

# The Language of Jewish Nationalism

## Street Signs and Linguistic Landscape in the Old City of Jerusalem

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### Abstract

The Old City of Jerusalem is likely the most hotly contested geographical location in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The linguistic landscape in the Old City, including street names and signs, can shed light on power relations and political agendas within the conflict. This article examines the linguistic landscape of the Old City after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) in 1967. It focuses on five different areas: four quarters (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian) and al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound. Based on an examination of several hundred street signs, the authors' findings indicate a clear dominance of Hebrew in signage throughout the Old City, evident in different linguistic aspects. Two linguistic behaviors were also obvious: firstly, in the Jewish quarter, the linguistic landscape promotes an Israeli nationalistic discourse including physical erasure of the Arabic language and Palestinian existence; secondly, all other areas lack national Palestinian content and aspirations. This indicates the official Israeli view that there is an exclusive Jewish right to national identity while Palestinians must make do with religious identity only. Our analysis of signs in the Old City indicates two Israeli-oriented, complementary features: pro-active Jewish-Israeli nationalization, and an Orientalist, British-inspired, colonial and religious-centered attempt to de-politicize the East.

### Keywords

Jerusalem; Old City of Jerusalem; linguistic landscape; naming; Jewish-Arab relations; Israeli-Arab conflict; language and conflict.

## On Politics and Street Signs

The image a city exudes is shaped by a combination of physical objects and symbols that together serve as a medium for conveying the ideologies and visions of a society and its effects on the consciousness of the inhabitants of that urban space. The urban landscape, therefore, is a rich canvas that reveals dominant cultural values and power structures within that particular society.<sup>1</sup> The linguistic landscape is central to the urban space; it provides users of that space with practical information as well as serving a symbolic function. On the practical level, signage marks the boundaries of a particular lingual area. Symbolically, the linguistic landscape can enhance the self-esteem of speakers of the language that dominates the public space.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the names of roads, intersections, and squares mark locations while also functioning as socio-political tools that inform the users' perception of that public space regarding the city. We argue that in situations of conflict or colonial conditions, the language of street signs and the meanings of the language used have a heightened importance as a means for advancing socio-political agendas. The sovereign power may use street names and signage in order to enhance its authority and control over the space while, simultaneously, exploiting, controlling and excluding others from that space. As such, as Young argues, any postcolonial analysis must deal with cultural, geographic, and linguistic changes made by occupying powers – an insight which serves as a main point of departure for this article.<sup>3</sup>

The act of naming sheds light on processes underlying establishment of new social or political realities. For example, the northern Italian region of Alto Adige was annexed by Italy after WWI. Once in Italian hands, it renamed 8,000 locations in Italian – replacing the previous German names. Today these new names are the center of a heated debate between German-speaking and Italian-speaking communities residing in the region.<sup>4</sup> Anderson, similarly, has highlighted how mapping and naming helped colonial states to imagine themselves, create a geographical identity and also served as alleged sources of legitimation.<sup>5</sup> While names can be seemingly functional, they also produce identities of place and create historical, social, and political connections – or disconnections – between the place and its inhabitants.

Through an examination of the linguistic landscape of the Old City of Jerusalem following Israel's occupation in 1967, this article will analyze ways in which Israel has influenced this important public space. We claim that Israel has used a strategy of changing or maintaining street names to justify political Zionist aims, on the one hand, and refute and de-politicize other aims, namely, Palestinian. Our research builds on the work of others such as Meron Benvenisti's analysis of maps demonstrating that, post-1948, Israel strove to achieve two political ends: to bolster the Zionist presence and to erase the Palestine one (past, present, political and more).<sup>6</sup> Our study of street signs and our linguistic analysis of them focuses on why and where historical street names were kept or, alternatively, changed or discarded and the political meaning of those decisions.

Regarding the hidden messages underlying linguistic decisions, and in line with

the work of Yasir Suleiman,<sup>7</sup> we contend that the lingual representation of street signs in the Old City of Jerusalem reveals deeper levels and dynamics underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, focusing on the linguistic landscape of an area of such great importance can shed light on the political status of the Old City as being symbolic of Jerusalem, as well as, more broadly, the dynamics underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## **The Modern History of Jerusalem, al-Quds, and Yerushalayyim**

Following from Lorenzo and others, we situate examination of the conflict in historical Palestine using insights and readings from colonial studies. For example, rather than being a conflict between two national movements, this lens views the conflict as being between a community comprised primarily of immigrants from Europe (West Jerusalem) and the indigenous Palestinian population (in East Jerusalem). This perspective views Jewish immigrants, and subsequently the Jewish state from its founding in 1948, as settlers rather than locals who are integrally connected to the place. As such, the Israeli regime reflects settler colonial societies which aspire to replace an indigenous population, and make settlers into locals.<sup>8</sup> This perspective is essential to understanding the larger conflict and specifically the linguistic landscape in the Old City in general and particularly in the Jewish quarter.

The political situation in the Old City of Jerusalem post-1967 typifies settler colonial societies on the symbolic and physical levels. Firstly, this area was occupied militarily and then annexed unilaterally by Israel – an act that violates international law and stands in contradiction to the position of the international community. Secondly, due to the religious, national, and historic importance of the Old City, Israel has attempted to fully integrate this area into its national ethos. For example, official national and national-religious Israeli ceremonies and celebrations such as army swear-ins, Remembrance Day ceremonies, Dance of the Flags parade on “Jerusalem Day” and more are held there.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, the Israeli authorities assigned Israeli and Jewish names to public spaces and obliterated Arabic names.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, three months following the Israeli occupation, the government officially changed the Arabic name of Jerusalem from al-Quds (القدس), a name which has been in continuous usage in Arabic since the seventh century, to Urshalim al-Quds (أورشليم القدس) or – preferably – Urshalim only (أورشليم).<sup>11</sup> Among other reasons, we believe that this change was made to make the Arabic name more similar to the Hebrew name (Yerushalayyim ירושלים). Thus, on the most basic level and at a very early stage, the Israeli regime decided to advance a Jewish-Israeli perspective through the use of language by engaging in both physical and symbolic acts.

The status of Jerusalem is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the city encompasses religious, political, national, symbolic, historical, and mythical elements that are of central importance to both national communities.<sup>12</sup> Thus, analyzing the linguistic landscape of the Old City post-1967 facilitates insights into and lessons

about the ways in which Israel actively shapes political reality. We identify two linguistic-oriented processes that elucidate deeper political discourse and that, in a way, anticipated Israeli legislation such as the 2018 Nation-State Law: the first, the exclusive Jewish right to national self-determination, and the second, the depoliticization of Palestinian rights through an emphasis on religious and historical aspects.

## Historical Background: Quarters, Street Names, and Lingual Regulation in the Old City

It is important to note that the rationale behind the separation of the Old City into different quarters is relevant for understanding street names. Lingual regulation of streets in the Old City of Jerusalem and its “official” partition into four quarters began during the British Mandate period (1920–48). While some divisions existed prior to this time, during the Ottoman Empire these divisions were mainly based on *harat* (neighborhoods).<sup>13</sup> Tamari has shown that the subsequent division into four rigid quarters – that was pushed forward during the British Mandate – was not authentic nor consistent with local inhabitants’ perception of the space that had internal division to *mahallat* (places/areas/neighborhoods). According to Tamari:

There was no clear delineation between neighborhood and religion; we see a substantial intermixing of religious groups in each quarter. The boundaries of habitat, furthermore, were the *mahallat*, the neighborhood network of social demarcations within which a substantial amount of communal solidarity is exhibited. Such cohesiveness was clearly articulated in periodic visitations and sharing of ceremonials, including weddings and funerals, but also active participation in religious festivities. These solidarities undermined the fixity of the confessional system from a pre-modern (perhaps even primordial) network of affinities.<sup>14</sup>

The division into four quarters was invented by European travelers and explorers, army officers and architects who visited the city and created maps reflective of this idea toward the end of Ottoman Period.<sup>15</sup> This trend accelerated during the British Mandate period by further establishing clear borders and boundaries between areas while simultaneously homogenizing the populations in them.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Wallach demonstrated that street naming was key to establishing the European four quarters as an established fact. According to Wallach, the British sought to protect what they considered to be the city’s sacred characteristics. As such:

The British administration also annulled the Ottoman plan for tramlines and electricity provision in Jerusalem. Like early European photography of Palestine, which rendered the country as a biblical theater set, Jerusalem had to abandon its hopes for tramways and electrification and make way for an Orientalist fantasy.<sup>17</sup>

This reflected a Western, Orientalist perception as it aspired to look at the East as a non-changing entity, one that is rooted in an ancient, religious, past.<sup>18</sup> As Campos points out, in fact, the Old City was characterized by heterogeneous areas that featured significant mixing of religious groups and dynamics of migration, integration, and contact. Yet, this found no expression by either the colonialists or by the Israelis, as this post-1967 street name analysis will demonstrate.<sup>19</sup>

The British advanced this vision by undertaking practical activities and policies related to street naming. In 1922, the British governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs, established a committee for street names; it operated under the auspices of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, which was founded following British conquest of the city. The committee – a part of the town planning commission, which in itself was a product of the Pro-Jerusalem Society<sup>20</sup> – was headed by Harry Charles Luke and included representatives of the three religions in Jerusalem: Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The committee named forty-six streets in the Old City that were then inscribed on ceramic tiles created by the Armenian ceramicist David Ohannessian.<sup>21</sup> The British Pro-Jerusalem map relied on an earlier map, Wilson's map of 1865, which also references forty-six street names in the Old City during the Ottoman period.<sup>22</sup> However, while Wilson's map from the Ottoman period included five names related to Christianity, two references to Judaism and Jews (Harat al-Yahud and Tariq al-Nabi Dawud), and thirty-nine referring to Arab orientations of al-Quds, Ayyubid history, and Ottoman history, the Pro-Jerusalem map included thirteen names referring to Christian figures or orders, seven to Jewish clans and biblical figures, and twenty-six to Islamic history.

The British logic of street naming in the Old City was highlighted by the Mandate governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs. According to him: "It was forbidden to demolish, erect, alter or repair the structure of any building in or near Jerusalem without my permission in writing."<sup>23</sup> Storrs advocated for naming streets in ways that related to Jerusalem's ancient history and religious importance. This reflected a British-oriented colonial perception of the Middle East as being "frozen in time." The policy of avoiding selecting names with modern or national characteristics stemmed from a desire to avoid controversy or at least from keeping the place "in the past."<sup>24</sup> The guidelines outlined here reflect a Western-colonial approach expressing the belief that names should relate to historical periods and give expression to the special sacred character of the city.<sup>25</sup>

The committee also created specific regulations regarding the visual aspects of the signs and their linguistic features. They decided that tile colors would be blue or green so that the color would stand out against the grey background of Jerusalem's walls, indicating that the committee attached great importance to visual aspects.<sup>26</sup> They also made decisions about which languages would appear on the signs. In areas primarily occupied by a specific group, signs featured English (the language of the sovereign power) and the language of the local community (Arabic in Palestinian areas and Hebrew in Jewish areas). In what they defined as "public spaces" or where the area was populated by both populations, signs were written in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Remnants of these trilingual tiles have English at the top, Arabic in the





Figure 1. Louis Vincent St. sign, erected by the British authorities during the Mandate period (1920–48). Photo by Mahmoud Muna.

middle and Hebrew at the bottom (figure 1).

The signage project during this period was not devoid of political context. The Zionists sought to forge a connection between language, street signs, and political ideologies. Wallach argues that even as early as the 1920s

... the Zionist desire to rewrite the landscape of Palestine relied crucially on Hebrew as a tool for appropriation and reinterpretation. Zionist leaders and activists lobbied hard, from the beginning of the Mandate, for Hebrew signs in train stations, government offices, and public services. Their efforts aimed not only to make Hebrew visible in public space *but also to claim that space*. In the 1920s and 1930s the streets of Jerusalem became saturated with Hebrew of new kinds: commercial signs for shops and advertisements, signs of Zionist institutions, political notices, and street names. *This new visibility challenged, and would later displace, Arabic.*<sup>27</sup>

When the British Mandate ended in 1948, the Old City came under Jordanian control. During this period, no Jews resided in the Old City. Between 1948 and 1967, the Jordanians made very few changes to actual place names. Interestingly, the Jordanian map of the Old City included ninety street names, its vast majority being Arab, Muslim, and Christian names.<sup>28</sup> Jordanians did change the languages' appearance – by taking away the Hebrew and pushing forward a bilingual linguistic

landscape – Arabic followed by English. However, regarding the names of streets, their changes were minor, with the exception of two changes, the insertion of two new names: طريق المناضلين (Tariq al-Munadilin/Road of Fighters) commemorating Arab fighters who fought in the city during the 1948 war, and طريق الملك فيصل (Tariq al-Malik Faysal/King Faysal Road). In other words, the Jordanians did not create new Arab linguistic landscape (Jordanian or Palestinian) of a national or political nature.

A new linguistic era characterized by significant changes took place following the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the Old City in 1967. To date, this subject has received limited scholarly attention, particularly in relation to the Old City. Suleiman's research demonstrated that the Israeli regime gave enhanced visibility and presence to Hebrew on street names in Israel in order to reflect its control over the space.<sup>29</sup> We aspire to comprehensively look at all street signs in the Old City in Jerusalem, and analyze the linguistic landscape that took shape during the post-1967 era in the Old City, with a few clarifications on methodology and structure.

## Research Design and Methodology

This article, focusing on signs in the Old City, examines street and market signs, ascents, gates and squares. We analyze five areas in the Old City: the four quarters (the Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Armenian quarters) and al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound. In these areas, we seek to understand how Israel harnessed the linguistic landscape to gain control over space. As we will argue, at times this was done by perpetuating British colonial naming practices, and at other times by pushing forward a nationalistic approach to reconstruct space.

A total of some two hundred different signs were observed and documented. They were affixed during three main periods: the British Mandate period (1920–48), the Jordanian period (1948–67) and the Israeli period (1967 onwards). The article will not address the manner in which decisions were made about signage, or about symbols and colors, nor will it cover issues touching on the typeface used on the signs except in cases linked to the subject of the research. Rather, we examine the physical appearance of the signs, the representation or non-representation of languages as well as lingual hierarchy. We also incorporate general insights about language such as sign content, names, writing style, and the translation and/or transliteration of languages.

We aim to derive insights regarding political implications of the current linguistic landscape in the Old City. Israel has controlled this area for over five decades and throughout this period has made decisions about which signs to keep, replace, or create. As such, the linguistic landscape is indicative of power relations between the Israeli regime and Palestinian people. Consistent with Suleiman, our analysis seeks to elucidate Israeli political strategies, needs, perception, and desires and through this to uncover deeper layers of socio-political thought.<sup>30</sup> Thus, this article focuses on spatial-political meanings that underlie the linguistic landscape in the Old City of Jerusalem.

## Preliminary Findings: Content of Street Signs in the Old City

Based on our examination of signage throughout the Old City, we will discuss the findings in the five areas under investigation. The sign names are categorized by topic area and are presented in accordance with the frequency in which they appear, highest frequency to lowest.<sup>31</sup>

**The Muslim Quarter:** 46 name tiles were documented in the Muslim quarter, divided into 10 categories:

- a. *Muslim History of Jerusalem* (19 names). Street names symbolize the social, religious, historical, and strategic achievements as well as physical development of Old Jerusalem under Muslim rule, covering the Ayyubid period (1187–1260), the Mamluk period (1260–1515), and the early Ottoman period twelfth to sixteenth century. Ayyubid heritage is commemorated in names that mention actions taken by Salah al-Din and his entourage (1138–1193). For example, طريق المعظمية, Tariq al-Mu‘azzamiyya is named for the nearby al-Mu‘azzamiyya school, built by ‘Isa al-Mu‘azzam (d. 1227), Salah al-Din’s nephew.<sup>32</sup> ‘Aqabat al-Shaykh Lu’lu’, عقبة الشيخ لولو, is named after Shaykh Badr al-Din Lu’lu’, a commander of Salah al-Din’s army.<sup>33</sup> The Mamluk presence in Jerusalem is commemorated in names that preserve memories of sultans such as ‘Ala’ al-Din Street and mystics such as عقبة البسطامي (‘Aqabat al-Bastami) al-Bastami Ascent, named for Abu Yazid al-Bastami, a mystic Sufi holy man of Persian origin. Traces of the Ottoman sultans (1516–1917) are reflected in the names of institutions founded by Ottoman ruler. This includes عقبة السرايا, ‘Aqabat al-Saraya (Palace’s Ascent) and the Ottoman administration building, established by Hurrem Sultan, also known as Roxolana, wife of the first Ottoman sultan, Sulayman I.
- b. *Markets and Merchandise* (10 names). This refers to merchants, markets, and skilled workers who were active in the Old City. The names are mostly from the Crusader, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods. An example of this is سوق القطانين, Suq al-Qatanin (Cotton Merchants Market) built in the fourteenth century by the Mamluk governor of Jerusalem, Tankiz, and reflects the cotton goods sold there at the time. Another example is سوق اللحامين, Suq al-Lahamin (Butchers Market) whose establishment is attributed to the Crusaders; its name indicates a high concentration of abattoirs and meat shops on the street.
- c. *Local Families and Local Traditions* (5 names). These names highlight the biographies of Arab families in Jerusalem. For example, عقبة الخالدية, ‘Aqabat al-Khalidiyya (al-Khalidiyya Ascent) is called that because most of the houses were owned by al-Khalidi family, a veteran Muslim family in Jerusalem.
- d. *Nature and Trees* (3 names). An example of this is طريق الواد, Tariq al-Wad (Valley Road) given this name because its physical features follow the path of an ancient ravine.
- e. *Names Indicating Directions* (2 names). Tariq Bab al-Silsila (Chain Gate Road), طريق باب السلسلة, was the road leading to the Chain Gate, one of the gates to al-Haram.



- f. *Local Holy Men* (2 names). These signs refer to Muslim religious leaders, such as عقبة الشيخ ریحان, 'Aqabat Shaykh Rihan (Shaykh Rihan Ascent). This street indicates that the mosque and holy grave of the Sufi Shaykh Rihan, dating from the sixteenth century, are located on the street.
- g. *Christian Traditions and Monasteries* (2 names). Examples from this category are the Via Dolorosa, طريق الآلام, Tariq al-Alam (Street of Pain), where, according to Christian tradition, Jesus walked from the place where he was condemned to the place of his crucifixion. Another example is طريق الراهبات, Tariq al-Rahbat (Street of the Nuns) named for the Convent of the Sisters of Zion, located on that street.
- h. *Crusader Tradition* (1 name). For example: طريق برج اللقلق, Tariq Burj al-Laqlaq (Street of the Stork Tower).
- i. *Muslim Battle* (1 name). This sign القادسية, al-Qadisiyya, commemorates the battle in which the Muslims defeated the Persians in 636 CE.
- j. *Indian Tradition* (1 name). Tariq al-Zawiya al-Hindiyya (Road of the Indian Monastery), طريق الزاوية الهندية, refers to the Indian sufi mystics who established a monastic complex in the thirteenth century.

The main motifs of street names in the Muslim quarter relate to Christian religious history but primarily to Muslim religious and military history. Street names begin with traditions about Jesus and the Crusaders, and then cover Islamic military history during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, through the disintegration of Ottoman rule. Christianity and the Christians, as reflected by streets in the Muslim Quarter, are relatively limited in comparison with the abundant presence of Muslim history and Muslim rulers. Indeed, we learn about Muslim warriors through names given to monuments, holy men, religious structures, study halls, and public institutions founded by Muslim rulers.

**Al-Haram al-Sharif:** 10 signs feature the names of the gates of al-Haram and 4 primary motifs (see figure 2). This short overview indicates that al-Haram gate names portray Jerusalem as a religious Muslim city with particular emphasis on the Mamluk and Ayyubid periods of Islamic history:

- a. *Muslim Religious Motifs* (4 names). Muslim religious rituals and concepts are inscribed in the identities of the gates. باب المطهرة, Bab al-Mathara (Ablution Gate) leading to the ablution area for prayers, and باب المجلس, Bab al-Majlis (Council Gate, also known as al-Nazir, Gate of the Superintendent of the Compound), encompass this principle.



Figure 2. Removal of the Arabic name طريق البراق (Tariq al-Buraq, al-Buraq Road) by the Israeli forces following the occupation of the Old City in 1967. Photo courtesy of Micha Bar-Am.

- b. *Physical Development, Commercial Activity, and the Military Legacy of the Mamluks and the Ayyubids* (4 names). Bab al-Hadid, باب الحديد, (Iron Gate, also known as Arghun Gate) is named after Arghun al-Kamili, a fourteenth century Mamluk prince whose name in Turkish means iron.<sup>34</sup> باب المغاربة, Bab al-Maghariba (Mughrabi Gate) pays homage to Maghreb fighters who fought in Salah al-Din's army in the battle to liberate Jerusalem from the Crusaders. An example of a commercial name is باب القطنين, Bab al-Qatanin (Gate of the Cotton Merchants) which led to the Cotton Merchants' Market (figure 3).
- c. *Hashemite Dynasty* (1 name). A gate is named after King Faysal II (1935–1958) who gave a donation to al-Aqsa mosque during his visit to Jerusalem in 1943. This name plaque is relatively new and replaces the previous name of Bab al-Mu'azzam which referred to King 'Isa al-Mu'azzam, one of Salah al-Din's brothers.
- d. *Tribes Mentioned in the Quran* (1 name). Bab al-Asba (Gate of the Tribes), باب الأسباط, is a gate in the Old City walls that refers to the sons of Jacob mentioned in the Qur'an.

**Christian Quarter:** 15 street signs were documented in the Christian quarter, divided into 3 main categories.

- a. *Christian Saints* (6 names). Notable among the names in the Christian quarter are St. Helena Street, named after the mother of Emperor Constantine I, and St. Francis Street, named after the twelfth-century Italian Catholic monk, the founder of the Franciscan order.
- b. *Christian Branches and Institutions* (6 names). Examples are the Greek Catholic Patriarchate and the Street of the Copts. These street names highlight central branches of Christianity which are connected to Jerusalem in general and specifically to the Old City and the Christian holy sites located there.
- c. *Muslim Heritage* (2 names). Just as the Muslim quarter refers to Christianity, in the Christian quarter we find ميدان عمر بن الخطاب, Maydan 'Umar ibn al-



Figure 3. A welcome sign located at the Cotton Merchants' Gate showing the name in Arabic only (erected over the last decade by Palestinian Da'irat al-Awqaf/the Islamic religious endowments). Underneath is a tile bearing only Arabic and English (erected by Jordanian authorities in the 1948–1967 period). Photo by authors.

Khattab (‘Umar ibn al-Khattab Square) named after the Muslim military leader who conquered Jerusalem from the Byzantines in the year 638, and عقبة الخانقاه, ‘Aqabat al-Khanqah (al-Khanqah Ascent) which refers to the twelfth-century al-Khanqah al-Salahiyya mosque (مسجد الخانقاه الصلاحية), the Sufi institution from the period of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi.

- d. *Jewish and General Heritage*: (1 name). The street is called in Hebrew רחוב דוד, Rehov David (David Street) and in English: David Street, both refer to biblical King David. In Arabic the street is called سويقة علوان, Suwayqat ‘Alwan (‘Alwan products) referring to a market owned by the ‘Alwan family.

Street and location names in the Christian quarter reflect branches and communities from throughout the Christian world as well as others’ heritage – primarily Muslim. This religious-historical emphasis is evident by the prevalence of famous religious figures, for example, St. Helena and David. This naming system provides many different communities with recognition while also avoiding hierarchy or judgment.

**Armenian Quarter:** 8 signs were found in the Armenian quarter, divided into 3 categories:

- a. *Armenian Faith and Geography* (5 signs). An example is Ararat Street, referring to Mount Ararat, adjacent to Armenia, which is considered a central Armenian symbol. Another street, St. James, is the English version of the Christian saint Ya‘qub who was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus.
- b. *Names of Monasteries* (2 signs). One street is named after the Maronite monastery, referring to the Eastern Catholic Maronite community.
- c. *Mamluk Commander*: (1 sign). This street, حارة الشرف, Harat al-Sharaf (al-Sharaf Neighborhood) located in al-Sharaf area of the quarter, is named after Sharaf al-Din Musa Sulayman, a Mamluk commander who died in 1400 and was buried in the area. In Hebrew, the street is called ביקור חולים, Bikur Holim (Visiting the Sick).

The areas above reveal a number of similar themes. All have street names which focus on historical periods, as far as possible from modern reality. Many streets are named after religious figures and leaders related to the predominant religion in that area; however, there are some exceptions. With the exception of al-Haram al-Sharif, the three quarters reflect religious diversity in that they refer to more than one religious tradition while also seeking to avoid names that are overly particularistic. Furthermore, they refer to specific institutions, families, geographic characteristics, religious orders, types of businesses, graves, or other geographic markers on named streets, thus demonstrating congruence between the names and the specific locations. In general, the names in these quarters emphasize the range of religious history and traditions embodied by the Old City. This reflects a British settler-colonial understanding of the Old City, a perception that emphasizes the religious significance of the areas and de-emphasizes the national identity of the inhabitants or the politically-loaded significance of the place. Such a perception largely regards the Old City as “frozen in time,” and Orientalist, meaning lacking of modern national identities or understandings that go beyond the ancient religious orientation.

**Jewish Quarter:** We analyzed 36 signs in the Jewish quarter, divided them into 4 categories. The vast majority of the names were established following Israeli conquest in 1967:

- a. *Names Connected to Temple Worship* (13 names). These names encompass religious and national principles associated with religious rites performed during the First and Second Temple periods. Jews believe these temples were situated where the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque now stand. A street called רחוב משמרות, Rehov Mishmerot ha-Kehunah (Street of the Priestly Guards) is named for groups of priests who, according to the Book of Chronicles, performed work in the Temple and the Tabernacle. Another street, רחוב החצוצרות, Rehov Ha-Hatsotsrot (Street of the Trumpets) refers to the trumpets used to accompany animal sacrifices held in the Temples (figure 4).



Figure 4. Ha-Hatsotsrot Street sign, erected by Israeli authorities (with the visible remains of a sticker that was intended to delete the Arabic). Photo by authors.

- b. *Religious Names* (13 signs). These names refer to Jewish law, Jewish practice, and sects of Judaism. For example, רחוב המקובלים, Rehov ha-Mekubalim (Street of the Kabbalists) refers to the Kabbalah movement, and רחוב חב"ד, Rehov Chabad (Chabad Street) is named after the Chabad movement.
- c. *Nationality and Religion* (9 names). These names combine military values and religion; they commemorate security, military events and history, and Israel's wars (mostly the war in 1967 and the war in 1948). For example, רחוב פלוגת הכותל, Rehov Plugat ha-Kotel (Street of the Western Wall Company) is named for the military company established in 1937 to protect the Jewish presence in the Jewish quarter. Another sign, מעלות הרב מאיר יהודה גץ, Ma'alot Rabbi Meir Yehuda Getz (Rabbi Meir Yehuda Getz Ascent) refers to a religious leader who was an officer with the Artillery Corps, and lost his son in the 1967 War during the fighting in Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> This sign demonstrates the connection between religious life and the Jewish national cause and is reminiscent of ways in which French colonial rulers recognized military commanders in the French quarter of Fez in Morocco.<sup>36</sup>
- d. *Byzantine Relics* (1 name). This refers to just one street – the Cardo – the Latin term for the main north-south street in a city.

Several insights can be derived from the four categories outlined here. Regarding the first category, temple rites, while these names refer to incidents that took place



in ancient history, many Jews hold a messianic outlook and advocate for revival of the rituals they believe took place in the temples. Similarly, many of the names refer to Israeli military campaigns and victories. This establishes asymmetrical national relations in Jerusalem and imbues them with a national-religious (and, as such, Zionist) spatial consciousness.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, unlike in the other quarters, in the Jewish quarter, there are virtually no names that have non-Jewish connotations. This reinforces a perception of Jewish exclusivity and a significant nationalist and particularistic ethos.

We can see from this analysis that the Jewish quarter is different from the other areas of the Old City. Israel has, for the most part, maintained the British colonial and a-political understanding of the Old City in the other quarters. Yet, signs in the Jewish quarter reflect a national as well as settler-colonial ethos emphasizing historical continuity in the location, Israeli military conquest, religious-nationalistic themes, and religious tradition over time. It is the only quarter that reflects modern and nationalistic themes, and highlights Israeli myths such as defense and victimhood.<sup>38</sup>

The emphasis on the old and the new is reminiscent of Walid Khalidi's conception of "reconquista."<sup>39</sup> Comparing Zionism to medieval Spain, he focuses on how groups "reclaim" or "recover" lost lands by emphasizing their glorious history and connection to the place. In his view, this is an "offensive action" by "people on the move, with its alchemy of religious and national motivation, its profound sense of prior ownership and entitlement, its insatiable land hunger, and its pitiless indifference to the fate of the inhabitants."<sup>40</sup> The conquerors view this mission as "an exclusive primordial, unchallengeable, indeed divine right."<sup>41</sup>

In historical Palestine, unlike in other settler-colonial contexts, Zionist settlers did not simply create new names, rather they sought to "recover" the "original" or "true" names, as well as practices, clothing, and other norms. They sought to demonstrate that there was a pre-Palestinian Jewish existence and Jewish rootedness in order to legitimate territorial claims.<sup>42</sup> They did this, to a large extent, by referencing biblical names and concepts. Nadia Abulhadj<sup>43</sup> and Meron Benvenisti<sup>44</sup> refer to this in the context of place-names, while Yonatan Mendel writes about this in the context of "recovering" the forgotten roots of Arabic in the process of "reviving Hebrew."<sup>45</sup> Other writers, including Ricca and Nitzan-Shiftan referred as well to this notion of "reconstruction."<sup>46</sup> Nitzan-Shiftan, for example, writes that similar to other colonialists, the Israelis attempted to establish "nativeness." Her insights regarding architecture in the Old City are equally applicable to street signs: Israelis redefined the new surroundings as their own, according to an Orientalist vision. The "metaphorical return home" with the capture of the Old City was viewed as the embodiment of Jewish history and Jewish claims over the land, thus linking old and new.<sup>47</sup>

## Visual Appearance and Lingual Typeface

The signs examined in this research have been divided into two categories and analyzed as such. The first category relates to the sign's visual form; it examines



images on the signs, the types of signs, and the languages on the signs including the relative prominence of each language as reflected in linguistic hierarchy. The second category, the lingual category, examines the typeface, transliteration, and translation of language featured in the signs.

#### *Image, Languages, and Organization of the Languages*

Following Israel's conquest of the eastern part of Jerusalem in 1967, Israel left existing signage in place and commissioned new signs. During the Jordanian period, many signs were produced by an Armenian ceramicist in the Karakashian workshop.<sup>48</sup> This tradition was continued by the Israeli authorities, thus preserving the aesthetic norm embodied by the Jordanian signs and representing continuity between the two periods. However, Israel also added metal blue-and-white signs (see figure 5), colors that are associated with the Israeli flag, as well as green and black signs for municipal signage outside the Old City. The consistency between outside and inside the Old City is significant: the Old City, in Israel's view, was now part of "unified Jerusalem."



Figure 5. Al-Sarayah Street (transliterated as "As Sarayeh St."), erected by the Israeli authorities as the official signs of the Jerusalem municipality. Photo by authors.

We observed two types of signs: altered signs (from 1967 to early 1990s, see figure 7), and new signs (post-1990s, see figure 6). The first type is identified by a new Hebrew name, added by Israel after it conquered the Old City, at the top and above the border of the original frame of the Arabic and English sign made by the Jordanians. The second type has no dividing line yet the languages are in the same order with Hebrew first – and with diacritical marks for the Hebrew. This type of sign was manufactured by Israel in a later stage – from the 1990s onward – to be, as we analyze it, a symbol of "united Jerusalem" (with no division between "East" and "West")

all under Israeli rule. In areas primarily identified as Palestinian (the Muslim, Christian, and Armenian quarters, and al-Haram al-Sharif precinct) both types of signs appear. However, in the Jewish quarter – to symbolize Israeli rule most clearly – none of the signs have this dividing line, testifying to the fact that all of the signs in the Jewish quarter are new. We argue that the dividing line is indicative of a distinction between the two time periods, while the absence of that line advances the notion of a single history and a unified political present: in other words, “unified Jerusalem” under Israeli rule.

This is consistent with previous periods. Prior to and following 1967, there has and continues to be a linguistic hierarchy reflecting the identity of the forces in power at any given time. During British rule, English came first with Arabic underneath. However, when the Jordanians ruled, the same languages were present yet this order was reversed.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, following 1967, Israel added Hebrew to the Arabic and English, placing Hebrew on top. Due to Israel’s lingual intervention, the majority of signs became trilingual. Furthermore, the order of the languages changed: Hebrew was placed above the Arabic, and English was at the bottom. In addition, Israeli-commissioned signs use a Hebrew typeface with diacritical marks (vocalization) that is resonant of Hebrew Holy Scriptures, yet does not adopt that same convention for Arabic names. Therefore, Hebrew maintains hegemony due to its positioning on signs as well as through use of diacritical marks and typeface.

Hebrew’s amplification and visibility is also reflected in directional signage that appears throughout the Old City. In most cases, the number of words in Hebrew is greater than the number of words in Arabic as exemplified in a sign which reads, “Northern Access to the Western Wall” (figure 8). In English there are nine lines, in Hebrew there are seven lines yet the Arabic contains a single line. The Arabic speaker is not made aware of the identity of the bodies acting in their living space – in this case an Israeli governmental company titled “The East Jerusalem Development Ltd.” Some of these organizations are dedicated to the Judaization of this space, as another example of colonial practices.



Figure 6. Tile of the Christian Quarter St. without a dividing line between the languages, erected by Israel in the post-1990s. Photo by authors.



Figure 7. Tile of the same street (with a slightly different name: Christian Quarter Rd.) showing the Hebrew wording placed above the original border of the Jordanian Arabic and English sign, erected by Israel in the post-1967 to early 1990s period. Photo by authors.

The norm of placing Hebrew on all signs does not apply to al-Haram al-Sharif precinct where signs are only in Arabic and English with Arabic on top. The absence of Hebrew in this area implies a corresponding lack of Israeli intervention in the linguistic landscape. Indeed, this area is under the jurisdiction of the Islamic Waqf and is managed by Jordanian representatives, as agreed by both countries in 1967. In our view, the lack of signage in Hebrew could relate to this political arrangement; however, perhaps local political-religious dimensions account for Hebrew's absence. Until now, at least officially, Israel has not been interested in intervening in the lingual identity of al-Haram area due to religious sensitivities and the volatile, fraught politics of this specific holy area. This evident lack of Israeli intervention seems to indicate that there is agreement regarding at least one issue: preservation of the lingual status quo at this site.

### *Lingual Presentation: Typeface, Transliteration, and Translation*

Many have argued that translation and transliteration not only facilitates encounters between cultures, but can also be harnessed by majority and minority populations to advance ideological, social, and political agendas. This is the case particularly in situations characterized by colonialist relations between the dominant and the subaltern.<sup>50</sup> Throughout history, hegemonic social groups have exploited translation to understand other cultures and establish control over them. Yet, translation is also a tool that the subaltern group can use to protest against the ruling power.

We examined translation and transliteration and found a lack of symmetry between the way this was applied in relation to Hebrew and Arabic. Most Arabic words that lack particular significance have been translated into Hebrew and English. For example, طريق (tariq), شارع (share'), سوق (suq), and in some cases, حوش (hawsh) were all translated into Hebrew using a single word רחוב (rehov) and into English using two words – street or road. Clearly some of these translations are not faithful to the original Arabic terms; rather they were unified or simplified. Simplification of complex

terms occurs more frequently in Hebrew than in English. For example, the word حارة hara (neighborhood) was omitted from the name طريق حارة النصارى “Tariq Harat al-Nasara”; instead it was translated into Hebrew as Street of the Christians and into English as Christian Quarter Road. We believe that this linguistic change was made in



Figure 8. Directional sign to the northern access to the Western Wall in the Jewish quarter, erected in 1979 by a group of Israeli organizations. There are seven lines in Hebrew, nine lines in English, but one line in Arabic. Photo by authors.

order to make it easier for Hebrew and English speakers to locate themselves through use of terms familiar to them based on their own cultural frames of reference.

In most cases, components of Arabic names appear in transliteration in English characters, while some have also been translated into English. In contrast, all identifying names in Arabic with lexical significance appear in Hebrew in translation and are not transliterated into Hebrew characters. For example, سوق العطارين Suq al-‘Atarin is translated into Hebrew as שוק הבשמים, Shuk ha-Besamim (Market of the Perfumes) even if an accurate translation would be the Market of the Plant Healers. On the symbolic level, even when the translation contains fragmentary linguistic traces of the Arabic source, inaccurate translation fractures the natural connection between Arabic, the geographical location, and the Palestinian subject. This shapes the hierarchies of the Old City: between a hegemonic Hebrew discourse for all, a national superiority of Jewish-Israelis, and axiomatic inferiority of the Palestinians.

Many words from the Jewish-Israeli lexical database have been added to Arabic street names. Therefore, certain streets have two names: a Jewish-Israeli name and an Arabic one. For example, ביקור חולים, Bikur Holim, is the Hebrew name for طريق حارة الشرف Tariq Harat al-Sharaf, known in Arabic as al-Sharaf neighborhood, where today, the Jewish quarter is located.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, רחוב שער האריות, Rehov Sha‘ar ha-Arayot (Lions Gate Street) is referred to in Arabic as طريق المجاهدين, Tariq al-Mujahidin (Strugglers’ Road) in honor of fighters in the war for Jerusalem waged by Salah al-Din. In the Christian and Armenian quarters we found that the Hebrew text tends to be more consistent with the Arabic than in the Muslim quarter although, similarly, both the Hebrew typeface on signs and its vocalization echo Hebrew holy scriptures (figure 9). We believe that these inconsistencies in the Muslim quarter are because the Israeli regime seeks to strengthen Jewish heritage there. Accordingly, it views the Muslim quarter as being more important in terms of Jewish identity and presence.

Jewish identity and presence is, of course, most pronounced and dominant in the Jewish quarter. With the exception of Cardo Street, all names are Jewish and derived from the Hebrew lexical database. The overwhelming majority of signs in the Jewish quarter have been transliterated into Arabic and English characters. For example, רחוב אור החיים, Rehov Or ha-Hayim (the Light of Life Street) is transliterated into Arabic as طريق أور هحييم Tariq Or ha-Hayim and into English as Or ha-Hayim St. In some cases, but only in Hebrew, the sign actually contains an explanation of the name. For example, the sign רחוב משה רוסנק, Rehov Moshe Rusnak (Moshe Rusnak Street) contains the explanation “Commander of the Jewish quarter in 1948 and Honoree of Jerusalem 1923–2005. Only one street is translated into Arabic rather than transliterated: the Street of the Jews. The name حارة اليهود, Harat al-Yahud (Jewish Neighborhood) has been translated into Hebrew and English as Jewish Quarter Street. This preserves historical continuity and also ensures that the message is clear to speakers of Arabic regarding ownership over the area. Overall, this orthography demonstrates that the naming body sought to convey national and political messages in the Jewish quarter. For Jews, the message is clear: we are the owners. For others, particularly Palestinians, their foreignness is emphasized.



Israeli intervention in signage in the Old City is complex and intensive. It can be summarized as being based on Hebrew translation of Arabic terms, the addition of Jewish-Israeli names to Arabic names and the selection of an exclusive Hebrew typeface. These strategies represent an act of appropriation. They have been made with a Jewish-Israeli audience in mind and for its benefit while simultaneously alienating Palestinian spatial heritage. Overall, the Israeli authority refrained from changing street names in Palestinian spaces, but instead the emphasizing of Hebrew in these quarters and



Figure 9. Al-Wad Street, leading from Damascus Gate in the Muslim quarter to the Western Wall and al-Haram al-Sharif precinct; sign erected by Israeli authorities post-1967. Photo by authors.

lexical translation are made – at least for the Hebrew reader – in order to prove an ancient Jewish root. Following Gramsci, this could be considered as subversive and soft interference in Palestinian space.<sup>52</sup> Similar to considerations made by the British Mandate's Naming Committee, these decisions were made to advance Hebrew while avoiding direct confrontation with the Palestinian population.<sup>53</sup>

## Reactions from Below: Settlerism, Colonialism, and Names

In post-colonial literature, the subaltern resist those in authority through everyday practices such as how they use the space and their discourse about it.<sup>54</sup> This could also include destruction, such as the erasure of linguistic markers, use of graffiti, and other means. Such actions can be understood as a kind of discourse which demonstrates conflictual relations between political groups.<sup>55</sup>

Signs in the areas studied reveal differential opposition to the official linguistic landscape, which also varies in intensity and form. Opposition in the Muslim Quarter is quite limited and takes three forms:

1. Alternative signs: This is a sign which bears a blessing in Arabic only سوق العطارين *سوق العطارين* *Suq al-‘Attarin yurahibu bikum* (Suq al-‘Attarin welcomes you). Above the blessing is a verse from the Qur’an that proclaims the importance of al-Aqsa Mosque and in the background is a picture of the mosque (figure 10).
2. Spray-painted in Hebrew: We found two signs where words were spray-painted in



Hebrew. The name “Path of Hasidism” was spray-painted in yellow and the name for Bab al-Zahra, “Flower Gate” (שַׁעַר הַפְּרָחִים) was painted in green.

3. Stickers: We identified a sticker with religious-ideological content دافعوا عن الأقصى *Dafi ‘u ‘an al-Aqsa* (Defend al-Aqsa) affixed to one of the plaques on Ha-Gai Street (חגי רחוב).

Monolingual writing in Arabic and religious-ideological content in spaces ostensibly controlled by the hegemonic power are examples of use of “symbolic capital” that has been converted into social capital. In this case, the lingual Palestinian presentation from below constitutes symbolic defiance of the establishment.<sup>56</sup> However, there was a paucity of such cases; in our view, this is either out of fear of opposing the Israeli naming authority or such attempts may have been quickly stymied by the Israeli authorities.



Figure 10. A sign in Arabic سوق العطارين next to a trilingual sign erected by Israel. Photo by authors.

There is evidence of intense resistance activity near the gates of al-Haram. There, we found many fabric signs on the gates which display the name of the gate in Arabic, a picture of the al-Aqsa Mosque, a picture of the Dome of the Rock shrine, and a blessing in Arabic. This form of resistance can be described as indirect or soft because this grassroots-initiated linguistic landscape accompanies official plaques, yet does not replace them. Indeed, in the area of al-Haram there are two linguistic

landscapes: the official one from the Jordanian period and a contemporary Palestinian one. The contemporary one challenges the presence of English while seeking to grant exclusivity to Arabic and link it to religious symbols associated with the Palestinian struggle against the Israelis. We did not observe any similar opposition in the Christian or Armenian quarters. We believe that Israeli political activity in these other areas is relatively limited and, furthermore, these areas do not contain sites claimed by Israeli religious actors.

## The Jewish Quarter: A Zionist, Messianic, National-Religious Message

The Jewish quarter featured an entirely different pattern: obliteration of Arabic. Strikingly, the Arabic on virtually every sign in this quarter has been erased or defaced: many Arabic words on signs were removed or damaged either through use of graffiti or by covering Arabic text with stickers. This intense vandalization indicates that those engaging in such acts have a strong desire to make this area devoid of Arabic and Arabs. This contention is strengthened by the type of text evident in such vandalization attempts – primarily political messages which are tied to supporters of a version of Judaism which is largely messianic, settler, religious, and Zionist. For example, one sticker says: “And let them make me a sanctuary – we will go up to the Temple Mount according to the law” (figure 11). Clearly the individual who placed this sticker on the sign



Figure 11. Fighters of the Quarter 1948 St. sign, erected by Israeli authorities. Arabic is deleted. Photo by authors.

identifies with a group of rabbis who wish to break into al-Haram al-Sharif. Another sign features the logo of the Otzma Yehudit political movement – a group which supports transfer of Palestinians. On a sign for רחוב תפארת ירושלים, Rehov Tif’eret Yerushalayyim (Glory of Jerusalem Street), the extreme right-wing political message is even more explicit; it reads: “There is no co-existence. Transfer now” (figure 12).

We argue that these settler-oriented attempts to further Judaize and de-Arabize the already Judaized and de-Arabized linguistic landscape of the Jewish quarter tells a larger story of erasure that is consistent with contemporary Zionism in Israel. The Jewish quarter serves as a platform for extremist voices in Jewish-Israeli society,

voices which, over time, have become increasingly strident and dominant.<sup>57</sup> The Old City, as such, is emblematic of how Israel understands its geo-political location: it is a country that may be physically located in the Middle East, yet seeks to control and supervise the region's indigenous inhabitants and de-politicize and de-Palestinianize them. Our linguistic examination lends additional credence to the presence of a pivotal element of settler-colonialism that reflects the same narrow and rigid outlook and mindset as the colonialists who preceded the Zionist presence in the area.<sup>58</sup>



Figure 12. Tif'eret Yerushalayim Street sign, erected by Israeli authorities. Arabic is deleted. Photo by authors.

## Conclusion: Zionism and De-Palestinianization – Comparing Lingual Representation

Over time, the linguistic approach to signage in the Old City has undergone a number of changes. The British naming authority emphasized a historical and mythological approach, which is consistent with Orientalist, Western views of the Middle East. The Jordanians made very few changes to names given by the British. However, the situation changed dramatically following Israel's occupation of the area in 1967, specifically in the Jewish quarter but also in the Old City as a whole. In the Jewish quarter, the Israeli authorities invested enormous efforts in renaming the streets such that they would engender a connection between the Jewish religious past and the Israeli Zionist present. This highlights a religious Zionist narrative and privileges military events connected to Jewish sovereignty. The degradation of Arabic on signage in this quarter represents a further entrenchment of the Jewish quarter as a Jewish only space. This sends a clear message of who is the sovereign power and has the right to establish ownership over holy sites – Jewish and Muslim alike – in Jerusalem. These politicizing efforts are also reflected in the absence of neutral, universal names in the Jewish quarter, in contrast with other quarters that do feature names from other religious traditions. Furthermore, in the other quarters, Hebrew has been given elevated status through translations which simplify and unify Arabic. Therefore, the Old City can be viewed as a binary space of ideological and theoretical clashes: on the one hand, it infuses Jewish identity and Israeli politics into the present in the Jewish quarter and makes this space welcoming to Jews only. The other quarters, however, are de-politicized and a-historical instead, emphasizing their religious nature. Thus, Jews are entitled to a national-religious presence – while religion serves as a justification to the national – while Muslims and Christians must make due with a religious presence only.

Consistent with this, street names in the Jewish quarter reflect nationalistic themes which are derived exclusively from the Hebrew lexical database. In the other quarters, names are derived from a multitude of other languages. For example, the Via Dolorosa, “Saint” as in Saint Helena, and Patriarchate as in the Armenian Patriarchate are not limited to Arabic – Palestinians’ mother tongue. This policy of monolingualism reflects Israel’s desire to preserve the purity of Hebrew in the Jewish quarter while also challenging the status of languages such as Arabic that were dominant prior to 1967. Therefore the types of words selected reflect national priorities and intentions.

Linguistic presentation in the Old City is closely tied to power relations between the conqueror and the conquered and these asymmetrical relations are sustained by use of language. The Palestinians, who are embroiled in a struggle for national liberation, are not able to control the linguistic landscape in their areas; therefore, this space does not reflect their linguistic identity. Instead, the linguistic landscape is determined by Israel; this gives visibility to Israeli-Jewish linguistic and toponymic heritage, while eroding and blurring Arabic’s visibility.

A comparison of the content of signs in the Muslim quarter with those in the Jewish quarter reveals two different understandings of time. The Muslim quarter seemingly reflects a timeless and ancient space, a relic of the Middle Ages and the Ottomans, that bypasses Palestinian eras and lacks Palestinian national identity. The Jewish quarter, on the other hand, emphasizes a centuries-long continuous attachment to the area stretching from biblical times to the contemporary era, as Braudel also pointed out.<sup>59</sup> This intergenerational continuum melds the past with the present. Biblically-inspired names feature mythical and ancient themes while military names emphasize the sacrifice entailed in liberating the mythical space and the return to Zion. These form a continuous circle of interaction between the past and present moving towards a biblically-inspired endpoint where Jerusalem will be eternally Jewish. Furthermore, chronologically, biblical terminology precedes Muslim symbols. As such, the Jewish quarter reflects both a Jewish mythical space and a contemporary Israeli space. This portrays Jewish and Israeli history as an ancient narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. Furthermore, when comparing the names of streets between the different quarters the political agenda gets clearer; street signs testify to the desire of the new sovereign – Israel – to maintain a British-oriented, de-politicized, and Orientalist approach in all quarters except in the Jewish quarter. Rather, the Jewish quarter promotes an exclusive Jewish national-religious identity with no space for other religions or cultures.

This is also true vis-à-vis anti-Arabic vandalization. The obliteration of Arabic, acts which are consistently disregarded by the enforcement authorities, is indicative of the racist nature of political winds blowing through Israel. Attempts to eliminate Arabic are viewed as a way to cement Jewish identity, hegemony, and rights at the expense of Arab rights. More directly, Israel seeks to erase Palestinian national and political existence. This message is found deep in the echelons of Jewish society as expressed in the recently passed Nation-State Law. This 2018 legislation, with constitutional status, removed Arabic’s status as an official language in Israel. We view this as paradigmatic of the status of Palestinian citizens of Israel as a status under



threat. The same law also proclaims that: “The exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People.” In our view, the linguistic landscape in the Jewish quarter, with its symbolic and telling value, and as compared to other quarters, demonstrates this principle in practice and foreshadows the passage of this law. Language, once again, serves as an indicator of deeper political processes underway in Israel-Palestine.

“What’s in a name?” Shakespeare asks in *Romeo and Juliet*. In the Old City of Jerusalem, the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, names reveal Israeli mechanisms of national validation and erasure. As the sovereign power with the ability to assign names, Israel seeks to sever the link between “freedom of worship” granted to Jews, Muslims, and Christians, with the freedom to see the city as a symbol of national and political yearning. An examination of street signs – their names, their use, and their appearance – reveals that Israel sees only itself as entitled to both. This tragic yet significant insight about the Old City can be a language-oriented contribution to studies and debates dedicated to the injustice that lies in the heart of Jerusalem and into the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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  - 31 Explanations for the names in the Palestinian quarters and al-Haram were taken from the official explanations of the Jerusalem Municipality, and from interviews conducted with Robin Abu Shamsiah in September–October 2018, Dr. Yoav Loeff, October 2018, and Ami Metav June–July 2019.
  - 32 Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali, *Liqa' wudi li al-munaqashat bi ta'rikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil*, vol. 2, [A Friendly Meeting to Discuss the History of Jerusalem and Hebron] (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtaseb, 1973), 42.
  - 33 Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali, *Liqa'*.
  - 34 Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali, *Liqa'*, 36.
  - 35 See Nadav Shragai, "A Rabbi, an Officer and a Mystic," *Israel Hayom*, 12 July 2018, [www.israelhayom.com/2018/12/07/a-rabbi-an-officer-and-a-mystic/](http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/12/07/a-rabbi-an-officer-and-a-mystic/) (accessed 11 August 2021).
  - 36 Samira Hassa, "From 'Avenue de France' to 'Boulevard Hassan II': Toponymic Inscription and the Construction of Nationhood in Fes, Morocco," in *Place Names in Africa: Colonial Urban Legacies, Entangled Histories*, ed. Liora Bigon (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 79–91.
  - 37 Compare with John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1975).
  - 38 Tadek Markiewicz and Keren Sharvit, "When Victimhood Goes to War? Israel and Victim Claims," *Political Psychology* 42, 1 (2021): 111–26.
  - 39 Walid Khalidi, "The Hebrew Reconquista of Palestine: From the 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution to the First Zionist Congress of 1897," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 39, no. 1 (Autumn 2009): 29.
  - 40 Khalidi, "The Hebrew Reconquista."
  - 41 Khalidi, "The Hebrew Reconquista," 30.
  - 42 See, for example, Ivan Kalmar and Derek Penslar, *Orientalism and the Jews* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005).
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  - 44 Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948, and Jerusalem in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
  - 45 Yonatan Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 25.
  - 46 Simone Ricca, *Reinventing Jerusalem: Israel's Reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter After 1967* (London, I.B. Tauris: 2007); Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, *Seizing Jerusalem: The Architectures of Unilateral Unification* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
  - 47 Nitzan-Shiftan, *Seizing Jerusalem*, 22.

- 48 Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, *The Armenian Ceramics of Jerusalem Three Generations, 1919–2003* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2003).
- 49 On new signs placed by the Jordanians in the Old City of Jerusalem there were only two languages: Arabic and English.
- 50 See, for example: Román Álvarez and M. del Carmen Vidal, eds., *Translation, Power, Subversion* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1996).
- 51 The present location of the Jewish quarter was established on the space where there were previously three Palestinian neighborhoods: al-Sharaf, al-Risha, and al-Maslah.
- 52 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).
- 53 Naming Committee minutes, Jerusalem municipality archive, 7 December 1967.
- 54 Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 88.
- 55 Samira Hassa, “From ‘Avenue de France’ to ‘Boulevard Hassan II’: Toponymic Inscription and the Construction of Nationhood in Fes, Morocco,” in *Place Names in Africa: Colonial Urban Legacies, Entangled Histories*, ed. Liora Bigon (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 79–91. For further reading on vandalization of signs, see Ben Reiff, “‘Resist’: The Political Street Art of Jerusalem,” 3 August 2020, online at [vashtimedia.com/2020/08/03/jerusalem-protest-netanyahu-democracy-graffiti/](http://vashtimedia.com/2020/08/03/jerusalem-protest-netanyahu-democracy-graffiti/) (accessed 11 August 2021); “The Israeli Right is Erasing Arabic from Jerusalem, One Street Sign at a Time,” 24 September 2020, online at [www.972mag.com/jerusalem-arabic-street-signs-israeli-right/](http://www.972mag.com/jerusalem-arabic-street-signs-israeli-right/) (accessed 11 August 2021).
- 56 See Derek Alderman, “A Street Fit For a King: Naming Places and Commemoration in the American South,” *Professional Geography* 52, no. 4 (2000): 672–84.
- 57 An example of this is the far-right Religious Zionist Party – a group that harks back to the racist legacy of Rabbi Meir Kahane, outlawed from the Knesset during his lifetime, are now elected to the parliament and members of the Knesset (for example, Itamar Ben-Gvir).
- 58 For further reading on the inherent connection between settler-colonialism and the changing of landscape in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, see Neve Gordon and Moriel Ram, “Ethnic Cleansing and the Formation of Settler Colonial Geographies,” *Political Geography* 53 (2016): 20–29; Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2017); Nur Masalha, *The Zionist Bible: Biblical Precedent, Colonialism and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2013).
- 59 Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).