

focus

2004 Vol. 1

Cultural Heritage

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Programme of Assistance
to the Palestinian People

برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي / برنامج مساعدة الشعب الفلسطيني



Arrabeh

UNDP FOCUS is published by:
United Nations Development Programme/Programme of
Assistance to the Palestinian People

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Photos by: Steve Sabella - www.sabellaphoto.com
Design: Turbo Design
Printing Press: Studio Alpha

Guest Column
H.E. Mitri Abu Aita
Minister of Tourism & Antiquities

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce this issue of FOCUS, which is dedicated to Palestinian cultural heritage and reflects the many years of fruitful cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities and the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People toward cultural preservation.

Heritage is considered to be a sustainable resource, which should not only be perceived as a Palestinian national inheritance, but also as an integral part of the universal human endowment.

The Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities of the Palestinian Authority pays a great deal of attention to cultural heritage, which has faced tremendous neglect in the past years.

Palestinian cultural heritage is as diverse as it is rich. One would be hard pressed to find an area in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) that does not have an archeological site of religious or historical significance. For the history of Palestine stretches back to over a million years. Despite its relatively small size, Palestine has provided an important part of human civilization and heritage.

Whether in the prehistoric first human attempts to settlement and communal gatherings in Tel El-Sultan in Jericho or the emergence of cities in the Bronze Age, followed by the Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Arab civilizations, Palestinian cultural heritage is a culmination of all civilizations that resided in the land.

Such civilizations have left an indelible mark on the land within their material and spiritual contributions. I emphasize the spiritual contribution because Palestine is the birthplace of most biblical religions.

This cultural heritage constitutes an important resource for development in Palestine. The archeological,



historical and religious sites constitute the most important resource for tourism in our country, as they assume a profound religious and cultural significance.

The restoration and preservation of historic and archeological sites serve an important purpose for the marketing and development of tourism in Palestine. An emblematic example of this was the effort to preserve and restore heritage sites in the Bethlehem district, carried out in 1998-2000 in cooperation with UNDP/PAPP and others. Not only did these activities have tangible benefits and

improvements for touristic sites, but they constituted a turning point for cultural preservation projects across the territory, especially after raising the individual and collective awareness of the importance of cultural preservation.

Palestinian cultural heritage has faced severe destruction in recent years, especially in the cities of Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron and Gaza. The international community is obliged to uphold the rule of international law and to stop such attacks. Not only is the heritage central to preservation of Palestinian identity, but it also constitutes an ideal instrument for mutual understanding among peoples and cultures, based on mutual respect and away from all forms of extremism.

In conclusion, I am grateful to the UNDP for its role in preserving the cultural heritage of cities like Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala, Gaza, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem and many areas in the oPt. I also thank all the donor countries that have participated in this collective effort, especially Japan, Italy, Holland, USA, Norway, Sweden, in addition to all the Arab and international organizations such as UNESCO, the European Community, the World Bank, the World Heritage Committee, and others. All of these parties have played an important role in the effort to preserve this universal cultural heritage.



Al-Bad Museum (West Bank)

Between 1998 and 2000, UNDP and the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, in cooperation with the Greek Orthodox Society and with funding from the Government of Japan, restored an Ottoman-era house in Bethlehem and made it into a museum. This building contained an olive press, giving the project team the idea of making the olive theme of the museum. Thus, Al-Bad Museum was born. Al-Bad is the Arabic name for the large mill stone that crushes olives in the traditional olive oil making process. The museum houses one of these old mills, as well as a wide selection of other olive-related equipment, products, and artifacts.

The first room that visitors see as they enter the museum is long with warmly-lit stone where various kinds of olive oil storage containers are exhibited alongside other ethnographic items. “Every piece is related to making olive oil,” observes Iyad Hamdan, head of the Museum, which is run by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. This room was completely filled with dirt when the museum project began, and the project team had to excavate it before restoring it to its current state. A channel cuts across the stone floor of the room near one end. This was used to carry wastewater after the olives were washed. Against the wall there are olive wood baskets, poles to shake the branches of the tree during the harvest, and tarpaulins to catch the fruit as it falls. In a glass case a collection of olive oil lamps found at

archaeological sites is displayed, demonstrating the importance of the olive in antiquity. The case also contains the fortuitous byproducts of olive production, such as soap, olivewood items, and olive branches for medicinal use, which are steeped in hot water to treat sore throats and dark circles under the eyes. Hamdan explains: “we use everything, the olives, the branches, the leaves, the material left when the olives are crushed, everything.” There are olive oil jugs of varying sizes and construction all around the room, showing the evolution of olive oil storage from clay pots, to glass jugs, to metal cans. Project workers found 21 clay olive oil jugs capped with mud-brick in the building, and many of these are exhibited here. There are also many large glass jugs with an interesting history: “they brought these jars from Turkey with chemical materials, then [the local population] cleaned them and reused them for olive oil,” explains Hamdan.

In another room, sits the massive Bad. Anchored in place around a central axis, the giant stone wheel still turns when some muscle is applied. Donkeys powered most olive mills, but this one, due to its tight fit in the building, may have been human-powered. Near

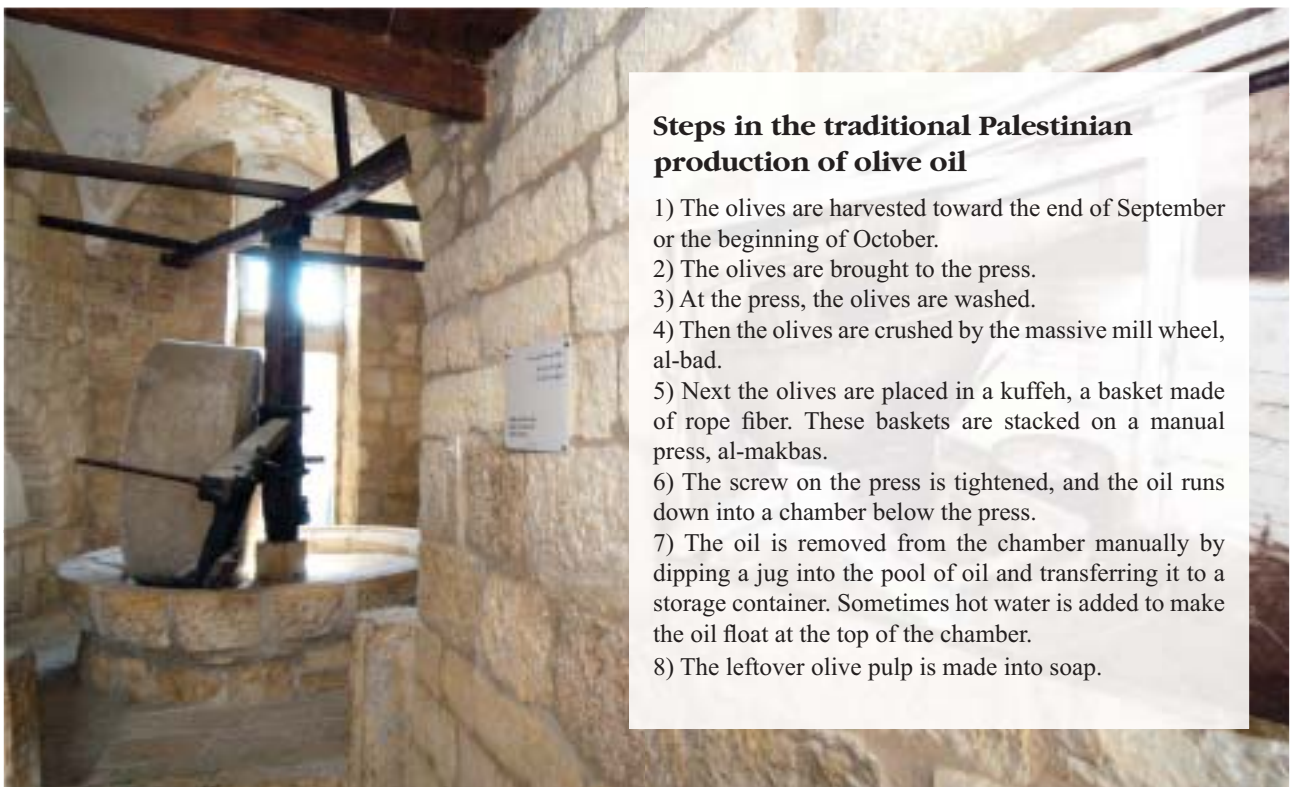
Medical Uses of Olive Oil

According to The Encyclopedia of Islam, the olive “is said to cure every illness except for that one from which a person is destined to die ...” In Palestine, it is mentioned as being used for wounds. In this region in the 1970s, it was recommended in villages or by the local herbalist (‘attar) for earache, sprains, as a massage on the throat for the tonsils, and on the joints for cases of acute influenza; with ghee (samna) and sesame oil (shiradj) it was used for ulcers on the leg. It could also be used with soap and egg white as a ‘plaster’ for fractures and was drunk in small quantities for kidney stone.” Penelope Johnstone



the millstone there is a large iron press, known as al-makbas. Because the traditional oil making process is lengthy, there are rooms adjoining the pressing area where people and their beasts of burden could stay overnight for as long as it took for their olives to be pressed. Everything is beautifully restored and presented. Entry is free.

This old press is a stark contrast to the modern olive pressing technology used in oil production, and it provides an opportunity for the youngest generation of Palestinians, ones who would not remember al-bad, to learn something about the way their ancestors lived. “Last summer school students from all of the schools in Bethlehem came,” says Hamdan, “but most students from other places can’t come here because of the restrictions on movement.” The Al-Bad Museum, he believes, teaches the importance of the olive in Palestinian society. “This tree means our land, our history; this is our grandfathers’ tree.”



Steps in the traditional Palestinian production of olive oil

- 1) The olives are harvested toward the end of September or the beginning of October.
- 2) The olives are brought to the press.
- 3) At the press, the olives are washed.
- 4) Then the olives are crushed by the massive mill wheel, al-bad.
- 5) Next the olives are placed in a kuffeh, a basket made of rope fiber. These baskets are stacked on a manual press, al-makbas.
- 6) The screw on the press is tightened, and the oil runs down into a chamber below the press.
- 7) The oil is removed from the chamber manually by dipping a jug into the pool of oil and transferring it to a storage container. Sometimes hot water is added to make the oil float at the top of the chamber.
- 8) The leftover olive pulp is made into soap.



Anthedon

In 1995 the École Biblique et Archéologique Française and the Palestinian Department of Antiquities began excavating an oceanfront site in the Beach Refugee Camp. The archaeologists suspected that this site could be Anthedon, a major Hellenistic port at the southern end of the Levantine coast. “Anthedon was the most important harbor on the Mediterranean connecting Asia and Africa to Europe,” says Akram Ijla, of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities. Five years of excavation yielded varied artifacts dating back as far as 800 BC, enormous walls, masses of pottery, warehouses, and mud-brick houses with frescoed walls painted red, yellow, blue, black, and white.

Excavation is far from finished on this significant site, the scope of which archaeologists are just beginning to understand. However, the Beach Camp has put pressure on the site through expansion and artifact poaching, both of which must be viewed in the context of Gaza’s struggling economy. For the preservation of the Archaeological heritage of Gaza, the German Development Bank (KFW) provided funds to the UNDP to take measures to protect the site, including restoring a fallen wall, fencing the area, building a guard room, and posting a guard.

Jabalya Mosaic

While working on Salah Ad-Din Road (Gaza), laborers accidentally uncovered a monastery from the Byzantine period. The site was excavated by the Palestinian Department of Antiquities.

Now the stunning Byzantine mosaics of the monastery are covered with sand to shield them from erosion caused by the direct impact of the winter rain. UNDP has made a commitment to aid in the construction of an archaeological park at the site by building a shelter for these spectacular mosaics so that they will be preserved from the elements.





estimates that the water tunnel was probably carved out of the rock in the Late Bronze or Early Iron Age. The tunnel fell into disuse in the eighth century BC. At some time in the Roman period the entrance of the tunnel was rehabilitated.

UNDP, with US\$ 200,000 of funding from USAID's Tashghil Project, is turning the tunnel into an archaeological park. 150 meters of the excavated tunnel will be accessible to visitors. The project will initially clean the tunnel and subsequently work on light and sound for the tunnel's educational presentation. As the excavations at Belameh continue, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities will have a possibility of expanding the park.

Belameh

Khirbet Belameh is one of the major Bronze Age sites of the West Bank and is located just outside. It sits in a commanding position over the pass of the Wadi Belameh, which leads to the Jezreel Plain. The site is identified with the city of Ibleam, which is mentioned in the Egyptian Royal Archive in the 15th century BC. This site was occupied through the Medieval period.

The Palestinian Department of Antiquities began excavation at Belameh in 1996 and plans to continue excavation at the large site well into the future. A major part of the excavation done so far has been dedicated to the city's water tunnel. This tunnel connected the city on the top of the hill to its source of water at the base of the hill. It allowed the people of the city to walk undetected and unhindered from their city to the well, even in times of siege. Dr. Hamdan Taha, Director of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Director of the excavations at Belameh,



Arrabeh (West Bank)

“It is easy to build a new one, but this is history for the whole region: every person remembers what happened in this palace,” explains Ismael Jarada, an Engineer for Arrabeh Municipality. He is standing in one of the palaces of the Abdel Hadi family, a family from Arrabeh that provided feudal governors during the Ottoman period. The building surrounding him is the grand, if ruinous, palace of Abdel Qader Abdel Hadi. Its rooms stand vacant. Garbage is tangled in the weeds of the courtyard. But the graceful lines of the structure and the fine stone work still stand out in the disorder. This palace will be restored and converted into a cultural center for the village of Arrabeh as part of a UNDP project funded with \$US 650,000 from USAID’s Tashghil Project. Its function was determined during workshops with the local community. The building will house a computer center, library, audio-visual multipurpose hall, information center, museum, café, and art studio.

At some point in the past, the palace was divided between two brothers. The main entrance, a monumental door overlooking a covered road in the old city, will be restored. The smaller of the two sections of the palace will house a library and reading room. The studio and museum will be on the second floor. In the future museum for popular art, bits of blue paint cling to the wall and creeping plants stretch their tendrils through the glassless window, framing a view of olive-clad hills. “Look, you can see there are still some wooden decorations,” says Nurjihan Riyad, a preservation architect for UNDP. She points to delicately carved wooden window frames that have survived in fragments. “I bet it was really beautiful,” she says.

It is the beauty and artistry of this palace that led the designers, project planners, and townspeople to earmark the building for a cultural heritage and arts center. According to Nadia Habash, the managing consultant



for the project, the memories and feelings that old buildings evoke can be used to enhance their function, or detract from it. The second building being restored by the project is the Hussein Abdel Hadi Palace. Of this palace, Habash comments, “it evokes bad images... part of it was used as a prison. I don’t think that people want to remember what happened to their grandfathers there.” This building will be turned into a children’s center, and the project team hopes that any negative associations with the building will be obliterated by its new role.



The future children’s center is just down the street from the other palace. It is a smaller structure, with a large, inviting courtyard, which is perfect for an amphitheatre and playground. Some rooms just off the courtyard will serve as a children’s activity room and a kitchen. The second level has a terrace, which will be converted into an outdoor seating area. Past the terrace and up a small set of steps, is a beautiful and enigmatic room. Linger color on the walls shows that it must have once been sky blue. Some of the wooden details of the room are

still intact, including wooden cabinets recessed into the walls. The vaulted ceiling reaches up towards a swirled plaster decoration. The people of Arrabeh say that this was the room reserved for the Sheikh’s favorite wife.

The renovation of these buildings and the road that connects them will continue into March of 2005. There is considerable work to be done, including rebuilding some destroyed elements, installing infrastructure, reinforcing structurally weak areas, retiling, repointing, plastering, and painting.

Jarada, wishing to express the readiness of the community to pitch in, states, “we want to tell you that we are very pleased to help you because it is your gift to us, so we will work more than you.” Community involvement has been central to this project from the very start. Members of the community worked with the designers to determine the functions of the buildings, which will be run by committees made of community members, and for the benefit of the community. The workers who will be employed to restore the building will be community members working under the supervision of Habash, Riyad, and other specialists in architectural restoration. In this way, the people of Arrabeh will benefit from employment opportunities and a chance to learn the skills necessary for restoring and maintaining the other historical buildings in the area.

Habash sums it up: “the most important thing about Arrabeh is that this village has a lot of cultural wealth that needs to be preserved.” After the restoration of these two palaces, there will still be thirteen Abdel Hadi palaces waiting for restoration, not to mention the multitude of culturally significant Ottoman-era village dwellings that are indicative of a popular architecture and way of life.



The French Count León de Laborde visited Arrabeh on the eight of April 1827, during Ramadan. His account gives an indication of the power and wealth that was present in the Arrabeh of the Abdel Hadis. The Count, who was certainly no stranger to luxury, uses his own prejudices in the following account to highlight the palatial nature of the house of Sheikh Abdallah Abdel Hadi.

Having obtained a recommendation to visit the Sheikh of Arrabeh, the Count had doubts as he approached the village:

“We expected shelter with some peasant who would give up his only room and the remains of his modest dinner. How great was our surprise then when we were ushered into an enormous house. The whole courtyard was lit by torches and populated with handsome horses tethered there. Under the arch of the gate thronged a crowd of servants who eagerly came forward to take the bridles of our mounts.

“We descended and two black slaves guided us by the light of great lanterns to the first floor and into an opulent sitting room. Scarcely had we sat down on superb cushions than several servants presented us respectfully with perfumed coffee and sorbets. One would have believed oneself to be in an enchanted palace.

“In whose place were we in this little village? How did we find ourselves with such a powerful host in such a rich palace? Who would undertake to elucidate this mystery? It was to be a Jew ... who like us had been received as a guest in this place. He was German and spoke easily, besides his own language, Italian, Turkish, and Arabic. He had traveled as far as the Indies and established himself at Nablus and practiced banking. We learned, through him, that we were lodged with Abdel Hadi, the most powerful sheikh in all the province, and who had under his authority 56 villages, 10 of which he owned outright. 100 carts scarcely sufficed to work his lands, all of them extremely fertile. He had just sold to the Pasha of Damascus 1,000 loads of corn, about 7,000 quintals, taken out of his granaries, in which still much more remained.

“Most of the horses that we had seen in his courtyard belonged to minor sheikhs placed under his orders and who had come to dine with him during the festivities of Ramadan. Having left us the leisure of an initial meal, Abdallah came to pay us a visit and he spoke as an enlightened man about affairs of government. This unexpected reception continued to be magnificent right up until the moment of our departure.”



According to Nurjihan Riyad, a preservation architect working with UNDP, the stone used for restoration work should be softer than the stone of the original building. Adding harder stone to a building will put stress on the original, softer stones and cause them to deteriorate more rapidly. In the West Bank, stone from Jema'een is particularly good, she says, because it is soft and weathers to a light golden color, “achieving a harmony within the restored facade.”

“In Palestine there are quarries of good white building-stone.” The traveler Al-Mukaddasi (“the Jerusalemite”) in the year 985

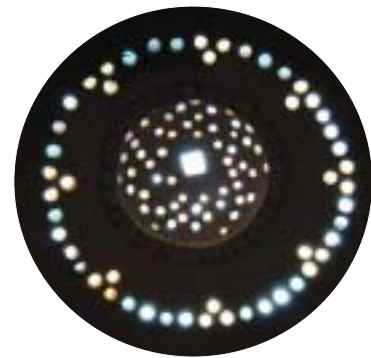


Hamam As-Sumara (Gaza)

There is a plaque in the lobby of this bathhouse proclaiming that it was restored by the Mamluk Governor Sangar Ibn Abdallah. That was around the year 1320. work to restore the hamam has begun once again, this time by UNDP, working with the Islamic University. Its history almost ended when the family who owned it decided to tear it down and build a new building. They were faced with an ancient water heating system and traditional hamam that no longer functioned properly and which would be extremely costly to repair. According to Akram Ijla, of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, there were once five old bathhouses in Gaza and four of these have been destroyed. Only the Hamam As-Sumara remains. "It is," he says, "a local masterpiece."

Salim Abdallah Al-Wazeer, one of the owners of the bathhouse, admits a deep sentimental attachment to the place, which has been in his family for more than 100 years. Now that the bath has been restored in part, he is searching for funds to continue restoration of the aqueducts beneath the marble floor slabs. (The baths still use the old system of wood-fueled ovens and aqueducts.)

The bathhouse consists of several rooms with varied temperatures. People who come to bathe first leave their belongings with a clerk from whom they purchase a ticket, then proceed to a steam room, after which point they bathe with warm water. After bathing hamam goes rest at room temperature in a lounge area near the entrance to the baths. For those who are interested, there is also the possibility of a massage. "If you take a bath in your house it is not the same as coming here," according to Al-Wazeer, who extols the many virtues of the public bath that come as a bonus to being absolutely clean.



According to Al-Wazeer, it is customary for mothers to bring their 40-day-old infants to the baths for a blessing. "Hamam is healing," he says. Baths are used as a folk remedy for rheumatism and infertility. Ijla notes that the bathhouse has social importance, especially to women, as a place where community members come together to socialize.

To preserve the bathhouse as a genuine public bath – as opposed to a spa for the elite – the Al-Wazeer family has set the price of entry at 15 NIS (about \$3.35). It is open to men 05:00-12:00 and 17:00-22:00 daily and for women 12:00-15:00 daily.

The name *Hamam As-Sumara* means "the Brown Bath." In 1913 T.E. Dowling writes, in *Gaza: a City of Many Battles*, about a bath in Gaza called *Hamam As-Samara*, or "the Samaritans Bath":

"A.D. 1584.—Samaritans are known to have lived in Gaza at this date, and possessed a synagogue. Two large baths in the city belonged to them. One of them still bears the name of 'the Bath of the Samaritans.' ... During the occupancy of the Pashas of Gaza, one of them (of the fourth family Rid wan) desired to procure the inn and bath belonging to the Samaritan community. The owner objected, and gave them to the Muslims for the benefit of the Great Mosque. The Pasha consequently was indignant, and hanged the Samaritan at the gate of the inn. From the end of the sixteenth century we hear nothing more of the Samaritans at Gaza."

Deir Istiya (West Bank)

“For generations rituals of life and death were acted out by the citizens of Deir Istiya under the Arch of the Madafeh. When a man and woman were joined in marriage, it was at the bench under the Arch that the groom received congratulations from the rest of the village. When death came, those close to the deceased would stand under the Arch to accept condolences”. Now this madafeh, perched above what used to be the main entrance to the village of Deir Istiya, sits empty and inaccessible. Its sole occupants are plants that have taken root between its limestone blocks and which, in the eternal way of vegetation, will slowly and silently return the elements of the construction to a state of nature. Through the arch and into the heart of the old city, empty buildings with dark holes for windows stand above the road, like seashells, like bones: once-vital structures whose beauty is a shadow of the life they once contained. The old city of Deir Istiya covers 74 dunums, and according to the estimate of Mayor Nafith Mansour, at most 30 families still reside there – a fraction of the 4,000 residents of the town.



Mansour, both mayor and dentist to the residents of Deir Istiya, is concerned about the gradual movement of the community out of the old city and out of Deir Istiya itself. “Many people are leaving,” he says, “they are going to live in Ramallah and Nablus – many are abroad.” Mansour believes that a current UNDP project, which is funded by a US\$ 450,000 contribution from USAID’s Tashghil Project, may have a hand in reversing the depopulation of the old city. The project involves providing infrastructure, equipment, and restoration in areas of the old city. When the work is finished, the old city of Deir Istiya will have a new women’s center, a cultural heritage museum, renovated facades along the central pedestrian street, a children’s center, and a visitor information center. One of the objectives of these projects, Mansour notes, “is to develop infrastructure in the old city to make it more suitable for people to live there, and to encourage them to restore the old buildings so they can come back and live in them.” During some previous restoration work in the old city, residents expressed interest in returning to the old buildings, Mansour recalls. He himself returned to his family’s property in the old city and began to renovate the house, inspired by the results he saw during these earlier projects.

The madafeh at the entrance to old Deir Istiya will be renovated and missing elements, such as the staircase, will be rebuilt. The restored building will



be used as a visitor information center. Just under the arch of the madafeh and to the right are the stately old houses of the Abu Hijleh and Zidan families, important and powerful families in the history of the area and shareholders in the old madafeh. The Abu Hijleh house is still lived in, but the Zidan house stands empty and half-renovated. This building is an excellent example of a Palestinian village house from the Ottoman period, in that it follows a system of splitting a space for use by humans and animals and has a khawabi (see box). But climbing the stairs past the first level makes it apparent that this house is much larger and more complex than a simple village house. The village residents say that 10

nuclear families shared this house at one time, which explains the size of the building.

The lower part of the building will house a women's center, where local women will be able to meet and take courses on topics such as nutrition and literacy, and where unemployed women will be able to develop small employment projects. The upper part of the building, which has already been restored by Riwaq and the Welfare Association, will become a women's health clinic. Here women will be able to seek specialized healthcare and health education that is sensitive to their specific needs. The overarching benefit of this center, according to Mansour, is "for women to participate in the development process of this area."

Down the road from the new women's center, one enters a narrow pedestrian street that cuts through the middle of the old city. This historic thoroughfare will be modified slightly by UNDP: basic infrastructure, including water and sewage lines, will be installed below the street, and the old stone tiles will then be carefully replaced. Mansour, whose family house is in this neighborhood, says, with a look down the empty street, "50 years ago it was full of life, full of people talking, singing, singing poetry, smoking arguileh, but now it is dead."

The children's center is located in this area. It has been restored in a Riwaq project, and the current UNDP project will provide furnishings for the center.

Continuing further into Deir Istiya, another madafeh, which is connected to an old oil press building, will become a cultural heritage museum for the people of Deir Istiya. Project workers will also restore the surrounding road, plaza, and facades. This area was a gathering place for workers once, and a lively spot at the time of the olive harvest. Its connection to olive



Khawabi

A Khawabi is a traditional storage unit that can be found in many old buildings in Palestinian villages. It is made out of a mixture of mud and ash. Dried cereals can be stored in this container and taken out of a hole. The Khawabi also has holes for ventilation, so that the contents are not spoiled by humidity.

production makes this building a part of the cultural heritage of Deir Istiya, and in this way the museum itself will be something of an artifact. This village has been a center of olive-based agriculture since at least the Mamluk period. Today, according to Mansour, Deir Istiya possesses one of the largest areas of olive-producing land of anywhere in the West Bank, with 10,000 dunums of olive orchards.

For Mansour, preserving the cultural heritage of the people of Deir Istiya is not just an exercise in aesthetics, nor is it a luxury. Rather, it is the keystone to the survival of the spirit and character of the village. “In these circumstances,” he notes, “each person has their own priorities, so their priorities are in terms of food, living conditions, education, health: these are the priorities of any person in the world.” Nonetheless, Mansour believes that as the villagers begin to see the revitalization of the old city they will begin to see the possibility that lingers in the old buildings and to appreciate how identity and memory add richness to their lives. “It is probably easier to develop infrastructure than to create awareness of cultural heritage,” he says. He firmly believes that the municipality should act to preserve the cultural heritage of Deir Istiya, “but if we fail to do so, the long-term consequences to the community will be worse than if we had not developed infrastructure.”

Madafeh

A madafeh is a guest house of sorts, often owned by one powerful family or shared among several families. These facilities are used to host visitors and for gatherings on special occasions.

“Conservation of cultural heritage is an integral part of a healthy concept of development ... we have to coordinate [the] relationship [between development and conservation] in such a way that the past is a project for the future.” Dr. Hamdan Taha, Director of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Preservation, 2004



Khirbet Irtah (West Bank)

Just at the edge of the village Khirbet Irtah, near Tulkarem, there is an open green space surrounding the Shrine of Banat Yaqub (Jacob's Daughters). Near the shrine there are some tank-like structures that the casual observer would never recognize as Roman pools. Walking through the grass, one may come across a channel of liquid of dubious origin issuing forth from a black pipe. Ramshackle buildings border the space.

UNDP, with funding of US\$ 200,000 from USAID's Tashghil Project and in coordination with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, is in the process of developing this area into a park for the local community. The project will clean the area, landscape it, carry out small maintenance work on the shrine, and refurbish the nearby pottery workshops.

One of the biggest challenges will be to unify the elements of the park, including the Roman pools and the Shrine to Jacob's Daughters. The Shrine, which according to project planners "will continue its function as a holy place," is built on Roman foundations. The whole area sits on an unexcavated Roman site – up the hill are the ruins of a Roman winepress.

Two traditional ceramic workshops border the future park and will be refurbished in the course of the project. Mustafa Abu Khalil is the owner of one of these workshops. He inherited the trade from his father and grandfather. Working within his means, he has a shed surrounded by a makeshift, sheet metal fence. His show room consists of a tattered tent structure made of tarps. When asked about the effects that the new park and remodeled pottery studio would have on him, Abu Khalil exclaims, "there would be gold!" He elaborates: "a better view means more visitors; they will come and see my products." His best selling items are water jugs and pots for plants, but he has also made unique items such as drums and hookahs.

Currently, Abu Khalil's workshop has no connection to the electrical grid nor to waterlines. The project is working

with the village of Khirbet Irtah to bring these services to the pottery workshops. "Water and electricity or not," Abu Khalil says, "the most important element is the clay." He has been having difficulties accessing his clay source near Ramallah, and his work, has been suffering.

Still, he is planning for the future. Soon a class from Dar Candil art center will come under his tutelage so that they may learn the craft of the traditional Palestinian potter.



"We headed east, and having crossed after 2 hours and 35 minutes a wadi called Wadi Irtah, we were soon climbing the slopes of a hill which was crowned by a village of the same name, at the bottom of which is an ancient well and some cisterns." Victor Guérin Description de la Palestine 1875

"A small village on a knoll in the plain, with wells and cisterns, and a Mukam [holy place]. A few olives to the north. The houses are stone and mud. Perhaps the place called Irtah (No. 60), in the Lists of Thothemes III [the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III, 1479-1425 BC] which appears to have been north of Jaffa." Survey of Western Palestine, 1882-1888



Living Heritage: The Hebron House Restoration Project (West Bank)

Hebron's Arabic name is Khalil, the friend; it is the city of Abraham the Friend of God. The city is beloved of three religions, and has been famous since antiquity for its hospitality. The Mosque of Abraham is a much-celebrated icon of religious and cultural heritage in monumental form. Its religious significance is illustrated by stories of mystic encounters in the tombs below, and its architectural uniqueness is highlighted by historical travel logs attributing its construction to the jinn. This building is at the epicenter of Hebron, its culture, its religions, and now, its conflict.

But there is another history and architecture of Hebron that is, perhaps, less dramatic than that of the Mosque of Abraham. This more intimate architecture is the architecture of home and family, an architecture of small spaces which speak of the cycle of life, the needs of humans, and the fruit of the earth. In the struggle for the tombs of the Patriarchs, this other cultural patrimony is often forgotten, neglected, or even destroyed. Walking down a narrow street in the Old City of Hebron, Hilmi Maraqa, the Vice President Engineer for the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, answers a question about a half-demolished building. "The Israeli forces destroyed it...[before it was destroyed] it was being restored by the Kuwait Foundation."

Despite the proximity of conflict in the Old City, Maraqa believes that it is possible to revive the Old City and draw the population back. He cites a census that was carried out before restoration projects began: "in the center there were only 400 people, since then the population has risen to 3,000 people." "If it is secure, everyone will think about coming back, but if there is no security, the people will act in a different way," he says. The numbers seem incredible, but by seeing the results of this UNDP project, funded by a grant from the German Development Bank (KfW), one can understand why people would flock back to the

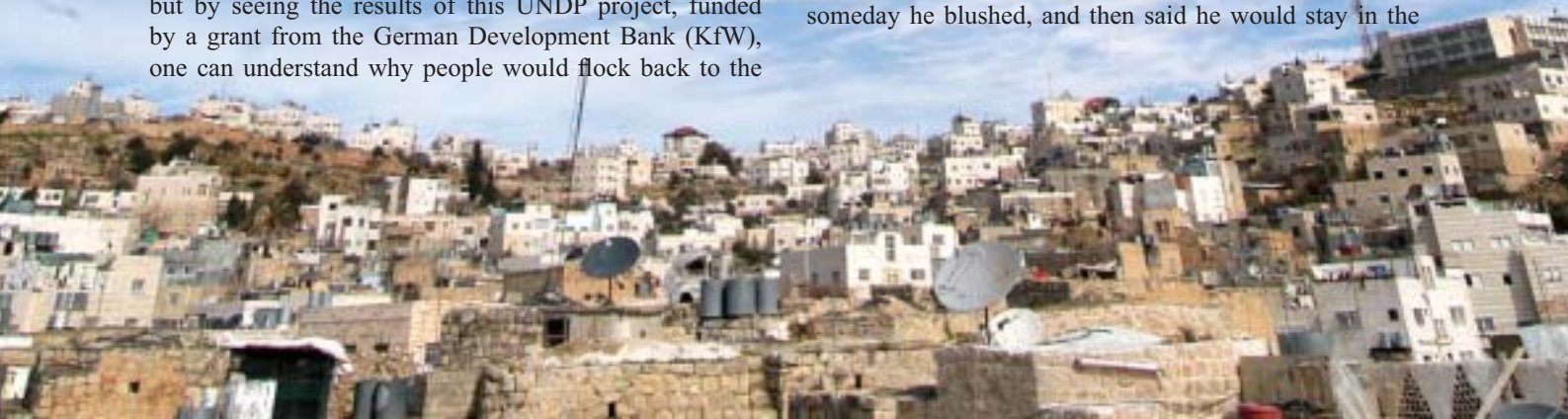
largely-deserted Old City. Old stone houses, mostly from the Ottoman period but with some parts dating back to the Mamluk or even Ayyubid periods, are being rehabilitated, and with spectacular results.

"We keep all of the lines, all of the architectural features, the materials, and we adapt [the building] to be used in this century," Maraqa explains. The needs of each building are addressed, and the engineers decide how to proceed, sometimes rebuilding rooms if another room is needed, at other times preserving a ruined element as it is. He points to a partial cross vault, outlined above against the sky, "for example, this cross vault was demolished and we will not rebuild it." The partial vault will now provide some shelter and character for a patio space. In another case, rooms in the Abu

Sirriyyeh Building collapsed under the weight of a recent blanket of snow. This house, like many other historical houses in the region, is large enough to house an extended family. Because these houses are now being divided into smaller apartments to suit the needs of a nuclear family, the collapsed rooms had to be rebuilt to provide adequate living space. Rather than taking a short cut and building a modern cement slab room, the project team rebuilt the cross vault using traditional techniques – not an easy task.

The buildings are secured structurally, repainted, plastered, rebuilt in parts, and fitted with the necessary infrastructure. The project also works on some internal roads, placing infrastructure and then retiling. When the buildings are finished, the families who own them will either move back in, or will rent them to local families with the Hebron Redevelopment Committee acting as an agent.

In the Kadak house, a beautiful old building with a Mamluk decoration above one of the doors, the family has moved back in, now that restoration is finished. Tamer, a 15-year-old son of the family, says that the house is "good." When asked if he would rather live in a new house on the outskirts of Hebron he replied, "I like to live here, that is it." When asked what he will do when he marries someday he blushed, and then said he would stay in the



old house. Before it was restored, part of the building was falling down and the house was empty, but, he says, “it had the same shape.”

Near the Kadak house is an area where restoration work has not yet started. The contrast between the carefully restored living space of the Kadak house and the current disarray of the Al-Nasar area is vivid. Right now the area is a large court with uneven ground composed largely of rubble and garbage. A roll of barbed wire has come unsprung like a mad slinky toy on the far side of the clearing, just in front of some ruined buildings. The tenants are typical of destroyed buildings: a few hens, a white donkey, and an angry dog. This, according to Maraqa, will be transformed into a park flanked by three apartments.

“The interesting thing is that in every apartment you see different things, every apartment is an individual case,” Maraqa says, his eyes sparkling. In the Narak house, for example, there is a very small roof-top cistern and excellent examples of the “Mastaba.”* The nearby Zhagal and Ulamah house has a room with old wooden cabinets built into the walls – probably Ottoman – which a worker treats with flames to remove the old paint. The Al-Deeb house has a “mashrabiya” – a decorative enclosed veranda from which someone inside the house can watch the outside world without being seen. Each of the buildings has unique lines, staircases, views and entranceways. Many houses have fireplaces of various sizes. One house has a series of storage jars sunk into the wall, in which cooking supplies such as salt and grain may have been stored. A few houses have decorations incised into the plaster ceilings of their

* The Mastaba is a space conserving architectural feature, a platform where family members could spread out sleeping mats at night with a storage area underneath.

cross vaults. These designs are reminiscent of the designs one finds in traditional Palestinian embroidery, and they speak of the harvest. Maraqa points out the symbols for wheat and bread among them. He explains the symbols by describing the inhabitants of the Old City when these buildings were still in use: “the majority were farmers and they had their minds always on the land.” In places where they found old paint, it was often green, which, he points out, is the color of the fields.

The next challenge for the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee will be ensuring that these buildings, as both living and historical elements of the local culture, are well maintained. Maraqa notes that the Committee “is interested in restoration of skills for people, teaching them how to interact with this cultural heritage.” This will, he hopes, “change the idea that old things need to be destroyed.” Looking around him at the work being done in the Old City, Maraqa observes of the locals, “they have begun to understand the value of old things.”

The rich agricultural lands of Hebron were described by the late 10th century travel writer Al-Muqaddasi (“the Jerusalemite”): “All the country round Hebron, for the distance of half a stage, is filled with villages and vineyards, and grounds bearing grapes and apples; it is even as though it were all but a single orchard of vines and fruit trees ... its equal for beauty does not exist elsewhere, nor can any fruits be finer.” (Le Strange, p. 309)



The Making of a Cross Vault

The ubiquitous dome-like cross vault ceiling is a very difficult thing to build. Because it gets its strength from the stones of the arches locking together under their own weight, the stones must be supported as they are being put in place. Builders used to pile fill up in the shape of the vault, build the vault on top of the mound of earth, and then excavate the room when the vault was in place. Alternatively, they sometimes built a wooden frame upon which the vault was built. When the vault was complete, they burnt the frame. If the vault was built correctly it would be locked into place by its own weight.

The Hebron House Rehabilitation Project is working on some buildings that require the rebuilding of damaged cross vaults. In some cases, a February snow caused old and as yet un-restored vaults to collapse. Instead of fill dirt or a wooden frame, the rehabilitation project uses strong metal supports to hold the vault while being reassembled stone by stone in the traditional way. When the vault is complete, the metal supports are simply removed.

The Pasha's Palace Museum (Gaza)



Once a seat of power, Qasr Al-Basha, the Pasha's Palace, had a second life as the administration building of a girls' secondary school until a UNDP project, funded by a grant from the German Development Bank (KFW), undertook the transformation of the landmark into a museum. UNDP built new facilities for the girls' school, and restoration of the Pasha's Palace began under the close supervision of the Palestinian Authority Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage.

"The building was in bad condition," according to Akram Ijla, of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities, "there were 12 centimeters of plaster over the original stone walls." When workers removed the plaster from the walls, they found architectural details, including arched niches and windows between rooms, that were previously hidden by the thick coat of plaster. Project workers plastered the cross vaults of the Palace with a special combination of pulverized terra cotta, sand, and lime, which is designed to draw moisture out of the soft, sandy stone that the building is made of.

The school had removed the old tile floor of the building and replaced it with something more modern. The project team wanted to restore the floor to its former state, but no

one in Gaza was making traditional Palestinian floor tiles at the time, says Ijla, so "we asked a 70 year old craftsman if he could reproduce the tiles, and he did." Using old tile molds, he first put color into the molds and then poured the tile material over it. When the tiles were dry, they would be taken out of the mold and the colored design would appear on the surface.

Also during the first phase of the project, workers landscaped the museum grounds, installed new doors, windows and gates, and restored the facade of the Pasha's Palace. This facade tells some of the building's history. The first storey of the Palace is Mamluk construction, and exhibits characteristic Mamluk stone relief carving in some of its details. The most significant example of this is a relief of two facing lions, which is the symbol of the fourth Mamluk Sultan, Al-Zaher





Baybars. Baybars was one of the military commanders at the battle of 'Ain Jalut, during which the Mamluk forces defeated the Mongols in 1260. The Mamluks were a Muslim dynasty that ruled Egypt and much of the Levant from their base in Cairo from the 13th through the 15th centuries.

The second storey is largely Ottoman construction. The Pashas of Gaza administered their realm from this palace following the rapid conquest of the Middle East by the Ottomans during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Both Ottomans and Mamluks would have had an interest in the defense of the palace, and their concerns are reflected in defensive architectural elements, such as arrow slits and underground passages. The height of the palace made it a militarily strategic point in Gaza. This, combined with its fortification, made the Pasha's Palace a logical choice for Napoleon Bonaparte to take as a residence when he stayed there for three nights in February 1799 during his military campaign in Egypt and Syria. It is likely that these same characteristics led to the use of the building as a police station during the British Mandate period.

Phase two of the project is now underway, and soon the Gazan public will benefit from the building. In this phase display cases and other appropriate furniture will be installed in the museum. When the cases are in place, the Department of Antiquities will use them to exhibit some items from their collection, including Roman, Persian, Hellenistic, Phoenician, Pharaonic, and possibly even Neolithic artifacts.

The smaller building in front of the palace will be renovated for use as a gateway to the museum, and outdoor lighting will be installed. Project workers will build pergolas in the museum yard. When this is complete, the new museum grounds will host 12 months of activities and exhibits, bringing musicians for outdoor concerts and providing special activities for children. With these activities, the Pasha's Palace is about to embark on a new phase in its rich and colorful history.

"The Citadel was built in ancient times and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The present Citadel derives from a later time. It is small and rectangular and lies one hour distant, east of the sea. Its walls are twenty yards high. It has a metal door which opens in the direction of the qibla. The commander and the garrison must always be present here to fulfill their guard duties because it is in a dangerous place here the Arab tribes and the enemy are numerous [it is important to note that this was written by a Turkish traveler during Ottoman rule] ... In this citadel are found the lodgings of the soldiers. There is also a mosque, granary, armory, and fine outstanding wonderful cannons with all the necessary munitions."

Turkish Traveler Eviliya Çelebi, 1649



Qasr Al Sheikh, the Sheikh's palace, is one of these endangered buildings. Cracking walls, piles of rubble, and collapsed cross vaults give an indication of the fate the structure would suffer without immediate intervention. A row of rooms at ground level are being used to house animals, but a little girl's voice from a balcony in the courtyard makes it clear that the decaying palace is still home to people as well. Nurjihan Riyad, a preservation architect, comments, over the loud bellowing of a bull, "I do not know if people will cooperate to the extent of removing the animals from the building." The presence of animals in the lower rooms of the building can be extremely counterproductive to conservation efforts.

The consolidation efforts in this building will include replacing the mortar between the stones, retiling roof areas so that water does not penetrate, adding light structures to protect architectural features, and repairing structural weaknesses. Project workers will also fill in a hole in the large cross vault that covers the yard of the Abu Naman Al-Jayousi house. A woman who lives in this house says, "all of this work will help the community; people will be interested in coming back to the old buildings and preserving them. We hope this will be a start." She, like

Kour (West Bank)

On top of a hill in the northern West Bank sit a cluster of massive, fortress-like structures built out of blocks of golden-hued limestone. As one draws near to these Ottoman-era giants, an initial impression of solidity gives way, through fallen walls and collapsed cross vaults, to one of fragility. The buildings look vacant. However, coming closer there are hints -- a potted plant, a bit of washing hung out on a line -- that there are people living in these rapidly-deteriorating structures. UNDP, as part of the USAID Tashgheel Project, is beginning to preserve these impressive buildings in a consolidation effort, budgeted at \$190,000. It will halt further deterioration of the most endangered buildings, especially in light of the danger that they pose to their occupants.





Now these two women, as the sole occupants of the house, have no clapping sheikh to send them running, and although they are the ones in charge, they are still not empowered to make their existence safe. When asked what they thought about the project of consolidating the building, the old woman replied, “of course this project will benefit us, because when we go to sleep [in the deteriorating building] we

almost all of the approximately 300 people who live in the village, is a member of the Jayousi family. This is a unique situation, in which the architectural heritage of a village is tied to the family history of the entire population. These palaces were the seat of power of the Jayousi family when Kour was one of the “throne villages” of the Ottoman Government in Palestine.

do not know whether we will wake up dead or alive.” Her younger neighbor reacted by exclaiming, “I cannot believe, are you going to fix my house? I will kiss you on both cheeks!”

In the Qal’a (or “fortress,” also known as the house of Abdallah) two more relations of the Jayousi family live a precarious existence in the upper rooms of the deteriorating structure. The older of the two is 75, a Jayousi by birth. She has lived in Kour for her entire life. The other woman married a Jayousi (“who could refuse the son of a Jayousi?” she asks) and is originally from Jaffa. She came here 30 years ago, “and they still call me a foreigner!” she jokes. The old woman remembers her youth as a time of eagerness, a time when the village “was full of life, and the buildings were new.” She traces her family back over twelve generations in this location. She remembers a time when there were important sheikhs – important enough to have

servants. One of these is Sheikh Abdallah, after whom the house is named in the local popular geography. The Sheikh, according to the two women, used to sit on the roof just above his room and watch the goings on in the town below. The old woman recalls, “he gave orders from there. ... if someone came into the house, the Sheikh used to clap and all women had to get into their rooms!”



Animals and Old Buildings

It is a ubiquitous site in old buildings across the West Bank: a chicken scratching away in the ruined rooms of a house, or a donkey looking pensively from what was once a human family’s front door. Palestinian families who have moved to more modern housing often continue to utilize the space of their historical family homes to house tenants who demand less in terms of infrastructure: farm animals. What was once a house becomes a barn, since the owners of the building no longer find it comfortable to live there and may not have the capital to carry out renovation. In the past, animals shared space with humans in many village houses, with the animals generally being relegated to the ground level. So, housing animals in these old buildings is not an illogical step.

Whether or not animals were traditionally kept in these structures, their continued presence in stone buildings causes accelerated deterioration of the stone blocks. Animal droppings have a high salt content, and according to Riyad, this salt dissolves in water, which is then subsequently absorbed into the porous limestone walls. Once in the walls, the process of evaporation carries the salt water toward the surface of the stone, causing salt crystals to form on the surface, eating away at the face of the stone, and slowly diminishing the stone’s integrity. This shows up as scaling on the surface of the stone. To remove as much salt as possible from the Qasr Al-Sheikh, project workers will apply what is essentially a mud plaster mask to the walls. As the plaster dries, the salt will be drawn out of the stone. Then the plaster will be removed. Although this technique does not reverse the damaging effects of animals being stabled in an old stone building, it will at least keep the damage from getting any worse.



Baara, technical assistant to the UNDP project. Despite the seeming futility of repairing and re-repairing houses damaged in the Old City of Nablus, he is committed to the work. People need these repairs to their houses, some of which have become structurally unsafe due to the damages. Baara sums it up: “It is urgent.”

It is urgent, and the project just keeps getting bigger: the original plan was for 250 houses, but some work has been done on over 1,000 houses. Continuing damage caused by military operations in the Old City has left project workers scrambling to keep up with the demand. A report by the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage lists some of the destruction: domestic units, mosques, churches,

a Samaritan synagogue, soap factories, markets, bath houses, and ancient water systems. “The damage in the historic core is estimated [at] more than 70% of the city fabric,” according to the report.

Old Nablus Healing the Wounds of a Living City (West Bank)

The Al-Alquilani house and surrounding buildings were heavily damaged by Israeli rockets during April 2002. A project carried out by UNDP and funded by the Government of Japan to rebuilt the houses. Then in December of 2003, the Al-Alquilani house was again damaged during Israeli military activity. “It happened many times; the buildings were repaired and then damaged,” admits Abdel Nasser

So how does one respond to this destruction? First, the project team removes rubble from the area and keeps old stones for rebuilding purposes. Then they evaluate the structural situation of the remaining portions of the structure. Next, workers begin rebuilding old walls with stones where they can, and new cement walls where this is not possible. Finally, they give finishing touches to the building, such as plastering and painting. Baara regrets the





need to use so many modern elements in the reconstruction of these old (mainly Ottoman period) buildings. He states that even if some of the walls are cement, “we are trying to keep with the tradition and the culture of the city.” This, according to Baara, means respecting the character of the buildings and preserving architectural features.

The Al-Howah house is a beautiful airy structure with cross vaults and stone columns in the living area. Military activity blew out the windows and the wall in the living area, left a huge hole in the floor, and caused severe structural damage to an adjacent sitting room. Project workers fixed the walls, windows and floor. Then they provided concrete supports for the cracked sitting room. Sabih Howah, the owner of the house, says that he and his family were at home when the damage occurred: “I cannot describe the psychological situation,” he says. As a reminder, a red spray-painted arrow is still on one of the interior walls, left as a sign post by Israeli soldiers. When asked how he feels about the work on his house, Howah responds, “Of course it is sure that when a person returns to his home after it has been destroyed he will feel more comfortable and happy ... when you are born here and live here it is not easy to transfer to a different location.”

“Most people of the old city have the same feeling for their houses. If they are destroyed it is not easy for the people to leave,” agrees Baara. Ma’amoun Abdel Hadi is not an exception to this trend. He resides in the palace that his family built during the height of their fame in the Ottoman

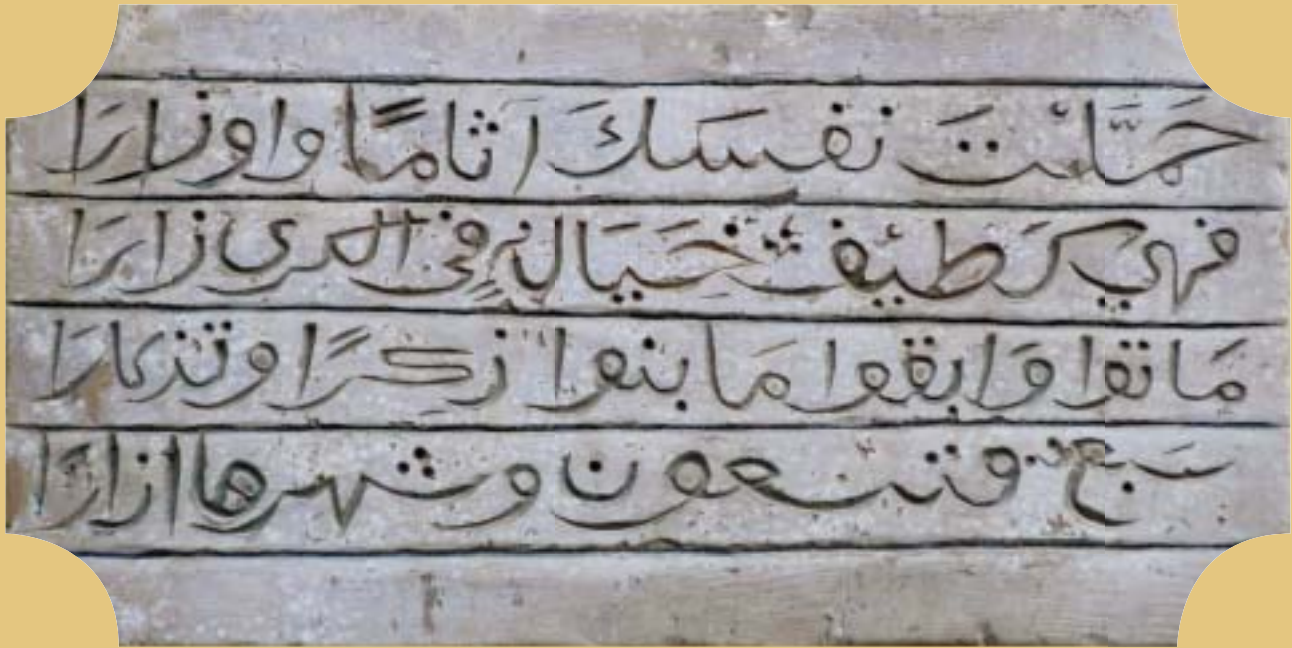
period. Walking into a largely empty room with broken windows he notes, “this is my grandfather’s mosque.” The palace, he says, has a total of 124 rooms. Ten families and a kindergarten now occupy its grounds, but for 12 days Israeli soldiers occupied it. “They used it for themselves for 11 days and on the last day they destroyed what they could destroy,” remarks Abdel Hadi. The soldiers ripped out bathrooms in the courtyard, destroyed walls and windows, and pulled up floor tiles, the latter apparently in search of underground tunnels. Now the UNDP project is rebuilding walls, reinstalling bathrooms, and replacing windows in this historic palace. Again, on the golden limestone wall of the stairwell to the upper courtyard a spray-painted arrow marks the path of an invader.

A few blocks away there is a less-subtle trail where a bulldozer smashed through several houses, resulting in a large clearing. Part of the destruction was from a bomb in April 2002, according to Baara, but the houses around the edge of the clearing, the ones with their outer skins shaved off exposing their interior rooms, were the victims of a bulldozer that arrived in December 2003. Baara points out a house that had its roof sealed by the project, and another that had some work done on the remaining portions of the structure. They cannot rebuild the demolished portions unless they excavate down through the rubble and start from the bottom, he explains, “this is waiting for more budget; it costs too much.” “There” (he points to nothing, seemingly, a spot in the rubble) “is the Ash-Shobi house.” Seven family members died beneath the rubble, and one escaped. The destruction is complete. Restoration is not possible.

“Since October 2000 we are facing a dilemma with the demolition and destruction of cultural heritage sites. A great damage has been inflicted on cultural sites in the Palestinian areas, including major historic cities such as Bethlehem, Nablus, Gaza, Rafah, Beit Jala, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Aboud, Salfit, and other sites, but the most severe damage has been inflicted on the historic city of Nablus.”

“It is a human tragedy, really, the damage which occurred in this historic city, built by the Romans in 72 AD. It was one of the best preserved medieval cities, not just in Palestine, but in the Near East. It can be compared with Old Cairo or Damascus. Great damage and destruction has been inflicted on this historic city.” Dr. Hamdan Taha, Director of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, 2004

“The city resembles a palace amid gardens. God has endowed it with the blessed tree, the olive. From it oil is exported to all the lands of Egypt, Syria, the Hijjaz and the Arabian Desert. They send also of its oil to Damascus, for use in the Umayyad Mosque, yearly, a thousand kintars of the Damascene measure. From the oil they also make soap of a fine quality, which is exported to all lands, and to the islands of the Mediterranean...” The Damascene traveler Dimashki, around the year 1300.



Streets of Bethlehem 2000 (West Bank)

In some of the most historic areas of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala, UNDP, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, rehabilitated streets, arches, facades, and infrastructure. This project was made possible by a generous grant of US\$ 2 million from the Government of Japan, as part of the preparation for Bethlehem 2000 celebrations. But these restoration activities were not targeted only at beautification of the area. As Ghadeer Hirzallah an Architectural Drafting Engineer with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities put it, “these projects are not just for rehabilitation, but to ensure that people can live here.” Indeed, walking the route of the renovations it is apparent that this project was attentive to the modern day needs of the local residents without losing sight of preserving the historical character of the urban fabric: here street lights have been added, over there the floor of a balcony-cum-bathroom has been reinforced, making it safer for its owners to use. During the course of the project, 95 houses were connected to the electrical grid, 145 were connected to sewage networks, 95 were connected to water lines, and 95 were connected to telephone service.

Another objective of these projects, said Hirzallah, was “to create a cadre of qualified employees and skilled workers specialized in rehabilitation and restoration of historical and archaeological sites.” From 1997 to 2000, these workers had plenty of practice, re-mortaring 10,000 square meters of facades, rebuilding 1,100 square meters of structural elements, applying 3,050

square meters of plaster, painting over 2,200 square meters of surface, and tiling 4,600 meters of walking surfaces.



The following is a pictorial tour through these revitalized streets.

Najajra Quarter

In this neighborhood, facades and infrastructure were renovated. This neighborhood was chosen because of its historical character and the poor state of the buildings in which people were residing.

Al-Shaer Arch

This major arch is one of many restored by the project. The arch derives its name from the poet Al-Shaer who lived nearby.

Fawaghreh Arch

Both the exterior and interior living space of this arch were restored. Fawaghreh Arch is on one of the major thoroughfares through Bethlehem.

Al-Abeed Arch

This narrow arch, restored during the course of the project, is rumored to have marked the passageway out of Bethlehem for servants, and the buildings on either side of the passage are said to have been horse stables at the time.

Baituna Al-Tahami Museum

The exterior of this cultural heritage museum was renovated

Deik Arch

This arch is on a historically important axis running from the northeast to the south of Bethlehem.

Hananiya Arch

The family after whom this arch is named still live here. This arch has an unusual

half-barrel ceiling, which is very high at the bottom of the stairs but very close to the heads of pedestrians entering the passage from the top at Star Street.

Mar Michael Street, in Beit Sahour

In this portion of the project, doors, iron grilles, handrails, and stairs were added to buildings which lacked them. Workers added infrastructure, cleaned facades, painted, tiled the street with stone, and added street lamps. The project team carried out some reconstruction, including the partial reconstruction of an arch, inscribed with the date 1897, on which its owner had inscribed a poem about the building.

Harat Al-'Iraq, in Beit Jala

In this neighborhood, the project created a plaza, landscaped, put in stone tile paving, reinforced weak buildings, restored facades, installed infrastructure, and added ironwork where it was lacking. Hirzallah recalled, "when the Bethlehem 2000 project contracted engineers for work, they brought them here to see this square as an example of good quality work."

Saba Arch

The project restored this arch and opened one of its walls creating a gallery flanked by a smaller plaza and amphitheatre.

Massad Arch

In addition to general restoration and consolidation, workers added stone benches under this arch.

Khalilieh Arch

While restoring this arch, project workers discovered a room that was previously sealed. They opened one wall of this room to face the interior of the arch, and built a stairway for a nearby house.



"The restoration and rehabilitation of archaeological sites and historical buildings which was carried out within the framework of Bethlehem 2000 was a landmark in the history of cultural preservation of Palestine ... it was a model of mutual cooperation based on mutual respect, a post-colonial model of cooperation in cultural heritage." Dr. Hamdan Taha, Director of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, 2004

Barqawi Castle in Shofeh (West Bank)

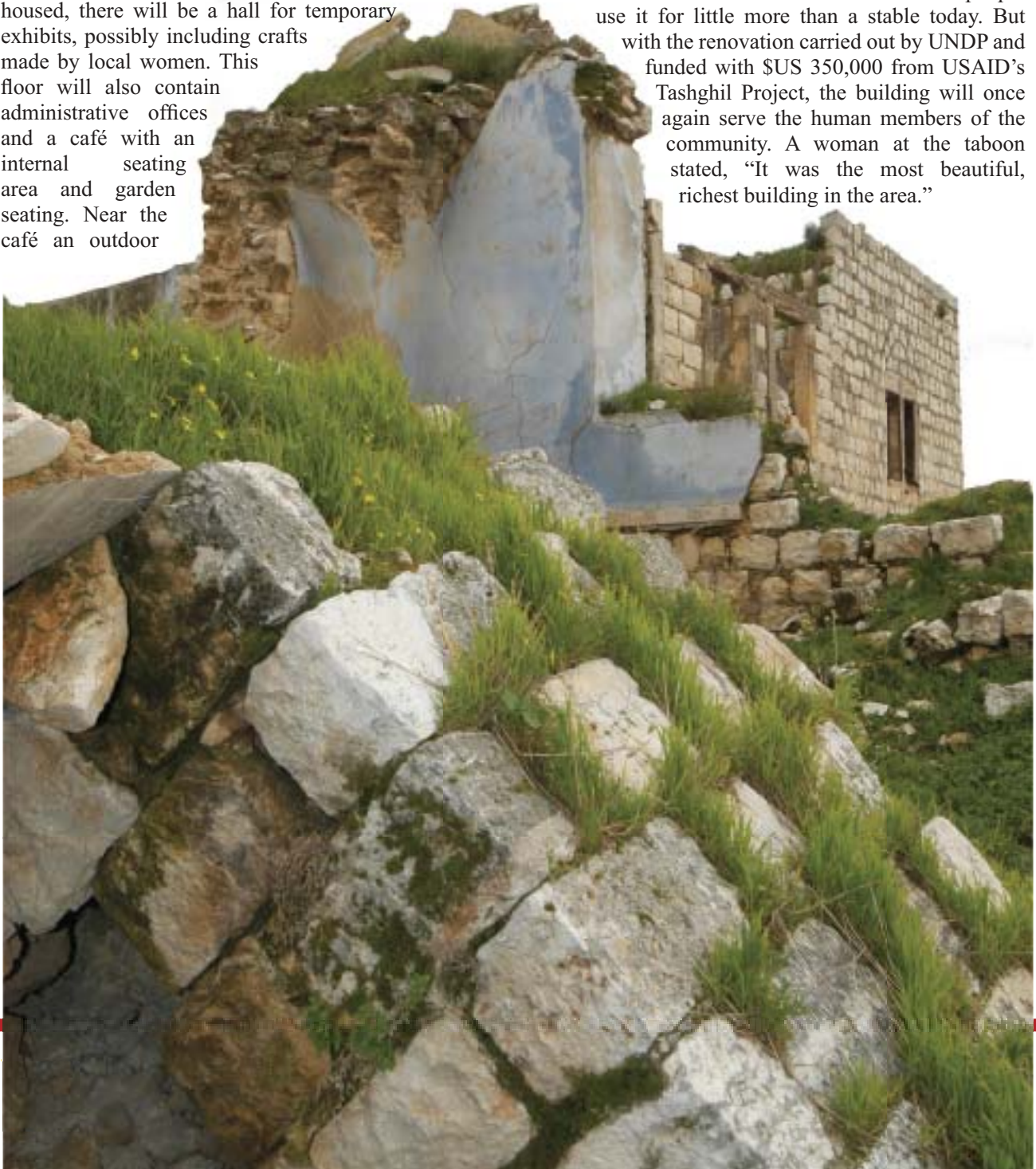
Upon approaching the Barqawi Castle, another UNDP project in town dominates the scene: a large cement water tower. Water towers and fortresses, coincidentally, both demand high ground. The second thing that becomes apparent as one nears the Castle is the cracking of its walls, and one large sloping section of construction that looks like some sort of buttress or ramp built at an odd angle. Fallen walls and cracks aside, the Barqawi Castle is still an imposing structure. It consists of three floors and a multitude of separate sections.

The Castle will soon be restored, and the basement, which was originally a stable, will become a museum housing the permanent collection of the Barqawi family. On the main floor, where a donkey is currently housed, there will be a hall for temporary exhibits, possibly including crafts made by local women. This floor will also contain administrative offices and a café with an internal seating area and garden seating. Near the café an outdoor

amphitheater will provide the village with a place for holding cultural events. The top floor of the castle will be remodeled to accommodate the activities of the women's center, with a lecture hall, workshop for arts and crafts, and a library.

Cracking and slumping of the structure are serious problems in the Castle after years of abandonment combined with a dynamiting incident. The building will need new mortar to bind the stones together, and the corners of the building that sit above cross vaults must be stabilized. Some women working at a traditional Palestinian taboon bread oven just beside the castle recalled the day that construction workers, in the process of building a new highway, began to dynamite through a limestone rise just below the town. They say that children were playing in the road 15 minutes before the blast happened and the building fell. The unstable condition of the structure means that the local people

use it for little more than a stable today. But with the renovation carried out by UNDP and funded with \$US 350,000 from USAID's Tashghil Project, the building will once again serve the human members of the community. A woman at the taboon stated, "It was the most beautiful, richest building in the area."



The Cannon in the Olive Tree: Abu Zaher's Local History

For the People of Shofeh, the Barqawi castle is more than just an impressive piece of architecture, it is a central element in their town's identity and local mythology. When asked about the local knowledge of the structure, the villagers will direct inquiries to one of the town's distinguished elders, such as Abu Zaher. Born in 1921, Abu Zaher was a soldier during the British Mandate. Later he returned to his village as a farmer. He is a member of the Ahmad family, which he says was the founding family of the village of Shofeh and was once so numerous in the town that it could have instead been called Beit Ahmad. It is called Shofeh, he believes, because of its position on the back of a ridge, which gives it a commanding view of the surrounding area (shofeh in Arabic means "view"). "You can see Nablus and Jerusalem, Tel Aviv you can see from here, Jaffa, even Lebanon!" according to Abu Zaher.

"This castle is ancient," he says. It was a seat of power during Ottoman rule, and was once considered the center of the region. During "the war," he reports, "they" used to shell the castle, which people used as a shelter because of its fortress-like strength. In the distant past, according to Abu Zaher, the people of the region were ruled by powerful sheikhs, who fought amongst themselves. Later, he says, the Ottomans introduced a more unified rule. But the people of Shofeh were not keen to bend to the will of Ottoman Turks, and they were rebellious.

The Ottomans sent a force to deal with the unruly villagers, who were significant participants in the revolution against the Ottomans in 1831. Abu Zaher says that the Ottomans put a cannon in an olive tree and used it to shoot at the castle, according to local tradition. "Now this tree is called zeitounat al-madfa' (the cannon olive tree)."

Another story having to do with the rebellion is related by Abu Zaher as follows: "Ibrahim Pasha invaded this village. The Turks came to the well and somebody [in the fortress] came and told a marksman to aim at the person at the well, saying 'if you kill the soldier you win.' The marksman targeted him [the soldier] and he fell into the well." The local

soldiers were encouraged by the success of the marksman, and they beat the Ottoman soldiers in battle. The well is now called Bir Al-Hadaf (the target well).

"They did not expect the power the people had here. The invaders were defeated and they [the villagers] captured one of the Pasha's soldiers." Buoyed on their success, the villagers made their captive walk to a far away village to atone for having attacked them. The villagers composed poetry to mark the event:

According to Abu Zaher, the castle was destroyed twice long ago, "the first time it was partially destroyed, and the second time it was almost completely destroyed." Then, he says, it was rebuilt. When asked what he thinks about the project to restore the building and use it as a community center, Abu Zaher replies, "it is something dead; you must revive it." He hopes that the renewed strength of the fortress will bring new strength to the community. He insists on calling it a fortress, to emphasize its strength and solidity.

This local history-mythology surrounding the castle links the physical integrity and antiquity of the castle to the status of the people in the village. Abu Zaher presents the Barqawi Castle as a symbol of the potency and steadfastness of the local people. Although the imagery he uses is primarily of a militaristic nature, his conclusions do not preclude the new -- and decidedly non-military -- strengths that the villagers may develop in their renovated community center. He hints at a future in which, like the often-destroyed old building, the village's sense of community may also be renewed. By using the renovated castle as a community center, this project will also preserve a landmark that is intimately woven into the local community's culture. The positive self-identification that the villagers feel toward the old building as an icon of their own strength could be a powerful factor in the future success of the community center.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor

Ecole Biblique

The earliest evidence of the presence of humans on the West Bank begins in a wadi running south-east from Bethlehem. The Wadi Kharitun contains a cave known as Umm Qatafa. It was occupied roughly 500,000 years ago, a time when a perennial stream carved out the wadi and the land on both sides was rich in grass and large animals.

After hundreds of thousands of years the remote descendants of the hunter-gatherers of Umm Qatafa domesticated wheat and animals and settled near the spring in Jericho (En es-Sultan). Their prosperity was envied by those who were still nomads, and to protect themselves they surrounded their encampment with a massive wall, which had at least one round tower (Tel es-Sultan). Such social organisation, which is dated to 8,000 BC, won for Jericho the title of the first city.

The Stone Age people evolved into the Canaanites, and their transition to the use of metal (copper) is attested at Tel Balata to the east of Nablus. The cyclopean wall and city gate from around 1600 BC are well preserved. At that stage it was the capital of a city-state that controlled the entire hill-country. At the same time Tel el-Farah drew its wealth from the immense fertility of the Wadi Farah. Its city gate is still visible. There was also a small Canaanite city on the Ophel Ridge. It was called Yara Shalem 'the foundation of Shalem', the Canaanite god of twilight. The two words have evolved into 'Jerusalem'.

A major cultural change occurred about 1200 BC. The introduction of iron made it much easier to work stone. The great pool at Jib was cut at the beginning of this period. It proved to be a vain attempt to reach the water table, and about 1000 BC it was replaced by two magnificent tunnels. David occupied Jerusalem about 1000 BC, and traces of all subsequent archaeological periods are to be found in the City of David.

Herod the Great transformed Jerusalem in the first century BC. Only foundations remain of his palace near Jaffa Gate and the fortress Antonia, but the great platform of the temple survives, though without its walls. They can be mentally reconstructed, however, from those of its sister shrine, the Haram al-Khalil at Hebron. Herod also built palaces at Jebel Fureidis (Herodion) and on both side of the Wadi Qelt at Jericho. The first century pagan healing temple in the grounds of St Anne's Church, Jerusalem, is

the site of a miracle of Jesus. Herod extended the aqueduct system centred on Solomon's Pools south of Bethlehem. At the same time the Essenes were copying their scrolls at Qumran.

In addition to a number of great churches, the Byzantine period (fourth to seventh centuries) is notable for 73 monastic settlements in the desert east of Jerusalem, of which the most important are Mar Saba, and the monasteries of Saints Euthemius (in Mishor Adumim), Martyrius (in Maale Adumim), and George of Coziba (Wadi Qelt).

More sites are coming to light in Gaza, a Roman temple at Blakhiyeh, the largest baptistery in Palestine in the Byzantine ecclesiastical complex at Mkheitem/Jabaliyeh, which is being restored, and above all the huge monastery of Saint Hilarion (Umm al-Amr).

Islam put its definitive stamp on Palestine when Umayyad caliphs built the Dome of the Rock (691) and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (705), and provided housing for pilgrims in the four hostels around the south-west corner of the Haram esh-Sharif. Another Umayyad, al-Walid II, started the regal hunting lodge in Jericho, popularly known as Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al-Mafjar), but was assassinated before he could complete it.

Surprisingly the Crusaders have left only few traces of their passage. In Jerusalem the Catholicon of the Greeks in

the Holy Sepulchre is their work, as is the Church of St Anne. The Templars built the castle Toron of the Knights at Latrun, and the fort Maldouin on the Jericho road. The walls of the ruined church at Emmaus-Nicopolis still rise to a considerable height. The cathedral at Khan Yunis in Gaza has been transformed into a mosque as has the church in the Haram at Hebron.

The Mamluks, who succeeded the dynasty of Saladin in 1250, did more to beautify Jerusalem than anyone else, with the possible exception of Herod the Great. To the Haram esh-Sharif they contributed the houses along the north wall above the portico, the west portico with the Bab al-Qattanin and Al-Ashrafiyya, and the Sabil Qaitbey. The city glowed with the new stone - white, red and black - of the remarkable facades of their religious schools, pilgrim hospices, Sufi residences, and tombs. Suleiman the Magnificent protected these jewels when he gave Jerusalem its walls in the mid-sixteenth century.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor has been professor of New Testament at the Ecole Biblique since 1965. An Irishman, he has lived in Jerusalem for over 40 years, and for most of those years he has guided members of the international community to archaeological sites throughout the area. He is the author of THE HOLY LAND. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE (4th ed. 1998).



The Most Ancient History of Gaza : The Excavations at Tell es-Sakan

by Pierre de Miroshedji and Moain Sadeq

While the Gaza Strip has long remained in the background of archaeological research, excavations have multiplied there since 1995, with the establishment of the Department of Antiquities of Gaza, a branch of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of the Palestinian Authority. To a large extent, this is the result of the urgency of the situation because the archaeological heritage of the Gaza Strip is threatened with irreparable destructions by rapid urban development.

One of the archaeological sites saved in extremis by archaeologists is Tell es-Sakan, located five kilometers south of Gaza City. Discovered by chance in 1998 during the construction of a housing complex, it is the only Early Bronze Age site presently known in the Gaza Strip. Inhabited between ca. 3300 and 2200 B.C., this settlement of more than 5 hectares was possibly the capital of the area at the time. It is actually the distant forerunner of Gaza City because it was the immediate predecessor of nearby Tell el-Ajjul, which itself existed just before the foundation of Gaza City.

To save Tell es-Sakan from destruction, a series of soundings were briefly conducted there in September 1999. It confirmed the tremendous importance of the site to the ancient history of Gaza, and prompted the establishment of a Franco-Palestinian excavation project with the help of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP/PAP). This project is not limited to the archaeological exploration of Tell es-Sakan; it pursues also other goals, such as the institutional strengthening of the Department of Antiquities of Gaza and the training of its archaeologists. The project is under the joint auspices of the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the Palestinian Department of Antiquities of Gaza and is co-directed by Pierre de Miroshedji, Director of Research at the CNRS, and Moain Sadeq, Director of the Department of Antiquities of Gaza.

The first season of excavation took place in August-October 2000, with the financial support of the sponsoring institutions, and UNDP/PAP, Consulate General of France in Jerusalem and the help of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The two excavations directors were assisted by a Franco-Palestinian team of 25 archaeologists, specialists and technicians and by about some fifty workers. The excavations covered an area of 1400 sq. m. and concerned three different areas.

The results of these excavations are spectacular and have deepened our knowledge of the archaeology of Palestine during the third millennium B.C. Tell es-Sakan had two

mains phases of occupation : the first, represented by four strata at the base of the site, correspond to an Egyptian settlement of the Protodynastic period (end of the fourth millennium B.C.), while the second phase of occupation, illustrated by the middle and upper strata, corresponds to a Canaanite settlement of the third millennium B.C.

The oldest strata of occupation were reached in a different area of excavation more than 500 square meters. The architectural remains of the archaeological material is typical of the Nile Valley between ca. 3200 and 3000 B.C. The important role played by Tell es-Sakan during this period is indicated by an exceptional discovery : the fortifications of the site, represented by two powerful mudbrick walls built in succession. Tell es-Sakan is the most ancient fortified site presently known both for Egypt and Palestine. It was probably at this time the administrative center of the Egyptian colonies established in southwestern Palestine. It was located at the head of a caravan route linking Palestine and Egypt along the coast of northern Sinai. At the same time, it was presumably close to a harbor in Gaza that enabled easy maritime connections with Egypt.

After several centuries of abandonment, Tell es-Sakan was reoccupied in the Early Bronze Age III period, between ca 2650 and 2200, but this time by Cananeans. Their presence testifies to the southward expansion of the Palestinian civilization down towards Gaza. A new city wall in mudbrick — the third found on the site — was then built. It is a formidable fortification, comprised of 7.8-meter thick wall in front of a rampart. This powerful rampart protected an urban settlement whose remains were brought to light in the excavations. There were dwelling districts crossed by winding streets, which give evidence of remarkably developed urbanism. The houses yielded an abundance and variety of household equipment: many scores of vessels, domestic tools of various sorts and personal ornaments such as beads and pendants were found. They are typical of the Palestinian culture of the second half of the third millennium B.C. and illustrate the close ties existing then between Tell es-Sakan and the settlements of inner Palestine. There are reasons to believe that the inhabitants of the site may correspond to the Amu-Heriu-Sha, a name given by the Egyptians to the inhabitants of the Palestinian coast, against whom Egypt organized several military campaigns around 2250 B.C.

The excavations at Tell es-Sakan will go on, despite the present difficulties. It is a major Palestinian site for the third millennium B.C., whose exploration will reveal the most ancient history of the Gaza Strip.

“It is a city so rich in trees as to be like a cloth of brocade spread out on the sand.” Dimashki, the Damascene traveler, in approximately 1300



tourists may soon follow this road, since Burqin is thought to be the site of one of the miracles mentioned in the Bible.

Popular tradition holds that Jesus healed ten lepers in a cave in Burqin, and later the cave was made into a church. Eventually, a church was built in front of the cave, and then abandoned. In the 18th century, the church was rebuilt, and then nearly abandoned again in the 20th century. In 1997, in anticipation of the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities carried out extensive restoration work at the church.

The UNDP project will clean up the entrance area, and give a facelift to the small winding street that runs between the plaza and church. Project workers will plant shrubs and trees, retille the street, beautify the facades of the surrounding houses, add benches, and install playgrounds for children.

The Municipality of Burqin sees this as both an improvement to the quality of life of the citizens of Burqin and a tourist-sensitive move that may bring Burqin economic advantages. A third part of the project will be the installation of a small guesthouse and youth center

in the Municipality Building to provide housing for tourists. “We consider this to be an experiment,” says the Mayor of Burqin: “We did not previously have a vision of cooperation between the municipality and the local community on the subject of tourism.”



Burqin (West Bank)

The first impression that a visitor has of Burqin is the view of its main plaza, an unpaved, uneven expanse of ground that is neither round nor square, but rather an odd shape that looks completely accidental. Men sit around the margins in plastic chairs, smoking and chatting. Children play ball. Old women stand in their doorways and visit with each other. This scene is flanked by a small grocery store and a fruit cart.

Thanks to a UNDP project, funded by a US\$ 200,000 grant through USAID’s Tashghil Project, this square will soon offer a grander welcome to visitors and a park-like atmosphere for locals. The traffic will be routed along a paved road around the square, which will be landscaped and beautified. The plans include kiosks for vendors, benches, parking areas, a bus stop, and an amphitheatre for outdoor events.

Beyond the square, the project will beautify the winding road that leads to the church, knowing that pilgrims and

“We passed through the little Christian village of Burkin ... the old [priest] hastened down to show us his church on the hillside, a small whitewashed room, with a stone screen on the east shutting off the apse, as in all Greek churches in the country, and with three entrances guarded by curtains... his [the priest’s] pride and satisfaction in showing his church were immense.” Claude R. Conder, 1879, *Tent Work in Palestine*

Managing Cultural Heritage in Palestine

**Dr. Hamdan Taha / Director General
Department of Antiquities & Cultural
Heritage**



The reestablishment of the Antiquities Department in 1994 played an integral role in the Palestinian management of cultural heritage. It is considered an official comeback to history after several attempts of historical banishment. The Palestinians are now rewriting their history through the study of cultural heritage from its primary sources. Their beliefs stem from realizing that Palestinian cultural heritage an integral part of the universal human endowment and is part of Palestinian history and identity. Understanding cultural heritage helps build a nation, a society; it also builds tolerance, cultural diversity and is a source of sustainable development. Accumulated heritage of over one million years and cultural diversification is important for the development of this small part of the world. "Palestine is rich in its history" as Edward Robinson had written during his visit in 1838.

Creating a sense of history and information will help build a cultural identity, social unity and cultural awareness. The new millennium is introducing new forms of cultural interaction as a result of globalization and information technology, imposing existential challenges to local cultures in the new world system controlled by rich countries.

The Antiquities department was established in difficult circumstances. It had no archeological archive nor a source of previous excavations in the area and is still lacking logistical foundations and equipped centers, a specialized library, maps, and trained manpower.

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority at the end of the last century helped the Palestinians explore their history from its primary sources, a task previously dominated by external excavation missions and exploited politically and ideologically.

The work undertaken by the department of Antiquities is based on international standards of research, protection, education, preservation, legislation as well as scientific exploration of archeology in Palestine and the role of Palestinian culture incorporated within humanitarian civilization. This is reflected in the Department of Antiquities policies in cultural heritage and the new legislation project currently being prepared, taking into consideration not only general definitions but archeological and historical sites, natural heritage and traditional architecture.

The Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage was established in mid 2002 as a result of combining the Antiquities Department at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Cultural Heritage Department at the Ministry of Culture with an aim of managing cultural heritage on a national level. This new formation involved the development of a new structure including technical departments such as excavation, national registry, restoration and preservation, museums and management of historical sites. Parallel to this, the Department is working on establishing new rules and regulations regarding the development and protection of cultural and natural heritage. In addition, the Department is giving special

Palestinian Archaeology in Numbers

Numbers reflect known historical and archaeological sites in the West Bank and Gaza according to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

12,000	The number of archaeological and cultural heritage sites
60,000	The number of traditional houses
1,750	The number of major sites (human settlements)
500	The number of sites that have been excavated
60	The number of major sites that have been excavated
100+	The number of sites that have great potential for future use as archaeological parks (currently not more than 10 have been developed)

attention to building archeological and ethnographic museums because of the role they play in the design of cultural heritage.

In 1996, the Department of Antiquities initiated a development of many cultural and historical sites in the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to the development of the 100 archeological sites project between 1996-1998 and historical preservation project between 1998-2000, which was implemented with support from the Netherlands. This was followed by the restoration of historical and cultural sites project in Bethlehem during the years of 1997-2000, implemented by UNDP/PAPP and others as part of the Bethlehem 2000 Project. Since then, three museums have opened in cooperation with UNDP/PAPP along with the development of tel al-sultan and Hisham's Palace in Jericho, tel Balata in Nablus, tel al-Ujoul, Nusairat, Balakhia and tel al-Sakan in Gaza.

Preparations are underway to start with cultural preservation projects in Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus and Salfet districts. They include the restoration and rehabilitation of Belameh tunnel in Jenin, Burqin Church, Arrabeh Castles, Arrabeh, Deir Istiya, Shoufeh castle, Kour and Khirbet Irtah. The project is implemented by UNDP/PAPP with the financial support of USAID.

Since 1994, the Department of Antiquities has been carrying out several emergency excavations in the cities and villages of the West Bank and Gaza, many of which shed light on the evolution of Palestinian history and culture, forming preliminary research material that will, over time, contribute to the establishment of a school of archeology and field work.



Gaza's Great Umari Mosque

The Great Mosque is located in the same area as the Pasha's Palace and the Hamam As-Sumara. The site of the mosque has been the center of spiritual life in the area throughout the centuries, beginning as a temple to the god of Gaza. In the Byzantine period it was made into a basilica, which continues to have a visible influence on the form of the current building. In the Islamic period, the building was converted into a mosque, and is now the largest mosque in Gaza.