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# Accounts of Settler Colonialism: A Comparative Study of the Dakota & Palestinians' Plight

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Accounts of Settler Colonialism:  
A Comparative Study of the Dakota & Palestinians' Plight

By

Baligh Ben Taleb

A THESIS

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Accounts of Settler Colonialism:  
A Comparative Study of the Dakota & Palestinians' Plight

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University of Nebraska, 2014

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Over the course of the nineteenth century, American settlers spread throughout the Western frontier, driving out indigenous populations to establish unique and permanent homelands of their own. In doing so, they caused the death and displacement of thousands of Plains Indians, including the Dakota people in the young state of Minnesota in 1862. Indeed, the US-Dakota War represented a salient instance of settler colonial expansion on the frontier, triggering a bloody conflict between the Dakota Sioux and American military expeditions led by Henry H. Sibley. This paper attempts to contextualize this war within the broader framework of settler colonialism and examines the white settlers' rhetoric of exclusion that validated the mass hanging and dispossession of the Dakota people. Equally important, this paper examines the settler colonial enterprise in Palestine since the rise of Zionism until around the 1967 War. It looks at a body of Zionist settler colonial practices in Palestine in tandem with the tragedy of Lydda—the very epicenter of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948. This is not, however, to essentialize both historical experiences, it certainly tends to highlight few practices of settler colonialism in America and Israel such as the discursive strategy of exclusion cloaked within Dakota 'heathenism' and 'savagery' and Zionist "obsessional imperative" of being ethnically pure to the detriment of thousands of Palestinian Arabs.<sup>1</sup> It is beyond this paper's scope to deliver parochial tablets; rather it tends to explore the underpinnings and practices of settler colonialism on the Dakota and the Palestinian peoples. Two cases different in time and space, but they share certain psychodynamics of settler colonialism.

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<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo Veracini. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 61.

## ***Dedication***

*As always, I remain endlessly thankful to my indefatigable teachers in this world, my parents,*

*Ahmed Ben Taleb and Mabrouka Maaoui!*

*I am sure it won't be enough, but thank you for being my parents!*

*And for Yasmine, who was there every step of the way.*

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This thesis has been quite a wild and herculean task, but with the help of fascinating people I am glad it has come to an end. In academia it has become a custom to give credit where it is due. First, I would like to thank Dr. Victoria Smith for taking the time to offer assistance in reading the Dakota work. I am also very appreciative of prof. Margaret Jacobs' thoughtful comments and the benefits of her astute suggestions on the Dakota chapter. I would like also to give credit to prof. James D. LeSueur for his insightful remarks and constructive criticisms. Similarly, I benefited extensively from the generosity and sagacity of Dr. Bedross Der Matossian, whose criticism has been very eye-opening to my Palestinian chapter. Last but not least, I owe an immense amount to Mikal Brotov, Rebecca Wingo, Meryem Ay, Ghada Issa, and Amny Athamny for being so generous in reading and helping with research. Thank you all!

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## Introduction

If the 1948 Arab-Israeli War marked the first chapter of a military series of land annexation of Israeli settler colonialism, the 1862 US-Dakota War in the young state of Minnesota continued to ignite the American Western frontier and did not end until 1890 with the ill-famed Battle of Wounded Knee in South Dakota. This Dakota-Palestinians parallel remains scarcely understudied and typically shares patterns of settler colonialism. In filling the gap, this work examines the Dakota War of 1862, also known as the 1862 Minnesota Massacre, as a glaring example of the battle on the frontier between the settlers, the state, and the Dakota people. The conflict symbolizes the constant demands for Indian lands made by westward-moving settlers and consequent treaties to “legalize” the land take-overs. It equally depicts a decisive battleground for the Dakotas as a beguiling dream of the return to their ancestral lands.

To interpret the valid use of violence against the existing anti-Indian feelings, I examine the reports of Henry Hastings Sibley, First State Governor of Minnesota (1858-1860) and a U.S. Representative of the Minnesota Territory. I also examine Governor Alexander Ramsey’s letters to Abraham Lincoln; the reports of Morton S. Wilkinson, the Republican Senator from Minnesota (1859-1865); and Gen. John Pope, the commander of the new department who was sent to Minnesota to quell the Sioux uprising. In addition, I look at Alfred Sully, the colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Infantry on February 3, 1862 and later brigadier general on September 26, 1862, whose troops destroyed a village of some 500 tipis in the field of Tah-kah-o-ku-ty. These reports and primary sources embody a discursive strategy of settler colonialism to purge the Dakotas

from an expanding settlers' body created by the boundaries of the new state of Minnesota, which is a Dakota word for "clear water."

Equally important, this paper examines Israel's settler colonial structures in Palestine since the rise of Zionism as well as its tactics and its practices during the 1948 and 1967 wars. It focuses on specific cases of a settler colonial paradigm such as the discursive strategy of dispossession, cultural effacement, legal appropriation and how the latter "reaffirm[ed] a sort of Zionist manifest destiny."<sup>2</sup> It also historicizes the massacre of Lydda (Lod, al-Lud) during the 1948 Palestine War (Israeli War of Independence) within the broader frame of settler colonialism. The expulsion of a full one-tenth of the Arab exodus from the towns of Lydda and Ramle in July 1948 "was the largest operation of its kind in the first Israeli-Arab war," Benny Morris indicated.<sup>3</sup> Was there direct evidence of a systematic expulsion during "Operation Dani" (Mivtza' Dani)? This question and others remain integral in the ever-growing body of the historical debate on the 1948 war.

Our task is to contextualize this conflict and Israel's colonial practices within a history of settler colonialism. This part draws and expands from a body of Israeli and Arab primary and secondary resources. For example, I examine reports related to Yigal Allon, the IDF General Commander of Operation Dani, his chief lieutenant Yitzhak Rabin's, and commander of the 89<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Moshe Dayan's. I also use Spiro Munayyer's account, *Al-Lud fi 'Ahdai al-Intidab wal-Ihtilal* [Lydda in both Periods of the Mandate

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<sup>2</sup> Eugène L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.). *"The" War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Benny Morris, "Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 82.



and the Occupation], as one of the very few detailed eye-witness accounts that exists from the point of view of an ordinary Palestinian layman.<sup>4</sup>

That being said, the present study does not purport to be a complete history of the young states of Minnesota and Israel, but rather a sketch of few politics of settler colonialism and their aftermath implications. The writing is organized into three main layers intersecting and interlocking with the general context of settler colonial studies. Chapter one addresses the concept of settler colonialism, its historical scholarship, its logic of dispossession and practices of appropriation. Chapter two examines the rhetoric behind the 1862 Minnesota Massacre (U.S-Dakota War) as it encapsulates a central part of the U.S. settler colonial paradigm on the American frontier. Chapter three investigates the philosophy of Zionism/Israel, its practices of settler colonialism and its infliction on the Palestinian Arabs, particularly during the 1948 and the 1967 wars. The conclusion brings both cases into a comparative approach and looks at the practices of both settler colonial experiences and their implications on the indigenes—the Dakota and the Palestinians. In a nutshell, the central arguments of this paper are framed by the global history of settler colonialism, a relatively recent and cutting-edge field of historical inquiry.

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<sup>4</sup> Spiro Munayyer. "The Fall of Lydda." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Vol. 17, No. 4 (Summer 1998), 80-98.

## Chapter One: Settler Colonialism & Logic of Exclusion

*Settler colonialism is being unable to fill in the blanks. It is the history of a family welded together by natives and settlers. It is the logic of superiority, of primacy, of genocide. It is the colonization of memory and of events that come to be known as “History”.*<sup>5</sup>

Settler colonialism refers to a history in which the settlers drove indigenous populations from their land in order to create their own national or ethnic communities.<sup>6</sup> Under colonialism, the colonizers go out to the colonies, usurp the land, exploit their resources as if by right and eventually return home. Under settler colonialism, there is no return home, the colonizers come to stay and occupy the land permanently. In other words, they want the indigenes “to vanish,” but sometimes they exploit them before their disappearance, and “other times they replace them,” as theorist Patrick Wolfe explains.<sup>7</sup> This applies to Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Canada, the United States and Israel.

In the United States, settler colonialism has taken the form of military, institutional, cultural (forced assimilation through boarding schools) and legal policies (treaties) aimed at eliminating and subordinating Indian tribes over the short and long term. The Dakota people began to challenge the colonial rule more forcefully, eventually engaging in direct warfare against the settlers and the U.S government in 1862. The aftermath of this settler colonial war resulted in mass hanging, imprisonment, forced depopulation, and starvation and thus the destruction of the Dakota community. In Israel, Zionist settler colonialism has taken similar forms of policies to expel thousands of Palestinians from their land in the two wars of 1948 and 1967. Despite differences in time and space, the concerted

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<sup>5</sup> Maya Mikdashi. “What is Settler Colonialism?” *Jadaliya*. (Jul 17, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Walter L. Hixson. *American Settler Colonialism: A History*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Wolfe. *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*. (London: Cassell, 1999), 2.

efforts of white settlers in Minnesota and in Palestine “resemble one another in several respects [and are] not a consequence of conscious imitation,” Lynette Russell explains, “but of separate efforts to resolve very similar problems,”—how to deal with violent indigenous resistance in contestation for colonial space.<sup>8</sup>

In this respect, settler colonial studies facilitate comparative analysis that features histories evolving at different places and at different times. A phenomenon that replicates globally and remains as much a thing of the past as a thing of the present.<sup>9</sup> What primarily distinguishes settler colonialism in Minnesota and Palestine from colonialism proper is that settlers came not to exploit the indigenous population for economic gain, but rather to remove them from colonial space. They sought to “construct communities bounded by ties of ethnicity and faith,” Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson point out.<sup>10</sup> Settlers in Minnesota and Israel created a culturally imagined and legally sanctioned relationship with the land. For example, terms such as “frontier” and a “Jewish homeland” establish emotional attachment to the new space.<sup>11</sup> Military leaders in both Minnesota and in Palestine “wished less to govern indigenous peoples or to enlist them in their economic ventures than to seize their land and push them beyond an ever-expanding frontier of settlement.”<sup>12</sup> Preeminent theorist of settler colonialism Lorenzo Veracini succinctly notes, “Settler colonial projects are specifically interested in turning indigenous peoples into refugees.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Lynette Russell, ed. *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Cavanagh & Lorenzo Veracini (2013): “Editors statement”. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3:1,1.1

<sup>10</sup> Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson, eds. *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Walter L. Hixson. *American Settler Colonialism: A History*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Elkins and Pederson, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Lorenzo Veracini. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 35; See also “Settler Colonialism,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 107, 4. (Special edition, Fall 2008).

In the end, settler colonialism is a zero-sum contest; a winner-take-all project and would accept nothing less than the removal of the Dakota and the Palestinian Arabs to cobble the settler's indigeneity. Settlers in Minnesota and Israel established "facts on the ground" through mass immigrations, "to scout for prospects and to squat," John Weaver points out.<sup>14</sup> Masses of settlers brought modernity with them—building roads, bridges, railroads, factories, towns and cities, nevertheless mowing indigenous cultures in the process. The migrants destroyed, crippled, swamped most of the numerous societies they encountered, and created new societies at an astonishing pace.<sup>15</sup> Yet, if the indigenes failed to embrace the 'arts' of settlers' civilization, then a lethal tropes of racial inferiority, indigenous savagery and ineptitude are used to validate ethnic cleansing campaigns.

In colonial textual ingredients of settler colonialism in Minnesota and Palestine, indigenes' identities were formulated as a chameleon-like feature that required constant repetition and affirmation in order to assert them as being real. In this line of thought, Aimé Césaire in *Discourse of Colonialism* (1950) explained how the colonizer destroys the identity of the colonized through "thingification" ("chosification"). Both the Dakota and the Palestinians are conceptually perceived as a "thing"—without a core existence on their lands. Following Césaire's argument, Albert Memmi emphasized that the colonized people were perpetually degraded and kept a separate entity, precluding the creation of a new settler society.<sup>16</sup> Homi Bhaba destabilized this allegorical Manichean between the colonizer and the colonized since the former depended on the latter to construct his own

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<sup>14</sup> John C. Weaver. *The Great Land Rush and The Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>15</sup> James Belich. *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World, 1783-1939*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 558.

<sup>16</sup> Albert Memmi. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. (Boston, MA: The Beacon Press, 1965), 88-89.

identity. Both are seen through “malleable” relations—settlers are white and civilized and indigenes are brown and savage.<sup>17</sup>

The Dakota were perceived as “heathens” even though many white settlers, particularly Indian sympathizers like Sara Wakefield condemned treaty violations and aggression against the Dakota. Settlers, arriving in massive numbers in Minnesota, assumed entitlement to the land and demanded total security from the threat of the Dakota resistance. The Dakota presence destabilized white settlers’ access to land and so the settlers’ “logic of exclusion” straightforwardly furthered a “racial classification” that validates an indiscriminate violence aimed at fulfilling the self-serving vision of Indians as a “dying race.”<sup>18</sup> The frontier, including the Dakota land, became feminized, a space characterized as a naked woman exposed to white settlers’ gaze, and presented a promise of effortless access. This coherent discursive strategy of feminization, eroticization and cannibalism echoes the gender power relation that requires Henry Sibley, traders and Indian agents’ intervention to redeem the *pristine* land of the young state of Minnesota.

Concurrently, as a national movement, Zionism is heavily laden with Eurocentric notions of racial superiority, progress, and providential destiny which propelled a land rush in Palestine to be “unstoppable.”<sup>19</sup> Having imagined powerful connections to Palestine, Jewish settlers, although they purchased major parts of the land, defended *the land of Zion* in 1948 violently and at all costs, continued to conquer and inherit the wilderness in 1967. Their ultimate goal is to “bring about the return to Zion” and morph the “Chosen people” into a “normal people”, and from the ills of the diaspora into their

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<sup>17</sup> Homi Bhaba. *The Location of Culture*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 112.

<sup>18</sup> Wolfe, 388.

<sup>19</sup> Weaver. *The Great Land Rush and The Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 5.

own Jewish state.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, Palestinian existence laid outside Jewish conceptions of a state of Israel. The way leading figures of Zionism conceived, imagined and framed Palestine in their campaigns of land rush, turned the indigenes ‘invisible’. The orientalist reproach of invisibility, statelessness and nomadism “renders” the Palestinians “removable,” Patrick Wolfe indicates. It is ‘territoriality’ that remains settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element, not race or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.”<sup>21</sup> This racial superiority establishes and maintains a colonial authority over the land as the Palestinians disappear slowly in favor of the colonial settlers. The land, henceforth, shall “belong by natural right to that power which understands its value and is willing to turn it into account,” as David Spurr concurred.<sup>22</sup>

Although the next chapter is on a tragic war on the American frontier, the 1862 Dakota war is a microcosm of a long nineteenth century Westward expansion of the United States in that it “connects deeply, extensively, and reciprocally with land-taking and land-allocation episodes in the histories of British settlement colonies,” Weaver points out.<sup>23</sup> Israel, on the other hand, was not a product of British settler colonialism like the United States, but it was a product of a national movement backed by Britain and later the United States. The settlers had to naturalize a new historical record while displacing the indigenous past because indigeneity required not only taking over the land, either through killing or removing, but also a sanitized historical narrative as well. This could be seen

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<sup>20</sup> Aviezer Ravitzky. *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>21</sup> Wolfe, 396.

<sup>22</sup> David Spurr. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 156.

<sup>23</sup> Weaver, *Great Land Rush*, 18-19.

later in the next two chapters about settler colonial conflicts like the 1862 US-Dakota war and the 1948 Lydda massacre in the Arab-Israeli War.

## Chapter Two: The Dakota-US War of 1862: A Settler Colonial War

“The cries of the victims of the Indian massacre and the yells of their fiendish assailants were lost in the thunders of the Second Manassas, South Mountain and Perryville; the smoke of the savage burnings in Minnesota was obscured by the powder clouds of a score of Southern battlefields.”<sup>24</sup> Thus spoke Charles D. Gilfillan, the first president of the Minnesota Valley Historical Society in 1895, of the outbreak of the 1862 Minnesota War. In the years between 1861 and 1865, the United States Army faced a second front often neglected in historical accounts of this tragic period of American history. The first major and unexpected attack from western Indian tribes during the Civil War came in 1862, in Minnesota. Governor Alexander Ramsey telegraphed President Lincoln: “This is not our war,” he said; “it is a national war... More than five hundred whites have been murdered by the Indians.”<sup>25</sup>

The 1862 Dakota War was more of a reaction to a series of problems—the ever-increasing white settlement in the Minnesota River Valley, the violation of terms of treaties, the deficiency to feed the roughly six thousand Dakotans on the reservation. Tensions were already high when four young Santee men, out hunting on August 17, 1862, broke into the village of Acton, Minnesota, stole some eggs from a local farmer, and murdered five white settlers. This incident triggered great panic on the frontier. The Mdewakanton chief Little Crow soon became the recognized leader of the rebellion, as “long years of exploitation and injustice had bred a deep resentment among the Dakota

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<sup>24</sup> Sketches, historical and descriptive, of the monuments and tablets erected by the Minnesota Valley Historical Society in Renville and Redwood counties, Minnesota. (Morton: Minnesota Valley Historical Society, 1902), 4.

<sup>25</sup> “Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress.” Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. Alexander Ramsey to Abraham Lincoln, Saturday, September 06, 1862. (Telegram concerning affairs in Minnesota).



tribesmen along the frontier,” as William B. Hesseltine noted. “When this resentment came to a head, strong bands of red men attacked the white settlements.”<sup>26</sup> This outbreak was one of a series of Indian wars on the Northern Plains that continued to ignite the frontier and did not end until 1890 with the ill-famed Massacre of Wounded Knee in South Dakota. To illustrate the disastrous magnitude of the Dakota War, John G. Nicolay, one of President Lincoln’s private secretaries, noted on a treaty-making assignment in Minnesota, that from “the days of King Philip to the time of Black Hawk, there has hardly been an outbreak so treacherous, so sudden, so bitter, and so bloody, as that which filled the State of Minnesota with sorrow and lamentation.”<sup>27</sup>

Like major historical events, this war is often tempting for historians to look back and make judgments on the actions or the causes of the war. Different histories emerged out of this war. Early histories, for example, ricocheted off the dominant views of the time: that white people had a God-given right to the land, and that native people were “heathen savages” in contrast to the bearers of a “true civilization”. Harriet Bishop, a St. Paul resident who started the city’s first school in Minnesota, explained in 1864 that the major cause of the war was a “divine intervention” and that the Indians went to war because they had fallen in league with the “devil.”<sup>28</sup> Charles S. Bryant’s book, *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota* (1864) described the “massacre” as the “result of a conspiracy long cherished by the great chief, Little Crow.”<sup>29</sup> Overall, the

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<sup>26</sup> William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 275.

<sup>27</sup> Theodore C. Blegen, ed., *Lincoln's Secretary Goes West: Two Reports by John G. Nicolay on Frontier Indian Troubles 1862* (La Crosse, Wis., 1965), 45.

<sup>28</sup> Harriet E. Bishop, *Dakota War Whoop: or, Indian Massacres and War in Minnesota, of 1862-3* (New York: WM. J. Moses' Press, 1864), 66.

<sup>29</sup> Charles S. Bryant, Abel B. Murch, *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota: Including the Personal Narratives of many who Escaped* (Cincinnati: Rickey & Carroll, 1864), iv.

first accounts of the war focused on the brutality and the atrocities committed by the several hundred Dakota who took up arms.

On the other hand, Sarah Wakefield, with her physician husband Dr. John L. Wakefield, were at Yellow Medicine (Upper Sioux Agency), where the U.S.-Dakota War broke out. Upon hearing about the war, Mrs. Wakefield and her two children fled and were taken prisoners on their way to Fort Ridgely. A Dakota man named Chaska (Wechankwastadonpe) and his family took them under their protection throughout the six weeks of battle. He safely returned them at Camp Release after the war. Yet, Chaska ended up being among the 38 hanged in Mankato.<sup>30</sup> Wakefield insider's perspective put the onus on white settlers, particularly state agents for catalyzing the war; "That our people," she wrote; "not the Indians were to blame. Had they not, for years, been suffering? Had they not been cheated unmercifully, and now their money had been delayed? ... But they knew no justice but in dealing out death for their wrongs".<sup>31</sup>

Later accounts of the war reiterated Wakefield's personal insight. Alexander Berghold, a Catholic priest in New Ulm, justified in *The Indians' Revenge, or Days of Horror, Some Appalling Events in the History of the Sioux* (1891), that the swindles, starvation and ill treatment of the Dakota had indeed laid the groundwork for their revolt. "During the winter", he said, "they lose a good many, [...] the poor creatures perish from cold and starvation."<sup>32</sup> What sets this paper apart from early works is my examination of the

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<sup>30</sup> Sarah Wakefield. "The Dakota-US War of 1862," *Minnesota Historical Society*. (Accessed April 22, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Sarah F. Wakefield, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*. With an introduction by Julia Namias (Shakopee, Minn.: Argus Books, 1864), 100.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Berghold, *The Indians' Revenge, or Days of Horror, Some Appalling Events in the History of the Sioux* (San Francisco: P. J. Thomas Printer, 1891), 55.

rhetoric of extermination, or “The Metaphysics of Indian Hating”—where the idea of savagism contrasted with the image of the bearers of a “true civilization”.<sup>33</sup>

How did Minnesota White Man’s conception of himself influence both his perception of the Dakota people and the subsequent military expeditions against the Sioux? Were there connections between the official rhetoric and the public labeling of Indians as “the deficient savage”? How did a threatening image of “merciless savages” trying to take over the young state of Minnesota, serve to legitimize a policy of extermination? The answer to these questions does not intend to engage in “who is to blame” analysis, but rather to historicize one of the features of settler colonialism—the rhetoric of extermination—during the 1862 Dakota War. So, the primary focus of this chapter is to use the concept of settler colonialism as a basis to articulate a principled critique of settlers’ colonial policy and how that policy delegitimized the Dakota’s grievances.

Settler colonialism is a central dynamic to understand the causes of the Minnesota conflict, as westward-moving settlers constantly encroached upon, demanded Indian lands and consequently established treaties to “legalize” the land take-overs.<sup>34</sup> As aforementioned, settler colonialism’s dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement—it “destroys to replace.”<sup>35</sup> By the early 1860s, the settler-oriented policy of “territoriality” continued to dispossess the Sioux. The latter lost practically all of their Minnesota lands “except for a ten-mile-wide reservation on the south side of the

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<sup>33</sup> Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (California: University of California Press, 1988), 245.

<sup>34</sup> Gerald S. Henig, “A Neglect Cause of the Sioux Uprising,” *The Minnesota Historical Society*. (Fall 1976): 107.

<sup>35</sup> Wolfe, 388.

Minnesota River from west of New Ulm to Big Stone Lake.”<sup>36</sup> The remaining land was not a good hunting ground and many suffered from starvation as they were largely dependent on the annuities, which were often delayed. In this frame, Wakefield wrote:

*Many days these poor creatures subsisted on a tall grass which they find in the marshes, chewing the roots, and eating the wild turnip. They would occasionally shoot a muskrat, and with what begging they would do, contrive to steal enough so they could live; but I knew that many died from starvation or disease caused by eating improper food.*<sup>37</sup>

Along these politics, the racially-coded rhetoric of anti-Indianism played a dynamic role in defining the general sentiment. Hank Cox writes “Minnesota was anti-slavery regarding the Negroes, but locally it was more anti-Indian”.<sup>38</sup> Using the Manichean allegory, the logic of anti-Indianism worked in tandem with a second logic of expansion *à la mission civilisatrice*. The bearers of a “true civilization” contrasted “Indian savagism”. In a letter to Abraham Lincoln in 1862, Thaddeus Williams, a doctor from St. Paul, wrote: “In the march of civilized humanity across the New World, the lurking *savage*, with lust and vengeance in his heart has ever lurked by the pathway, and suspended over the couch of the pioneer the tom-a-hawk and scalping-knife, those terrible emblems of *savage cruelty* and *demoniac hatred*”.<sup>39</sup> The common theme of marching westward implicitly designates an inevitable subjugation of all geographical and human obstacles.

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<sup>36</sup> Gerald S. Henig, “A Neglect Cause of the Sioux Uprising,” *The Minnesota Historical Society*. (Fall 1976): 107.

<sup>37</sup> Wakefield, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, 63-4.

<sup>38</sup> Cox, Hank H. *Lincoln and the Sioux Uprising of 1862*. (Nashville: Cumberland House Publishing, 2005), 48.

<sup>39</sup> Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (Thaddeus Williams to Abraham Lincoln, Saturday, November 22, 1862), 31. (Opposes the pardoning of Sioux sentenced to death)

The settler belief in the powerlessness of the Dakota people provided a cover for a colonial authority over the land in favor of the white settlers of Minnesota. The idea of the Indian, being the “deficient savage” did not halt with the war, but continued and became reified at the end of the nineteenth century. Charles D. Gilfillan described the Indian uprising as follows: “More Indians were engaged, more whites were killed, and more property were destroyed than in any other conflicts with the *savages* since the first settlement of this country”.<sup>40</sup> The idea of the Sioux “savagism” presented a demiurgic impulse to replace a threatening existing society with a new one—white settlers.

### **I. The Dakota-US War of 1862: An Account of Settler Colonialism**

Assaults against white settlers began on August 18, when Little Crow led an attack on the Lower Sioux Agency. He killed thirty-one, including James W. Lynd, a husband of two Indian wives, women and children. The Indians lost a young warrior of Hu-sha-sha’s band, named Towato, or All Blue.<sup>41</sup> Killing women and children, however, seemed to oppose chief Little Crow’s belief of protecting the helpless from violence. Addressing his soldiers on the second day of the uprising, he said:

*Soldiers and young men, you ought not to kill women and children. Your consciousness will reproach you for it hereafter, and make you weak in battle. You were too hasty in going into the country. You should have killed only those who have been robbing us for so long. Hereafter make war after the manner of white men.*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sketches, historical and descriptive, of the monuments and tablets erected by the Minnesota Valley Historical Society in Renville and Redwood counties, Minnesota: to preserve the sites of certain incidents and in honor of the devotion and important services of some of the characters, whites and Indians, connected with the Indian outbreak of 1862. (Morton: Minnesota Valley Historical Society, 1902), 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> As reported by A.J. Campbell, now at Santee, Neb., who was present and heard the speech. In Sketches, historical and descriptive, of the monuments and tablets erected by the Minnesota Valley Historical Society in Renville and Redwood counties, Minnesota, (Morton: Minnesota Valley Historical Society, 1902), 18.

Like Little Crow, many Indians were forced into the war against their desires due to the madness of their misery. After the Battle of Wood Lake in September 1862, many of them favored a general massacre of 300 helpless white and mixed blood prisoners. Had Little Crow not opposed such proposition, it could have triggered another massacre on the frontier. Meanwhile, Captain John S. March urged Lieut. Sheehan, in his letter: “It is absolutely necessary that you should return with your command immediately to this Post. The Indians are raising hell at the lower Agency. Return as soon as possible.”<sup>43</sup>

In taking revenge, however, Captain March headed with a seventy-eight-man garrison toward the Lower Sioux Agency, only to be ambushed in tandem with twenty-three soldiers by the Dakotas at the Redwood Ferry.<sup>44</sup> Left in command at Fort Ridgely, the nineteen-year-old Lieutenant Thomas Gere wrote to Governor Ramsey, “The Indians are killing the settlers and plundering the country. Send reinforcements without delay.”<sup>45</sup> On August 19<sup>th</sup>, the Dakota, successful in its surprise attacks, continued the insurgency against the Lower Sioux agency and white settlers at New Ulm, the nearest white settlement to the reservation. The next day, August 20<sup>th</sup>, the Sioux tried to take over the reinforced garrison at Fort Ridgely, but remaining soldiers drove them off. Upon his briefing on the uprising, Governor Ramsey, on August 21, telegraphed Secretary of War

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<sup>43</sup> August 18, 1862, *Letters from Captain Marsh and 2nd Lieutenant Gere*, Letters Received—Indian Agencies, Military Posts and Units—Aug. 1862. Minnesota: Governor: Ramsey. Records. State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>44</sup> Jerry Keenan, *The Great Sioux Uprising: Rebellion on the Plains, August-September 1862*. (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 26-28

<sup>45</sup> August 18, 1862, *Letters from Captain Marsh and 2nd Lieutenant Gere*, Letters Received—Indian Agencies, Military Posts and Units—Aug. 1862. Minnesota: Governor: Ramsey. Records. State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.

Edwin Stanton, in which he wrote: “The Sioux Indians on our western border have risen, and are murdering men, women and children.”<sup>46</sup>

Consumed by the Civil War, President Lincoln initially did not take any act on the uprising in Minnesota.<sup>47</sup> His administration was pulled through deep setbacks as General Robert E. Lee was about to defeat the second Union army under General Pope. But later, on December 1, 1862, in his State of the Union Address, he stated:

*In the month of August last the Sioux Indians in Minnesota attacked the settlements in their vicinity with extreme ferocity, killing indiscriminately men, women, and children. This attack was wholly unexpected, and therefore no means of defense had been prodded. It is estimated that not less than 800 persons were killed by the Indians, and a large amount of property was destroyed. How this outbreak was induced is not definitely known, and suspicions, which may be unjust, need not to be stated. Information was received by the Indian Bureau from different sources about the time hostilities were commenced that a simultaneous attack was to be made upon the white settlements by all the tribes between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. The State of Minnesota has suffered great injury from this Indian war. A large portion of her territory has been depopulated, and a severe loss has been sustained by the destruction of property. The people of that State manifest much anxiety for the removal of the tribes beyond the limits of the State as a guaranty against future hostilities [emphases added].<sup>48</sup>*

The usage of the passive voice in “were commenced” and “were killed by the Indians” allows President Lincoln to reveal the “savagery” of the Indians and the victimization of the white settlers and military generals. In a sense, the passive voice shows the “ferocity” of the Indians while it buries the deteriorating living conditions within the context of the passage. As one can see, there is no indication precisely of what caused the outbreak. As such, without the use of a subject, President Lincoln gave weight of authority to statements such as “The people of that State manifest much anxiety for the removal of the tribes beyond the limits of the State as a guaranty against future hostilities”. This

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. War Department, *War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and the Confederate Armies*, ser. 1 vol. 13 pt. 1 (Washington, D.C, 1880), 590.

<sup>47</sup> David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 81.

<sup>48</sup> State of the Union Address: Abraham Lincoln (December 1, 1862).

discursive strategy to feminize the Sioux echoes the gender power relation that requires white settlers' intervention to redeem the pristine land and reestablish order. Lincoln's Speech has indeed important ideological functions as it deletes agency and reifies processes of 'removal'. In other words, his speech derealized and reconstructed the Dakota people to fit into a threatening picture in an effort to purge them from an expanding social body created by the boundaries of the new white settler society.

In the midst of the uprising, on Wednesday, August 27, 1862, Morton S. Wilkinson, the Republican Senator from Minnesota (1859-1865), William P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and John G. Nicolay one of Lincoln's private secretaries, briefed the President about the crisis: "We are in the midst of a most terrible & exciting Indian war thus far the massacre of innocent white settlers has been fearful a wild panic prevails in nearly one half of the state. All are rushing to the frontier to defend settlers."<sup>49</sup> Indian assailants on white settlements and Indian agencies did not halt. Few days later, on September 2 and 3, 1862, in the battleground of Birch Coulie, the Indians, under Red Legs, besieged "a white force of 150 men, composed of newly-recruited volunteers and newly organized militia and citizens, including half dozen loyal mixed-blood Indians," for nearly thirty hours.<sup>50</sup> The rampage resulted in the murder of 23 white settlers, the injury of 45, the killing of 90 horses, and the loss of the tents and much of the other camp equipage. The Indians, on the other hand, claimed to have lost two with seven slightly wounded.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> From Morton S. Wilkinson, William P. Dole, and John G. Nicolay to Abraham Lincoln, Sent on Wednesday, August 27, 1862 and Received at 3:00 AM, Washington, D. C., Aug 28 1862. (Telegram concerning Indian war in Minnesota).

<sup>50</sup> Sketches, historical and descriptive, of the monuments and tablets erected by the Minnesota Valley Historical Society in Renville and Redwood counties, (Morton: Minnesota Valley Historical Society, 1902), 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



As soldiers continued to skirmish with the Sioux, the Lincoln administration had a growing conspiratorial concern that Confederate agents might be pulling the strings of the uprising. Horace Greeley, the chief editor of the New York Tribune, seemed to believe so: “The Sioux have doubtless been stimulated... by white and red villains sent among them for this purpose by the Secessionists. They will have effected a temporary diversion in favor of the Confederacy, and that is all their concern.”<sup>52</sup> These conspiracy fears triggered Lincoln to claim Confederate involvement in his State of the Union address to Congress in December.<sup>53</sup> Yet, Captain Pattee of the 14<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry had a different attitude on “who was to blame” and he put the onus on white settlers of Minnesota: “It was conceded at last that the white people of Minnesota, but mostly the people near and connected with the agency, were responsible for this appalling calamity that chilled the blood of the white race of the United States.”<sup>54</sup>

In the meantime, Governor Ramsey, as a second step, appointed his old partner, the fifty-year-old General Henry H. Sibley, to command Minnesota’s militia. His first task was to rescue Fort Ridgely and the settlers caught up in the conflict. Sibley’s forces entered the combat against the Santee. Describing the horrors of the scene, Charles Johnston, 6<sup>th</sup> Minnesota Infantry wrote: “who should describe the horrors and distresses witnessed in the march up the Minnesota [River]? The roads were literally lined with fugitive settlers, with their families, cattle and household effects, terror-stricken and almost entirely unarmed.”<sup>55</sup> Charles Watson, serving in the same Infantry, noted in his dairies as well: “I have seen a great many things since I left home. I have seen awful

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Cozzens, *General John Pope: A Life for the Nation*. (University of Illinois Press, 2005), 200-201.

<sup>53</sup> Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics*, 177.

<sup>54</sup> John Pattee, “Reminiscences of John Pattee,” *South Dakota Historical Collections* 5, (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1910), 519.

<sup>55</sup> Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian wars*, vol., 1, 304.

sights, men with their heads cut off and their skulls all mashed to pieces.”<sup>56</sup> Other soldiers’ diaries depicted more grim images. George Doud, 8<sup>th</sup> Minnesota Infantry served with Leonard Aldrich in Company F. described the nearly destroyed town of New Ulm as “one complete reck”; a twelve-years-old girl “was found dead scalped and all of her garments was torn off from her, women’s breasts cut off and pregnant women with unborn babies cut out from the womb.”<sup>57</sup>

The war continued with another disastrous Battle—Bull Run, August 29 and 30<sup>th</sup>, where General John Pope, the head of the department of the Northwest, witnessed another humiliating loss. Writing to General in Chief Henry Halleck: “You have no idea of the terrible destruction already done and of the panic everywhere. Unless very prompt steps are taken these states will be half depopulated before the winter begins.”<sup>58</sup> But, Sibley, in a six weeks’ campaign, put down the uprising, captured more than a thousand Indians, and sentenced three hundred and three to death.

## II. Sibley’s Expeditions and the Rhetoric of Extermination

Henry Hastings Sibley was at home in Mendota late in the afternoon of August 19, 1862, when Governor Alexander Ramsey rode up to inform him about the “hostility” of the Sioux Indians—the murder and capture of white settlers and the destruction of property in the Minnesota River Valley. Sibley accepted that evening to serve as a Colonel and Commander of the Indian Expedition.<sup>59</sup> On August 20<sup>th</sup>, Sibley and his

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<sup>56</sup> Diary, October 2, 1862, October 22, 1862, March 22, 1863, Charles Watson papers, MHS.

<sup>57</sup> September 16, 1862, September 19, 1862, George Doud Dairies, MHS.

<sup>58</sup> Pope to Major General Henry Halleck, September 16, 1862, U.S. Department, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 13, 642.

<sup>59</sup> Edward D. Neill, *History of the Minnesota Valley*, (Minneapolis, 1882), 136. Sibley’s original commission, signed by Ramsey and Adjutant General Oscar Malmros, is in the Minnesota Historical Society’s manuscripts collection.

troops landed at Shakopee, southwest of Minnesota. Thus began a military campaign—often termed “The Sibley Campaign”—that would last more than a month before its two main goals—defeating the Indians and releasing the captive whites—would be realized.<sup>60</sup> Sibley, a former friend and advocate of Indian rights now faced a daunting task to be their conqueror. Accounts on this military expedition are recorded in the form of extracts from some forty letters that Sibley wrote to his wife, Sarah Jane Steele, from August 21, to November 12, 1862. These extracts are in the Sibley Papers in the manuscripts collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. These letters indicate some of Sibley’s intimate details about the 1862 campaign a man would share with his wife.

Despite his intimate knowledge of the Indian culture, languages, and the Santee chiefs, including Little Crow, the use of the rhetoric of “savagery” seems to be prevalent in his correspondence and reports. On the second day of the expedition, August 21, Sibley and his troops marched from Shakopee to Belle Plaine. There he wrote his first letter of the campaign to his wife: “Things are bad enough no doubt in the upper country,” he said, “but I have no idea that the *savages* will withstand the attack of an organized force”.<sup>61</sup> The news of widespread slaughter and the extent of the Indian outbreak compelled him for fast action. This in turn reinforced his rhetoric of “killing the savages,” as he wrote “I hope soon to be reinforced by more reliable material, and be supplied with ammunition and rations, so that I can overtake and kill a thousand or more of the *savages* and drive the remainder across the Missouri or to the devil.”<sup>62</sup> In different extracts, Sibley

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<sup>60</sup> Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* (St. Paul: The Minnesota Historical Society, 1961): 36, 47-51, 55-67.

<sup>61</sup> *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*. Vol. 2, Sibley’s official reports and correspondence for the campaign of 1862 (St. Paul, 1899): 165-292.

<sup>62</sup> *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*. Vol. 2, Sibley’s official reports and correspondence for the campaign of 1862 (St. Paul, 1899): 165-292.

described the Indians through this prism of dehumanization—“savages” and “murderers”—which in turn takes into effacing them and perform “the concomitant indigenization of the [white] settler,” as Johnston and Lawson put it.<sup>63</sup>

This jingoism of “Indian cruelty” and “white innocence” became powerful political modus operandi to justify the removal policy vis-à-vis the Sioux Indians, as highlighted earlier in President Lincoln speech that “The people of that State manifest much anxiety for the *removal* of the tribes beyond the limits of the State as a guaranty against future hostilities”.<sup>64</sup>

The rhetorical discourse of settler colonialism, skulking in a racially-coded logic, is prevalent in Generals’ reports. Major General Pope, the commander of the new Military Department of the Northwest, wrote to General-in-chief Henry Halleck that a quick “*exterminating* and ruining [of] all the Indians engaged” would bring him back to the locus of actions against the Confederacy [emphasis added].<sup>65</sup> The concomitance of “savagery” and “extermination” defined much of the subsequent policy of U.S generals during the 1862 Minnesota War. On September 23, 1862, Sibley, after the battle with Little Crow and his men near the mouth of the Chippewa River, wrote to his wife: “A large force of *savages* attacked us this morning, and after a desperate fight of two hours, we whipped them *handsomely*, killed twenty five or thirty of their warriors, and wounded a large number, with a loss on our side of four men killed outright and thirty five or forty wounded”.<sup>66</sup> Vengeful soldiers murdered many of the Santee and scalped several others

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<sup>63</sup> Johnston & Lawson, “Settler Colonies” in H. Schwarz and S. Ray (eds.), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (London, Blackwell, 2001), 369.

<sup>64</sup> State of the Union Address: Abraham Lincoln (December 1, 1862).

<sup>65</sup> *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, vol. 2, Pope to Halleck correspondence, 232-237.

<sup>66</sup> *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*. Vol. 2, Sibley’s official reports and correspondence for the campaign of 1862 (St. Paul, 1899), 165-292.

even though Sibley objected such practices. He wrote “The bodies of dead, even of a *savage* enemy, shall not be subjected to indignities by *civilized* Christian men.”<sup>67</sup> Sibley’s conception of himself as “civilized Christian” influenced both his perception of the Native as “savage heathen” and the subsequent policy directed at the Santee.

In the same vein, it is not uncommon for soldiers in war to demonize their enemy. Union troops who rallied to march against the Sioux often used racist and condescending terms such as “bloodthirsty savages”, “Mr. Lo” and “Mr. Red”.<sup>68</sup> A. P. Connolly made this comparison between the Southern soldiers and American Indians: “In the South we fought foeman worthy of our steel, soldiers who were manly enough to acknowledge defeat of their opponents. Not so the Redskins. Their tactics were of the skulking kind; their object scalps, and not for glory. They never acknowledged defeat, had no respect for a fallen foe, and gratified for their natural propensity for blood.”<sup>69</sup> While the soldiers changed their view of the Southerners who used to be described as “traitors” and “cowards”, but never would the image of the Sioux change in the soldiers’ perception.

The same demeaning and inferior image of the Sioux was replicated among soldiers and generals, including President Lincoln. “The desire for revenge, or actual extermination of the Santees, motivated many soldiers,” as Paul Beck wrote.<sup>70</sup> Eli Pickett, 10<sup>th</sup> Minnesota Infantry, wrote a letter to his wife, Philena Pickett, in which he stated “I know that my hatred for the Indian is great ... so great I believe I could murder the most helpless of their women and children without a feeling of remorse.” This feeling of

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<sup>67</sup> William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, vol. 2. (Minnesota Historical Society, 1924), 182.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Hagadorn Diary, MHS, May 10, 1863.

<sup>69</sup> A. P. Connolly, *A Thrilling Narrative of the Minnesota Massacre and the Sioux War of 1862-63; Graphic Accounts of the Siege of Fort Ridgely, Battles of Birch* (Chicago: A. P. Connolly Publisher, 1896), 12.

<sup>70</sup> Beck, Paul N., *Columns of Vengeance: Soldiers, Sioux, and the Punitive Expeditions, 1863-1864*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 68.

enmity or the settler colonial mentality continues in Pickett's writing: "This Indian war will not only rid Minnesota of the Indians, but will bring millions and millions of dollars to our state."<sup>71</sup>

By the same token, A. P. Connolly reiterated this rhetoric of extermination when he argued that the upcoming campaign against the Sioux was "the final extinction of the Indians."<sup>72</sup> The rhetoric of effacing the Sioux during the expedition manifests itself as well in Duren Kelley's letter to his wife Emma Kelley: "This is going to be a tremendous expedition. If I don't do *extinction* somebody will be to blame... the Indians had better say their prayers for they are surely going to be *snuffed out*".<sup>73</sup> Many Sioux people were not part of the war, but found themselves "guilty of being hostile" for the mere fact they were Sioux.<sup>74</sup> The Dakota raids on white settlers reinforced indeed the anti-Indian sentiment and rationalized the soldiers' belief that those Santees represented a threat to the frontier communities of white settlers and had to be removed. Yet, not only those Dakotas who had surrendered and never participated in the war were removed from Minnesota, but also 2,000 Winnebagos, completely innocent of any role in the uprising, "were beginning to be removed from Minnesota, banished to the new reservation of Crow Creek 150 miles up the Missouri River from Fort Randall."<sup>75</sup>

Sibley's casualties were light comparing to the Indians, but his concern for the captives urged him to complain to Governor Ramsey. "If only I had 500 cavalry," he wrote, "I could have killed the greater part of the Indians, and brought the campaign to a

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<sup>71</sup> Eli to Philena, June 3, 1863, Eli Correspondence, MHS.

<sup>72</sup> Connolly, *A Thrilling Narrative of the Minnesota Massacre and the Sioux War of 1862-63; Graphic Accounts of the Siege of Fort Ridgely, Battles of Birch*, 199.

<sup>73</sup> Offenberg and Parsonage, *War Letters of Duren F. Kelley*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> Beck, 69.

<sup>75</sup> Edmund J. Danziger, Jr., "The Crow Creek Experiment: An Aftermath of the Sioux War of 1862," *North Dakota History* 37, (Spring 1970), 106-109, 114.

successful close.”<sup>76</sup> The campaign was already over with the surrender of the Santees and Little Crow’s departure to Canada in search of new allies to continue the war. Sibley’s final march on September 25<sup>th</sup>, rescued the 296 captives and “established a bivouac at the site, which he christened Camp Release, and proceeded to round up in the next two weeks some 2,000 surrendering Sioux.”<sup>77</sup> The accused did not obtain any legal assistance or representation and were hardly given a chance to defend themselves. Their major allegation was their presence at the scene of the crime and above all, for being Native Americans. Among the 392 charged, 307 were found guilty of heinous crime against white settlers. President Lincoln received a telegraph from General Pope on November 7<sup>th</sup> and after a careful perusal of the convictions, reduced the number of mass hanging to thirty-nine, including Chaska who had saved a white woman—Sarah Wakefield—and her children during the captivity.

In his letters to his wife and reports, Sibley made it clear that he expected the 303 condemned prisoners to die. He was frustrated, like most other Minnesotans, at Lincoln’s drastic reduction of the “death list” of Sioux from 303 to 39. A last-minute pardon reached another Indian man before thirty-eight Sioux went to the gallows in Mankato on December 26, 1862, in “America’s greatest mass execution.”<sup>78</sup> Besides those sentenced to death, “300 were directed toward either the hangman’s rope or prison bars, another 1,658 charged with no other crime than being on the war’s losing side, remained under

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<sup>76</sup> Nathaniel West, *The Ancestry, Life, and Times of Hon. Henry Hastings Sibley* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, 1935), 471.

<sup>77</sup> Micheal Clodfelter, *The Dakota War: the United States Army versus the Sioux, 1862-1865* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1998), 57; Anderson Gary and Alan R. Woolworth, eds. *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 224.

<sup>78</sup> William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, vol. 2. (Minnesota Historical Society, 1924), 209-211.

Sibley's jurisdiction at Camp Release."<sup>79</sup> Indeed, like major settler colonial conflicts, the aftermath of the 1862 Minnesota War worsened much of the intolerable living conditions of the Santees and many other Native Americans, as Congress passed legislation in February and March, 1863, "voiding all the treaties with Santee tribes, erasing their reservations, and ending their annuities... Over one million acres of Indian land were offered up for sale and settlements to white emigrants."<sup>80</sup> In the spring of 1863, in the absence of any serious threat, Minnesotan and local press expressed dissatisfaction at the punishment of Santee tribes. The St. Paul Press warned that "The war is not over! What the people of Minnesota demand is...that the war shall now be offensive. In God's name let the columns of vengeance move on ... until the whole accursed race is crushed."<sup>81</sup>

Thus, from beginning to end, the Sioux outbreak of 1862 was a tragic and brutal episode in the history of Indian-white relations in America. Its central feature is "territoriality", as the colonial structures of alienation and dehumanization of the Santee were necessary for an attempt to banish and place Indian tribes on reservations and open their lands to white settlers. Despite the allegorical images and themes of "savagery vs. civilization", the primary motive for elimination is not race or grade of civilization, but access to territory.<sup>82</sup> Like similar conflicts of settler colonialism, its underlying causes were complex and deeply rooted in the past. Yet, would it have occurred if the national situation had been different? Perhaps missionary Stephen R. Riggs, who had spent

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<sup>79</sup> Clodfelter, 59.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>81</sup> Richard N. Ellis, *General Pope and U.S Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970): 16-17.

<sup>82</sup> Wolfe, 388.



several decades with the Sioux, was right when he declared: “If there had been no Southern war, there would have been no Dakota uprising and no Minnesota massacres!”<sup>83</sup>

Unquestionably, the “Southern war” played a major role in fuelling the uprising, but the flock of thousands of settlers to Minnesota, the destruction of the Dakota crop, the disappearance of bison, starvation, the delay of annuities payment for selling their land, and repeatedly violated treaties had indeed a profound impact in the U.S.-Dakota war of 1862. The violence of settler colonialism did not end there as the vast majority of Dakota place-names, historic and sacred sites were re-named with a white male or Euro-American landmark.<sup>84</sup> In hindsight, much of the “ill-conceived” policies of American settler colonialism in Minnesota are reiterated elsewhere. Although different in time and space, Zionism and later the State of Israel internalized a propensity for creating a new Jewish State in Palestine to the detriment of its indigenes.

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<sup>83</sup> Stephen Riggs, *Tah-koo Wah-kan; Or, The Gospel Among the Dakotas*, (Boston: Cong. Sabbath-School and Publishing Society, 1869), 331.

<sup>84</sup> Waziyatawin. “Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours: Reflections on US Indigenous and Palestinian Experiences under Occupation.” *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2:1, 180.

### Chapter Three: On Politics of Zionism and Settler Colonialism

*I found my way home, passing bodies everywhere, in the middle of the streets and along the sidewalks, including bodies of acquaintances. When I reached the beginning of our street, my knees shaking with fear, I saw my family leaving our home with some light belongings.*<sup>85</sup>

Settler colonialism has been an unescapable dominant theme throughout the history of the *Holy Land*. Various tribes and nations occupied the land—from the Canaanites, Amorites, Jebusites and Jews to the Babylonians, Romans, Persians, and Arabs.<sup>86</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian equation is not unique in this sense as a new phase of settler colonialism has reemerged with the rise of Zionism in the late nineteenth century. As a modern political movement, Zionism has not only brought a new contest over the land, but also its major leading figures have reproduced certain colonial dynamics of worldwide politics of settler colonialism: land confiscation, cultural effacement, legal appropriation and a discursive strategy of alienation to delegitimize the grievances of the Palestinian Arabs. This cadastral structure of de-arabizing (judaising) the land has replicated certain practices of nineteenth century American policy vis-à-vis Indian tribes, including the Dakota people.

This chapter uses the concept of settler colonialism as a basis to articulate a principled critique of Israel's settler colonial reality. First, it examines how has the philosophy of a 'homeless' and 'nationless' political movement—Zionism— validated the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. Second, it discusses the historiographical debate on the concept of *Terra Nullius* or “a land without people” and how, to a certain extent, it has conceptually validated Israeli colonial practices. Third, it historicizes the 1948 War as it has laid the ground for seven inconclusive wars and ending, for the most part, in Israeli

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<sup>85</sup> Munnayar, 80-98.

<sup>86</sup> Richard R. Losch. *The Uttermost Part of the Earth: A Guide to Places in the Bible*. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 153.

territorial acquisitions and in the dismembering of what is left of Palestine into scattered West Bank communities, living under the shadow of Israeli military occupation.<sup>87</sup> In this vein, it is axiomatic to examine the historiographical debate of the 1948 war and how the way settler colonial winners write and conceptualize history. Fourth, as a glaring example of the persistent violence of settler colonial encounter between settlers, state and indigenes, we examine the massacre of Lydda (Lod, al-Lud) and Ramle in July 1948 within the general framework of settler colonialism. And, finally, the last two parts look at two more key aspects of Israel's settler colonial advance and land-allocation episodes through the dynamics of cultural effacement or Judaisation of the land and legal confiscation.

### **I. The Philosophy of Zionism and its Political Goals:**

Zionism is a term architected by the Viennese writer Nathan Birnbaum in 1890 to designate the corporate will of the Jewish people to re-establish a Jewish national renaissance, through settlements in Palestine, as conceived of as their nation's homeland. In the words of Birnbaum, Palestine "alone held out hope of peace for the Jew."<sup>88</sup> Zionism emerged as a reaction to twin challenges to the Jewish identity—assimilation and persecution in Europe. Its earliest stirrings as a political movement occurred in Russia in the 1880s after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and the notorious "May Laws."<sup>89</sup> But its official appearance began in earnest in 1897 when the Hungarian Jewish leader Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. In his

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<sup>87</sup> Rowley C. K., & Taylor J. (2006b). "The Israel and Palestine Land Settlement Problem, 1948-2005: An Analytical History." *Public Choice*, Vol. 128, No. 1/2, the Political Economy of Terrorism (Jul., 2006), 77-79.

<sup>88</sup> Nathan Birnbaum. *Confession*. (New York: Spero Foundation, 1946), 8. [An abridged translation of Birnbaum's *Gottesvolk*, published in 1917.]

<sup>89</sup> The "May Laws" stiffened the economic discrimination against the Jews and many were forced to leave Russia, mainly for the United States and very few to Palestine.

diaries, Herzl wrote: “If I had to sum up the Basel Congress in one word—which I shall not do openly—it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State. If I were to say this today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in 50, everyone will see it.”<sup>90</sup> His prophecy of a “Jewish State” began to take shape through massive immigration, land acquisition and territorial control in Palestine.

To build a Jewish State meant to fashion a contemporary vessel for the spirit that had inhabited its people from their origins. Religious Jews always represented a vigorous and vocal minority of Zionism—‘right’ political Zionists whose nationalism encompasses Greater Israel.<sup>91</sup> To pursue its political goals, an uneasy alliance between classical liberals (such as Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weitzmann) and socialists (such as David Ben-Gurion who founded Labor Zionism and members of the religious orthodoxy), composed an uneasy alliance.<sup>92</sup> The alliance helped leading Zionist figures look backward for sacred symbols to achieve goals traditionally associated with Jewish hopes and Jewish national identity, although many Jews strongly opposed the project of Zionism.<sup>93</sup> Their ultimate goal was to “bring about the return to Zion” and morph the “Chosen people” into a “normal people,” and from the ills of the diaspora into their own Jewish State.<sup>94</sup>

The sense of a place, as an experienced phenomenon, plays an integral role in the Jewish experience as it incorporates the “perceptions of objects and activities that are

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<sup>90</sup> David Ben Gurion, “Theodore Herzl.” *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* 5 (1990), 850.

<sup>91</sup> Oren Ben-Dor. “Occupied Minds: Philosophical Reflections on Zionism, Anti-Zionism and the Jewish Prison.” *Holy Land Studies*, 11.1 (May, 2012), 34.

<sup>92</sup> Cohen, M. *Pluralism and theocrats: the conflict between religion and state in Israel*. In: N. Biggar, J. S. Scott, & W. Schweiker (Eds.), *Cities of Gods: faith, politics and pluralism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 35-54.

<sup>93</sup> “The Standard,” (London, England), Wednesday, November 03, 1897; Issue 22885. *19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II*.

<sup>94</sup> Ravitzky. *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 10.

used as sources of personal and collective identities.”<sup>95</sup> Zionist national tradition encapsulates a politicization of space of belonging, where heterogeneous Sephardic (Oriental), and Ashkenazi (European) Jews live under one nation.<sup>96</sup> In order to transcend the persecution of the Jewish minority in Europe, the Zionist narrative created an ontological necessity to associate with a significant place—*Eretz* Israel. In contrast to the nineteenth century Euro-American colonial rhetoric of “civilizing” the heathens, the Zionist movement appealed to the persecuted Jewish minority in Europe to return to their ancient land. The messianic Zionism gravitates toward an inward *mission civilizatrice*—bringing social change and development to thousands of Jews around the world. It called for a persecuted religious minority across the world to consolidate themselves and create a new society in Palestine. This new inward mission resonated the ideology of the Puritans, who spearheaded settler colonialism in the United States, upon which a new Jerusalem could be inscribed, but, whereas, “Zionism was based in concepts of return, restoration and re-inscription.”<sup>97</sup>

The concepts of “return, restoration and re-inscription” define the major roles of leading Zionists such as Herzl, Weizmann and Ben Gurion. Herzl founded Zionism, Chaim Weizmann secured the Balfour Declaration and David Ben-Gurion established the State of Israel within 77 percent of Palestine.<sup>98</sup> But, despite the theoretical cleavage

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<sup>95</sup> This is Edward Relph’s idea as illustrated in his book *Place and Placelessness* (1976, 141), but paraphrased in Haim Yacobi’s book *Constructing a Sense of Place: Architecture and the Zionist Discourse*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004): 5.

<sup>96</sup> Sephardic or Sephardim denotes the ethnic Jews of Spain, Portugal, the Middle East, and North Africa as well as their descendants who migrated to Palestine. Ashkenazi Jews largely came from European countries and the US, hold key posts in Israel/Palestine. Mizrahi Jews, also known as Adot HaMizrach, are the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>97</sup> Derek, Penslar. *Israel in History: The Jewish State in Comparative Perspective*. (New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2007): 108

<sup>98</sup> Walid Khalidi. “The Palestine Problem: An Overview.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Autumn, 1991), 13.

between ‘Left wing’ vs. ‘Right wing’ Zionism, both wings not only reject the notion that Israel is a colonial-settler state, but also they deny the expulsion of thousands of Palestinians during the 1947-1948 war, as discussed later in this chapter. Moreover, major writings of early Zionists, like Zangwill’s, played a credential role in ‘emptying’ the land conceptually from its Arab inhabitants. The ‘invisibility’ of the Palestinians is a critical component of a repertoire of mechanisms of settler colonial rule and a prominent part of a moral grammar to underwrite and reproduce power. In hindsight, leading figures of Zionism and Israel conceptualized Palestine as a wasteland and Palestinians as “landless.”

## **II. The Invisibility of the Palestinians:**

There has been a historiographical debate as to whether the phrase “a land without a people, for a people without land,” was a fragment of the early Zionist literary and intellectual history. Several leading Palestinian intellectuals such as Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi and Israeli historians such as Avi Shlaim and Benny Morris have identified the famous—or infamous—phrase as originating with Israel Zangwill. Although the phrase is not Zangwill’s, a slightly altered statement appears in his article “The Return to Palestine” in the *New-Liberal Review* (1901), in which he states:

*Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country. The regeneration of the soil would bring the regeneration of the people. It is marvelous that the country should have remained comparatively empty for eighteen hundred years; but it cannot remain unexploited much longer... neither the Jew nor Palestine can wait longer.*<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Israel Zangwill. “The Return to Palestine.” *New Liberal Review* (London), III, (December 1901), 627.

More versions of the phrase have become ubiquitous ever since. Golda Meir's statement in her interview with Frank Giles in 1969 remains the most flagrant. "There was no such thing as Palestinians," she said. "It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people... they did not exist."<sup>100</sup> Although a few early Zionists (including Herzl) believed that the land was 'virtually empty,' Meir's phrase claims there were literally no inhabitants there ("without a people"); it was not even underpopulated.

Other Zionists like Martin Buber, who worked tirelessly for Jewish-Arab conciliation in Palestine, considered Palestine "underpopulated" and existing on the spectrum of scattered Bedouins and not as a united group of people wedded to a particular community, and whose members define themselves as Palestinians. In September 1921, he wrote: "I know how hard it is to negotiate with people who are not yet constituted politically as nations and who have no legitimate representatives."<sup>101</sup> In other words, Buber perceived Zangwill's phraseology as not an exclusion of the Palestinian demography but rather its existence as a political entity. Zangwill articulated the relevant political context of advocating a Jewish State in Palestine given the waves of anti-Semitism in Europe. He called for Jewish philanthropic efforts to "stimulate the most maligned of races to break the desolate monotony of this brutal modern world."<sup>102</sup> Zangwill's statement is not unprecedented since similar concepts of "emptiness" featured throughout the nineteenth century's writings of Christian Zionists such as Lord

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<sup>100</sup> *The Sunday Times* (London, June 15, 1969), 12.

<sup>101</sup> Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 60.

<sup>102</sup> Zangwill, 627.

Shaftesbury and John Lawson Stoddard.<sup>103</sup> Had their claims been true, there would have been no conflict and the Jews could have peacefully created their own Jewish State. But, the Arab community who had lived there for centuries refused to share their land and resisted the Jewish settlers from Europe.

Despite the locals' recalcitrance, some of the Zionist writings represented Palestinians as tribal Bedouins and too inept to cultivate the land. Menachem Ussishkin, the Chairman of the Jewish National fund and a leading Zionist stated in 1930, "If there are other inhabitants there, they must be transferred to some other places. We must take over the land. We have a greater and nobler ideal than preserving several hundred thousands of Arab *fellahin*."<sup>104</sup> Similarly, the Manichean allegory of 'progress' vs. 'backwardness' was imbued in Weizmann's statement, in which he described the Palestinians and Palestine as "a vast stretch of territory bordering on the Mediterranean...sparsely populated by a semi-backward people with a low standard of living."<sup>105</sup> This racially-coded rhetoric delegitimized Palestinians' genuine ties to the land and thus facilitated the indigeneity of the Jewish settlers. In a speech delivered at a meeting of the French Zionist Federation, Paris, 28 March 1914, Weizmann reproduced much of Zangwill's slogan of the *Terra Nullius*: "there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary, then, than to fit the gem into the ring, to unite this people

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<sup>103</sup> "[The region is] a country without a nation [which should be matched to] a nation without a country ... Is there such a thing? To be sure there is, The ancient and rightful lords of the soil, the Jews!" (Lord Shaftesbury, 30 July 1853) "At present Palestine supports only six hundred thousand people, but, with proper cultivation it can easily maintain two and half millions. You are a people without a country; there is a country without a people. Be united. Fulfil the dreams of your old poets and patriarchs. Go back, – go back to the land of Abraham." (John Lawson Stoddard, 1891)

<sup>104</sup> Doar Hayom (Jerusalem), 28 April 1930.

<sup>105</sup> Paul Goodman (ed.). *Chaim Weizmann: A Tribute on His Seventieth Birthday*. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1945), 313.



with this country?”<sup>106</sup> Zangwill, Weizmann, Herzl and Meir’s statements on Palestine rendered the local Arab populace conceptually invisible, but if they exist they are ‘semi-backward’ and ‘unfit’ to fertilize the land. “If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine,” Herzl wrote, “we should there form the portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism.”<sup>107</sup> If by any other mean the Arabs refuse to welcome the civilizing “corrigible mission” of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine, then it would be evidence of their inferiority.<sup>108</sup>

That being said, the old adage of colonialism centers first on the negation of the other’s existence—the emptiness of the land, but if the ‘other’ does exist then ‘nomadism’, spacelessness, and statelessness remains covert to expropriate the land and legitimize the concomitant indigenization of the new Jewish settlers in Palestine. The historical argument of race and terra nullius are crucial parts of the Israeli colonial system that structures and nuances the way Israeli soldiers imagine and treat Palestinian people. This imagination still reverberates today. In summer 2004, as Israeli soldiers were uprooting acres of olive orchards to build a 24-foot high concrete wall extending well into Palestinian territory, “protesters asked soldiers guarding the bulldozers why they were destroying cultivated Palestinian fields. The heavily armed soldiers pointed their rifles at the protestors and yelled, ‘They are foreigners here. This all belongs to us.’”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Chaim Weizman, speech delivered at a meeting of the French Zionist Federation, Paris, 28 March 1914, reproduced in Barnet Litvinoff, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 1, series B, paper 24 (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1983), 115–16.

<sup>107</sup> Theodore Herzl. *The Jewish State*. (Library of the University of Michigan, 1904), 28.

<sup>108</sup> Jonathan, Cook. *Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair*. (New York: Zed Books, 2008), 14.

<sup>109</sup> Julie Peteet. “Words as Interventions: Naming in the Palestine: Israel Conflict.” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1, The Politics of Naming: Rebels, Terrorists, Criminals, Bandits and Subversives (2005), 162.

### III. “The Land Belongs to...”: The Kettle of Settler Colonialism

Territorial sovereignty has been and continues to be the crux of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. For Palestinians, the land is their home; for Zionist-Jews, it is a long-lost land from which they were expelled thousands of years ago; today, it is the same land from which Palestinians are in exile.<sup>110</sup> Like settler colonial projects, space has been a zero-sum contest in defining the broader political enterprise of which the State of Israel was and remains the expression. In its unstated policy of territorial aggrandizement, land of an entire village or town was swiftly seized and occupied and its inhabitants were subsequently forced to leave.<sup>111</sup> This was possible during the wars of 1948 and 1967 and settlements today continue to increase in the West Bank. However, land seizure for Jewish settlements and absorption of immigrants began in 1897 after the Basel meeting.

The practical aspect of Zionism, as espoused by Hovevei (Lovers of) Zion, involved small-scale settlements in Palestine below the political radar of both Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the impact of the Ottoman land reform laws of 1858 and 1867 laid the ground for shifting the land tenure system in Palestine and helped Jewish settlers penetrate into the land. These laws were the outcome of a series of Ottoman Tanzimât—reforms. The main purpose of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 was to define landholdings and categories precisely, abolish the system of tax farming, and consolidate and retrieve the state’s rights to its *miri* land (state land requiring official permission for transfer).<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Aida Asim Essaid. *Zionism and Land Tenure in Mandate Palestine*. (London: Routledge, 2014): 5.

<sup>111</sup> Walid Khalidi. “Why Did the Palestinians Leave, Revisited.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (Winter 2005), 42–54

<sup>112</sup> Ruth Kark, “Consequences of the Ottoman Land Law: Agrarian and Privatization Processes in Palestine, 1858–1918,” presented at: *The International Conference on The Application of the Tanzimat Reforms in various regions of the Ottoman Empire*. (Haifa, Israel: Haifa University, June 2007).

While the 1858 Land Code was enacted to establish clear proof of title to ownership and hold the owners liable for taxes, the Ottoman Land Code of 1867 granted foreigners citizenship and the right to own land as long as they pay taxes to the Ottoman government.<sup>113</sup> Foreign Jews, legally resident in Palestine would, as a matter of fact, be permitted to buy land. Despite the Ottoman restrictions on land sale to foreigners, a small number of urban merchants and notables, including foreign Jews, were able to buy land in Palestine and Syria in accordance with the 1867 Land Code.<sup>114</sup> Many peasants (*fellahin*), however, were unable to pay large fees to landholders to establish titles, let alone pay taxes on the land. Very few Palestinian notables—local Christians [Sursuq family, Greek Orthodox, purchased a total of 230,000 dunams (57,000 acres) from the Ottomans], Christian merchants from Beirut, acquired extensive areas of land while allowing the *fellahin* to cultivate their lands as they used to.<sup>115</sup>

The dynamics of land ownership vacillates between two conceptions of dialectical reality—*de jure* and *de facto*. The latter means that the property rights are specified by first person (an individual claims the land) or second person (a group assigns rights or norms emerge) while *de jure* rights are specified by a government with recognized authority. In practice, the *fellahin* had cultivated the land for several decades and considered themselves in congruence to land ownership as illustrated in their motto:

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<sup>113</sup> Since the seventeenth century, the Ottomans had divided Palestine into several districts, known also as *sanjaks*—Gaza, Jerusalem, Nablus, Lajun and Safad. While the latter were incorporated within the province of greater Syria, Jerusalem was unique source of income to the governor of Damascus. In helping collecting taxes, Ibrahim Mohamed Ali granted Christians and Jews effective political role of collecting taxes and religious equality with Muslims. This step helped Zionists purchase lands through foreign agents.

<sup>114</sup> Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*, 105.

<sup>115</sup> Other European missionaries like French Catholics, donated sums to build religious institutions, the German Templars established agricultural colonies to settle and proselytize, Protestant missionaries from England and America purchased lands and worked on bringing Jews to Palestine in order to convert them to Christianity before the Day of Judgment. Comparatively, many Jews came to Palestine as tourists or pilgrims, but once there; they acquired the protection of foreign consuls and settled in several cities, particularly Jerusalem.

“Ardi hiya hawiyati!” meaning “My land is my identity!”<sup>116</sup> All at once, they lost ‘property rights’ as absentee landlords sold their land to Jewish settlers.<sup>117</sup> The net result was the increase of the Jewish community in Palestine. By 1897, there were about fifty thousand Jews in Palestine and eighteen new settlements.<sup>118</sup> The creation of the World Zionist Organization’s own bank in 1899 and the Jewish National Fund in 1901 helped the development of Jewish settlements. The possibilities of buying land grew wider when Baron Maurice de Hirsch founded the Jewish Colonization Association in 1891 (JCA—unconnected with the Zionist Movement). In 1901, the JCA acquired 31,500 dunams of land near Tiberias from the Sursuq family of Beirut.<sup>119</sup>

The commitment to the land and the creation of a socialist agricultural basis for a new Jewish society began with second Aliyah (1903 onward, following renewed pogroms in Russia). The Jews had acquired then 400,000 dunams of land (out of a total area of about 27 million dunams), of which slightly more than half was under cultivation.<sup>120</sup> Purchases were facilitated both by the fact that many large landholders in northern Palestine resided in Beirut and by the willingness of the Ottoman officials there to ignore regulations. Similar practices occurred in and around Jerusalem from 1901 onward as the appointed Ottoman governors permitted Jews to buy land in return for financial favors. The Anglo-Palestine Company, the first Zionist organization established in Palestine, found that despite Ottoman laws, local Ottoman authorities would permit land sales in return for loans from the company to the governor.

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<sup>116</sup> Fawaz Turki. “Day of the Land: What the Land Means to Palestinians,” *Palestine Congress of North America Newsletter* (Washington D.C., 10 February 1982), 10.

<sup>117</sup> Rashid Khalidi in *Blaming The Victims*, edited by Said and Hitchens, 211.

<sup>118</sup> Mandel, 20.

<sup>119</sup> Central Zionist Archives Z2/635, enc. to letter of 28.5.1911. Cited in Neville J, Mandel. *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*. (University of California: Berkeley, 1976): 22.

<sup>120</sup> Alex Bein. *The Return to the Soil*. Trans. I. Schen. (Jerusalem, 1952), 47.

Although land tenure reforms began under Ottoman rule, the British Mandate in Palestine (1917-1948) facilitated the process for Jews to take possession of the fertile geography—North of Palestine.<sup>121</sup> In 1920, Jews owned 100,000 acres of land. By 1929, they increased their land base by an additional 128,000 acres. This turned the Jewish community in Palestine into a vibrant community within a State.<sup>122</sup> This State was structured and nuanced between 1878 and 1936 during which Zionists acquired 52.6% of their entire land purchases from large absentee landlords.<sup>123</sup> The rising tide of European Jewish immigration, land purchases and settlement generated increasing animosity in Palestine. Peasants, journalists and political figures feared that these practices would lead eventually to the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.

Palestinian resistance to British control and Zionist settlement climaxed with the Arab revolt of 1936–1939, which Britain repressed with the help of Zionist militias and the complicity of neighboring Arab regimes. After suppressing the Arab revolt, the British reconsidered their governing policies vis-à-vis Palestine through the 1939 White Paper.<sup>124</sup> The Zionists interpreted the White Paper's form as an egregious act of betrayal the Balfour Declaration, particularly in light of the desperate situation of the Jews in Europe. This policy paper ended the British-Zionist alliance and defeated the Arab revolt.

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<sup>121</sup> Essaid, 9.

<sup>122</sup> Charles K. Rowley and Jennis Taylor. "The Israel and Palestine Land Settlement Problem: An Analytical History, 4000 B.C.E.-1948 C.E." *Public Choice*, Vol. 128, No. 1/2, The Political Economy of Terrorism (Jul., 2006), 50-51.

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth W. Stein. *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939*. (University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 226-7.

<sup>124</sup> The British Government issued this policy paper to restrict future Jewish immigration, land purchases and promised independence in ten years, which would have resulted in a majority-Arab Palestinian state.

By 1939 the JNF had acquired 64,000 dunams in the Jordan and Baysan valleys and between 1939 and 1946 they purchased another 11,000 dunams.<sup>125</sup> By 1947 a total of 12 Jewish settlements were established on JNF lands in the Baysan valley. By 1948, Jews possessed 20% of Palestine.<sup>126</sup> After the 1948 war, land acquisition became no longer an assertive land-purchasing schemes, but a matter of military occupation. Upon the evacuation of thousands of Palestinians, the State of Israel soon began establishing Israeli civilian settlements on expropriated Palestinian lands.<sup>127</sup> The 1967 war reinforced the 1948 pattern where it displaced thousands of Palestinians and confiscated their properties “on grounds of ‘security’ and frequently thereafter turned into settlements or housing centres.”<sup>128</sup> But beyond just settling its own population on occupied lands, the State of Israel, as discussed later in this chapter, initiated legal steps to expropriate these settlements through “Absentees’ property” laws, and other ordinances.<sup>129</sup>

Territorial acquisition from absentee landlords became viable only with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its post-World War I sponsorship by Britain, the paramount imperial power of the day.<sup>130</sup> As Zionists’ growing control of the land had consolidated, Arabs’ rudimentary opposition to Jewish settlements in Palestine and their vague awareness became real with the Balfour Declaration in 1917.<sup>131</sup> In a book published in Paris in 1905 (*Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe*), Naguib Azoury, a Maronite Catholic,

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<sup>125</sup> Yossi Katz, *The Battle for the Land: The History of the Jewish National Fund (KKL) Before the Establishment of the State of Israel*. (Israel: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2005), Appendix 4, 354.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix 8.

<sup>127</sup> Institute for Palestine Studies. “Palestinian Emigration and Israeli Land Expropriation in the Occupied Territories.” *University of California Press* (on behalf of *Journal of Palestine Studies*), Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), 107-108.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>129</sup> Center On Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), “Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine.” *COHRE and BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights* (Geneva and Bethlehem, 2005), 38-51.

<sup>130</sup> Khalidi, “The Palestine Problem: An Overview,” 7.

<sup>131</sup> Mandel, xviii.

predicted an alarming clash between the Arabs and Jews over the land. While most Palestinian Muslims remained loyal to the Ottoman authority, Palestinian Christians led the public opposition to land purchases, Zionist immigration and Jewish exclusiveness. The background to some of this violence was the 1936–1939 Arab revolt (the Great Revolt), as a response to “the general uncertainty as to the ultimate intentions of the Mandatory Power.”<sup>132</sup>

These events helped the Palestine Royal Commission in 1937 to craft a report on the tumultuous situation in Palestine, outlining the unviability and undesirability of the two antagonistic communities to live side by side. Fueling enmity, the Commission decided to put “forward the principle of Partition and not to give it any concrete shape.”<sup>133</sup> The Arab Revolt in the 1930s created a new reality in the Zionist imagination. The Palestinian Arab, in particular, transformed “from a natural part of the landscape into a coherent, hostile political force, an enemy that would have to be vanquished in the struggle to establish a Jewish state.”<sup>134</sup> Both nationalisms had grown and gripped each other in reciprocal antagonism, an apparently endless dance of mutual menace and injury. The 1948 war remains more than a simple reflection of this animosity, but also the beginning of the second phase of Israeli settler colonialism—military occupation. In other words, it embodies an ideological significance and sets the lexicon to describe subsequent major events, actions, peoples, and places that uphold or contest power over the land.

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<sup>132</sup> Gregory S., Mahler. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader*. (New York, N.Y : Routledge, 2010), 71

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>134</sup> Penslar. 109.

#### **IV. The Conquest of Latrun, Lydda & Ramle (May-July 1948):**

After the United Nations General Assembly Partition Resolution of November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1947, the three towns of Latrun, Lydda and Ramle were allocated in the proposed Arab-Palestinian State. The conquest of Latrun, Lydda and Ramle is a web of narratives composed of national and political myths that structured and nuanced images of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. These images imbued a plethora of national figures and heroes to shape a certain historical memory. Yet, the loss of control over collective memory and its link with historical documentation has been challenged with the rise of the “new historians.” The battles fought in Latrun (Operation Bin-Nun A) on May 25, 1948, Lydda and Ramle (some five kilometers to the south), under “Operation Dani” (Mivtza‘ Dani), on 10-14<sup>th</sup> of July 1948, not only encapsulate one of the most important and tragic episodes of the 1948 war, but also the growing disconnect between the collective memory and the new historical research. The goal behind the capture of Lydda, Ramle and Latrun was to discharge the semi-besieged Jerusalem by securing the whole length of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway.<sup>135</sup>

Israeli military forces tempted to secure a territorial link between the coastal plain and Jewish Jerusalem. Prime Minister David Ben Gurion ordered Yigael Yadin, the operations officer and deputy chief of staff, to concentrate the Seventh Brigade—among them Shlomo Shamir, head of the brigade, and Hayyim Laskov, commander of the armored battalion—in order to breach a road to Jerusalem.<sup>136</sup> The Latrun area was occupied in May 1948 and the new artery carried traffic to Jerusalem until 1967. In the wake of Operation Bin-Nun A, newspapers carried only sparse reports about the

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<sup>135</sup> Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” 82.

<sup>136</sup> Anita Shapira. “Historiography and Memory: Latrun, 1948.” *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 3. No.1 (Oct 31, 1996): 23.



confrontation and gave few details. Briefing foreign journalists, the IDF spokesman described Latrun's battle as "satisfactory."<sup>137</sup> Similarly, Israeli officials claimed that Arabs had lost 250 casualties while Jewish losses, aside from very few dead and injured, the final losses of Operation of Bin-Nun A "have not yet been determined."<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, Ben-Gurion stressed the positive aspect of the battle and praised the performance of the Seventh Brigade and claimed a "military victory."<sup>139</sup>

Irrespective of the accuracy of the number, Lieutenant Colonel Yisrael Ber, Yadin's subordinate in the planning Branch, Department of Operations, during the 1948 war, commented on the battle for Latrun as a "strategic advance guard", tying Arab forces down and preventing them from attacking Jewish population centers in the coastal plain.<sup>140</sup> Ber describes the events at Latrun as a "heroic epic" and important moment in the birth of the Jewish national State. This was not the case for another protagonist of the war, as described by Yigal Mosinsoln's book, *In the Wilderness of the Negev* (Be-arvot ha-Negev): "I was in Latrun! Look, I don't know if that name says very much to you. But, man that was hell on earth, Latrun! [...] And I'll never forget one of the new immigrants who was lying there on the ground, he was in the throes of death."<sup>141</sup> The trauma of resettlement, uprooting and replanting, is always filled with bitterness and pain. The battle for Latrun was a catharsis of liberation and the genesis of a new trauma for the natives as well as the new Jewish immigrants. The latter who survived a cruel war in Europe had to fight another settler colonial war in Palestine; some of them lost their lives, others survived, but supported the establishment of an ethnic community of their own.

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<sup>137</sup> *Hatsofeh*, May 31, 1948, based on a BBC report, cited in Shapira, 5.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>140</sup> Yisrael Ber, "Keravot Latrun," *Maarakhot* (Nov. 1955): 9, cited in Shapira, 6

<sup>141</sup> Yigal Mosinsoln, *Be-arvot ha-Negev* (Israel: Tel Aviv, 1949): 38-39, cited in Shapira, 9.

Latrun's circumstances were circumvented so as long as Ben-Gurion served both as prime minister and defense minister, criticism was restricted to the realms of hearsay and fiction.<sup>142</sup>

Similarly, the primary goal of Operation Dani—the major offensive launched by the IDF at the order of Ben-Gurion during the so-called “Ten Days” of fighting (8-18 July 1948), between the First Truce (11 June-8 July) and the Second Truce (8 July 1948-early 1949), was to occupy Lydda and its neighbor Ramle and outmaneuver the Arab Legion positions at Latrun in order to penetrate central Palestine and capture Ramallah and Nablus. Both towns held a strategic importance in intersecting the country's main north-south and west-east road and rail lines.<sup>143</sup> The Israeli forces assembled under the overall command of Yigal Allon, the Palmach<sup>144</sup> commander—two Palmach brigades (Yiftach and Harel, the latter under the command of Yitzhak Rabin), the Eighth Armored Brigade, the second Battalion Kiryati Brigade, the Third Battalion Alexandroni Kiryati and several units of the Kiryati Garrison Troops, making a total of 8,000 Israeli soldiers. On the other hand, the Arab Legion (defending Lydda and Ramle) was a minuscule 125 men—the Fifth Infantry Company of the Transjordanian Arab Legion.<sup>145</sup>

Fierce combat broke out on all fronts around Lydda and Ramle in the night of 9-10 July resulting in the killing of 250 civilians in an “orgy of indiscriminate killing.”<sup>146</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Israel Defense forces took the northern parts of the Lydda valley, including

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<sup>142</sup>Shapira. “Historiography and Memory: Latrun, 1948,” 33-36.

<sup>143</sup> Munayyer, 81.

<sup>144</sup> The Palmach (Plugot Machats) were the elite fighting force of the Haganah, the underground army of the Yishuv during the period of the British Mandate for Palestine, also known the crushing battalions. By 1948, this force was made up of three brigades (Yiftach, Harel and HaNegev) numbering just above 8,000 men. See Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*. (Washington: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1987): 861.

<sup>145</sup> Munayyer. “The Fall of Lydda,” 81.

<sup>146</sup> “Comprehensive Report of the Activities of the Third Battalion from 9 July until 18 July,” *Sefer Hapalmach*, Vol. II, p. 565 and PA 142-163, *Third Battalion/Intelligence*, July 19, 1948.

the villages of Deir Tarif and Haditha, and the international airport near Tel Aviv. The elite of the Yiftach Brigade took the southern parts: the villages of Inaba, Gimzu, Daniyal and Dahiriya. Within twenty-four hours, all villages in Lydda were occupied.<sup>147</sup> On July 11<sup>th</sup>, along with the expulsion of the inhabitants of Lydda and Ramle, the IDF expelled the populations of some twenty-five villages conquered during Operation Dani, making a total of some 80,000 expellees—the largest single instance of deliberate mass expulsion during the 1948 war.<sup>148</sup> From the start, the military operations against the two towns were designed to induce civilian panic and flight. The Israeli air force showered Ramle and Lydda with leaflets stating: “You have no chance of receiving help. We intend to conquer the towns. We have no intention of harming persons or property. [But] whoever attempts to oppose us—will die. He who prefers to live must surrender.”<sup>149</sup> Bombings from the air and shelling of artillery of Lydda and Ramle, in the words of Yiftah Brigade’s intelligence officer “caused flight and panic among the civilians [and] a readiness to surrender.”<sup>150</sup> Many Lydda inhabitants feared that a massacre would take place by Third Battalion troops and so, many rushed to the streets, only to be pushed back by Israeli fire. Yeruham Cohen, an intelligence officer at Operation Dani HQ, later described the bedlam: “The inhabitants of the town became panic-stricken. They feared that ... the IDF troops would take revenge on them. It was a horrible, earsplitting scene. Women wailed at the tops of their voices and old men said prayers, as if they saw their own deaths before

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<sup>147</sup> Ari Shavit. “Lydda, 1948: A city, a Massacre, and the Middle East Today”. *The New Yorker*. (October 21, 2013), 42.

<sup>148</sup> Munayyer. 81.

<sup>149</sup> KMA-PA 142-120, “To the Inhabitants of Lydda and Ramle and All Bearers of Arms,” *Operation Dani HQ*, July 11, 1948. See Benny Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 87.

<sup>150</sup> Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” 86.

their eyes...”<sup>151</sup> The panic-stricken disorder forced thousands of Lydda’s inhabitants to flee.

On the Palestinian side, Spiro Munnayar was one of those few allowed to stay in his hometown while 49,000 of Lydda’s 50,000 inhabitants were forcefully expelled.<sup>152</sup> Although he was not in a political or military position, Munnayar was actively involved as a volunteer paramedic, organizing the telephone network between sectors of Lydda’s front lines. On duty, he saw wounded, dead bodies and a city in carnage. Children, women and elderly people were teemed, marching hands up to the grand mosque. “People were being rounded up and herded under guard into the mosque in an endless stream,” he narrates:

*It was July and terribly hot; the air was stifling. The only water was in the fountain for performing ablutions, but we could not reach it. People started passing water vessels from hand to hand. There was a tremendous crush, bodies squeezed against each other with no room to sit; movement was almost impossible. Many fainted from heat, thirst, and fear. To top it all, soldiers were firing over our heads to intimidate us and keep us quiet.*<sup>153</sup>

Israeli military forces (the erstwhile Haganah and Palmach) engaged in a wide variety of repressive tactics and forms of collective punishment aimed at putting down the “uprising” of Lydda. The collective nature of the Israeli military incursions imposed by the settler colonial strategy is characterized by the sensational atrocities typically associated with the dismantlement of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State.

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<sup>151</sup> Yeruham Cohen, *During the Day and the Night (Le’or Hayom U’bamach’ shach)*. (Tel Aviv: Amikan, 1969), 160.

<sup>152</sup> Munayyer. 80.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 300-400 Israeli troops were dispersed in the midst of tens of thousands of furious townspeople, who felt threatened and vulnerable. Third Battalion commander Moshe Kalman ordered his troops to suppress the local “uprising” with utmost severity. The troops were ordered to shoot at “any clear target” or, alternatively, at anyone “seen on the streets.”<sup>154</sup> The curfew shut local inhabitants up in their houses while Israeli soldiers lobbed grenades into houses from which they suspected snipers to be operating. In such mayhem, some of them attempted to escape while many unarmed detainees in town, mosques, and church compounds were shot and killed.<sup>155</sup> The IDF, for that matter, conducted a massacre of defenseless prisoners of war (POWs) in the al-‘Umari Mosque on July 12, 1948, after Lydda had surrendered.<sup>156</sup> Israeli troops looted vacant properties and conquered areas. Yiftach Brigade Commander Mula Cohen summarized the scene: “There is no doubt that the Lydda-Ramle affair and the flight of the inhabitants, the uprising [in Lydda] and the expulsion [geirush] that followed cut deep grooves in all who underwent [the experiences].”<sup>157</sup>

On July 13<sup>th</sup>, a massive exodus from Ramle and Lydda took place as inhabitants by and large were trucked and bussed out by Kiryati Brigade units to nearby villages like Al-Qubab, from where they made their walking journey to Arab Legion lines. “The streets were filled with people,” said Munnayer, “setting out for indeterminate destinations. The important thing was to get out of the city.”<sup>158</sup> Fierce fighting continued as Israeli forces

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<sup>154</sup>“Comprehensive Report of the Activities of the Third Battalion from 9 July until 18 July,” *Third Battalion/Intelligence*, July 19, 1948. Quoted in Neville J. Mandel. *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*. (University of California: Berkeley, 1976): 31.

<sup>155</sup> Elhannan Oren, *On the Road to the City: Operation Dani, July 1948*, [Ba-Derekh el ha- 'Ir: Mivtza ' Dani Yuli 1948]. (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot, 1976), 110.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-106.

<sup>157</sup> Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” 87. & Oren, *On the Road to the City*, 125.

<sup>158</sup> Munayyer, 94.

proceeded with their policy of expelling the entire local population, “entering the houses and dragging out the inhabitants, ordering them out of the city and on to Ramallah and al-Bireh. The flood of displaced persons clogged the roads, a seemingly endless stream flowing east, with enemy soldiers firing over their heads every now and then.”<sup>159</sup> At sunset, firing of automatic weapons continued to be heard until nightfall, “when silence descended on the city. We no longer could hear shooting nor the crying of children nor the lamentations of women. It was as though the city itself had died.”<sup>160</sup>



*Lydda and other cities were emptied as inhabitants were forced to flee.*<sup>161</sup>

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, having emptied both Ramle and Lydda of its inhabitants, Israeli soldiers (the erstwhile Haganah and Palmach) plundered Lydda’s shops and left their doors wide open.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Munayyer, 96.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ari Shavit. “Lydda, 1948: A city, a Massacre, and the Middle East Today”. *The New Yorker*. (October 21, 2013), 42.

<sup>162</sup> Tom Segev. *The First Israelis* (New York and London: Free Press and Collier Mac-Millan Publisher, 1986), 69.

Relying exclusively on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) documents, Elhanan Oren and Benny Morris argued that the occupation and the expulsion of the Arab inhabitants in Operation Dani, especially from Lydda, was “pre-planned and deliberate,” owing to “strategic necessity and [as] a goal in itself.”<sup>163</sup> From the beginning, there was a substantial need to conquer Lydda since the latter was an obstacle blocking the road to a Jewish State. If the young State of Israel “was to exist,” explains Ari Shavit, “Lydda could not exist.”<sup>164</sup> In doing so, settlers conducted, in the words of Benny Morris, “the largest operation of its kind in the first Israeli-Arab war.”<sup>165</sup> Indeed, the July 1948 war encapsulates a microcosm of the wider features of settler colonialism—territorial expansion and fierce violence—during the conquest of Latrun, Lydda and Ramle—the very epicenter of the Arab-Israeli war. This war helped create an entirely new society in place of an existing one. To appropriate settler advance and land-allocation episodes, it is axiomatic that the history of the Lydda massacre is written and conceptualized by the settler colonial winner. The history of the 1948 war is a case in point.

### **V. Historiography of the 1948 War:**

The 1948 war remains a defining moment in the history of the Middle East in that it has not only transformed the political landscape of Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs, but it has also impacted profoundly the entire region with the emergence of a new settler society.<sup>166</sup> The war resulted in the birth of the State of Israel and the disintegration of Arab Palestine. A dialectic of legitimacy and illegitimacy followed as historians played a

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<sup>163</sup> Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” 82-109.

<sup>164</sup> Shavit, 42.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>166</sup> Stasiulis Daiva & Yuval-Davis Nira (eds.). *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*. (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 299.

substantial role in appropriating the origins of the state as well as its formation. Both the Arab and the Israeli nationalist histories are guided more, in Avi Shlaim's words, by a "quest for legitimacy" than by an honest reckoning with the past.<sup>167</sup> Each embraced a narrative of blame-throwing—distilling the allegations and blaming the other for the Palestinians' plight. The Arab narrative terms the 1948 war, *Al-Nakba* (disaster or catastrophe), where a calamity befell the Palestinian Arabs, while the Zionists present their actions as retaliatory, leading to national sovereignty—the *War of Independence*. For the former, the war made them stateless, a nation of refugees and deprived of their homeland. For the latter, after fifty years of strenuous efforts, the war brought them a powerful and sovereign state of their own, which became a haven for Jewish immigrants across the world.

The political fabric of the 1948 war was a mobilizing force in disillusioning the defeat of the Arab national armies and "reaffirming a sort of Zionist manifest destiny" with no deficits.<sup>168</sup> However, after the passage of thirty years, a critical debate took over as the Israeli government released documents to public criticism. A group of Israeli scholars, also known as "new historians," and several Palestinian scholars educated in the West reframed the historiographical debate and challenged some of the Israeli conventional attitude toward the 1948 war. These historians have questioned the charges of the Palestinian expulsion and the destruction of their villages.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Rogan & Shlaim, 2.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Israeli revisionist historians have reexamined and historicized the common Zionist historiographical interpretation of the 1948 war in the light of the declassified Zionist archives in the 1980s. Works of Simha Flapan, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, Tom Segev, and Avi Shlaim, have relied on Israeli and British archival sources to demystify the validity of the founding narrative of Israel. [See also Rogan, Eugène L. & Shlaim,



Each scholar has discredited some of the “foundational myths” embodied in the state narrative of Israel since 1948.<sup>170</sup> Their arguments center on five main prongs: “1) the Zionist movement did not enthusiastically embrace the partition of Palestine; 2) the surrounding Arab states did not unite as one to destroy the nascent Jewish State; 3) the war did not pit a relatively defenseless and weak Jewish David against a relatively strong Arab Goliath; 4) Palestine’s Arabs did not take flight at the behest of Arab orders; 5) Israel was not earnestly seeking peace at the war’s end.”<sup>171</sup> Point four is integral in the post-1948 war reality, where the fight for survival of the Palestinian refugees involves “a fight for the recognition of their historical experience.”<sup>172</sup> The arguments of the “new historians” have received sympathy within the Arab scholarship and an enormous dispute within the Israeli nationalist historians. For example, Benny Morris’s re-examination of the nascence of the Palestinian refugee problem is a case in point. His uncovered materials deconstructed the picture he had drawn earlier, in that the Palestinian refugee problem was arguably not premeditated and rather a corollary of war.<sup>173</sup>

On the one hand, Laila Parson explains that the “secret wartime alliance” between the *Yishuv* (the Jewish colons in Palestine) and the Druze “allowed” the latter “to remain by design” during the 1948 war, while there was “at least partially coherent policy to expel Muslims.”<sup>174</sup> Rashid Khalidi went even further to argue that the Israeli victory in the war and the “fall of numerous Arab cities and towns...the capture of a number of strategic

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Avi (eds.). *“The” War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)].

<sup>170</sup> Simha Flapan. *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 8.

<sup>171</sup> Norman Finkelstein. “Myths, Old and New.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Vol. 21, no. 1. (Autumn, 1991), 66.

<sup>172</sup> Lorenzo Veracini. *Israel and Settler Society*. (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006), 70.

<sup>173</sup> Morris, 588.

<sup>174</sup> Laila Parsons. *The Druze between Palestine and Israel, 1947-1949*. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), 68.

roads, junctions, positions,” which in turn resulted in the “expulsion of the first wave of Arabs from Palestine.”<sup>175</sup> The expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs seems a valid argument in Nafez Nazzal’s interpretation of the war as well. Nazzal wrote: “after an examination of the evidence presented...no other conclusion is possible than that the Arabs of Galilee—and indeed all the Palestinians made refugees by 1947-49 fighting—left their homes as victims of a conscious and willful Zionist Plan.”<sup>176</sup> The *new historians’* take in tandem with Palestinian scholars educated in the West may seem overly optimistic in bringing a quiet revolution in redefining the history of the 1948 war.

On the other hand, Israeli nationalist writers such as Anita Shapira, Shlomo Ben-Ami, Hillel Halkin, Aharon Meged, Shabtai Teveth, and Efraim Karsh put the onus of the Palestinian expulsion entirely on the Arabs, who allegedly requested the Palestinians to clear way for the invading Arab armies. Karsh, for example, writes “huge numbers of Palestinians were also driven out of their homes by their own leaders and/or by Arab military forces, whether out of military considerations, or more actively to prevent them from becoming citizens of the nascent Jewish State.”<sup>177</sup> The effects of the psychological warfare and the heat of the battle were manifold and led the Arab High Committee (AHC) to force “huge numbers” to leave. In a letter to the United Nations during the 1948 war, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, wrote “the Arab mass flight from

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<sup>175</sup> Khalidi Rashid. “The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure.” In *“The” War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, edited by Rogan, Eugène L. & Shlaim, Avi. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>176</sup> Nafez Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus*. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978), 105.

<sup>177</sup> Efraim Karsh. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: The 1948 War*. (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2009), 87

Israel and Israel-occupied territory is the direct effect of Arab aggression from outside.”<sup>178</sup>

Narratives, regardless the degree of their accuracy, remain an important product of either the hero or the villain’s experience. New historians have arguably defined the 1948 war as the watershed of the Zionist settler colonial project of depopulation and repopulation of the land—the Lydda massacre is a case in point.<sup>179</sup> The Palestinians’ forced removal was, in Khalidi’s words, “the desired outcome of a process which began early in this century tradition selected an Asian land for its colonial activities, established itself step-by-step with Great Power assistance, and fought to overcome the resistance of the indigenous population.”<sup>180</sup> Fayeze Sayegh, in a letter discussed at the United Nations, argued that the Zionists’ prerogatives gained through the U.N. recognition of Israel as a Jewish State “together with the growing imbalance of Zionist and Arab military potential in favor of the former—rendered the circumstances favorable for launching the long awaited Zionist campaign for the forcible and violent displacement of the Palestinian Arabs.”<sup>181</sup>

As it may seem, the tendency of this historiographical debate is centered on the external causes of the Palestinian plight. But, what prompted the expulsion may not deprive the refugees to return to their land, as Christopher Hitchens argues: “Whatever may have prompted their flight, they had a right to expect to return home after the end of

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<sup>178</sup> United Nations, Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyah. *The Palestinian Refugees: a Collection of United Nations documents*. (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1970): 9.

<sup>179</sup> Uri Davis. *Apartheid Israel: Possibilities for the Struggle Within*. (London: Zedbooks, 2003): 148. See also Joel Beinin & Rebecca L. Stein’s book, *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel, 1993-2005* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 157.

<sup>180</sup> Rashid, Khalidi. (Foreword to Nafez Nazzal). *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978), ix.

<sup>181</sup> Fayeze A., Sayegh. *The Palestine Refugees*. (Washington, D.C.: Amara, 1952), 9.

hostilities. Nobody has so far been so bold as to deny that right was stripped from them.”<sup>182</sup> That being said, the 1948 war remains the most contested ground, yet the “foundation and consolidation of the State of Israel and its (unilateral) legitimacy vis-à-vis Palestinian destruction—the moment of indigenous dispossession and the founding violence of a settler society.”<sup>183</sup> Despite the new historiographical debate of the 1980s, few political developments such as the breakdown of the Oslo peace process, the outbreak of two intifadas, and the rise of Likud-dominated government, have made the Israeli public more suspicious of the new interpretations of the past and more receptive to the old history.<sup>184</sup> That being said, terminology is subject to historical process. As in the 1948 war setting, the word choice or naming reverberates power and forms a prominent part of historical transitions, which in turn appropriates the ‘narrativization’ of history.

## **VI. Cultural Effacement: Hebraisation of Palestine**

Discourse creates, naturalizes and appropriates certain colonial actions because it occurs in an institutional context of power like settler-colonial rule.<sup>185</sup> In the wake of the 1948 war, Israel settler colonial paradigm has deployed transformations in naming to reconstruct Palestinian lands and Arab identities into a Jewish State and widespread biblical imaginaries. For example, al-Bassa became Betzet, Saffuriyyah became Tzipori, and Baysan became Beit Shean.<sup>186</sup> This action could be seen in the work of the Names Committee in the 1930s. With statehood, the new Israel Place-Names Committee replaced the Names Committee and was tasked to change place names to either biblical

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<sup>182</sup> Said, & Hitchens, 73.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>184</sup> Rogan, & Shlaim, xxi.

<sup>185</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, “From Little King to Landlord; Colonial Discourse and Colonial Rule”, in Dirks (ed), *In Colonialism and Culture*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 175-208.

<sup>186</sup> Peteet, 159.

or national/Zionist ones.<sup>187</sup> David Ben Gurion, Israel First Prime Minister, assigned nine scholars on *Eretz* Israel from the Israel Exploration Society (IES)—cartographers, archeologists, geographers, historians—to “develop and advance the study of the Land, its history, and pre-history, accentuating the settlement aspect and the sociohistorical connection between the people of Israel and Eretz Israel.”<sup>188</sup> Their main scheme was to “assign Hebrew names to all the places—mountainous, valleys, springs, roads, and so on, in the Negev region.”<sup>189</sup> Some of the local villagers were de-Arabized and lost connection with their land, particularly, the Palestinian Bedouins who was “almost entirely expunged from Zionism’s official history.”<sup>190</sup> The fact of renaming Arab places embody an ideological significance and moral attributes of Jewish cultural systems that structure and nuance the way the new settlers imagine and understand the new settler society.

In the meantime, the rise of Zionism promulgated and cultivated the Jewish national identity through a pioneering settler-culture—songs, ceremonies, national holidays. The cultural fabric of an ancient Jewish homeland—*Eretz* Israel—absorbed masses of immigrants.<sup>191</sup> This political orientation developed “a rigid form of territorial ethnonationalism ... in order to indigenize immigrant Jews quickly and to conceal the

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<sup>187</sup> Peteet, 154.

<sup>188</sup> Mêrôn Benvenisti. *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 11-12

<sup>189</sup> This quote is cited in two standard works: Benvenisti, Mêrôn’s *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 12 & Nur Masalha’s *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees*. (New York: Zedbooks, 2005), 121.

<sup>190</sup> Nur Masalha. *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees*. (New York: Zedbooks, 2005), 121.

<sup>191</sup> There were five Aliyot (plural of Aliya) during Ottoman times and the British Mandate: the first (1881-1903) came at the time of the Russian Pogroms; the second (1904-14) followed by the second wave of pogroms and was spurred by the failure of the Russian revolution of 1905; the Third (1919-1923) was encouraged by the Balfour Declaration; the Fourth (1924-1930) was set off by economic restrictions imposed on the Jews of Poland; the Fifth (1933-1939) was the consequence of the Nazi anti-Semitism.

existence of a Palestinian people on the same land.”<sup>192</sup> Zionist concerted efforts on appropriating the new settlements were part of transforming landscape, identities and forms of power. For instance, the Arab village of Yibna (10 miles southwest of Ramle) was occupied and depopulated during the 1948 war and repopulated with new Jewish settlers on April 1949. The new residents began using biblical name “Gan Yavne” or “Yavne village”—“the town where rabbinical scholarship was carried on after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans.”<sup>193</sup> Renaming a place functions as a public claim and repeating it normalizes it. The Arab village of Yazur (located 3.7 miles east of Jaffa) is another instance of identity effacement. Yazur was captured in May 1948 and repopulated by Jewish settlers in October and given the name of “*Mishmar ha-Shiv’ah*, in memory of the seven soldiers, who were killed there.”<sup>194</sup> These acts of linguistic appropriation and replacement entail, in Stephen Greenblatt’s words, “the cancelation of the native name—the erasure of the alien, perhaps demonic, identity—and hence a kind of making new; it is at once an exorcism, an appropriation, and a gift.”<sup>195</sup> Rendering the Palestinian space extinct validates the “divine land grant”.<sup>196</sup>

After the 1948 war, the new State Judaized much of the occupied villages’ spatial history. “Palestine was not simply ‘baptized’ with Euro-Christian names,” as Nadia Abu-El-Haj argues but also, “biblical names were understood to *belong to the land* itself and

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<sup>192</sup> Oren, Yiftachel. *Ethnocracy: Land And Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006): 108.

<sup>193</sup> Mêrôn, 31.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Stephen Greenblatt. *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 83.

<sup>196</sup> Steven T. Newcomb. *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery*. (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2008), 39.

to be eminently present and identifiable therein (once properly deciphered).”<sup>197</sup> The Israeli former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Mêrôn Benveništî wrote, “every Arabic name, even if no ancient Hebrew name had preceded it” was erased from the map, an act he equated with a “declaration of war” on Palestinian heritage, attributed to the Zionist “desire to make direct contact with their own ancient heritage”.<sup>198</sup> Israel settler colonial nomenclature tries to superimpose its name over territory and places and this in turn constructs collective memories and traditions. The use of narratives of a past craft a sense of a collective present and future. As such, the ‘baptization’ of space remains always more than a mere reflections of reality, but it underwrites and reproduces Israel settler colonial power.

Words to refer to places, events, and actions are critical building blocks in the linguistic repertoire of Zionist settler colonialism. Their terms of discourse naturalizes domination and “part of the taken-for-granted [...] as if there were no other possible alternatives,” as Julie Peteet indicated.<sup>199</sup> Creating a Jewish State requires an elaboration of an historical deep ties to the place and renaming is an axiomatic strategy to symbolize its settler colonial dynamics of the Judaisation of the land. These practices of remaking the spatial history of the land had indeed laid the ground for a terrain within which the practices of settler nationhood would take place and shape in the newly founded Jewish State.<sup>200</sup>

Naming strategies continued in Jerusalem as excavations and restoration work damaged many Islamic and Christian buildings. With the Israeli occupation of East

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<sup>197</sup> Nadia Abu-El-Haj. *Facts on the Ground: Archeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 35.

<sup>198</sup> Mêrôn. 2.

<sup>199</sup> Peteet, 154.

<sup>200</sup> Abu-El-Haj, 98.

Jerusalem in 1967, a residential area to the west of the Wailing Wall, called Haret al-Maghariba or the *Moroccan Quarter* (established by Saladin's son, Malik al-Afdal in 1193), including four Muslim religious sites, was razed and forced 1000 residents to leave, "in order to create the large open plaza that now exists west of the wall."<sup>201</sup> Today, thousands of Israeli visitors and worshippers congregate in the site.

Similar practices of cultural effacement were reported through international organizations. Since 1967 the old city of Nablus witnessed a number of expropriations of mosques, churches, mausoleum, and historic houses. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, John Dugard, reported "in Nablus 64 buildings in the Old City, including 22 residential buildings, were completely destroyed or badly damaged, and a further 221 buildings partially damaged."<sup>202</sup> In this vein, Amnesty International reported, "a number of religious or historical sites were partially destroyed or severely damaged in what frequently appeared to be wanton destruction without military necessity."<sup>203</sup> Destroying historical places has a two-pronged goals: first, to facilitate the indigeneity of the new Jewish settlers and second, to efface Palestinian history and presence and thus appropriates the land. In other words, it is pivotal in reinventing a nation, a place and identities. The reconstruction of a Jewish place or the practice of producing it, indigenizes Sephardic and Ashkenazi settlers. The Israeli minister of Trade and Industry, Pinchas Sapir, ordered in April 1968 the expropriation of twenty-nine acres of the southern part of the Old City "to develop the area to house Israeli Jewish families

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<sup>201</sup> Rashid Khalidi. *Palestinian Identity: Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 17.

<sup>202</sup> UNESCO: "Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. John Dugard, on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, submitted in accordance with Commission resolutions 1993/2 A and 2002/8". E/CN.4/2003/30, 17 December 2002.

<sup>203</sup> Amnesty International, *Israel and the Occupied Territories: Shielded from Scrutiny: IDF Violations in Jenin and Nablus* (AI Index: MDE 15/143/2002), November 2002.



and to reestablish a Jewish presence in the Old City.”<sup>204</sup> These series of expropriation in the words of the former mayor of Jordanian East Jerusalem, Ruhi al-Khatib will render [and had indeed rendered]:

*Arabs in the City lose properties which have belonged to them for hundreds of years, and more than 6,000 Arabs will be evacuated from the city and dispersed... while more than 700 employers and workers will be deprived of their means of livelihood, and forced to swell the ranks of the homeless...*<sup>205</sup>

In the politics of settler colonialism buildings are replete with meaning. The primary motive for their destruction and the displacement of the local inhabitants, as Wolfe argues, is the territory.<sup>206</sup> This remains a leading principle in the Israeli occupation of the U.N assigned territories of Palestine. Prior to 1967, Israel was restricted to the Green Line area (the 1949 armistice line), but afterwards it covered all of Israel/Palestine and continues until the present day through the Israeli legislature.<sup>207</sup>

## **VII. Legal Dispossession**

Until the end of the British Mandate, land was purchased primarily by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and other land-purchasing companies. This made 1.5 million dunams [1 dunam = 1000 m<sup>2</sup>] of Mandate Palestine’s 26.3 million dunams ‘Jewish owned’.<sup>208</sup> In the aftermath of the war, enactment of new laws appropriated the dispossession and defined largely the ethno-national identity of the new settler society. Between 1948 and 1960, the Israelis authorities increasingly established legal structures

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<sup>204</sup> Michael Dumper. *The Politics of Sacred Space: The Old City of Jerusalem in the Middle East Conflict*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 81

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Wolfe, 388.

<sup>207</sup> Oren, 103.

<sup>208</sup> Jeremy, Forman & Alexander, Kedar. “From Arab Land to ‘Israel Lands’: the Legal Dispossession of the Palestinians Displaced by Israel in the wake of 1948.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. Vol. 22, (Summer 2003): 812.

to seize, retain, and reclassify the Arab lands appropriated by the state.<sup>209</sup> While there is no unanimous estimate of the total dunams expropriated, the post 1948 war witnessed a massive land confiscation. According to a 1951 study of the U.N Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), the 1948 war cost the Palestinian Arabs 16.3 million dunams (almost 4 million acres), including public and privately owned land. However, the 1964 UNCCP survey showed the expropriation of land a little over 7 million dunams.<sup>210</sup> This dispute over the accuracy of these numbers is reproduced also among the Arab and the Israeli researchers and organizations. While the former have limited the expropriations between 5.7 and 6.6 million dunams, the latter have estimated it from 4.2 to 6.5 million dunams.<sup>211</sup>

In filling the space, the ruling Mapai party has settled the evacuated homes with Jewish settlers. By April 1949, they were 75,000 Jewish settlers living in the Arab quarters of mixed cities of Haifa, Safed, Jaffa, and Jerusalem; 16,000 in the abandoned Arab cities of Ramle, Lydda, and Acre; and a little over 18,000 in evacuated Arab villages.<sup>212</sup> These practices of land expropriation began almost immediately, with the repeated reclassification of the land, first as ‘abandoned land’, then as ‘absentee land’, and finally as ‘Israel Lands.’<sup>213</sup> Territorial conquest is validated through legal mechanisms. The Israeli tactics of land expropriation deployed four mechanisms of

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<sup>209</sup>Jeremy, Forman & Alexander, Kedar, 309.

<sup>210</sup> Michael R. Fishbach’s book *Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York, N.Y: Institute for Palestine Studies and Columbia University Press, 2003) uses an extensive documents from the UN committee reports, the Arab and the Israeli sources to trace the development of the Palestinian refugee problem and its convoluted legality.

<sup>211</sup>Yifat, Holzman-gazit. *Land Expropriation in Israel: Law, Culture and Society*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007): 104.

<sup>212</sup>Ernest, Stock. *Chosen instrument: The Jewish Agency in the First Decade of the State of Israel*. (New York, N.Y: Herzl Press, 1988): 86.

<sup>213</sup> Forman & Alexander, “From Arab Land to ‘Israel Lands’: the Legal Dispossession of the Palestinians Displaced by Israel in the wake of 1948.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 812.

control: purchasing land, occupying land outright, confiscating Arab land, and undermining the legality of traditional rules of inheritance.<sup>214</sup>

Based on these practices, pro-Zionists Jews perceived the return of the Palestinian Arabs after 1948 a menace to their existence. From the birth of the new State, there was a fear that the overwhelming Arab majority would legally own the land and thus was reasonably “regarded as hostile to the State and the interests of the majority of its citizens.”<sup>215</sup> To illustrate, the 1950 *Absentees Property Law* confiscated all Palestinians’ personal property prior to the war and placed them within the power of the Custodian of Absentee Property.<sup>216</sup> Michael Fischbach estimates over half (more than 726,000) of the entire Palestinian population’s properties were legally seized without compensation.<sup>217</sup> Yet, the international law, U.N. Resolution 194 (III) Section 11) states that the “refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so .... and that compensation should be paid for the property, of those choosing not to return and for loss of, or damage to, property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”<sup>218</sup> Israeli law stipulates that Jews from all over the world have the “right of return” while the right of return for Palestinians is internationally recognized yet denied by Israel. For Palestinian refugees, the ‘right of return’ is still imagined within the geographical space of Palestine, but the political arrangements have been profoundly reconfigured.

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<sup>214</sup> Lyon, *et al.* (eds.). *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power*. (New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2011), 335.

<sup>215</sup> Yifat, Holzman-gazit. *Land Expropriation in Israel: Law, Culture and Society*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 105.

<sup>216</sup> According to this law, anybody that was not physically present on their property before, during or after the war is considered “absentee” and his land confiscated.

<sup>217</sup> Michael R. Fishbach. *Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. (New York, N.Y: Columbia University Press, 2003), xxiii.

<sup>218</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *194 (III), Palestine -- Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator*. A/RES/194 (III), 11 December 1948.

Another central example of the Israeli statutory of land expropriation is the *Planning and Building Law* of 1965.<sup>219</sup> This law bans a Palestinian landowner who lives in East Jerusalem to use his own property without a building permit from the Israeli municipality. Many Palestinian Arabs were disenfranchised to use their own property since “there were no approved town planning schemes for Arab-owned land.”<sup>220</sup> In other words, plan approval is defined along ethnic lines. It may take the Palestinian Arab as triple as the time it takes a new Jewish neighborhood to be approved. In 1967, out of 70,500 dunams of Palestinian land annexed to Jerusalem, 25,000 dunams, or more than one-third, has been expropriated for the construction of new Jewish settlements and of the approximately 46,000 dunams of land the Arabs still own, only 23,000 dunams have been planned. This means that half of Palestinian lands were frozen and could not be used.<sup>221</sup> Even among the 23,000 planned, less than one third, or 7,500 dunams, has been designated as residential land, making Palestinian Arabs have the right to live on less than 10 percent of their land.<sup>222</sup>

The post-1948 Israeli governments have not used the law only to appropriate the land confiscation of Palestinian refugees, living outside Israel’s borders, but also to alienate the country’s internal Arab minority as well. Since 1948, treatment of the Palestinian Arabs irrespective of where they are, has “gone relatively unchanged.”<sup>223</sup> The settler

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<sup>219</sup> The Planning Law restricts actions of building or demolition in East Jerusalem; all “most planning decisions at the local level require the approval of the District planning and Building commission composed of representatives of central government ministries. The Minister of the Interior has extensive oversight power...the system calls for coordinated hierarchy of plans...Lower level plans have to be strictly consistent with all higher level plans.” Cited in Brynen & El-Rifai’s book, *Palestinian Refugees: Challenges of Repatriation and Development*. (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2007), 170.

<sup>220</sup>Sarah Kaminker. “For Arabs Only: Building Restrictions in East Jerusalem.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XXVI, no. 4 (Summer 1997), 7-8.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>222</sup> Kaminker, 9.

<sup>223</sup>David Shipler. *New York Times*, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1983. In *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon, Part II:*

colonial system, as embedded in the Zionist practices, has delegitimized the grievances of the Palestinian Arabs even though methods of alienation differ nonetheless from the Arab Israeli citizens.

### **Reflections:**

This chapter examined the foundational structures of the new settler society in 1948 and how it perpetuated through the 1960s. It explored how the colonial discursive strategy of emptying the land conceptually, practices of depopulation, Judaisation, and legal dispossession have validated Israel's new settler society. Herzlian prophecy of creating a Jewish State was indeed "beneficial" for some, but definitely, in Hannah Arendt's words, "a recipe for disaster."<sup>224</sup> Zionism, the political ideology which calls for the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine, triggered this "disaster." Just as two natives cannot occupy the same territory and claim origins and sovereignty neither can there be two victims making a claim for their narrative and memories to prevail.<sup>225</sup> Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine from its inception to the 1960s may have been nearly fifty years in the past, but its foundational structures still define today's Israel settler colonial dynamics and are everywhere to be seen. Its legacy demonstrates the centrality of settler colonialism and features today in the expropriated lands in various parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as in East Jerusalem, in the blockade of Gaza, in the Wall of separation, in the increasing number of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the displacement of thousands of Palestinians in refugee camps, in the Judaisation of the Palestinian lands, in the control of Palestinian economy and in the denial of the

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*Press Profile*, August 1982/May 1983. (New York: Claremont Research and Publications, 1983), 108.

<sup>224</sup> Herzl, *The Jewish State*, p. 157 & Benhabib, Seyla. "*The*" *Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. (Oxford, UK: AltaMira Press, 2000): 44.

<sup>225</sup> Peteet, 156.

Palestinian 'right of return'. Settler colonial rule has, no simple solutions, for it is usually impossible to repair the injustice done to one party without causing grave injustice to the other. Not sure, however, if there is a way out of this imbroglio?

## Conclusion: Are the Dakota and the Palestinians' Plight Comparable?

*Settler colonialism is not about shaming or 'guilting' or blaming. It is about acknowledging the truth, and with that acknowledgment will come reconciliation, healing, empowerment and pride... It is a mistake to think of Indigenous rights and well-being as merely an 'Indigenous issue' or 'Indigenous problem.'*<sup>226</sup>

Although settler colonial studies reveal similar histories evolving at different times and at different spaces, they reproduce more universal structures of settler colonialism. The latter was a “winner-takes-all proposition” that demanded land in Minnesota and still does in Israel to the detriment of the indigenous peoples.<sup>227</sup> In Minnesota, the white settlers devastatingly dispossessed the Dakota and assaulted their culture. In Israel, the two wars of 1948 and 1967 expelled thousands of Palestinians, confiscated their properties and brought Jewish settlers into the emptied lands. Both settler colonial enterprises in Minnesota and Israel aimed to subordinate and destroy the way of life of the Dakota and the Palestinians, respectively. Yet, indigenous resistance made settler colonialism appear less violent and destructive and helped shift the paradigm from settler violence to indigenous guilt.<sup>228</sup> Like the Dakota people, the Palestinians responded to settler violence by fleeing and/or fighting, as constant encroachment and other forms of colonial repression escalated. This escalation made both nations suffer substantial destruction, retaining only a fraction of original land.

Infuriated by a sense of betrayal over the signing of various treaties in 1851, the decline of food sources, the delay in the payment of annuities, and the indifference of United States agents, the Dakota rose under the leadership of Little Crow to take the

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<sup>226</sup> Larissa Behrendt. *Achieving Social Justice: Indigenous Rights and Australia's Future*. (New South Wales: The Federation Press, 2003), 176.

<sup>227</sup> Hixson, 197.

<sup>228</sup> More on the psychology of violence, See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970; reprint, New York: Continuum, 2001), 55.

white settlers in the Minnesota Valley by surprise. As reservation confinement entered its second decade, the Dakota living under a postcolonial colonial regime declared war against the US government and its citizens. When resistance peaked during the US-Dakota War of 1862, General John Pope wrote to General Henry Sibley:

*We have now the means to make a final settlement with all these Indians. The opportunity may not occur again.... Let me again say to you that I regard the destruction of everything that can sustain life between Fort Ridgely and Big Stone Lake as very important.... All annuity Indians must be notified that hereafter they will not be permitted on any pre-text to leave their reservation that all the soldiers have orders to shoot them wherever they are found, and citizens are authorized to do the same.<sup>229</sup>*

Sibley designed his ‘final settlement’ based on a colonial ideology of ‘alienation’ and ‘dehumanization’ of the locals—being ‘savages’ and ‘heathens’ to assert a claim to land, ghettoize the Dakota and promulgate the concomitant indigenization of the new settlers. However, it came at the expense of a ninety-eight percent rate of the Dakota extermination.<sup>230</sup> From beginning to end, the Sioux outbreak of 1862 was a tragic and brutal episode in the history of postcolonial Indian-white relations in the new republic. With their way of life under the threat of extension, the Dakota were committed to push settlers out of the Minnesota River valley and take their land back. Their resistance ended with two major phases of elimination: first, trials and executions of 38 and second, mass deportation of more than 300 Dakota to other states, such as Iowa.

In sharp contrast, Zionists constructed their own narrative to accompany the construction of Jewish settlements after the 1948 and 1967 wars. This narrative presented the Zionists as a unique and impregnable force that would displace Palestinian Arabs.

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<sup>229</sup> Letter from Maj. Gen. John Pope to Brig. Gen. Henry Sibley (Oct. 10, 1862), in Letters Rec'd-Adj. Gen., NARG 94 (M619, roll 483).

<sup>230</sup> Waziyatawin. “Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours: Reflections on US Indigenous and Palestinian Experiences under Occupation.” *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2:1, 183.



The politics of settler colonialism in Palestine—forced depopulation, land confiscation, cultural effacement, legal appropriation—have transformed substantial parts of Palestinian lands into a Jewish State. For example, the conquest of Lydda and other cities and towns in July 1948 forced thousands of its inhabitants to flee, leaving the door open for hundreds of new Jewish immigrants to flock the town and transform Lydda within few days into a Jewish settler colony. Henceforth, Israel's destruction of Palestinian collective memories and the imposition of Hebrew names ('baptization') has a two-pronged goal: first, to facilitate the indigeneity of the new Jewish settlers and second, to efface Palestinian history and thus appropriate the land. Moreover, the post-1948 Israeli governments have used laws such as the 1950 *Absentees Property Law* and the *Planning and Building Law* of 1965 not only to confiscate the land of Palestinian refugees, living outside Israel's borders, but also to alienate the country's internal Arab minority as well.

As my comparison has shown, settler colonialism is a process that acts similarly across time and space and the end result of both practices of settler colonialism in Minnesota and Israel is quite similar—territoriality. The elimination of the Dakota and the exclusion of the Palestinians were largely land-based, which would provide a good parallel about the need for settlers to expand their land base. In retrospect, both the Dakota people and the Palestinian refugees cherish a tradition of a day when their return to their lands will eventually come. While the Dakota dream of restoring their life of hunting the buffalo in the Dakota Territory, the Palestinians' yearning to return to Lydda and to other dozens of towns that vanished during the cataclysmic year of 1948 linger at the core of the Palestinians' plight. These ambitions of national resuscitation are often met with white settlers' feeling of paternalism and outright hatred.

Studying American history within the context of both settler colonialism and postcolonialism has been fairly controversial. American historians until 1960s typically presented the 1862 war (and nineteenth century wars on the frontier in general), as America's "winning of the West," an expansion deemed a "good" to spread across the continent and supplant the less developed, "savage" native inhabitants. On the other hand, although the historiographical debate of the 1948 war roiled Israeli society, "revisionist" historians were often met with denunciation and marginalization because of Israeli assumption of the existence of a true and immutable sacred past.<sup>231</sup> While conventional view of the both histories reaffirm the indigeneity of the settlers, it delegitimizes indigenous past.<sup>232</sup> Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson argue, "The settlers seek to establish a nation, and therefore need to become native and to write the epic of the nation's origin." They continue, "The 'origin' is that which has no antecedent, so the presence of Ab-origines is an impediment."<sup>233</sup> In other words, creating the indigene has a two-fold task: first, cleansing the land through killing or marginalization and second, sanitizing historical record. The evidence in the case of the Dakota War in 1862 and the Palestinians' war in 1948 clearly upholds the former task.

There is always a need for historical questioning of the colonial situation in order to decolonize our history. As Fanon states, "we might find it in the well-known words: 'The last shall be first and the first last.' Decolonization is the putting into practice of this sentence."<sup>234</sup> To do otherwise qualifies historians "as co-perpetrators, and 'accessories to

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<sup>231</sup> Hixson, 12.

<sup>232</sup> Hixson, 11.

<sup>233</sup> Johnston & Lawson, "Settler Colonies" in H. Schwarz and S. Ray (eds.), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. (London, Blackwell, 2001), 369.

<sup>234</sup> Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 36.

the crime,' the bearers of the onus of what the Germans call "*Mitschuld*," i.e., complicity," as Professor Vahakn Dadrian posits.<sup>235</sup> If it took the United States Federal Government almost a century to apologize for its long history of official depredations and its ill-conceived policies toward the Dakota and Indian tribes, how long will it take Israel to do justice to the plight of the Palestinians?<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Dadrian Vahakn. *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Oxford, N.Y: Berghahn Books, 2004), 294.

<sup>236</sup> S. J. RES. 14. Joint Resolution in the United States Senate during the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session on April 2009.

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