

Nakba Diaries: Unsettling the Scale and Temporality of Historical Writing⁽¹⁾

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This paper argues that diaries are in themselves a kind of history—individual in scale and scope, but wide-ranging in content and style. Reading diaries as histories rather than as historical documents, offers new perspectives from which to understand Palestinians’ experiences of the Nakba. In particular, this paper draws on the Nakba-era diaries of Khalil al-Sakakini and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf, to suggest potential contributions of reading diaries as history rather than texts from which fragments can be mobilized to augment, confirm, or illuminate narrative histories. Khalil al-Sakakini was one of the giants of Palestinian intellectual and political life in the twentieth century, and his diaries encompass nearly half a century, extending from 1907 to 1953. Meanwhile, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf (1913–1994) was of a different generation and a different milieu than Sakakini. Though far less prominent, and less prolific, than Sakakini, Shrouf’s diaries nevertheless provide an extensive record of the life of a Palestinian villager and subaltern during a crucial period of social, political, and economic transformation. Overall, the assessment of these two works will place Sakakini’s and Shrouf’s diaries within the context of Palestinian and Arab diaries, discussing their generic distinction from other kinds of personal accounts and even other published diaries, before discussing what in particular may be gained by reading these diaries as Nakba histories.

Palestinian

Historiography

Nakba Diaries

Palestinian history

Diaries are often treated as raw material from which history can be written, “first drafts” of history awaiting proper framing in an overarching narrative and revision to exclude or contextualize repetitive, contradictory, or “irrelevant” entries and information. In this paper, I argue that diaries are in themselves a kind of history—individual in scale and scope, but wide-ranging in content and style. Moreover, reading diaries as *histories* rather than as *historical documents*, offers new perspectives from which to understand Palestinians’ experiences of the Nakba. Diaries are often confounding and frustrating, falling silent when we most want them to speak, providing riddles when we desire clarity, hinting at people and events that we cannot seem to bring into focus. Yet as a record of praxis—the daily (or, often, less frequent) act of writing—a diary offers a history that is embodied and alive, re-inscribed and evolving with each new entry.

In particular, this paper draws on the Nakba-era diaries of Khalil al-Sakakini and Muhammad ‘Abd

al-Hadi al-Shrouf, both published in the last decade, to suggest potential contributions of reading diaries as history rather than texts from which fragments can be mobilized to augment, confirm, or illuminate narrative histories. Khalil al-Sakakini (1878–1953) is one of the giants of Palestinian intellectual and political life in the twentieth century, an educator, reformer, and nationalist of unquestioned accomplishment. He operated in elevated political and intellectual circles, enjoying close personal and working relationships with many of the most notable figures of Palestine and the Arab Levant in the first half of the twentieth century. His diaries encompass nearly half a century, extending from 1907 to 1953, and were published in eight volumes by the Khalil Sakakini Center in Ramallah and the Institute for Jerusalem Studies between 2003 and 2010. (His daughter Hala had published an abridged version under the title *Kadha ana ya dunya* [Such Am I, O World] in 1955.)⁽³⁾ As Salim Tamari writes: “Sakakini’s diaries, a daily record of his thoughts and presumably not intended for publication, are the only such memoirs [*sic*] of a

1 This study was originally presented at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies’ conference titled “Seventy Years Since the Nakba: Memory and History”, which was held in May 12-14, 2018. It is set to be released in an Arabic book by the same title.

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3 Khalil al-Sakakini, *Kadha ana ya dunya* [Such Am I, O World] (n.p.: al-Matba‘a al-tijariyya, 1955).

major modern Palestinian intellectual, and possibly any Arab writer, known to exist.”⁽⁴⁾

As such, scholars have drawn on these diaries and analyzed their contents to discuss a number of issues—the development of Palestinian and Arab nationalism in the early twentieth century, early Palestinian intellectual engagement with Zionism, conflicts within the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Renaissance in the Arab world, Arab education in Palestine, Arab immigration to the United States, courtship and expression of romantic love in early twentieth-century Palestine, the development of café culture in Mandate Palestine, and Sakakini’s own contributions to Arab language and literature.⁽⁵⁾ But relatively little attention has been devoted to Sakakini’s experiences of displacement in April 1948, when he and his family fled their home in the Qatamon neighborhood of Jerusalem for Egypt.⁽⁶⁾ One explanation for this may be the relative dearth of entries from this period: though in other periods the diaries do indeed represent a daily record, from 1947 to 1949, Sakakini’s entries are irregular and infrequent, marked by a significant gap—discussed in greater depth below—from April 1948 until the beginning of 1949.

Meanwhile, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf (1913–1994) was of a different generation and a different milieu than Sakakini. Shrouf was from Nuba, a village about eleven kilometers northwest of Hebron and one of five villages (along with Surif, Kharas, Bayt Awla, and Tarqumiya) comprising *qura saff al-‘Amleh*—villages historically associated with

the ‘Amleh family.⁽⁷⁾ During the 1930s and 1940s, Shrouf served several stints as a constable in the British Mandate Palestine Police, briefly operating a wholesale fabric shop in the Old City of Jerusalem in the interim. In the aftermath of the 1948 war, Shrouf left police service and involved himself deeply in the affairs of Nuba, much of whose agricultural lands had been severed by the post-1948 ceasefire lines that became Israel’s de facto border. In 1955, Shrouf relocated to al-Rusayfa, Jordan, seeking relief from the dire economic circumstances of the West Bank. From 1943 to 1962, Shrouf kept a record of his daily activities and events around him in a series of pocket-sized calendars.⁽⁸⁾ In 2016, the Institute for Palestine Studies published a compilation of these diaries, along with Shrouf’s policeman’s notebook from his period of service in Jaffa and a notebook in which he recorded his public statements, from speeches at events and appeals to public officials to letters and newspapers.⁽⁹⁾ Though far less prominent, and less prolific, than Sakakini, Shrouf’s diaries nevertheless provide an extensive record of the life of a Palestinian villager and subaltern during a crucial period of social, political, and economic transformation.⁽¹⁰⁾

Scholars of the Nakba, recognizing the undeniable impact of the Nakba on the historical trajectory of Palestine and the Arab world more broadly, have struggled to overcome the inaccessibility and dispersal of contemporaneous Palestinian and Arab primary sources. Yet, despite—and in part because of—the limits imposed by such factors, there has been a flourishing of post hoc efforts to document the experiences of Palestinians during the tumultuous

4 Salim Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 113.

5 See: Nadim Bawalsa, “Sakakini Defrocked,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 42 (2010): 5–25; Emanuel Beska, “Khalil al-Sakakini and Zionism before WWI,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 63–64 (2015): 40–53; Yusuf Ayyub Haddad, *Khalil al-Sakakini: hayatuhu, mawqifuhu, wa-atharuhu* [Khalil al-Sakakini: His Life, His Ideas, and His Patrimony] (Beirut: al-Ittihad al-‘amm li-l-kuttab wa al-suhufiyyin al-Filastiniyyin, 1981); Elie Keddouri, “Religion and Politics: The Diaries of Khalil Sakakini,” *St. Antony’s Papers* 4 (1958): 77–94; Adel Manna’, “Between Jerusalem and Damascus: The End of Ottoman Rule as Seen by a Palestinian Modernist,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 22–23 (2005): 117–120; Kamel Moed, “Educator in the Service of the Homeland: Khalil al-Sakakini’s Conflicted Identities,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 59 (2014): 68–85; Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea*, 113–132, 176–189.

6 In his 375-page book about Sakakini, for example, Yusuf Ayyub Haddad dedicates only about 5 pages to this period: Haddad, 85–91. The exception to this has been the work of Itamar Radai, who has used Sakakini’s diaries as a key source in his work on the fate of al-Qatamon neighborhood in 1948. See: Itamar Radai, “Qatamon, 1948: The Fall of a Neighborhood,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 46 (2011): 6–14; and Itamar Radai, “The Collapse of the Palestinian-Arab Middle Class in 1948: The Case of Qatamon,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007): 961–982.

7 For the historical significance of the ‘Amleh family in Jabal al-Khalil in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Johann Büsow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 194–210.

8 Nine of these calendars remain. The lack of entries from 1947 and 1950, despite Shrouf’s prolific diary-keeping for the remainder of the period from 1946 to 1953, implies that he maintained a diary during these years as well, but that these calendars have been lost, destroyed, or are otherwise inaccessible.

9 Alex Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa wa jabal al-Khalil: yawmiyyat Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shuruf (1943–1962)* [Between Jaffa and Mount Hebron: The Diaries of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf] (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-dirasat al-Filastiniyya, 2016).

10 On the diary’s contributions, see: Alex Winder, “After the Nakba in Nuba: A Palestinian Villager’s Diary, 1949,” *Biography* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 24–76; Alex Winder, “With the Dregs at the Sambo Café: The Shrouf Diaries, 1943–1962,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 54 (Summer 2013): 31–55.

period from the UN recommendation for Palestine's partition in 1947 through the withdrawal of the British and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and its aftermath, focusing in particular on the violence and displacement that accompanied these political acts. These efforts have been carried out individually, through the writing and publication of memoirs and autobiographies, and collectively, through the collection and recording of oral histories and the compilation of village histories. Diaries are

often subsumed within overarching categories of personal accounts of the Nakba that include memoir and oral history, despite significant differences in terms of genre, content, and perspective. The following section will place Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries within the context of Palestinian and Arab diaries, discussing their generic distinction from other kinds of personal accounts and even other published diaries, before discussing what in particular may be gained by reading these diaries as Nakba histories.

Palestinian and Arab Diaries

The number of extant Palestinian diaries from the first half of the twentieth century is limited. In addition to the published diaries of Sakakini and Shrouf, other published diaries from this period include those of Sami 'Amr, a young Palestinian from Hebron; Khalil Totah, an educator from Ramallah; Ihsan al-Turjman, a Palestinian soldier in the Ottoman military during World War I; and Akram Zu'aytir, a journalist and nationalist activist with the Istiqlal party.⁽¹¹⁾ Beyond these published works, Sameeh Hammoudeh lists a number of other Palestinian diaries in his exploration of Mandate-era diaries of Palestinian elites, including: the papers of al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni (1895–1974), mufti of Jerusalem and leader of the Palestinian national movement; the memoirs of 'Arif al-'Arif (1892–1972), historian and government administrator; the diaries of Tahir al-Fityani (1910–1971), a journalist and educator; the memoirs of Dawud al-Husayni (1903–1991), a trained dentist and activist with al-Jihad al-Muqaddis during the 1936–1939 Revolt and a member of the founding committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization; the diaries of Salim al-Za'rur (1888–1978), who headed the Ramallah municipality during the 1940s; and the papers of Mustafa Irshayd (1912–1957), a political activist

with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.⁽¹²⁾ Some of these works remain largely inaccessible—held in the personal collections of family members or researchers—and it is unclear whether the majority are diaries at all, rather than personal papers, correspondence, or post facto memoirs. Moreover, we must consider the possibility—indeed, likelihood—that Palestinian diaries were destroyed, looted, and stolen by Zionist militias and the Israeli military at the end of the Palestine Mandate or in subsequent incursions, invasions, and occupations.⁽¹³⁾ Taking all of this into consideration, Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries remain among the few known and accessible examples of the genre kept by Palestinians during the crucial 1947–1949 period.

Sakakini's Nakba-era diaries are complemented by the diary entries and correspondence that his daughter, Hala Sakakini, included in her memoir *Jerusalem and I*.⁽¹⁴⁾ Hala's diary entries are particularly valuable in exploring questions of affect and positionality vis-à-vis individual experiences of the Nakba, as they describe the same events as those recorded in her septuagenarian widower father's diary—from the heightened tensions and rising violence in the Qatamon neighborhood of

11 See: Kimberly Katz, ed., *A Young Palestinian's Diary: The Life of Sami 'Amr* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Thomas M. Ricks, ed., *Turbulent Times in Palestine: The Diaries of Khalil Totah, 1886–1955* (Ramallah: Institute for Palestine Studies and PASSIA, 2009); Salim Tamari, ed., *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Akram Zu'aytir, *Yawmiyyat Akram Zu'aytir: al-haraka al-wataniyya al-Filastiniyya, 1935–1939* [The Diaries of Akram Zu'aytir: The Palestinian National Movement, 1935–1939] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-dirasat al-Filastiniyya, 1980).

12 Sameeh Hammoudeh, "Yawmiyyat al-nukhba al-Filastiniyya fi 'ahd al-intidab al-Britani: qadaya bahthiyya" [Diaries of Palestinian Elites in the British Mandate Era: Research Issues], in Zakariya Muhammad et al., eds., *Awraq 'a'iliyya: dirasat fi al-tarikh al-ijtima'i al-mu'asir li-Filastin* [Family Papers: Studies in the Modern Social History of Palestine] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies), 224–26.

13 See Gish Amit, "Salvage or Plunder? Israel's 'Collection' of Private Palestinian Libraries in West Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 6–23; Hannah Mermelstein, "Overdue Books: Returning Palestine's 'Abandoned Property' of 1948," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 47 (Autumn 2011): 46–64.

14 Hala Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I: A Personal Record* (Amman: Economic Press, 1987), 110–133.

Jerusalem to the family's exodus to Egypt—from the perspective of an unmarried urban Palestinian woman in her mid-twenties. Meanwhile, there are significant resonances between both Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries and the memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya. Abu Gharbiyya, a Palestinian fighter with al-Jihad al-Muqaddis, described the progress of the military confrontation between the Zionist military organizations and the Arab defenders in and around Jerusalem from his headquarters in the Musrara neighborhood—north of the Old City and, beyond it, Qatamon—and, later, from the northwestern villages of Mount Hebron, particularly Surif.⁽¹⁵⁾

Neither Hala Sakakini's inclusion of diary entries in her memoir, nor Abu Gharbiyya's day-by-day account of the battle for Palestine—the daily details of which imply a contemporaneous diary as its foundation—conform, however, to the definition of a diary put forward by Philippe Lejeune, the leading theorist of diary as a distinct genre. For example, Lejeune insists that “the diarist can neither *compose* nor *correct*. . . . People don't know the future when they write their diaries.”⁽¹⁶⁾ Both Hala Sakakini and Abu Gharbiyya were able to compose and correct their diaries in preparation for publication—to frame them in life narratives that take into account the “future” from which they were written, to include context that renders allusive entries accessible and remove material deemed irrelevant or potentially disruptive to these narratives. Similarly, Hala's edited and abridged version of her father's diary, *Kadha ana ya dunya*, must be seen as distinct from the more recent multi-volume publication of these diaries not only from the perspective of completeness, but with regard to this relationship to the diary genre.

Other Arab diaries from this period should be also noted, including Hassan Hathout's *Yawmiyyat tabib Misri* (Diary of an Egyptian Doctor) and Mohamed Hassanein Heikal's two-volume *al-'Urush wa*

al-juyush (Thrones and Armies).⁽¹⁷⁾ Both offer accounts of Egyptian actors' engagement in the struggle for Palestine in 1948 and 1949—in Hathout's case, that of a doctor providing medical aid during the upheaval, while Heikal's book provides daily military briefings that demonstrate the shifting fortunes and misfortunes of Egypt's soldiers during the fighting. Hathout's diary was published by its author during his lifetime, and thus its affinity with a “true diary” in Lejeune's sense is undermined by the same authorial freedom to “compose and correct” for publication. The Egyptian military “diaries,” meanwhile, though unintended and, it seems, largely unedited for publication, are not the work of a single diarist, but rather the product of a military bureaucracy. Their form resembles that of the diary, but in practice it is far from the kind of personal diary-keeping that we find with Sakakini and Shrouf. Neither Hathout nor Heikal, moreover, offers the on-the-ground *Palestinian* perspective that Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries provide.

Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries are, more than any other published sources, closest to the “true diary” imagined and described by Lejeune. This generic affinity—despite significant differences in their authors' backgrounds and writing styles—allows them to be paired for analysis as comparable sources, with similar internal logics and shared limitations and constraints. This is not intended to imply that Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries offer a more direct or more authentic access to the “truth” of the Nakba. In fact, they contain only traces of the already limited perspectives of two literate Palestinian men. But they do not add or exclude material to conform to larger narratives. This anti-narrative quality allows other elements to emerge. This article will address four of these: the significance of family and social networks; the production of space; affect and embodiment; and temporality.

15 Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, *Fi khidam al-nidal al-'Arabi al-Filastini: mudhakkirat al-munadil Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, 1916–1949* [In the Midst of the Palestinian Arab Struggle: Memoirs of the Fighter Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, 1916–1949] (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-dirasat al-Filastiniyya, 1993).

16 Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 182. Emphasis in original.

17 Hassan Hathout, *Yawmiyyat tabib Misri: Filastin, al-nakba al-ula 1948* [Diaries of an Egyptian Doctor: Palestine, the First Catastrophe, 1948] (Cairo: Kitab al-hilal, 1988); Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, ed., *al-'Urush wa al-juyush: kadhalik infajara al-sira 'fi Filastin, 1948–1998: qira'a fi yawmiyyat al-harb* [Thrones and Armies: Thus Erupted the Conflict in Palestine, 1948–1998: A Reading of War Diaries] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1998); Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, ed., *al-'Urush wa al-juyush 2: azmat al-'urush, sadmat al-juyush: yawmiyyat al-harb (Filastin 1948)* [Thrones and Armies 2: The Thrones' Crisis and the Armies' Shock: Palestine 1948 War Diaries] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2000).

Family and Social Networks

Diaries' articulations of social bonds illuminate Palestinian experiences of the Nakba on a human scale. Contra historical narratives of the Nakba as a disaster for an abstract community, whether conceived in national (Palestinian or pan-Arab) or religious (Islamic) terms, the nature of a diary—in ways both similar to and distinct from village histories, oral histories, and memoirs—necessarily reflects a scale of community that is lived rather than conceptual: the individual enmeshed in collectives of family; neighborhood, city, or village; and subnational region. Though, of course, Palestinians feared and fought for Palestine, on a more intimate level, the fear they felt was the fear for their loved ones; their fight, a fight with and for comrades; and their survival sustained through maintaining and forging bonds of meaning and affection.

Diaries are often conceived in the popular imagination as the repositories of their authors' innermost selves, but they more commonly record interactions with others, serving as a kind of annotated social calendar that, in the totality of their entries, recreate a "labyrinthine network of companionship."⁽¹⁸⁾ Both Sakakini and Shrouf were intensely social beings and their diaries are replete with the names of those with whom they ate, drank, traveled, and conversed.⁽¹⁹⁾ Their diaries thus provide source material to recreate some of the social networks in which they were embedded and to trace the ebbs and flows of these networks over time. Such an approach provides an opportunity to see the ways in which such social networks were strained and, in some cases, severed by the catastrophe of 1948, as well as the ways in which they provided the comfort and resilience that underpinned Palestinian survival during such dark days.

Sakakini's immediate family, especially his son Sari, his daughters Dumya and Hala, and his sister Melia,

all figure prominently in his diary entries from 1947 to 1949 (as in other periods). Before 1948, they joined him in travels within Palestine and to Beirut and Cairo, and in hosting various friends, visitors, and dignitaries in the Sakakini home in Qatamon. Yet, as the situation in Palestine deteriorated in 1947 and early 1948, the impact can be read on these family bonds. On 16 February 1948, for example, Sakakini received a letter from Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, president of the Fu'ad I Language Academy, formally announcing Sakakini's appointment to the academy.⁽²⁰⁾ His diary reads: "I resolved to travel [to Egypt] immediately and had wanted my sister Melia to travel with me, be she preferred to remain at home in these distressing times."⁽²¹⁾

More significantly, Sari's ill health gave rise to increasing anxiety in Sakakini's diary. On 17 March 1948—as Sakakini and Melia accompanied the U.S. diplomat Wells Stabler to a meeting with 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni—Sari called to the house a doctor who found his heart to be in poor condition. "We were gripped with great anxiety," Sakakini wrote in his diary. "It is the doctor's view that Sari must leave this environment, and he advised us to take him to Egypt."⁽²²⁾ Sari resisted this advice, perhaps fearing to leave his family in the increasingly chaotic circumstances in Palestine, but on 27 March—a week after Zionist forces launched an intense assault against Qatamon—he was finally convinced to travel to Egypt. After sending Sari on his way in a convoy of cars traveling from Jerusalem to Egypt via Bethlehem and Hebron, Sakakini writes:

we heard that a large Jewish convoy guarded by armored cars was, at the same time, traveling south. We were overcome by anxiety, having a thousand apprehensions about the trip, for we feared that the Jews would encounter our

18 This language is drawn from Cemal Kafadar's study of the diary of Seyyid Hasan, a seventeenth-century Ottoman dervish. See Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989): 148.

19 On the "networks of companionship" in Sakakini's and Shrouf's respective diaries, see, for example: Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea*, 176–189; Winder, "With the Dregs."

20 Sakakini had been informed earlier of his nomination, and included a warm anecdote in his diary entry for the week of 8–17 January 1948, recounting Sari reading aloud the report of the nomination from *al-Ahram* newspaper. Akram Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini: yawmiyyat, risalat, ta'ammulat: al-kitab al-thamin: al-khuruj min al-Qatamon, 1942–1953* [The Diaries of Khalil al-Sakakini: Diaries, Letters, Reflections: Volume Eight: Exile from al-Qatamon, 1942–1953] (Ramallah: Institute for Jerusalem Studies and Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, 2010), 239.

21 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 244.

22 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 246.

vehicles, or that the Arabs would encounter the Jews and a battle break out, and our vehicle would be caught in the midst of the fray.⁽²³⁾

The following day, 28 March, Sakakini records a full account of the clash that did take place between the armed Jewish convoy and Arab fighters outside of Bethlehem. He remained nervous about what the clash may have meant for the cars in which Sari was traveling. Though Sakakini praised the commanders of the armed Arab forces—including Kamel ‘Urayqat, Ibrahim Abu Diyya, and Abu Diyya’s deputy, Abu ‘Atta of Rafat village—he expressed concern about the cleavages within Palestinian society, going on at length about the potential for divisions along rural-urban, Muslim-Christian, and factional lines, and the fear that the fight for Palestine might turn “to a war for spoils, not a war of *jihād*,” before concluding: “As for the war today, we fear that it will become chaos.”⁽²⁴⁾ Though there is no doubt that Sakakini was deeply invested in and concerned about the fate of Palestine, it is notable that his lengthy discussion of his fears and anxieties regarding the ongoing struggle coincide with a moment of great uncertainty regarding his son, Sari. (Ultimately, confirmation of Sari’s safe arrival came from Cairo on 1 April with Sakakini’s close friend ‘Adil Jabir.)⁽²⁵⁾

The degree to which the unfolding conflict in Palestine was one whose impacts were felt and expressed in close family and social networks can also be seen in the diaries of Shrouf. At the beginning of 1948, Shrouf was stationed as a policeman in Jaffa, and had rented a house for himself and his family in the town of Yazur, on the outskirts of Jaffa. As Shrouf records increasing acts of violence and destruction in the Jaffa area, one can sense the urgency of removing his family to their home village and the relief when he is transferred in mid-March from Jaffa to a Hebron-area police station. On 25 January 1948, for example, Shrouf records a three-hour running battle between Zionist

and Arab forces on the borders of Yazur village.⁽²⁶⁾ Less than a week later, on the night of 29–30 January, Yazur again came under attack, with Zionist militants blowing up the house of one of the residents.⁽²⁷⁾ On 2 February, after receiving five days of leave, Shrouf writes: “The family, [our] home goods, and I finally left Yazur, [returning] to our village in a truck rented for 8 Palestine pounds.”⁽²⁸⁾ Although Shrouf remained stationed in Jaffa, he prepared for his family’s return to the Hebron area. On 8 February, Shrouf returned to Yazur to obtain a transfer document for his eldest son, Faysal, to officially change schools from the one in Yazur to Nuba’s school.⁽²⁹⁾ On 19 February, Shrouf went to Hebron to register all nine members of his family with a grocer there “according to the transfer order from the provisioning office in Jaffa.”⁽³⁰⁾ On 15 March, Shrouf writes: “Today, in the morning, I was finally transferred from the Jaffa City Police Station to the Hebron Police Station.”⁽³¹⁾ The repetition of the word “finally” [*niha’iyyan*] in the entries from 2 February and 15 March is notable, giving a sense of the anxiety and relief that was deeply embedded in the question of safety of and proximity to family in the increasingly chaotic and violent atmosphere in the early months of 1948.

Beyond his nuclear family, Shrouf’s diary provides an extensive record of the clan (*hamula*), village, and professional networks that formed the backbone of Arab resistance outside of Hebron. Although he rarely provides details of battle, from April through the end of 1948, Shrouf’s diary entries reveal him crisscrossing the Mount Hebron region, between police stations in al-Dhahiriyya and Bayt Jibrin, to the Arab military regional headquarters in Surif and among the other villages of *qura saff al-‘Amleh*, and to and from Hebron city, often in support of the Arab military effort. He does so in the company of fellow policemen and with other men from Nuba and surrounding villages, sleeping and dining in the company of his comrades-

23 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 250.

24 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 255.

25 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 255.

26 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 91.

27 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 91.

28 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 93.

29 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 93.

30 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 94.

31 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 94.

in-arms. Although further work is required to unspool the densely interwoven threads of family, village, and profession, the steady streams of names in Shrouf's diary entries indicate that fighting for Palestine was not an impersonal affair.

To take one example, on 9 February 1948, Shrouf wrote in his diary that Ahmad 'Abd al-Fattah Tayyim, a member of Shrouf's *hamula*, had been killed. One week later, a delegation from *qura saff al-'Amleh*, Bayt Jibrin, and al-Dawayima—headed by a number of men, including 'Abdallah 'Amr al-'Amleh, Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi al-'Amleh, and 'Abd al-Rahman 'Awwad al-Fatafita—interceded in the matter to arrange reconciliation (*sulh*) between the Tayyim family and those responsible for Ahmad's death, thereby diminishing the likelihood of retaliation.⁽³²⁾ The local notables mentioned in this case reappear in Shrouf's later entries describing the Arab military effort in the Hebron region. For example, on 12 May 1948, Shrouf writes:

In the morning today, I went with a number of armed men from our village to Bayt Awla village, and from there we rode in a truck with 'Abdallah 'Amr and Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi al-'Amleh, and a number of armed men from Bayt Awla. Likewise, we took with us 'Abd al-Rahman 'Awwad and a number of armed men from Tarqumiya. We went to Kfar Etzion colony and we began to attack it and its neighboring colonies, alongside a large number of fighters from Hebron and the district.⁽³³⁾

The war was, for Palestinians, one engaged in with one's fellow villagers, family members, and, in Shrouf's case, policemen. The defense of Palestine, flawed as it may have been, was deeply dependent on the local networks that undergirded the Palestinian social order.

As I have argued elsewhere, these networks were also crucial for Palestinians as they struggled

to accommodate the new reality of Palestine's dismemberment and the displacement of hundreds of thousands.⁽³⁴⁾ Shrouf's diary entries that detail the provision of aid to Nuba and *qura saff al-'Amleh*, as well as his advocacy on behalf of these villages, show how the impact of the Nakba was felt on a local scale, and how Palestinian reactions to it were likewise, at least initially, local affairs made possible by preexisting family, social, and economic bonds. The resilience of these networks, however, was much easier to sustain for those Palestinians, like Shrouf, who were not themselves displaced. Those who were, including elites like Sakakini, were forced to pull together the threads of severed connections and to weave new bonds that could sustain them in dire circumstances.

Sakakini's diary shows both the importance of such connections and the difficulty in establishing them in circumstances of displacement. Sakakini's pre-1948 diary entries testify to his rich intellectual, social, and political networks. Tamari, for example, has written of Sakakini's development of a circle of social and intellectual companions, which he dubbed the Vagabond Party, after Sakakini began referring to the café that they frequented as the Vagabond Café (*qahwat al-sa'alik*).⁽³⁵⁾ In Egypt, Sakakini was able to once again to find—or, perhaps, establish—a coterie in a café in Heliopolis called the Palmyra, “frequented by Palestinian refugees in the morning and afternoon.”⁽³⁶⁾ (Hala Sakakini described Heliopolis in May 1948 as a “Palestinian colony. Every other house is occupied by a Palestinian family.”)⁽³⁷⁾ There, Sakakini also came to know many Egyptians, Syrians, and Lebanese, and he lists in his diary the names and professions of 33 of the circle—a predominantly Christian group of active and retired professionals.⁽³⁸⁾ In a later entry, Sakakini lists the three most important developments in his period of his life, namely since the loss of Palestine and Sakakini's displacement to Egypt: his election to the Fu'ad I Language Academy; the meeting of the Palestinian national assembly in

32 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 93.

33 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 97.

34 Winder, “With the Dregs.” See also, Alex Winder, “Family, Social, and Professional Networks in Mount Hebron Before and After 1948,” paper presented to the Middle East Studies Association annual meeting, Washington, DC, 19 November 2017.

35 On the Vagabond Café of Jerusalem, see Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea*, 176–189.

36 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 267.

37 Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I*, 124.

38 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 268–69. The professions listed for members of the Palmyra circle include pharmacist, lawyer, journalist, publisher, trader, doctor, and a significant number of retirees.

Gaza, over which Sakakini initially presided; and, finally, the establishment of a community at the Palmyra Café, where “the faces of all gleam with nothing but friendship, kindness, and sincerity, as if we were raised in one house, as if we were members of one family.”⁽³⁹⁾ He holds his “membership” in the Palmyra coterie as an equivalent source of pride as his membership in the Language Academy, and in an entry from 21 September 1949, Sakakini even revives the moniker Vagabond Café to refer to the Palmyra.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Yet, even as Sakakini established new social connections in Cairo, a certain pall hung over otherwise sustaining and nourishing relationships. In noting the importance to his life in Egypt of the Language Academy and the Palmyra Café, Sakakini also notes that each had been afflicted by deaths of members. Ruminating on death’s inescapability, Sakakini concluded: “There was no relief for me in the exodus from Palestine into God’s vast lands, no relief for me in the academy or the [café] coterie, when each day portends calamity for us and we

announce our own deaths.”⁽⁴¹⁾ Although Sakakini’s diary before the Nakba was hardly a lighthearted record of good cheer—Tamari writes that his diary entries “are full of self-recrimination and bouts of gloom and despair”⁽⁴²⁾—the sense of futility in escaping the death and destruction of Jerusalem at the end of April 1948, only to be beset by the deaths of colleagues and comrades in Cairo illustrates the overwhelming totality of alienation that the Nakba produced. In an addendum to this bleak entry, Sakakini noted the death of yet another member of the Language Academy, followed by an entry in which Sakakini received news of the death of his niece, Julia, who had been incinerated with her grandson when the car in which they were traveling from Jerusalem to Amman caught fire. Sakakini’s exodus from Jerusalem had given no relief from death and despair, and only served to distance him from the tragedies befalling loved ones in Palestine. “O fates,” Sakakini wrote, “take it easy on us, for we are too weak to tolerate such calamities!”⁽⁴³⁾

Producing Space

Just as diaries can, through their record of interpersonal networks in which their diarists are engaged, shift the scale of community from the national to the intimate, they can also shift the scale of geography, producing a Palestinian space rooted in locations inhabited and traversed by their authors. Unlike political and military histories of the 1948 war and its tremendous impact on Palestinian society, which recount the unfolding of violence and flight from a bird’s-eye-view, taking the entirety of Palestine as its setting and proceeding from one battle to another to trace the shifting frontlines, the diaries of Sakakini and Shrouf are largely rooted in the locations inhabited and traversed by their authors. A reader of these diaries, therefore, has a rare opportunity to see the progression of historical change as Palestinians themselves experienced it in the moment, with limited knowledge of events in other cities and regions, with hope and pessimism thus often determined by local developments rather than an overall view of the national

situation, and with an almost claustrophobic sense of the limits of individual scope of action.

Sakakini’s diary entries from 1947–1949 produce several different spatial domains, from the space Levantine intellectual circuits to the intensely localized Jerusalem neighborhood of Qatamon and, after fleeing Jerusalem, the reconstituted neighborhood space of Heliopolis in Cairo. Throughout 1947 and into 1948, Sakakini’s diary records travels to Beirut with Melia and Musa al-‘Alami (2 February 1947); to Cairo with Melia (14 April 1947); to Lebanon as a participant in the first Arab Cultural Conference (31 August to 14 September 1947); to Damascus to attend a memorial service for Shakib Arslan (14 October 1947); and to Cairo to accept his membership to the Language Academy (19 February to 6 March 1948). These travels—as well as Sakakini’s movement within historic Palestine—are indicative of the regional spaces of intellectual exchange that linked

39 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 277.

40 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 279.

41 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 277.

42 Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea*, 119.

43 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 278. “*Ayyatuha al-aqdar ruwaydaka fa-innana ad’af min an nahtamil mithla hadhihi al-masa’ib.*”

Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jaffa, Jerusalem, and other urban centers and of a pre-Nakba time-space in which borders within historic Palestine and between Palestine and its neighbors were more porous and less militarized than they became after May 1948.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Alongside this elite cosmopolitan space produced via Sakakini's diaries is the intensely localized space of Qatamon and, within it, the Sakakini house. Before being forced to flee, Qatamon serves as a central character in Sakakini's diary entries, with the Sakakini home becoming a kind of synecdoche for Qatamon, itself a kind of synecdoche for Jerusalem, which in turn can be read as symbolic of Palestine as a whole. The violence that began to fracture Palestine, and the fears that it produced, increasingly turned neighborhoods and homes inward, effectively severing communities from those adjacent to them and giving rise to a kind of claustrophobia.

At the beginning of January 1948, Sakakini wrote an entry describing the escalation of violence in Palestine and comparing Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods to cities of Europe during the two world wars: "It is as though the Old City is Sevastopol, Shaykh Jarrah is Verdun, and Qatamon is Malta."⁽⁴⁵⁾ In the same entry, Sakakini describes the efforts of the neighborhood to organize itself for defense, collecting funds to purchase arms, scheduling guard duty, and organizing medical and engineering expertise. At the end of his description of these efforts, Sakakini repeats his earlier analogy: "we took [the defense of] our neighborhood upon ourselves, with a street surrounding it as if it was a island stronghold, fortified like Sevastopol, Verdun, Gibraltar, and Malta!!"⁽⁴⁶⁾ This comparison—in conjunction with Sakakini's unsuccessful request for support from the Arab Higher Committee, recorded in the same entry—emphasizes the neighborhood's preparation and self-reliance, but also its growing sense of isolation.

Qatamon's state of siege intensified, and in an entry from 20 March 1948 Sakakini notes the violent assault that Zionist militias had launched against

the neighborhood. Sakakini writes: "Qatamon neighborhood resembles the crater of a volcano, from which lava flies in all directions, flames rise, and smoke emanates. Not a night passes among us that we do not congratulate one another on our safe passage [to morning]."⁽⁴⁷⁾ As a result, Sakakini's neighbors began to evacuate the neighborhood, taking refuge in the Old City, Bayt Jala, and Amman, among other places. The Sakakini family became increasingly confined to their home, which at the same time became a nerve center of the neighborhood's defense, hosting visits by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni and his top lieutenants. Sakakini closes the entry by listing "three things only [that] concern me and occupy my mind," at their head: "That our houses will be bombed and fall upon our heads. Any death would be easier than this death."⁽⁴⁸⁾ As space closes in around Sakakini, he fears its collapse upon him.

Sakakini's entry of 7 April, only about three weeks before the family's exodus to Egypt, also recognizes the transformation of the home from a site of refuge to a site of vulnerability. Sakakini writes:

We found a rifle bullet on the balcony this morning. It had struck the right doorjamb, leaving a small trace and then falling in the middle of the balcony. Had it struck the door or the window, it would have penetrated the door or window and entered the house. And if one of us had been in its way, it would have injured or killed him. Where did this bullet come from? No doubt it came from that opening between our neighbors' houses [and] Laurence House. I had thought that we were safe because our house is in the middle of the neighborhood, surrounded by [other] houses like walls of a fortress. But if we are vulnerable to bullets, then after today we are on our guard, for once bitten, twice shy [al-mu'min la yuldaghu min juhr marratayn].⁽⁴⁹⁾

The diary thus records the increasing intrusion of violence into personal space and marks the disruption of this space as a turning point in Sakakini's experience

44 This characteristic of Sakakini's pre-1948 writings has been identified and examined by 'Adania Shibli. Hisham 'Awda, "'Adania Shibli: harakat al-kalimat rahinat jughrafiya al-makan," *al-Dustur*, 10 May 2010, online at addustour.com/articles/451926 (accessed 18 February 2018).

45 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 237.

46 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 238.

47 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 248.

48 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 248.

49 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 255.

of the tumultuous events of 1948. When Sakakini flees at the end of April, the bullet on the balcony can be read as a harbinger of this exodus—flight to Egypt representing the most intense disruption of space, of course.

Shrouf's diaries, meanwhile, produce a different space: this particular geography of the Nakba spreads out among the networks of *qura saff al-'Amleh* and this cluster's links to and beyond Hebron and, at the same time, intensely rooted in the agricultural land of Nuba. The networks of villages in the Mount Hebron region become apparent in Shrouf's peripatetic excursions to engage in the defense of the region during the 1948 war; to perform his service in the British Mandate police and the police institution that continued under Egyptian military command during the war; to buy and sell at market; to listen to the radio to learn of international and regional developments; and to visit friends and family. Even superficially, the strength of these intra-regional linkages are apparent in the sheer frequency with which Shrouf's diaries record place names. Between 1948 and 1949, the other villages of *qura saff al-'Amleh* (Bayt Awla, Kharas, Surif, and Tarqumiya) are recorded a total of 109 times. Hebron alone is recorded in 92 different entries. The town of al-Dhahiriyya, south of Hebron, where Shrouf was initially posted upon his transfer from Jaffa, is recorded 15 times, and Bayt Jibrin, to Hebron's north and to which Shrouf requested a transfer from al-Dhahiriyya to be closer to his family home and the nearby war front, is mentioned 31 times.

Closer examination of the entries' content further illuminates the tightly knit geography of Shrouf's world. Consecutive entries from late October 1949, for example, show relief (appeals to the Red Cross), commerce (purchases of sugar and rice and the pressing of olives), and sociability (shared meals and prayer) intermingle in the spaces between Nuba, *qura saff al-'Amleh*, and Hebron—traversed by taxi, camel, and donkey, and on foot. On 27 October 1949, Shrouf writes:

Around 9:30 a.m., we held a meeting with Michel Qattan, one of the Red Cross observers, attended by Kamal al-Qatnani, and from there we went to the

headquarters of the Committee of the Red Cross in Hebron and presented an appeal to the director's secretary in which we explained the conditions of our village and its bad state and requested rations for the villagers ... After noon we all left Hebron by taxi to Bayt Ula and from there to the village by foot. I bought a rotl of sugar for 300 mils and a rotl of rice for 460 mils.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The following day, 28 October, Shrouf writes:

Mahmud Ibrahim Salem, 'Abd al-Latif 'Abd al-Rahman, Mahmud 'Ali Mahmud, ustaz Hasan Hijazi, and I held a meeting in Ibrahim Husayn's house. After that, we left for the school and wrote an appeal in English to the Red Cross, requesting rations for the village. We and ustaz Husayn al-Kawamila had lunch at Hasan Mahmud Hijazi's house with his father. After the afternoon prayer, I sent 11 sidsiyyas of dried olives to the olive press on Mahmud 'Abd al-Rahman's camel and 'Abd al-Latif 'Abd al-Rahman's donkey. The two teachers, Hasan Mahmud Hijazi and Husayn al-Kawamila, went with me to Kharas and after sunset we returned to the village.⁽⁵¹⁾

The proliferation of such entries brings into focus the lived space within which Shrouf experienced and responded to the Nakba. Indeed, Shrouf's localized experience and understanding of the Nakba emerged in the early 1950s as he took on the role of a passionate advocate on behalf of the "front-line" villages—those along the post-1948 cease-fire lines, many of which had lost land on the other side of the new border—of Hebron district, including Nuba and the other villages of *saff al-'Amleh*.⁽⁵²⁾

Beyond their record of thick local interconnectivity, Shrouf's diaries also produce a particular kind of village agricultural space, in which planting, tending, and harvesting are the repeated acts that connect the diarist to the land of Palestine. The diary entries in this vein are too numerous to detail, but they include planting olives, mangoes, parsley, zucchini, winter squash, okra, and tomatoes; applying phosphate to tomatoes, zucchini, and grapes; plowing; hoeing and

50 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 126–7.

51 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 127.

52 See Winder, "With the Dregs," 44–49.

plowing; and repairing the threshing floor.⁽⁵³⁾ Shrouf's diaries thus produce an agricultural space, rooted in the earth of rural Palestine—not in an abstracted nationalist sense, but in a physical, material sense.

Despite resonances with Palestinian nationalist spaces—Jerusalem, the village, cultivated land—the spaces produced in these diaries are not abstracted or imagined.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Diaries thus differ from other kinds of texts, such as political histories (which tend to produce an abstracted geography defined by political borders), memoirs (in which spaces correspond to overarching life narratives), and Palestinian village memorial books (which, as Rochelle Davis writes,

“despite the unique representations of village places they offer through recorded detailed place names and features, the experiences and sentiments associated with those places conform to the shared experiences and sentiments expected of Palestinians as shaped by a nationalist idealization of peasant life”).⁽⁵⁵⁾ The diaries of Sakakini and Shrouf, by contrast, record place names and descriptions, and document experiences and sentiments associated with them, as part of the diarists' record of everyday life on an individual scale rather than its formation in conformity with or in response to collective expectations. It is to these experiences and sentiments that the paper now turns.

Affective and Embodied Experiences

While engaging history at reduced scales of community and place, diaries are also scaled to the individual's physically embodied and emotional experience. Diaries are, perhaps unfairly, often seen as particularly rich deposits of affective material. This is certainly true for the diary of Sakakini, whose diary entries engage with his internal condition as well as conditions external to him. Shrouf's diaries, on the other hand, are particularly formulaic and allusive, with little record of the interior world of emotion and intellectual reflection. Still, both Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries can be read with a particular eye to the affective and embodied experiences of Nakba. Thinking of diaries as records of bodily experience allows us to consider how, as Fatma Kassem writes, “the occupation in 1948 and the ongoing oppression, whether direct or indirect, is inscribed on the bodies of Palestinians and tells the story of their history.”⁽⁵⁶⁾ Often, affect and embodiment intermingle in diary entries, with physical experiences gesturing to the diarist's affective response.

A number of the entries mentioned above already gesture to the affective experience of the Nakba. For example, during Sari's voyage to Egypt, Sakakini

described being “overcome by anxiety, having a thousand apprehensions about the trip.” He went on:

We bolted to the telephone, and the line was cut. We asked anybody coming or going, but did not receive any news. We waited for the day to pass and the night to arrive, and did not hear anything. So we told ourselves that no news was news, and were inclined toward optimism and our belief that our group had continued their journey to Egypt, inshallah.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Striking in this entry is the rush of different emotions—from intense anxiety to optimism to a kind of resignation implied by turning the matter to God—and the vacillation between activity and inactivity—bolting to the telephone, asking all passersby, waiting—that accompanied them.

Sakakini's complex affective responses to events during the period can also be read in his description of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni's funeral on 9 April 1948. The death of 'Abd al-Qadir during the battle of al-Qastal is, along with the massacre at Dayr Yasin the following day, often regarded as one of the definitive turning points toward Arab despair and

53 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 93, 98, 107–8, 111–13, 115, and 123.

54 On the longstanding importance of Jerusalem in Palestinian nationalist thought, see, for example: Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), especially 35–62. On rural Palestine as a nationalized space, see Ted Swedenburg, “The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Jan. 1990): 18–30.

55 Rochelle Davis, “Mapping the Past, Re-creating the Homeland: Memories of Village Places in pre-1948 Palestine,” in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, ed. Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 54.

56 Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 130.

57 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 252.

defeat in 1948. The funeral was an outpouring of grief in recognition of the significance of the loss, as well as a defiant mobilization to refuse its implications. Sakakini's diary entry captures this combination, recording its nearly ecstatic quality, as well as its frantic chaos:

When the coffin came into view, it brought forth bursts of machine gun fire. Panic seized and people rushed and trampled each other to escape from danger. In vain, I tried to remain firmly in my place, as I was sure that the shooting was from the fighters, 'Abd al-Qadir's men, saluting him. The current swept me and I was among the churning waves of people, as if I was a grain [of sand] in the ocean.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Sakakini is both terrified and thrilled by the rush of the crowd, exerting all of his strength to avoid being crushed. This was both a terrible low point for Palestinians in their struggle for Palestine, but the power embodied in the masses of people, and felt viscerally and physically by Sakakini as he was swept along, was also thrilling. This thrill, and the optimism that it evidently stirred in Sakakini, is expressed at the end of the entry, when Sakakini praises the eulogy of Ibrahim Abu Diyya, 'Abd al-Qadir's lieutenant and leader of the defense of Qatamon: "We thought to name a street in our neighborhood after him . . . in recognition of his merit in defense of our neighborhood."⁽⁵⁹⁾ The future that Sakakini foresaw was evidently one in which the heroes of Palestine's defense would be memorialized in neighborhoods like Qatamon.

Although far less revealing, Shrouf's diaries seem to point to similar expressions of hope.⁽⁶⁰⁾ On 15 May 1948, with the official termination of the British Mandate and the declaration of the State of Israel, Shrouf recorded: "At 12 o'clock at night, the night of 14–15 May 1948, the British Mandate over Palestine ended. Directly after that time, the Arab regime armies, composed of Transjordan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, entered to liberate it from

Jewish tyranny."⁽⁶¹⁾ In this moment, liberation may have seemed not only possible, but inevitable. Yet, disillusionment and disappointment quickly set in for Shrouf, as for many others, Sakakini included. In particular, the departure of Egyptian forces from the Hebron region appears to have indicated to Shrouf the Arab regimes' resignation to the *fait accompli* of Israel's victory. Though again Shrouf's diary is relatively spare of emotional language, his entry of 1 May 1949, in which he records his resignation from the police force, seems to hint at his disenchantment:

Today in the early morning I left Abu Taysir's house for the market and from there I went to the police station in Hebron and submitted my service record, thereby ending my service in the police by my own free will. After noon, I left Hebron by car for Tarqumiya and drank coffee and tea in Abu Fathi's shop. After that, I left them for the village and we planted another section of tomatoes. On 1/5/1949, the first regiment of the Egyptian forces departed, returning to their country.⁽⁶²⁾

Radically different in their affective registers and their degrees of emotional revelation, both Sakakini's and Shrouf's diaries do provide insight into the immediate impact of events. The impact was, moreover, not only emotional or psychological, but also corporeal. Both diarists record the physical toll exacted by war, loss, and uncertainty on their bodies.

In an undated entry likely from September 1949, Sakakini describes his routine, unchanged since arriving in Egypt: bathing in cold water once a day in the winter, twice daily in the summer; stretching from head to toe, everyday; moderation in eating; a healthy amount of sleep, with a short nap after lunch; keeping clean clothes and bedclothes; and generally balancing activity and rest. Despite this, Sakakini complained, he began to suffer in Egypt from constipation, forcing him to limit his diet to fruits and vegetables and to begin taking laxatives: "I know of no reason for this constipation other than moving from the atmosphere

58 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 256.

59 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 256.

60 The only real record of affect in Shrouf's diaries from this period is—notably—in reaction to an interpersonal, not geopolitical, development. Although the actual cause is unclear, on 19 November 1948, Shrouf writes: "At 12:30 in the afternoon today, I became angry with [my wife] Halima and her brother Mahmud." Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 105.

61 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 97.

62 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 113.

of Palestine to the atmosphere of Egypt, and hope that the situation will improve.”⁽⁶³⁾ Further, upon arrival in Egypt, Sakakini “began to feel . . . a change in my vision” characterized by intermittent episodes of seeing “small, transparent rings of smoke” flying in his peripheral vision. Further, Sakakini wrote: “when I look, I see what is near appears far, and what is far, near; or what is moving appears stationary, and stationary, moving; or large appears small, and small, large. Then, my vision corrects itself and I see things of different distances, shapes, and colors as they truly are.”⁽⁶⁴⁾ Sakakini also complained about similar disruptions to his other senses: “I have felt for a while that I have become hard of hearing, for I hear a voice and I do not know whether it is coming from behind me or in front of me, or whether this voice comes from nearby or afar.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ It would be overly simple to attribute Sakakini’s physical ailments to his displacement, the fact that Sakakini himself makes this association in his diaries is telling: geographical displacement was intimately linked to bodily deterioration.

Shrouf, too, suffered a certain amount of physical discomfort during this period. On 9 July, as the second *hudna* between the Arab and Jewish forces came to an end and fighting resumed, Egyptian doctors came to Nuba to vaccinate the villagers, giving each person two shots. Shrouf was vaccinated and fell ill for two days as a result.⁽⁶⁶⁾ After the heaviest fighting had

ended and Arab and Jewish representatives were engaged in ceasefire talks, Shrouf at times suffered through what he records as a frigid and wet winter of 1948–1949.⁽⁶⁷⁾ On the night of 24 January 1949, for example, he wrote that he was “afflicted by a severe cold [*rashh shadid*].”⁽⁶⁸⁾ On 11 March 1949, “It was raining and cold” when Shrouf reported for reserve duty at the police post, after which, he wrote: “At night I was severely ill as a result of a toothache.”⁽⁶⁹⁾ (He had the tooth pulled the next day.) The discomfort of the winter months, though not attributable to the Arab military defeat, is inseparable from West Bank Palestinians’ overall experience of the Nakba, compounding their suffering.

Such diary entries allow a glimpse into how individuals experienced the Nakba not only as psychological or emotional trauma, but also in various embodied sensations. As Kassem writes of the Palestinian women she interviewed, “Bodily praxis, memories of the body, and memories through the body—of their own bodies as well as those of others—represent change during different historical moments.”⁽⁷⁰⁾ Diary keeping is itself a bodily praxis—a regular and repetitive act of sitting with pen and paper—but while Kassem draws a tight link between bodily praxis and memory, the praxis of diary keeping has a district relationship with memory, memorialization, and temporality.

Turbulent Times

Whereas memoirists, autobiographers, and historians (including oral historians) face backward in an attempt to recover the past, Lejeune stresses “the diary’s dynamic, forward-looking image; it is always on the very crest of time moving into unknown territory . . . [Diarists] are writing a text whose ultimate logic escapes us; [they] agree to collaborate

with an unpredictable and uncontrollable future.”⁽⁷¹⁾ It is this constant forward-looking movement captured by the diary that also distinguishes it from memorial: “An isolated dated trace is a memorial rather than a diary: the diary begins when traces in a series attempt to capture the movement of time rather than to freeze it around a source event.”⁽⁷²⁾ Much of modern

63 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 266.

64 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 266.

65 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 266.

66 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 99.

67 See, for example, various entries from February 1949, in which the weather is described as “very cold” (5 February); “rainy and very cold” (7 February); “rainy and cold” (25 February, 26 February). Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 108–9.

68 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 107.

69 Winder, ed., *Bayna manshiyat Yafa*, 110.

70 Kassem, *Palestinian Women*, 130.

71 Lejeune, *On Diary*, 208.

72 Lejeune, *On Diary*, 179.

Palestinian historiography identifies the Nakba as just this kind of source event, and in so doing produces and reproduces its memorialization, freezing it in time. Diaries, then, are particularly predisposed—in ways distinct from memoirs or oral history—to offer history that posits the Nakba as an ongoing process rather than a singular moment of rupture.⁽⁷³⁾ It is the potential of Nakba-era Palestinian diaries in this regard—and not an inherently greater claim to truth of the contemporaneous record compared to a supposed distortion that accompanies the post hoc record—that gives them particular value.

The process of the Nakba was not experienced evenly by all Palestinians, and this, too, is reflected in the diaries discussed here. One of the most significant differences between Sakakini's diaries and Shrouf's is the extended lapse in the former, which extends from Sakakini's flight from Jerusalem in late April 1948 until the beginning of 1949. The suspension of Sakakini's diary is, in a way, a reflection of the suspension of time in the initial days, weeks, and months of exile. As Sakakini writes in the first entry of 1949: "It did not enter our minds that our voyage to Egypt would extend eight months, and only God knows when it will end, and how."⁽⁷⁴⁾ This uncertainty is reflected not in the content of diary entries, but in their absence. On such phenomena, Lejeune observes:

poised at the razor's edge of the moment, the diarist must decide each day whether to continue or discontinue her diary.... There are different degrees in how you 'discontinue' your diary: mild, through neglect; medium, by voluntarily suspending it; strong, by stopping forever; and violent, by destroying it.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Though Sakakini's discontinuation may not have been violent in the sense of destroying his diary, the violent rupture of Palestinian society is reflected in

the diary's discontinuity. Diaries' silences are also a part of the histories that they tell.

Shrouf's diary, meanwhile, maintains its steady pace through 1948 and 1949. Indeed, over the two-decade span that Shrouf's diaries cover, the year with the most entries (304) is 1949 and the second-most entries (266) were recorded in 1948. (Tied for third are 1952 and 1953, during each of which Shrouf wrote 240 diary entries.) The increase in entries leads to a greater sense of continuity from one entry to the next and, almost counterintuitively, to a deceleration of time from the perspective of the reader, who expends more time reading entries condensed within a shorter period of time. In Shrouf's diaries, therefore, the Nakba plays out in slow motion: the warfare of 1947–1949 and the large-scale economic, political, and social crises imposed upon West Bank Palestinians in defeat's wake are infused with and complemented by the rhythms of daily village life—planting and harvesting, buying and selling, visiting and hosting, disputes and reconciliations, movement and inactivity. If Shrouf's diary is primarily—or at least in large part—a record of motion and interaction, it should not be surprising that the turbulence of the 1947–1949 period is reflected in a proliferation of entries, not in their disruption.

Needless to say, Sakakini's diary is not a more "authentic" Nakba diary because of its rupture than Shrouf's is for its continuity, nor vice versa. The Nakba itself encompassed both rupture and continuity, imposing radical new conditions on Palestinians, whose lives continued within, outside, and despite these conditions. Rather, the different temporalities produced by these diaries are indicative of the multiple temporalities of the Nakba as experienced by Palestinians and as produced through different kinds of histories.

Conclusion

Diaries offer unique vantage points, both with regard to scale and temporality, from which to examine the unfolding of the Nakba for Palestinians. The Sakakini

and Shrouf diaries reflect the spatially-embedded social, economic, political, and intellectual networks of which their authors were a part: Sakakini the

73 As Elias Khoury writes: "The nakba is a continuous process. Its major event was 1948, but it never ended. It has gone through different phases and taken different shapes." Elias Khoury, Rethinking the *Nakba*, *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 256.

74 Musallam, ed., *Yawmiyyat Khalil al-Sakakini*, 261.

75 Lejeune, *On Diary*, 183.

intellectual elite, Orthodox Christian pedagogue and reformer based in Jerusalem, which he was forced to abandon in 1948; Shrouf the low-ranking Muslim policeman from Nuba, who remained in place post-1948. Examination of their diaries reveals the Nakba not as a singular catastrophe, but a variegated patchwork of catastrophes, individual and communal, that produced different experiences and concerns grounded in the lived spaces that comprised Palestine.

Further, considering diaries as history rather than as historical sources forces us, as historians, to rethink the conventions and boundaries that have grown within history as a discipline and scholarship on the Nakba. Nakba scholarship has been largely divided between the historical (associated with that which is materially and often archivally substantiated, framed by the national, political and intellectual, and male)

and the anthropological (associated with that which is orally substantiated, social, embodied and affective, and female). Diaries may offer new opportunities to cross, blur, or refuse such boundaries, thereby presenting new paths by which to revisit and rethink the Nakba.

Palestinian diaries thus offer alternative histories, whose reorientations with regard to time, place, community, and discipline can expose and illuminate the settler-colonial structure and process of the Nakba, as well as the multiplicity of Palestinian experiences of and engagements with this structure. This shift in perspective, rather than proximity in time to the tragedy of the Nakba, allows diaries to open up new horizons. Let us hope that Sakakini's and Shrouf's are two of many diaries that will allow us to shape and reshape our understandings of the Nakba in the future.

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