, probably also by paid letter writers – offer rare insights into working conditions for some ordinary Palestinians during the Mandate period.



Figure 1. "Northern views. Athlit [sic]. Rock-hewn moat," 1920–33; a Palestinian man (at left) in the ruins of the Crusader castle at Atlit. Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, online at [www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019693539/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019693539/) (accessed 27 September 2022).

Using the employment files of some of those employees, often dismissed as “unskilled,” I explore some of the ways in which ordinary Palestinians interacted with archaeology as a social institution and how this overlapped with daily concerns such as family and village life, and with the changing dynamics of daily life in Palestine during the Mandate and the Palestinian revolt of the late 1930s. ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s file presents a rare opportunity in this respect: he worked at ‘Atlit for over a decade and its contents reveal details about the experience of Mandate employment for ordinary Palestinians, including questions of sick pay, annual leave, relations with management, and dismissal. Similar records for staff at other archaeological sites, including Sabastiya, Jerusalem, and Khirbat al-Mafjar (Hisham’s Palace) in Jericho, broaden the picture.<sup>10</sup> Using colonial records to reconstruct such experiences has obvious drawbacks: the majority of the documents involved are written by colonial officials, mainly British although occasionally Palestinian. The working-class Palestinians who are the direct subject of this article were unlikely to be able to write; variations in the handwriting on letters from employees suggest that at least sometimes these were written by local scribes, friends, or colleagues. In other cases, the original letters have not been preserved, so that the employees’ words are recorded only in the official translations made for their British managers. In the worst cases, we can only track events via internal notes and memoranda, which eliminate the voices of Palestinian workers completely. Nevertheless, at a temporal distance which makes oral history approaches impossible, and given the rarity of personal records from working-class Palestinians in this period, I argue that colonial records, read against the grain and supplemented and contextualized using a range of other information, still represent valuable sources from which to understand aspects of the lives of usually voiceless members of Mandate Palestinian society.<sup>11</sup>

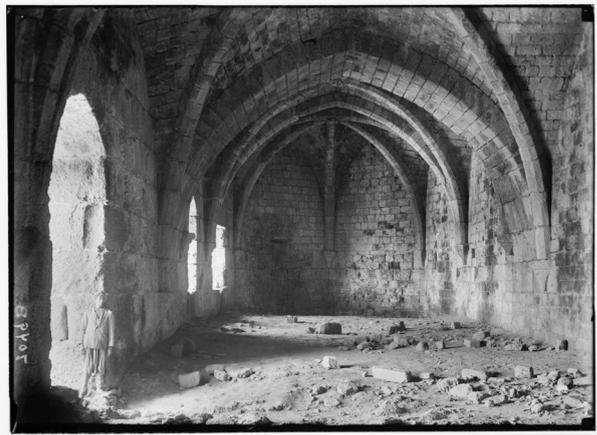


Figure 2. “‘Atlit. Various including excavations. Ruins fr[om] the beach. Buttress wall close to the sea,” 1934–39; note the man in local dress standing in the doorway at left. Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, online at [www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019696491/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019696491/) (accessed 27 September 2022).

## Guarding ‘Atlit

‘Abdullah al-Masri, born in 1900, probably in Tantura, was employed by the Department of Antiquities in December 1930 to work as a resident guard at the Crusader castle of ‘Atlit.<sup>12</sup> The imposing ruins of this thirteenth-century fortress –

known in French as Chastel Pèlerin or Pilgrims Castle – are still prominent on the Mediterranean coast south of Haifa, and today are part of an Israeli military base. During the Mandate period, the Department of Antiquities’ field archaeologist Cedric Norman Johns led excavations of the castle and its surroundings, including a Crusader cemetery, between 1930 and 1934, and authored a guide to the site; the publication became generally available only in 1997, the original print run having been destroyed during the British evacuation from Palestine in 1947–48.<sup>13</sup> Al-Masri was one of the laborers on these excavations, and later took on the job of site guard.



Figure 3. “Northern views. Athlit. Excavating the city wall,” 1920–33; ‘Abdullah al-Masri worked as a laborer on these or similar excavations. Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, online at [www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019706148/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019706148/) (accessed 27 September 2022).

‘Abdullah al-Masri’s job consisted of two main elements: being present on-site around the clock to ensure that the impressive ruins were not damaged and findings from excavations not stolen, and acting as a tour guide to visitors wanting basic information about the site. In terms of the former, al-Masri generally lived on-site, providing twenty-four-hour cover for the important archaeological site, warding off people who might want to take objects from the buildings or dig for finds to sell in Palestine’s substantial illicit antiquities trade. The Department of Antiquities also owned a house on the ‘Athlit site for the director to live in during excavations and for

storing valuable tools and finds during the low season, and al-Masri was also tasked with securing and maintaining this. Although his job title was guard, al-Masri also spent his days at ‘Atlit repairing parts of the buildings, weeding and cutting the grass, and painting and whitewashing walls; he was also “an expert pot-mender,” helping to reconstruct bowls and jars from the potsherds unearthed on the excavations, apparently as a voluntary extra.<sup>14</sup> Letters to and from other antiquities guards across Palestine suggest that many of these men applied for their jobs because they represented steady wages and the respectability of government employment; correspondence from Jericho suggests that for some it was seen as a route into the Mandate police force. Others, though, and ‘Abdullah al-Masri seems to have been one of these, developed a genuine interest in the archaeology itself, developing skills and knowledge on the job, as we see in the case of his expertise in reconstructing ancient ceramics.

In terms of the latter part of this job – acting as some form of tour guide – the content of al-Masri’s letters suggest that he had probably not acquired an in-depth knowledge of the archaeological background and history of ‘Atlit, but he certainly possessed an outline understanding of the castle and, coming from a nearby village and as a former laborer on the excavations there, he presumably had local knowledge or stories and could describe the progress of and finds from earlier digs. It is not clear from the archive whether ‘Abdullah al-Masri could write in Arabic or English and what languages he spoke, but the many interactions he describes over the ten-year period of the correspondence suggest that as well as his native Arabic he must have commanded some English and perhaps even a little Hebrew. The relative accessibility of ‘Atlit, and its impressive appearance, made it a popular destination for British soldiers and other Mandate visitors, so Saturdays and Sundays could be busy for al-Masri, especially around public holidays; the visitors were not always interested in the archaeology so much as duck-shooting on the shore and marshes around the castle.

Although the correspondence between al-Masri and the department mainly concerns bureaucratic and everyday concerns, his letters do convey a sense of pride in his work of preserving and presenting the antiquities at ‘Atlit – something found in the work of Yusif Kana’an and other indigenous archaeological workers without formal training.<sup>15</sup> As Ilana Feldman’s interviews with former Mandate employees show, many clearly differentiated between their roles in government as service to their compatriots, and the government as an institution or its policies on Zionist immigration or Arab rights.<sup>16</sup> Al-Masri may not have been well-educated, but his voluntary acquisition and use of skills specific to an archaeological job, combined with the tone of his letters, challenge the assumption that an interest in history and archaeology are confined to the educated middle classes or foreign professionals, or that manual workers do not care about or take pride in their labor.

Despite the distortions, biases, and lacunae in the colonial archive, mentioned above, the length of ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s staff record with the department gives us the opportunity to witness the tensions and conflicts of the job and of a long-term manual worker’s relationship with a government department. In the earlier years of his employment the documents are few, reflecting what seems to have been a reasonably

amicable working relationship. He was absent on paid sick leave for around a fortnight in 1932, having been admitted to the isolation ward of the Government Hospital in Haifa with “pyrexia” – a general term for a high fever or pneumonia, as a medical certificate from the Government Hospital states. The cause is not specified on any of the medical certificates entered in the file. He also took several days off as paid holiday after his hospital discharge, perhaps to recuperate. These were deducted from al-Masri’s annual holiday entitlement, which in most years seems to have been seven days of personal leave plus a total of around two weeks of official holidays, made up of Islamic religious feasts and government administrative holidays. It seems also to have been normal for the family, including the growing number of children, to be allotted free rail passes by the Mandate administration in order to travel within Palestine. Until around 1938, ‘Abdullah al-Masri usually combined all of his leave into a single bloc in the summer, something which was to become a source of tension in his relationship with the Department of Antiquities.

In most years, al-Masri requested an increase in his monthly pay of four Egyptian pounds due to the financial pressures of a growing family, and to account for the inflation that affected Mandate Palestine.<sup>17</sup> These requests were supported by Johns, the department’s field archaeologist in charge of the ‘Atlit excavations, who cited the help al-Masri provided him on the dig. In 1933, al-Masri’s pay was increased to four Palestinian pounds and 250 mils per month, and in 1934 to five Palestinian pounds per month, but after this his requests were routinely turned down by the antiquities headquarters in Jerusalem. This was not a situation which ‘Abdullah al-Masri passively accepted; in 1937 he wrote to the head of his department pointing out, “I have had no increments since 1934, and I wonder why I do not get yearly increment as is the Govt Regulation.”<sup>18</sup> When his claim, based on an assertion of his honesty and long service and a list of the many tasks he routinely performed, was ignored, al-Masri turned to the Mandate administration’s own rules to back up his demands. When this was unsuccessful, it seems that he may have taken matters into his own hands, as this is the point in his personnel file where complaints of his absence from the site at ‘Atlit start to crop up on an increasingly regular basis.

By comparison, in 1933 the cook at the American Colony in Jerusalem was paid ten Palestinian pounds, the woman who did the laundry nine pounds 500 mils, and the nightwatchman – the job perhaps most comparable to al-Masri’s – seven pounds per month.<sup>19</sup> Even allowing for the likely lower cost of living in a small village and the home-grown produce supplementing the family’s diet, al-Masri’s pay was far from generous. As with other working-class Arab staff of the British Mandate, the administration’s wage policy depended on men such as al-Masri and his colleague ‘Ata Milhim at Wadi al-Mughara feeding themselves and their families through subsistence farming.<sup>20</sup> The February 1935 resignation of Hamdan Hassan Farah, antiquities guard at Khirbat al-Mafjar (Hisham’s Palace) in Jericho, because “I am too busy with my individual work,” suggests that antiquities staff often needed multiple jobs in order to get by.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, according to the personnel files of various guards in Jericho, pay was often even lower than al-Masri’s, at two and a half or three Palestinian pounds per

month, albeit with an additional cost-of-living allowance in some cases.

A further informative case is that of Moshe Ostrower, the guard at the antiquities museum in Acre (‘Akka) between 1927 and 1930. He was also the gardener at the site and designed and maintained the formal grounds, apparently drawing on existing abilities which, after he left government employment, he used to establish and run a plant nursery for at least three decades.<sup>22</sup> His role was considered to be skilled, although it is not clear whether tasks such as landscape design and gardening were specified as part of the job or added when a skilled employee was engaged; al-Masri’s role was deemed unskilled. Ostrower was initially paid eight Palestinian pounds per month, which was increased to ten – more than double al-Masri’s salary, even before inflation is taken into account. Given the racialized ideas about Jews and Arabs embedded in British colonial thinking about Palestine, it seems probable that the initial difference in pay was at least partly based on this, as was common in many sectors at the time;<sup>23</sup> other factors may also have entered the equation, such as al-Masri’s plot of agricultural land. The increase in Ostrower’s pay, however, appears to have come about due to an appeal made by him to the high commissioner, over the heads of his managers at the Department of Antiquities, as shown by a letter from the acting director of the Department of Antiquities to the central government offices, which bases the new salary on that advised by the Department of Agriculture as correct for a “highly skilled gardener.”<sup>24</sup>

## Rising Tensions

In the late 1930s, however, with the social disruption of the Palestinian revolt, the rising Jewish population as refugees fled Hitler’s Germany, and perhaps growing pressures on an income that was declining in real terms while he had to support a wife and a number of children, ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s relations with his employers started to decline. Certainly, the environment in which he worked must have become increasingly stressful. ‘Atlit’s location on the coastal plain south of Haifa saw major social and economic changes during the Mandate period. There had been a Zionist Organization experimental agriculture station at ‘Atlit since 1910,<sup>25</sup> but after World War I the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association sponsored a colony which grew rapidly, soon overshadowing the existing Arab villages.<sup>26</sup> The surrounding marshes were drained and a large salt production company set up under concessions from the Mandate government, the terms of which were challenged in legal and community conflicts during the 1930s and 1940s despite administration claims that their lease of state land would protect the rights of existing residents.<sup>27</sup> These changes also led to a proletarianization of some villages and the migration of Palestinians from the rural interior in search of work at ‘Atlit quarry, where the racialized perceptions of the day saw Palestinian workers allocated unskilled and heavy labor.<sup>28</sup> As a result of British concepts of Arabs and their society, Palestinians working for the quarries, operated by the Mandate government, were paid less than the administration’s own stated minimum wage or living wage levels.<sup>29</sup> In the late 1930s, the British also established a

large prison camp near ‘Atlit, initially holding Palestinian insurgents from the country-wide revolt (1936–39) and later incarcerating illegal Jewish immigrants. In later years the camp was used by the State of Israel to hold Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners.<sup>30</sup>

Given these rapid changes in the society, economy, population and environment of the coastal plain south of Haifa, particularly around ‘Atlit with combined militarization and industrialization, it is not, perhaps, surprising to find that the area saw many incidents during the 1936–39 Palestinian revolt. These ranged from small-scale events such as the brief kidnapping of ‘Abdullah al-Masri with which I began this article, to the massive raid which the uprising commander Yusuf Abu Durra launched against the British internment camp in July 1937, when two hundred Palestinian fighters attacked with the aim of releasing their fellow insurgents, and fought the guards and police for three hours.<sup>31</sup>

This, then, was the context in which ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s relations with his employers at the British Mandate Department of Antiquities went into decline. As noted above, by 1937 he was growing increasingly dissatisfied with his wages, something visible in the frustrated tone of letters to his employers. Then, in January 1938, al-Masri’s daily routine at ‘Atlit castle and archaeological excavation intersected with a murder case, when the lawyer for Mordechai Schwarcz came to the site as part of the investigation he was mounting for his client’s defense. Schwarcz, a Czechoslovakia-born Jewish migrant to Palestine, had joined the Palestine Police Force and on the night of 1 September 1937, when he and a fellow officer, Mustafa Khoury, were sharing a tent in the high commissioner’s summer encampment, Schwarcz shot the sleeping Khoury dead.<sup>32</sup> Schwarcz’s lawyer had apparently heard that al-Masri had been burgled at the site the previous year and wanted him to testify at the trial, presumably to build a case that robbers were responsible for the murder. In such a politically charged environment, however, al-Masri wanted to avoid the public exposure of giving evidence. The conversation as al-Masri reports it sounds profoundly demeaning: the lawyer is quoted as telling him, “I shall ask your Director to permit you to attend the Court and to tell all what happened to you.” But al-Masri sought to use the notion that he could not leave ‘Atlit without his employer’s permission to avoid appearing as a witness in court.<sup>33</sup> In February 1940, he used the same tactic, deploying a subaltern status in order to evade being caught up in the violence of the times, when one of his relatives, who had been involved in the armed revolt, surrendered himself to the superintendent of police in Haifa. The Haifa authorities tried to ensure that al-Masri’s relation would not return to the insurgency by imposing a collective financial guarantee of the huge sum of two thousand Palestinian pounds onto the extended family, and al-Masri asked the Director of Antiquities, Robert Hamilton, to “send me a letter so that his relatives and the people could see that I am prohibited to guarantee.”<sup>34</sup> In this instance, Hamilton refused, but in April 1938 he did respond rapidly to al-Masri’s request for a letter to show to soldiers and police when they came to Tantura, certifying that he was a government employee and that his house was exempt from searches.

In 1938, however, the most intensive year of the Palestinian revolt, the situation around ‘Atlit became less and less bearable for ‘Abdullah al-Masri and his family. In July, he wrote to the Department of Antiquities asking to be transferred to Jerusalem, citing his health, but this could also be read as a desire to leave an insecure environment. The pass system, under which a Palestinian such as al-Masri was not permitted even to travel to Haifa to buy basic goods, appears in letters to his employers asking for a government ID card and permission to use the local trains. The request for a transfer was refused, but he did receive his identity card and travel pass.<sup>35</sup> On another occasion, an urgent request from ‘Atlit – the contents of which are lost – could not be answered because the telegraph lines had been cut, and messages had to be sent via the prison camp telephones.

## **Antiquities under Fire**

At the end of August 1938, al-Masri again wrote to Hamilton, asking that the guard from Wadi al-Mughara be allowed to come and stay at ‘Atlit during the night, because he felt himself to be “in danger from the Jews and armed persons who might attack the place and destroy the equipment in my custody.”<sup>36</sup> He placed a stress on the fact that there was no moveable department property at Wadi al-Mughara, so nothing to guard during the night. The request was sent to Na‘im Makhoully, the regional antiquities inspector, who was on leave when Hamilton replied to al-Masri on 6 September. Despite the fact that guarding antiquities in Mandate Palestine was often a dangerous job, and it was not unusual for guards to run the risk of physical violence and even death, al-Masri’s important request was stalled by Makhoully’s holiday. Events overtook the proposed rearrangement of guarding duties: on 15 September, when al-Masri was staying with his family in Tantura, the house was invaded by apparent fighters in the Palestinian revolt who accused al-Masri of being a British agent and of being armed to kill them if they approached ‘Atlit:

Five armed men entered the house and said hand us the gun or you shall die. They told me that they know that I am a spy for the Government and that the gun was given to me to kill the rebels when they come to me. I told them that this was not true. They took the gun, the license and 25 bullets; then they tied me and took me with them. The second night they returned me to the village (Tantura) and swore to shoot me if they hear that I spy for the Government or the Jews. I reported the incident to the police at ‘Atlit.<sup>37</sup>

The handwritten comments of the British officials at the head of the antiquities department on the typed translation of al-Masri’s report are revealing. Hamilton’s response, ignoring the fact that one of his employees had been robbed, kidnapped, and threatened with murder, was to note that he had been at Tantura, not at his post at ‘Atlit, when the crime occurred. Cedric Johns, the field archaeologist with whom al-Masri had worked for many years at ‘Atlit, was more sympathetic and probably better

informed about the conditions of life in al-Masri's village: he pointed out that al-Masri had not been paid his previous month's salary and was probably in Tantura to arrange to buy food on credit for his family.

The Department of Antiquities' official reaction focused almost entirely on its archaeological site and property. Hamilton instructed Na'im Makhouly to go to 'Atlit to "let me have a report on the facts and a statement of any damage that may have been done at our property."<sup>38</sup> He also told Makhouly to "tactfully" extract from al-Masri a sense of whether he thought he would be safe if he returned to his post at 'Atlit, and whether the guards at "Wadi Mugharah and Jebel Kafzeh" felt secure. Makhouly was to assess whether department property needed to be removed from 'Atlit, but was not to actively suggest the idea to al-Masri. The ensuing correspondence – with al-Masri insisting that he felt safe at 'Atlit, 'Ata Milhim from Wadi Mughara refusing to sleep there because it would leave his own young family alone at night, and the department mostly worried about how to transport its property to Jerusalem – highlights the casual attitude of Department of Antiquities officers towards their working-class staff. Makhouly reported that al-Masri was mainly concerned about the safety of department property and that he was keen to stay at 'Atlit, but it is no stretch of the imagination to think that – given the repeated denials of his requests for a pay rise or a transfer – that al-Masri feared that if 'Atlit no longer needed to be guarded, he would be out of a job and that his employers would not hurry to find him a new position.

As noted above, the physical danger to al-Masri and the threat to the historical remains at 'Atlit were not an isolated incident for the Department of Antiquities. In 1929, during the Buraq Uprising, the guard at the Crusader site in 'Akka, Moshe Ostrower, had missed work when he and his family were trapped in Haifa after the trains were halted due to riots in the town. A few months later, having been reported by Makhouly as absent from his post and as having allowed the gardens and equipment to deteriorate, he wrote to the Director of Antiquities stating that he had received a letter threatening himself and his family with death if he remained in 'Akka, and asking if he could move to Haifa and travel daily to work.<sup>39</sup> The local police denied that there was any danger and suggested that Ostrower was manufacturing an excuse to move to Haifa. The department refused, and after further disagreements over the safety of his position, and with the transfer of the museum premises to the police and prison officials, Ostrower was fired. Makhouly directly related Ostrower's dissatisfaction with his job to the political situation, remarking that he "has become, since the recent disturbances, absolutely negligent in his duties and careless of the government work put into his hands."<sup>40</sup> As in al-Masri's case, however, there was little sympathy shown by senior staff at the Department of Antiquities.

Another detail highlighted by the kidnap of 'Abdullah al-Masri described above is the theft of the department's gun and ammunition – ownership of which may have made him an especially tempting target for the rebels. The fact that al-Masri was allocated and accustomed to carry a firearm makes clear that the job of an antiquities guard was viewed as dangerous. At least one of the guards in Jericho – Mufleh Abdul Ghani at Khirbat al-Mafjar – was also granted a gun from government stocks

(confiscated from the Palestinian population) “as the place he guards is a lonely one and he is troubled by a hyena at nights.”<sup>41</sup> According to the Antiquities Ordinance of 1935, even ordinary guards and attendants at the Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem had power of arrest over anyone suspected of trying to steal or damage objects on display, which could conceivably have involved violence from someone resisting arrest. Such examples make it clear that the lowest paid and least valued of the Department of Antiquities staff were expected to run considerable personal risk.

## Colonial Attitudes

After the kidnapping incident, ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s working conditions at ‘Atlit seem to have calmed down for a while, although in January 1939 he again asked for a transfer to Jerusalem. This time, however, he wrote directly to Johns, the field archaeologist, perhaps hoping that his former excavation boss at ‘Atlit might make a direct request for him as an assistant in the capital and enable him to leave “a place which is like a prison.”<sup>42</sup> While this plea was unsuccessful, awareness of his dissatisfaction must have become more widely known, as he was given permission to spend Thursday nights at home in Tantura, with ‘Ata Milhim from Wadi al-Mughara guarding ‘Atlit (despite the latter’s reluctance because his own family would be left alone). Makhouly backed the idea, telling Hamilton that “[i]n my opinion the suggestion is reasonable given that the guard is unable to bring his family from Tantura where his children attend the school.”<sup>43</sup> Milhim complained about the arrangement on Makhouly’s next set of rounds to sites in the area, and al-Masri was instead told to find a trustworthy person from the village at ‘Atlit and the department would pay him.

Unhappy at ‘Atlit and with no pay rise for several years, ‘Abdullah al-Masri’s relationship with his employers declined further over the next year. In a stroke of bad luck for him, at the beginning of November 1939, he went home to Tantura between 3:00 and 4:00 PM on an evening when he did not have permission to be absent. Ramadan fell in October and November that year and al-Masri had apparently become accustomed to breaking his fast with his family and returning to ‘Atlit early the next morning. But not long after he left, the high commissioner made a surprise visit to the castle and, finding no one looking after the Department of Antiquities house or present to guide them, his aide reported the fact to headquarters. This was a severe loss of face for the Department of Antiquities, especially given that the aide had somehow – presumably through poor translation from Arabic – got the impression that al-Masri had been absent for a fortnight. An acting director was heading the department at the time and, presumably concerned to perform well during his boss’s absence, he overreacted. Makhouly’s more accurate report of events smoothed things over, and al-Masri was docked one day’s pay and ten days of the next year’s holiday.

Although this brief clash was resolved, al-Masri was clearly unhappy at work and responded with what the anthropologist James C. Scott dubbed “weapons of the weak” – the everyday acts of non-compliance and disruption that often form a subtle kind of subaltern resistance.<sup>44</sup> While he had previously put up with the inefficient

and inconvenient system under which he and ‘Ata Milhim were paid, now he started to make complaints. An apparent misunderstanding over leave allowances led to an exchange of letters which was ill-tempered on both sides. Then al-Masri’s wife lost a baby – it is not clear whether this refers to a miscarriage or the death of a young infant – and he asked for, and was granted, extra leave to look after her. But his habit of combining all of his holidays into one long period came to the notice of the director, who questioned this. Explanations from Johns suggest that the practice had come about in the early years of al-Masri’s employment, when the department’s excavations at ‘Atlit still took place every summer. For al-Masri to leave for several weeks while Johns was on-site to head the dig made sense, because no replacement needed to be hired, but after the excavations halted because of the 1936–39 revolt, the system no longer worked and a lack of institutional memory meant that Hamilton (as usual assuming the worst) thought that al-Masri was making unreasonable demands. Relations between ‘Atlit and Jerusalem thus deteriorated further. The situation was exacerbated by a figure dubbed as “Najib Effendi,” apparently an employee of the Department of Antiquities and responsible for writing the Arabic versions of letters sent by Hamilton. Al-Masri had complained about him as early as 1934, alleging that Najib wanted to edge him out of his job at ‘Atlit so that it could be given to Najib’s brother Mahfuz. Al-Masri had spent his first five or six years in the job in close and regular cooperation with the field archaeologist Cedric Johns, and the effect of linguistic and physical distance once excavations halted at ‘Atlit was taking its toll on communications: “If Najib Effendi talks like that to me and I am unable [to speak that way] to him, to whom shall I report?” al-Masri begged of Johns in 1940.<sup>45</sup>

Al-Masri then came down with backache, preventing him from doing much of his job, particularly walking around the site, guiding visitors, and carrying out repairs. Between July and November 1940 a series of letters and medical certificates went back and forth between al-Masri, Makhoully and Hamilton. The latter was clearly skeptical, although Makhoully reported that the government doctor had found that the guard had a “serious case of trouble in his spinal column” and a later certificate mentions lumbago.<sup>46</sup> Al-Masri also asked if he might be permitted time off to go to al-Hamma, a village in the Yarmuk valley, destroyed between 1948 and 1950 but in the 1930s and 1940s popular with Palestinians, who went to the resort established by a Lebanese businessman, Sulayman Nasif, for the hot mineral springs and their healing properties.<sup>47</sup> Al-Hamma was on the railway connecting Haifa to the Hijaz line, so al-Masri also asked for railway passes to travel there when his requests were finally backed up by a medical certificate prescribing five days at the baths as treatment.

Mixed in with the dates of the Muslim feast, of al-Masri’s trip to al-Hamma, and of a call by the Mandate administration’s Land Settlement officer specifying that the villagers of Tantura had to be on their land on a specific date, there seems at the end of 1940 and the first weeks of 1941 to have been several occasions on which Makhoully visited ‘Atlit and did not find the guard there. Given existing tensions, this was bound to cause problems. Feelings ran even higher when al-Masri was docked two days’ pay for one of his absences and ‘Ata Milhim, who had been with him and

thus also away from his post, was not punished. In the ensuing correspondence, al-Masri never received a clear reason why he had been picked out for harsh measures, and he vehemently asserted his innocence, pointing out that both he and Milhim had thought that they were due to collect their wages in Haifa (a system they had already protested was troublesome) because they had confused the dates and lengths of the British administrative months. In defending himself, al-Masri had no qualms about telling the director of his department that his facts were “quite incorrect,” but to no avail.<sup>48</sup> By this point Na‘im Makhoul, the regional Inspector of Antiquities and al-Masri’s first line of departmental contact, had decided that he had had enough of this employee. “In my opinion, unless some arrangement of the sort will be made, Abdallah who is head of a compound, a wife and several children, will continue to absent himself from his post,” he wrote in a November 1940 letter to Hamilton, and the following month: “As a matter of fact I feel very sorry for the great change in the conduct of Abdallah so that he became nearly a man of no discipline.”<sup>49</sup> Finally, in February 1941, Makhoul wrote again that, “Abdallah is a man of no principle and does not like to be governed by rules; instructions or orders from his chiefs are of no value to him. In a word I must say that I do not like Abdallah, owing to the trouble he is making to me, to work under me any more.”<sup>50</sup>

Na‘im Makhoul and the department were still showing some flexibility in January and February 1941, when they discussed hiring a man from ‘Atlit to cover al-Masri’s nights in Tantura. But any semblance of organization was breaking down. Annoyed with Makhoul, al-Masri was now trying to bypass the official hierarchy, writing directly to Johns and further irritating the director, Hamilton. He then tried to sort things out in person by visiting Makhoul’s office in Nazareth, but the latter was not in town and the incident further added to al-Masri’s tally of unapproved absences. On 14 March, Hamilton finally wrote al-Masri a few terse lines, giving him a month’s notice to quit.

## Situations Vacant

There was not, however, to be a clean break; in fact al-Masri continued to guard ‘Atlit until well into the summer of 1941. On hearing that he was to be replaced, there were two distinct reactions from the residents of ‘Atlit itself. First, they asserted the village’s right to be involved in picking the new guard, since they did not want a stranger living among them; ideally, they believed, the new appointee should be from ‘Atlit and that they had a moral right to this. This argument seems to have been a reaction to the news that a man whose name is given as Kamil Ahmad Zandik (al-Zandiq), was to be offered the job. Zandik, a resident of Tayba, near Tulkarm, was married to a woman from ‘Atlit, which accounts for the fact that this news reached the village within days, possibly before Zandik had even been interviewed for the post by Makhoul. He had been enthusiastically recommended by the former governor of the prison at ‘Akka, who had employed him as a gardener for some years. According to a letter signed by one Hassan Ahmad al-Awad and claiming to be from all residents of the village, “He

was imprisoned for 15 years and we do not trust him on our lives lest one day he might beat or kill one of the villagers, since his mean characters are used to such mischiefs.<sup>51</sup> We kindly beg you not to send him to our village as we all disagree to his appointment.”<sup>52</sup>

The mukhtar of ‘Atlit reiterated this when Makhouly visited in mid-April. Another letter, from Muhammad Ahmed Awad of ‘Atlit, objected to the appointment of “Abdul Karim al-Teebi of al-Taybeh village, Tul Karm,” seemingly referring to the same man. It also claims that there would “be troubles and great corruption in the village if he comes because he will seize the opportunity through this job. All the inhabitants of the village object and oppose the acceptance of this person.”<sup>53</sup> The authority of this second letter objecting to Zandik’s appointment was undermined when a missive arrived in Jerusalem from Mordechai Surdin, director

of the Palestine Salt Company’s operations at ‘Atlit, recommending “Mr Mohamed Ahmed el Awad of ‘Atlit – Islam Village [sic]” for the job.<sup>54</sup> That Awad’s letter gave Surdin as an address for replies highlights the intertwining of this major Zionist enterprise in the daily life of the villagers.<sup>55</sup>

Hassan al-Awad’s letter went on to say that the villagers believed “that we have the right in the case more than a stranger,” but the Department of Antiquities did not agree. ‘Ata Milhim, the guard from Wadi al-Mughara, was suggested as an acceptable compromise.<sup>56</sup> In the weeks that followed, recommendations also arrived for an ‘Atlit man called Mahmud Yasin, who told Makhouly that he had worked for Johns and (incorrectly) claimed that the latter would give him a glowing reference. A Mahmud Muhammad al-Husayn, again from ‘Atlit, also wrote to apply, although Johns noted that he had been employed several years earlier on the excavations and had been



Figure 4. “Northern views. Athlit. Salt works. The pier and pipes for pumping sea water,” 1920–33. Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, online at [loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019706149/](https://loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/2019706149/) (accessed 27 September 2022).

dismissed from that role. Despite the comparatively poor pay, the competition for this role highlights the value attached to steady work for an official employer, both for the individual's job security and the village as a marker of its authority over the local area and relationship to the governing authorities.

Possibly as a result of the controversy over Zandik, some villagers backed al-Masri himself, perhaps because he was well-known to them and occasionally passed casual work to men from the village. This support came in an undated statement in the name of "the Arab inhabitants of 'Atlit," stating that al-Masri was always to be found at his post except for a brief period every five or six days when he went to Tantura to check on his family's food supplies, and that information to the contrary came from a "treacherous enemy." The document, ending with the assertion that al-Masri was "faithful, true and of good character," was signed by fifteen men, including the mukhtar, mainly using thumbprints. A short addendum reiterating that al-Masri was always to be found "at his place of business" was signed by "police No. 667, 'Atlit" on behalf of the constables at the 'Atlit police station.<sup>57</sup> The competition became yet more acrimonious when al-Masri wrote to Johns and Hamilton to say that he was willing to take a pay cut in order to keep his job, and that Muhammad al-Awad (also named Muhammad al-Jazury) had been sentenced four years previously for illegally digging antiquities at 'Atlit – which perhaps explains why al-Masri had enemies in the village.

At this point, having ruled out Zandik due to local opposition and Mahmud Yasin because of his bad reference from Johns,<sup>58</sup> the Department of Antiquities turned again to 'Ata Milhim, who at least had some support from the residents of 'Atlit and was a known quantity to Hamilton and Johns. Given his proximity, and the fact that he was accustomed to filling in at 'Atlit, it is not clear why it took some months for Milhim to be confirmed in the post, with al-Masri apparently remaining until July or August of 1941. The latter's certificate of service, signed by Hamilton, is dated 29 August and notes that he was "generally keen and active. Latterly became somewhat refractory when duty and private convenience conflicted."<sup>59</sup> In September, however, al-Masri made a somewhat pathetic journey to Jerusalem – something he could probably ill afford, under the circumstances – to beg Johns to intercede with Hamilton and ask for his reinstatement.<sup>60</sup> The bullish insistence on his innocence and martyred willingness to quit his job, abundant in previous letters, are gone. Instead he asks for forgiveness, saying that he will take his children out of the school at Tantura and move to 'Atlit, and is willing to work for less money. He also mentions making a similar trip to Nazareth to plead for Makhouly's support. Hamilton replied that Milhim had already taken up the position and that perhaps, if excavations recommenced at 'Atlit, al-Masri could find work then, a message which infuriated the recipient. His final communication pointed out that as a man in his forties with back trouble he was incapable of working as a laborer; he accused Milhim of being less competent than him and made oblique comments which Hamilton took to be a threat, while also demanding a "gratuity" or closing payment in recognition of his long service, "to which I am entitled."<sup>61</sup>

And here, 'Abdullah al-Masri disappears from the colonial record, or at least from

the personnel files of the British Mandate administration's Department of Antiquities. He may have gone on to find casual work, or he and his family may have had to rely on their small piece of land. In 1948, as has been well documented, his village of Tantura was the scene of a massacre by the Alexandroni Brigade of the Haganah. Among the eyewitness testimonies published by researchers who interviewed residents of Tantura are a number by people named Masri, including Mustafa al-Masri, Amina al-Masri (Umm Mustafa), 'Izz al-Din al-Masri, and Tamam al-Masri (Umm Sulayman). Several others of the name are mentioned as among the dead that day, including Mustafa's father and twelve other members of his family, and brothers Sulayman and Ahmad al-Masri.<sup>62</sup> Given a population of around 1,500 people at the time of the Nakba, it seems likely that some of these were part of 'Abdullah's extended family, if not more closely related to him. Was he killed in May 1948? Did he live out his days as a refugee in Yarmuk camp or in Damascus, like other Masris from Tantura? As mentioned at the start of this article, 'Abdullah al-Masri appears in the historical record only when his life intersects with the activities of the British Mandate authorities; otherwise he, like many ordinary Palestinians, could be found only in oral histories and family memories which are often now lost. But this account of the decade of his life spent working for the Department of Antiquities does permit a glimpse into how many working-class Palestinians existed day-to-day in this period.

## Conclusion

This article, drawing intensively on the correspondence between Palestinian antiquities guards working for the British Mandate Department of Antiquities in Palestine and the men who employed them, highlights the charged social history of archaeology. The existing literature has focused on the narratives and images derived from archaeology and ancient history in Palestine and how these have perpetuated particular visions of the region's past. As such, it has tended to concentrate on the activities and discourses of the colonial occupiers of Palestine and how they used ideas of the past to claim land and legitimacy. This article, however, has sought to consider archaeology as a site of labor, and thus how it was experienced by the lowest-paid and least-valued of the Department of Antiquities staff, an overwhelming proportion of whom were Palestinian Arabs. As the personnel files of these men show, they did a hard job, sometimes dangerous and frightening, with long hours and little respect from their employers. Nevertheless, these archives also reveal glimpses of the varying reasons they might have had for wanting these positions, ranging from the comparative security and longevity of a government post to a genuine interest and pride in the role of caring for and helping to present and display their material heritage.

This approach also highlights the ways in which archaeology was not just a sphere of elite academic discourses *about* Palestine, happening at a distance from the place and people. It was also an everyday practice taking place *in* Palestine, involving ordinary workers and the communities in which they lived and who, while usually silenced by colonial archives and histories, can occasionally, briefly, be heard. Archaeology was

a provider of jobs, sometimes sought-after and valued not only by the individuals in them but also by the communities in which excavations and antiquities sites were located, and for reasons as much to do with control over community space and access to state resources as with basic issues of pay and employment. As we find in the documents presented here, antiquities guards were men with families, land, legal responsibilities, political views, and career paths before and after their jobs with the department. All of these things affected their encounters with archaeology and the scholars who saw themselves as in charge of it. Men like ‘Abdullah al-Masri may have been exploited by the Mandate administration and their personal safety treated negligently, but they were also intermediaries or middlemen, viewed by the rebels of the 1930s as functionaries of the British administration and thus subjected to threats and kidnapping, at worst collaborating with and at best benefiting from the colonial regime. They were social actors in a changing setting of which colonial archaeologists were only a part, and their experiences offer valuable insights into the relationship between working-class Palestinians and the British occupiers of their land and history.

*Sarah Irving is lecturer at Staffordshire University, UK, researching a social history of the 1927 Jericho earthquake, and editor of the journal Contemporary Levant, published by the Council for British Research in the Levant.*

#### Endnotes

- 1 Letter ‘Abdullah al-Masri to Na‘im Makhoul, 17 September 1938. All citations of original letters involving al-Masri and the Department of Antiquities were drawn from the online archive of the Israel Antiquities Authority, where documents present in the Palestine Archaeological Museum (now the Rockefeller Museum) fell into Israeli hands with the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem. This online archive, which has huge potential for historians of both the archaeology of Mandate Palestine and social and labor issues in this period, is not easy to use: the documents have been scanned only as images, with no text recognition, and no consistent naming or file numbering system, and an erratic search facility. The documents referred to in this article can be found mainly in the folder “Atlit Castle: Guard ‘Abdullah El Masri,” online at (iaa-archives.org.il) [bit.ly/3TvD1vN](http://bit.ly/3TvD1vN) (accessed 18 September 2022), and other folders under the Site Headings, Athlit, online at (iaa-archives.org.il) [bit.ly/3s8OWUW](http://bit.ly/3s8OWUW) (accessed 18 September 2022), and Atlit, online at (iaa-archives.org.il) [bit.ly/3eNXGfT](http://bit.ly/3eNXGfT) (accessed 18 September 2022).
- 2 See Nadia Abu El Haj, “Producing (Arti) Facts: Archaeology and Power during the British Mandate of Palestine,” *Israel Studies* 7, no. 2 (2002): 33–61; Amara Thornton, “Tents, Tours, and Treks: Archaeologists, Antiquities Services, and Tourism in Mandate Palestine and Transjordan,” *Public Archaeology* 11, no. 4 (2013): 195–216; Amara Thornton, “Archaeologists-in-Training: Students of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem,” *Journal of Open Archaeology Data* (2012), online at (openarchaeologydata.metajnl.com) [bit.ly/3Ser3px](http://bit.ly/3Ser3px) (accessed 18 September 2022); Albert Glock, Lois Glock, and Nancy Lapp, “Archaeology,” in *Encyclopedia of the Palestinians*, ed. Philip Mattar (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 71–80; and Albert Glock, “Archaeology as Cultural Survival: The Future of the Palestinian Past,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no 3 (Spring 1994): 70–84.
- 3 See Sarah Irving, “Palestinian Christians in the Mandate Department of Antiquities: History and Archaeology in a Colonial Space,” in *European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine, 1918–1948*, ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary

- Zanariri (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 162–69; “‘A Young Man of Promise’: Finding a Place for Stephan Hanna Stephan in the History of Mandate Palestine,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 73 (2018): 42–62; and “Archaeological Entanglements: Palestinian Refugee Archaeologists in Cyprus, Libya and Jordan,” in *Empire and Excavation: Critical Perspectives on Archaeology in British-period Cyprus, 1878–1960*, ed. T. Kiely, A. Reeve and L. Crewe (Leiden: Sidestone Press, forthcoming 2023).
- 4 Stephen Quirke, *Hidden Hands: Egyptian Workforces in Petrie Excavation Archives, 1880–1924* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).
  - 5 Allison Mickel, *Why Those Who Shovel Are Silent: A History of Local Archaeological Knowledge and Labor* (Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2021).
  - 6 Sarah Irving, “A Tale of Two Yusifs: Recovering Arab Agency in Palestine Exploration Fund Excavations 1890–1924,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 149, no. 3 (2017): 223–36.
  - 7 Useful examples include the work of Arun Kumar on working classes in colonial India, see “Letters of the Labouring Poor: Letter Writing in Colonial India,” *Past & Present* 246, no. 1 (2020): 149–190; “Skilling and Its Histories: Labour Market and the Making of Skilled Workers in Colonial India (1880–1910),” *Journal of South Asian Development* 13, no. 3 (2018): 1–23; and of Elizabeth Thompson on mass struggles over the dynamics of citizenship, gender, and class in Mandatory Syria and Lebanon, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
  - 8 Glock, Glock, and Lapp, “Archaeology”; Irving, “Palestinian Christians in the Mandate.”
  - 9 See endnote 1.
  - 10 As mentioned in endnote 1, the majority of these files, including all personnel folders cited, are available online, although as image files and thus difficult to search on the website of the Israel Antiquities Authority (online at [www.iaa-archives.org.il/](http://www.iaa-archives.org.il/)). These were apparently left at the Palestine Archaeological Museum when Jordanian troops withdrew during the 1967 Israeli invasion of the West Bank. A small number of other Mandate documents cited were seemingly left in other administration premises occupied by Israeli forces in 1948 and are thus held by the National Library of Israel and digitized on its website, online at [www.nli.org.il/en](http://www.nli.org.il/en) (accessed 18 September 2022).
  - 11 For more complex and comprehensive discussions of the ethics and politics of this methodology, see Ricardo Roque and Kim Wagner, eds., *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
  - 12 I could find nothing more on al-Masri’s life story, whether before or after his employment by the Department of Antiquities. This gap highlights the extent to which many ordinary Palestinian lives are now invisible to historians except where they interact with the Mandate authorities.
  - 13 Denys Pringle, “Introduction,” in C. N. Johns, *Pilgrims’ Castle (‘Atlit), David’s Tower (Jerusalem) and Qal’at ar-Rabad (‘Ajlun): Three Middle Eastern Castles from the Time of the Crusades* (Farnham: Ashgate, 1997), xiii–xiv.
  - 14 C. N. Johns to Director of the Department of Antiquities, 12 April 1933.
  - 15 Irving, “Tale of Two Yusifs,” 226, 230.
  - 16 Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–1967* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 82–84.
  - 17 Issa Khalaf, “The Effect of Socioeconomic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 1 (February 1997): 101. Egyptian pounds were the standard currency in Mandate Palestine until November 1927, when the Palestine Pound was issued, but some of Masri’s file still uses Egyptian pounds as a denomination.
  - 18 Al-Masri to Johns, 25 November 1937.
  - 19 Sreemati Mitter, “A History of Money in Palestine: From the 1900s to the Present,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2014), online at ([nrs.harvard.edu](http://nrs.harvard.edu)) [bit.ly/3SbmIn2](http://bit.ly/3SbmIn2) (accessed 18 September 2022).
  - 20 Wadi al-Mughara, several kilometers from ‘Atlit Castle, is a major site of evidence for early prehistoric humans in the Levant and was excavated under Dorothy Garrod’s leadership, unusually employing and training a number of local women excavators, between 1929 and 1934.
  - 21 Hamdan Hassan Farah to Inspector of Antiquities, 12 February 1935.

- 22 Moshe Ostrower's name suggests roots in Ostrow, present-day Poland, and that he was probably Ashkenazi Jewish, but when he or his forebears arrived in Palestine is unknown. After leaving the museum and gardens at 'Akka he seems to have established a plant nursery at Kiryat Bialik, a town to the north of Haifa founded by Zionist immigrants in 1934. A nursery owned by M. Ostrower existed there by 1938, according to a 1938 documentary on the "Development of Emek Zevulun" in Amy Kronish, Edith Falk, Paula Weiman-Kelman, *The Nathan Axelrod Collection: Moledet Productions, 1927–1934* (Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), advertised its sale and delivery of seedlings in 1940 (*Palestine Post*, 7 January 1940, 5), and was still listed in an English-language Ministry of Posts telephone directory for Israel in 1965 (531).
- 23 See, for example, Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905–48* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65–68, 74–91; James Renton, "The Age of Nationality and the Origins of the Zionist-Palestinian Conflict," *International History Review* 35, no. 3 (2013): 586; specifically on questions of pay differentials Arabs and Jews, see Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 12, 52, 70, 86, 144, 101–2, 201–2, 214, 244, 247–48, 292.
- 24 ATQ/3/18 Lambert to Chief Secretary, 10 August 1929.
- 25 Dana von Suffrin, "The Possibility of a Productive Palestine: Otto Warburg and Botanical Zionism," *Israel Studies* 26 no. 2 (2021): 179–82.
- 26 J. Elazari-Volcani, "Jewish Colonization in Palestine," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 164 (November 1932): 87.
- 27 Jeremy Forman and Alexandre Kedar, "Colonialism, Colonization, and Land Law in Mandate Palestine: The Zor al-Zarqa and Barrat Qisarya Land Disputes in Historical Perspective," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 4, no. 2 (July 2003): 491–539.
- 28 Nimrod Ben Zeev, "Palestine along the Colour Line: Race, Colonialism, and Construction Labour, 1918–1948," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no. 12 (2021): 2193–94.
- 29 Mahmoud Yazbak, "From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 2000): 107.
- 30 Shimon-Erez Blum, "Between the Lion Cub of Judea and the British Lion: Cause Lawyers, British Rule and National Struggle in Mandatory Palestine," *Comparative Legal History* 7, no. 1 (2019): 13; Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto, 2001), 12; Irit Katz, "'The Common Camp': Temporary Settlements as a Spatio-political Instrument in Israel-Palestine," *Journal of Architecture* 22, no.1 (2017): 94.
- 31 Muhammad Suwaed, "The Role of the Bedouin in the Great Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–1939," *Middle Eastern Studies* 57, no.1 (2021): 85.
- 32 "Hanged after Plea to London Fails," *Reading Eagle*, 16 August 1938, 2; "Schwartz Dies on Gallows after Penning Confession," *Jewish Telegraph Agency Bulletin*, 17 August 1938.
- 33 Al-Masri to Hamilton, 9 January 1938.
- 34 Al-Masri to Hamilton, 9 February 1940.
- 35 Probably the railways built for the salt works, which used mules between 1922 and 1936 and then mechanized its wagons. Paul Cotterell, "One Horse Power," *HaRakavet*, no. 32 (March 1996): 23.
- 36 Al-Masri to Hamilton, 31 August 1938.
- 37 Al-Masri to Makhoully, 17 September 1938.
- 38 Hamilton to Makhoully, 22 September 1938.
- 39 Ostrower to Director of Antiquities via Makhoully, 26 November 1929.
- 40 Makhoully to Director of Antiquities, 18 November 1929.
- 41 Hamilton to Inspector-General of Palestine Police Force, 7 September 1935; Acting I.G. of Police to Director of Antiquities, 17 September 1935.
- 42 Al-Masri to Johns, 20 January 1939.
- 43 Makhoully to Hamilton, 30 November 1939.
- 44 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).
- 45 Al-Masri to (presumably) Hamilton, undated (second half of letter, first half missing).
- 46 Makhoully to Hamilton, 30 October 1940; medical certificate signed Dr. H. Hindi, 6 December 1940.
- 47 Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Beirut: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2006), 518–20; Muhammad 'Aql, "Project: The Baths

- of al-Hamma in the British Mandate Era,” PalestineRemembered.com, 2 February 2013, online at (palestineremembered.com) bit.ly/3gihV62 (accessed 18 September 2022).
- 48 Al-Masri to Hamilton, 11 November 1940.
- 49 Makhouly to Hamilton, 16 December 1940.
- 50 Makhouly to Hamilton, 22 February 1941.
- 51 While the nature of Zandik’s crime is unknown, it appears to have been serious enough that the court records were ruled as exempt from routine destruction when Shukry Muhtadie, Registrar of the Haifa District Court, assessed them in 1939 (*Palestine Gazette*, 24 August 1939, 870).
- 52 Undated petition, signed Hassan Ahmad al-Awad.
- 53 Mohd. Ahmed Awad, 24 March 1941.
- 54 Surdin to Hamilton, 25 March 1941.
- 55 The salt concession at ‘Atlit was initially granted to Surdin and his colleagues by the Mandate administration in 1922; Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 7. From then on, it played a significant role in economic lobbying by the Zionist movement, with tariffs introduced to protect its products from competition by cheaper, better-quality products from Egypt; Barbara Smith, *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine: British Economic Policy, 1920–1929* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 169. The company’s demands were also a factor in disputes over water supplies for the growing city of Haifa; David Schorr, “Water Law in British-Ruled Palestine,” *Water History* 6 (2014): 257.
- 56 Undated petition, signed Hassan Ahmad al-Awad.
- 57 Undated petition.
- 58 Hamilton to Makhouly, 22 April 1941; handwritten note in Johns’ script, also dated 22 April 1941.
- 59 Certificate of Service, 29 August 1941.
- 60 Al-Masri to Hamilton via Johns, 25 September 1941; Hamilton to al-Masri, 26 September 1941.
- 61 Al-Masri to Hamilton via Johns, undated, probably early October 1941.
- 62 Mustafa al-Wali, “The Tantura Massacre, 22–23 May 1948,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 5–18; Ilan Pappé, “The Tantura Case in Israel: the Katz Research and Trial,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 19–39; and PalestineRemembered.com, “al-Tantura Massacre & Ethnic Cleaning Are Exposed: 21 Eyewitness Testimonies of War Crimes against Humanity,” PalestineRemembered.com, online at (palestineremembered.com) bit.ly/3D56BD3 (accessed 18 September 2022).