

**The Glocalisation of al-Haram al-Sharif:
Designing Memory, Mystification of Place**

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“Strategic tinkering with the past introduces the question of myth.”

Bruce Lincoln

The Haram al-Sharif is considered the third most important sacred Islamic site (thalith al-Haramayn) but it is surely “the first political qibla” (ula al-qiblatayn).¹ The sacred, through its physical manifestations (sacred sites), plays an essential role in contemporary political debates of multi-scalar nature. In this chapter I seek to develop a deeper understanding of the spatial, political, and social aspects of Islamic resurgence, both at large and—in particular—in Israel. I ask how the most holy Islamic place there, the Haram al-Sharif, is being perceived, produced and promoted as a nexus for Palestinian communities, as both a religious symbol and a national icon. I explore how its unique status as the third most Islamic site, and its role as a sacred religious icon among contesting parties, transform it into one of the

¹ Yitzhak Reiter, "Third in Holiness, First in Politics: Al-Haram al-Sharif in Muslim Eyes," In *Sovereignty of God and Man: Sanctity and Political Centrality on the Temple Mount*, ed., Yitzhak Reiter, (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies; The Teddy Kollek Center for Jerusalem Studies, 2001), pp. 155-180; Idem *Jerusalem and its Role in Islamic Solidarity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11-35.

most intriguing localities, where images, meaning, and actual control are constantly being contested and fought over. The local Islamic movement is certainly the most tenacious and active force behind the mystification of the place, not only as a global Islamic monument, but also a local national icon. Concomitantly with global processes of Islamic resurgence, the place has become a spatial metaphor for the status and state of the Israeli-Palestinian minority both on the local-national scale and the global one. This is achieved through various processes: contestation of meaning and over-surplus of meaning, inclusion (mystification) and exclusion of other (demystification).

It is the premise of this chapter that through ideas of sanctity and myth, and through the agency of the sacred, we may understand better aspects of Islamic resurgence, in the context of the secularization debate and of the nation state in the age of globalization.² My exploration of the Haram al-Sharif and the role of the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement therein are based on contextualization of place as an open-ended ever-changing locality. The theoretical foundation of this work rests on three concepts to be found in recent developments of cultural and political and economic geography: place, scale and glocalisation. I promote an understanding of place as the outcome and the process of production, as open to

² I think one cannot discuss Islamic resurgence in remote to current anthropological and sociological debates on religion, modernism and nationalism. Indeed, I follow here Asad's contextualization as put forward in Talal Asad, *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,), esp. pp. 181-201.

multiple possibilities.³ The sacred in this respect is but one example (as intriguing as it may be) of *place*. *Scale* refers to the ways places are perceived, understood and promoted on different levels and between different levels from the personal (body scale) to the global. Understanding places within multiscale configuration allows a better understanding of the forces that shape them and of the reasons leading to these configurations.⁴ The neologism *glocal*, and hence *glocalisation*, stems from the theoretical understanding that the global and global flows and phenomena are local at any given time. Through this contextualization of the Haram I analyze the ways in which the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement is producing, promoting, and actively changing the ways the Haram is being perceived within varying scale levels.

The Contested Nature of the Sacred: Sacred Sites as Nexus of Conflicts

Rodney Needham postulates that the sacred is indeed a contested category.⁵ Far from being locations where faith is quietly practiced, God is peacefully

³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Trans, D. Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1991). Doreen Massey, "Places and their Past," *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995), pp. 182-192.

⁴ Eric Swyngedouw, "The Mammon Quest: 'Glocalization, Interspatial Competition and the Monetary Order: The Construction of New Scales,'" in *Cities and Regions in the New Europe*, ed. Mick Dunford, Grigoris Kafkalas, (London: Belhaven Press, 1992), pp. 39-67; idem, "Territorial Organization and the Space/Technology Nexus," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 17, (1992), pp. 417-33.

⁵ Rodney Needham cited at David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds. *American*

worshipped, and brotherly love is rejoiced, sacred places are often to be found at the center of conflict. They often serve as a stage where violence and bloodshed take place. Sacred places become contested first and foremost because they are places; that is, they are spatial. This last observation justifies further elaboration and inquiry into the political and contested inherent nature of places. In what follows I discuss, rather succinctly, the way places have been theorized and contextualized by contemporary political and cultural geographers.

The question of place has been raised in recent years among scholars from an array of disciplines. In his invariably persuasive manner, Foucault observed that place is fundamental in any exercise of power.⁶ Put differently, places are by their very nature political entities or at least politicized through various human agencies. A useful definition to understand place as a socially constructed entity is: “place is space to which meaning has been ascribed.”⁷ If this is the case, then place is the outcome of process of construction, which implies that it is invested with meaning, ideology, and surely politics. By its very nature, place is full of power and symbolism. It is a complex web of relations, of domination and subordination, of solidarities, and cooperation.⁸ At the same time, place is inexorably linked with

Sacred Space (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 5.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Trans. Catherine Gordon, (New York: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 63

⁷ Erica Carter, James Donald, Judith Squires, eds. *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), p. xii.

⁸ Doreen Massey, "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Changes*, ed. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim

controversies, conflicts, struggles over control and debates (as well as more physical contestations) over meaning and symbolism. Being a 'web of signification' inevitably transforms place into a site where that significance and its "true" nature is up for grabs for those already in, or in search of, power.⁹ Places are spatial metaphors through which people and peoples can represent themselves and thus concretize their culture; that is, through places cultural ideas and abstracts become concrete. Therefore, the struggle over the ownership of places and over their control need be seen also as a cultural struggle for autonomy and self determination.¹⁰ Place provides both the real, concrete settings from which culture¹¹ emanates to enmesh people in webs of activities and meanings and in the physical expression of those cultures in the form of landscapes.¹²

Thus far I have established that places are always on the "way of becoming," that is, they are always in the process (or the possibility) of changing, and that

Putman, George Robertson, Lisa Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 144.

⁹ David Ley, and Kris Olds, "Landscape as Spectacle: World's Fairs and Culture of Heroic Consumption," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6 (1988), p. 195.

¹⁰ Arturo Escobar, Culture sits in places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization. *Political Geography* 20 no. 2 (2001), p. 162.

¹¹ As place culture is always in the process of becoming and must not be reified or understood as a rigid and specific setting of human ideals, norms etc.

¹² James A. Agnew and James S. Duncan, ed., *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1989), preface.

conflict and competition are inherent to spatiality along with collaboration, negotiation and indeed production of understanding and meaning.¹³ Sacred places make for an intriguing example of the socio-political and constructed character of place. The specificities of the politics of sacred places will be discussed in what follows.

Eade and Sallnow focus our attention to the highly contested nature of the sacred: “The power of a shrine, therefore, derives in large part from its character almost as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices.”¹⁴ In this they break free of former paradigms and contextualization of pilgrimage sites and establish a dynamic and a highly political understanding of the role of sacred sites for communities and sub groups while competing and performing their religious practices therein.¹⁵ Geographers dealing with religion have pointed also to the presence of conflict and contestation involved

¹³ Allen Pred, "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 no. 2 (1984), pp. 279-297.

¹⁴ John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, (ed.) *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 15.

¹⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (New York: Free Press, 1912[1995]); Victor Turner, "Pilgrimages as Social Processes," in idem. *Drama, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 166-230.

in the production of sacred sites.¹⁶ Indeed, the very word *production*, when applied to the allegedly transcendent outward quality¹⁷ of the spatiality of a sacred site, immediately grounds the place and locates it within the realm of everyday life. Chidester and Linenthal present us with an understanding of the multivalence of sacred sites and their inherent contested nature. They claim that “a sacred place is not merely discovered, or founded, or constructed; it is claimed, owned, and operated by people advancing specific interest.”¹⁸ Therefore, becoming a sacred place involves a process of production but is also inescapably linked to cultural-

¹⁶Christine Chivallon, "Religion as Space for the Expression of Caribbean Identity in the United Kingdom," *Environment & Planning D: Society & Space* 19 no. 4 (2001), pp. 461-84; Lily Kong, "Negotiating Conceptions of Sacred Space: A Case Study of Religious Buildings in Singapore," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18 no. 3, (1993), pp. 342-58; idem, "Ideological Hegemony and the Political Symbolism of Religious Buildings in Singapore," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11, (1993), pp. 11-23; idem, "Mapping "New" Geographies of Religion: Politics and Poetics in Modernity," *Progress in Human Geography* 25 no. 2, (2001): 211-233; Simon Naylor, and James R. Ryan, "The Mosque in the Suburbs: Negotiating Religion and Ethnicity in South London," *Social & Cultural Geography* 3 no. 1 (2002), pp. 39-59.

¹⁷ This intangible quality is what Rudolf Otto defined as "numinous". See, Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: [an inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the natural]* Trans. James. W. Harvey, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1959).

¹⁸ Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, p. 17.

political contests regarding the multiple meanings assigned to the place. The conflict is not just over the production; Chidester and Linenthal continue to argue, but also over the “symbolic surpluses that are abundantly available for appropriation.”¹⁹ Sacred sites are arenas where resources are transformed into surplus of meaning. They are heavily invested with symbolism, emotions and indeed mystification. This also explains why sacred sites are locations for competing discourses. Too much is at stake and there is too much to lose for contesting groups or influential actors. Taking over and controlling the sacred involves various forms of politics.²⁰ Thus, the sacred is always to be found intertwined with political power, agency, and rather profane²¹ social forces. As argued by Lefebvre, the production of places is inexorably linked with politics.²² The very concept of production of space necessitates a human agency and activity and therefore implies politics in various manifestations. This is all the more apparent in the case in point, the Haram al-Sharif. Indeed, the process of sanctification of the site in Islamic understanding was heavily engaged with politics and inventions of traditions. But the contesting and competing narratives about the place are not confined solely to the past but also with the 'tinkering with the past' of various contemporary competing groups.

¹⁹ Ibid, 18.

²⁰ Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. Trans.J. E. Turner (New York: Macmillan, 1933/1986).

²¹ Indeed, the use of the term profane here needs to be understood as turning Eliade's concept of the nature of the sacred on its head.

²² Lefebvre, *Production of Place*.

Scale, Glocalisation, Resistance

The geopolitical changes that followed the 1967 war and consequently Israel's direct control of the area were responsible for the increase of tension and friction over the Haram al-Sharif. The place became one of the most controversial issues between Israel and the Muslim world (global), the focal point of the Israeli-Arab conflict (regional), a major site of contestation between Israel, as a self-proclaimed Jewish state, and Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.²³ Israel, as any other modern nation state, sees itself as the only legitimate authority that is authorized to execute power and exercise violence against whom ever challenges its authoritative position within its political boundaries.²⁴ Thus, since 1967 Israel has opposed most challenging endeavors to control the Haram al-Sharif and its environs and stubbornly wishes to dictate the socio-spatial interaction therein. The way to overcome these restrictions is to rescale the level of resistance to the state, be it on the body (personal), local, national, or global. In what follows I contextualize the issues of scale, scalar politics and resistance in order to understand better the nature of activities of Palestinians citizens of Israel regarding the Haram. Further I address the term "glocalization" and show its relevancy to the case in point.

The inflammatory visit of former member of the Knesset (MK) and later Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon on September 28, 2000 to the holy Islamic

²³ Roger Friedland, and Richard, D. Hecht *To Rule Jerusalem*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁴ James, C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

compound²⁵ in Jerusalem may be seen as the ultimate trigger and the spark that ignited the second Palestinians' civilian uprising commonly known as the al-Aqsa Intifada. Sharon's visit was a highly calculated political response to the political stalemate that followed the failure of the second Camp David summit. In the days that followed the visit the second Intifada was underway and civilian acts of resistance and defiance of Israeli state authority were spreading among Palestinian communities within and without the Green Line. When interviewed about the riots (also known as the "October 2000 Events") and the reactions among Israeli-Palestinians, 'Abd al-Malik Dhamsha, MK and head of the Islamic party at the Israeli parliament at the time, supplied the following rejoinder:

It is a war that every Muslim should be part of. There is no Green Line when al-Aqsa is concerned and this [the reactions] will continue throughout Israel... I cannot see this murderer transgress the most holy place in this land and idly observe from the sideline. Am I not a human being? Am I devoid of emotions, am I not a Muslim? He entered the most holy mosque of the Muslims in order to defile it as a murderer, as a powerful man, a Zionist. Do you honestly believe that we will not face up to it? This act is addressed against our very existence, but we

²⁵ The term Haram al-Sharif is coterminous to al-Aqsa mosque in everyday parlance. Throughout this paper I use them both interchangeably. Put bluntly, I refer here to the compound in Jerusalem which was constructed by King Herod to serve as the platform for the second Jewish Temple and was later the construction site for various Islamic structures including the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

do exist. Our sole culpability is that we are humans and that we have a life and that we have a mosque and a land.²⁶

Above and beyond his highly emotional response, Dhamsha is also engaged with an intriguing spatial language. He weaves a complex multiscalar configuration. While talking about the Haram and trying to explain the magnitude of Sharon's provocation he moves randomly between different scalar settings. He begins with the global scale by asserting that the defense of al-Aqsa against the transgression of profanity is the task of all Muslims. He then moves to a supranational scale and address the role of Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. Subsequently, he touches on the national scale by focusing on the Israeli-Palestinians. This is followed with the body (personal) scale as he alludes to his own rage and the humiliation he experienced as a human and a Muslim. He concludes by jumping to the community scale again and speaks on behalf of Israeli-Palestinians at large.

The concept of geographical scale has become a buzzword of sorts in recent debates among political, economic and urban geographers.²⁷ I exploit it here as I think it can be conducive to any critical discussion of the spatialities (and other aspects) of Islamic resurgence. Spatial scale needs to be understood as something that is produced. It is a process that involves politics and therefore it is constantly being fought over by contesting forces. Scale is the spatial configuration where

²⁶ *Haaretz*, 3.10.2000, 3.

²⁷ Neil Brenner, "The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration" *Progress in Human Geography* 25 no. 4, (2001), pp. 591-614.

sociopolitical relations are contested.²⁸ Scalar configurations are not pre-given platforms upon which social life simply take place. They are constantly being remade through sociopolitical struggles.

Scale and the production of scale (scaling) are indeed political and social projects. Scale is socially constructed which implies that in each and every level of analysis – that is, from the personal to the global – our understanding of scale is the outcome of social processes and political struggles. The question of scale and the setting of scale is a matter of political struggle and involves power relations and the changes or the contestation of existing power geometries.²⁹ Scale and scaling are not politically neutral. They are both the result and the outcome of struggles for power and control. Scale is a constitutive dimension of sociopolitical processes. It demarcates the site of social or political contest. It is also about setting a context to the struggle. Scale is an active progenitor of specific social processes; it sets the boundaries for struggles over identity, and control over places. In the face of a scale superimposed by a hegemonic power, subaltern groups may opt to thwart this power by actively jumping scales. Against the backdrop of Israeli control over the Haram, Dhamsha moves between scales as a way to subvert and resist a pre-given geographical production of scale in that specific place. Jumping scales allows the

²⁸ Eric Swyngedouw, "Neither Global nor Local: "Glocalization" and the Politics of Scale," In *Spaces of Globalization. Reasserting the Power of the Local*, ed. Kevin R. Cox, (New York London: The Guilford Press, 1997), pp. 137-166.

²⁹ Neil Smith, "Homeless/Global: Scaling Places," In *Mapping the Future - Local Cultures, Global Change*, eds. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putman, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 81-119.

subordinate or the controlled to dissolve spatial boundaries that are largely imposed from above and that contain rather than facilitate their production and reproduction of everyday life. By discussing challenges to and political contestations over specific scales I hope to indicate and make clear ways in which Islamic resurgence 'takes place' and uses scale within the boundaries of nation states. This approach is defined here as the glocalisation of the place.

Glocalisation refers to (1) the contested restructuring of the institutional level from the national scale, both upwards to supranational or global scales and downwards to the scale of the individual body or the local, urban or regional configurations and (2) the strategies of global localization of key forms of industrial, service and financial capital.³⁰ Glocalisation is also concerned with process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This is achieved again through the reconfiguration and the contestation over spatial scale. Since all social life is inevitably situated and locally placed Swyngedouw suggests that we need to rethink the global phenomenon. The global and the local are deeply intertwined and they are mutually constituted. The overarching and dramatic processes that currently shape the world under the canopy of the concept of globalization are of course local at every moment.³¹ The global always takes places at the local, as the local is constantly being shaped and altered by the global. But in coining the term glocalisation, Swyngedouw focuses our attention on the fact that regardless of the importance and magnitude of world globalisation we need to pay special attention

³⁰ Swyngedouw, "The Mammon Quest"; idem, *Territorial Organization*".

³¹ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Trans. Carl Porter, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

to the localities in which these changes are taking place. Glocalisation refers, then, to the changes and struggles over scalar configurations. Scale relates to existing social power relationships as dictated by the powers that be. Scale reconfiguration, in turns, challenges existing power relations and questions the existing power geometries.³² Jumping scales—as in the case in point approaching other than the national scale—is therefore central to any emancipatory project. Glocalisation which hereby refers to addressing the global within local context (but also promoting a local/national understanding in the global) should be understood as such a project. In what follows I describe this process of scalar reconfiguration as a strategy of resisting state control. Part and parcel of these endeavors are the mystification of the place and the exploitation of the past—put differently, a specific reading of the past—to reconfigure the scale at which the struggle is being fought. By focusing on the process of scaling I aim to explore the continuous reorganizing through political struggle of the hierarchical interrelationships among scales.³³

The Becoming of a Sacred Palestinian National Site: The Islamic Movement as an Agent of Change

Shortly after the failure of the second Camp David summit, mayors of Israeli-Palestinian municipalities were convened for an 'emergency meeting'. The reason behind this meeting was a news item in an article published at *Sawt al-haqq wa-l-*

³² Eric Swyngedouw, "Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'? Networks, Territories and Rescaling," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17 no. 1, (2003), pp. 25-48.

³³ Brenner, "The Limits to Scale".

huriyya, the Islamic movement's more extreme³⁴ wing's weekly, relating to an alleged governmental plan for constructing a synagogue inside "Solomon's Stables."³⁵ During the meeting Dr. Hanna Swaid, the mayor of Eilabun, supported Shaykh Ra'id Salah's³⁶ response in which he stated that this construction, should it materialize, would equal the destruction of al-Aqsa. Swaid is a Christian-Arab and is now serving as a MK of Hadash, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality. This is currently the only joint Arab-Jewish party in the Israeli parliament. Nonetheless, his ideological, ethnic and religious background does not seem to deter him from encouraging Israeli-Palestinians to join in the special annual rally of the Islamic Movement conducted under the name: 'Al-Aqsa is in Danger.'³⁷ His devotion to al-Aqsa surely cannot rest on religious grounds. For Swaid to publicly demonstrate such a commitment to the place can only imply that al-Aqsa is perceived as much more than just a religious symbol, indeed a national one. It seems that this transformation started with the charismatic mufti Hajj Amin al-

³⁴ The Islamic movement in Israel was divided in 1996 into two main wings. The more extreme one also called "The Northern Islamic Movement" (as opposed to the "Southern" is considered more extreme and profess a more subversive approach toward the state.

³⁵ *Sawt al-Haqq w-al-Huriyya*, 11.8.2002: 10. The term Solomon Stables derives from the Crusader period in Jerusalem in which the al-Aqsa mosque was erroneously understood as none other than Solomon's Temple. The commonly accepted dating of these underground halls is to circa 20 BC.

³⁶ Ra'id Salah is the head of the "Northern wing"

³⁷ *Sawt al-Haqq wa-l-Huriyya* 10.9.2000, p. 5

Husayni during the Mandate period.³⁸ This project of transforming the site into a religio-national symbol is carried further in recent years by the Islamic movement in Israel. I would like to concentrate on three aspects of those activities. Firstly, I explore the physical changes initiated at the Haram by the Islamic movement. Secondly, I address their social activities throughout the country regarding the status of al-Aqsa. And thirdly, I look at their use of public media (mostly their journals) as a way to elevate the status of the Haram.

The Physical Construction of the Place

As of the 1980s one may find an increase in the presence and influence of Israeli-Palestinian Muslim citizens in the compound. The driving forces behind these activities are by and large the two wings of the Islamic movement in Israel. This is especially true regarding the 'Northern' section of the movement which is headed by shaykh Ra'id Salah. The most prominent contribution of the Islamic movement is to be found at the southern tip of the platform below the al-Aqsa Mosque, commonly known as Solomon's Stables. In recent years, save for an occasional visit of archeology buffs, the place was mostly closed to the public. It was known also as al-Aqsa al-qadima (ancient al-Aqsa) but it was not part of the pilgrimage routine at the Haram. Since 1967 the management of the Haram, as that of other Islamic religious building in East Jerusalem, has been in the hands of the Jordanian

³⁸ Yoram Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918-1929*, (London: Frank Cass, 1974), pp. 194-200. Taysir Jbara, *Palestinian Leader, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, Mufti of Jerusalem*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Kingston Press, 1985).

Ministry of Endowments.³⁹ This arrangement was haphazardly agreed upon, as silently as possible, by the Israeli government shortly after 1967. Thus, the actual daily routine of the Haram was managed by an administration that was paid by, and followed instructions coming from, Amman. The creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) following the Oslo Accords in 1993 heavily distorted this arrangement as the Palestinians under Arafat were constantly striving to better their position and to undermine both Israeli and Jordanian control at the Haram.⁴⁰

In 1996 the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement was about to prove that it was also a significant player in addition to the unholy triad of Israel, Jordan and the PA. In the summer of that year the Endowment authority (by now a scion of the PA) received the approval of the Israeli government to perform some necessary maintenance work on the underground halls. The idea as explained to the Israeli authorities was that this was a much needed step in order to enable prayers to be carried out on rainy days, expected during that year's Ramadan. It would seem that Ra'id Salah was simply waiting for this challenge. A few months earlier he was a prominent player in a rupture within the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement. The official ideological reason behind the split was the issue of whether the movement should also establish itself as a political movement and run in the general elections for the Israeli parliament. Under his leadership, the Northern faction was responsible for the mobilization of thousands of volunteers, money and materials

³⁹ Reiter, "Third in Holiness", 160.

⁴⁰ Shmuel Berkovits, *The Battle for the Holy Places. The Struggle over Jerusalem and the Holy Sites in Israel, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Districts*, (Or Yehuda: Hed Arzi Publishing House, 2000), p. 133.

which were indispensable for this building project. The movement was responsible for the execution of a large-scale renovation project that ultimately transformed the halls into one of the largest mosques in the Middle East.⁴¹ The project was carried out along with fierce and constant encounters with Israeli authorities—both in courts and on the ground with Israeli police. It was a great success for the movement and for Salah personally. The fact that he confronted the Israeli authorities directly and prevailed not only won him the title of ‘shaykh of al-Aqsa’ but also positioned him as the most influential Islamic leader among Israeli-Palestinian Muslims. It was a live demonstration that the power of the place combined with the organization skills of the movement can bring about massive public support among Israeli-Palestinian citizens. One of the outcomes of the 1996 al-Aqsa campaign was an annual rally conducted under the name ‘al-Aqsa is in Danger.’ The rally was initially organized as a fundraiser for the 1996 renovation campaign, but was such an astounding success that it then became the biggest and most meaningful event of the Northern faction. This surely attests to the importance assigned to the Haram by Israeli-Palestinians but it is also a sign for the role of the movement and its significance in contemporary politics.

Social Activities among Israeli-Palestinian Muslims

In addition to grand-scale operations of flamboyant nature such as the creation of al-Musalla al-Marwani,⁴² as the underground place of prayer is called, the Islamic

⁴¹ Abd al-Malik Dahamsha, interview with author, September 2002.

⁴² The name supposed to mean the praying area of al-Marwani after the family of Abd al-Malik, the caliph that was responsible for the building project of al-Aqsa and the

movements are engaged year round with various social activities targeted at bringing the place closer to the people's hearts. Thus throughout the year the two factions maintain a subsidized bus service around Israel to bring devotees to the Haram. This is far from being a sporadic or a concentrated effort but rather a continuous and tenacious project.⁴³ In such a manner the movement is reaching more and more people including those who are not exposed to written or electronic media on a regular basis, women as the case may be. My observations in Sakhnin, a town of 25,000 people in the Galilee, revealed that no less than 12 buses (roughly 600 people) depart regularly to Jerusalem at weekends. This means that as a routine and not subject to special occasions thousands of visitors (pilgrims as the case may be) are being transported to the Haram from across the country.

A unique association that goes by the name “The al-Aqsa Association for the Upkeep of Islamic Endowments and Sacred Places” headed by Shaykh Kamal Rayan is working year round initiating numerous projects to keep the public connected to the place. The association was established in 1990 and its *raison d'être* is indeed preserving and defending *awqaf* and Islamic sacred sites throughout Israel.⁴⁴ But the al-Aqsa Association is also about actively keeping the memory of Palestinian iconic sites alive. In recent years a special project was carried out by various research teams to complete a map of historical Palestine: “Let every

Dome of the Rock. However, it is totally fictitious in the sense that there is neither indication nor a valid source that can verify the use of this name in any previous period in history and surely a connection to Abd al-Malik's project.

⁴³ *Al-Shuruq*, 4.2.2002, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Kamal Rayan, interview with author, October 2002.

Palestinian know whether he is from here or immigrated, where his mosque is and where his ancestors' graves are.”⁴⁵ Special attention is given to projects that concern the sacred center in Jerusalem. Two such projects are addressed directly at commemorating the Haram and connecting as large an audience as possible to it. The first is called *Shadd al-rihal* (fastening the saddles). The name is derived from a well know hadith transmitted by Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri according to which the prophet Muhammad acknowledged only three mosques (those of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem) for which saddles of beasts may be fastened as part of a holy pilgrimage.⁴⁶ The importance of this hadith is primarily the fact that it establishes Jerusalem's status as equal to the two most important sanctuaries already existing in Islamic piety. According to Rayan the project's objective is to establish a direct and unobstructed connection between Israeli-Palestinian Muslims and the al-Aqsa mosque especially now during those “dire days that are upon us.”⁴⁷ Literally this means contributing to increase the number of visits at the Haram and raising the value and number of donations for the place. The second project is involved with tree planting at the Haram and its environs as well as a commitment to tend those trees on a regular basis. These two projects are constructed in a fashion that will ensure the linkage and commitment of Israeli-Palestinian Muslim devotees to the Haram on a practical and daily level. Indeed, in recent years there is a growing tendency among Israeli-Palestinian Muslims to decorate new houses with signs and

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Meir J. Kister, "You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques. A Study of an Early Tradition," *Le Museon* 82 (1969), pp. 173-96.

⁴⁷ Kamal Rayan, interview with author, October 2002.

pictures of the Dome of the Rock, mostly above the main entrance. The casual and mundane manner in which this has become a convention indicates clearly that the Islamic movements are making headway with their objectives regarding the Haram.

Use of Public Media

The media is one of the main arenas used in order to advance and promote the status of the Haram and its importance among Israeli-Palestinians. It should come as no surprise that both factions' magazines are heavily engaged with the site and often publish articles concerning its role in history as well as news on contemporary politics. The Northern faction's magazine, *Sawt al-haqq wa-l-huriyya* explores in a very detailed and elaborate manner the religious status of the place, historical anecdotes that emphasize its Islamic nature and as of 2000 political implications of future peace negotiations.

As of 2000 and particularly after the October 2000 Events,⁴⁸ the printed and electronic Arab media in Israel is heavily engaged with the Haram, which is all the more apparent when exploring the "Islamic" media. The writing style is highly religious and saturated with quotations from the Qur'an, *tafsir* (exegesis) and the *hadith* literature. A special supplement entitled "al-Aqsa in Danger" is dedicated to the history, religious importance and contemporary challenges (mostly violations on its sanctity) by Israeli authorities.⁴⁹ The first page is splashed with the picture of the Dome of the Rock. Following is a series of articles and news items all revolving

⁴⁸ As explained above, this is the Israeli common term for the riots among Israeli Arab citizens in October 2000.

⁴⁹ *Sawt al-Haqq wa-l-Huriyya*, special supplement 15.9.2002.

around the Haram both in history and the present. The first article is a survey of various attempts by Israeli authorities to tighten their control in the compound since 1967. Particular attention is given to recurring events in which Jewish groups are trying to gain access to the site in order to conduct prayers therein. Among the violations considered are the archeological excavations along the Haram walls from 1967 to the present. In an article called “Al-Aqsa is above and beyond any would-be negotiator” Tawfiq Muhammad ‘Ari’ar presents us with an uncompromising view on the Islamic character of the Haram.⁵⁰ The conflict is essentially a religious one, claims ‘Ari’ar, and since it is one of the three most important Islamic shrines it is not to be negotiated nor compromised. The author exploits all the standard religious justifications in order to warn PA officials against concessions when negotiating with Israel over the place. He is particularly averse to the idea that Jews will be allowed to continue to pray at the Western Wall. Interestingly enough, ‘Ari’ar does not substantiate this position (which is commonly found among members of the Northern Wing) with any religious precedent or with any *shari‘a* ruling. Intriguingly enough this was already agreed upon by the two sides in the July 2000 talks as referred to in the Clinton minutes.⁵¹ An even more confrontational and adamant approach is advanced in an article of Ra’id Salah. He vows to defend the Haram with his life and warns against even the smallest concession of any of its parts:

⁵⁰ Ibid, 3.

⁵¹ *Haaretz*, 23.12.2000, p. 1.

This is the destination of the nocturnal journey of the Prophet (*isra'*) and from here he ascended to heaven (*mi'raj*). This place witnessed the conquest of Jerusalem by Umar ibn al-Khattab and the liberation of Jerusalem from the hands of the Crusaders by Salah al-Din... and because it is so important it is beyond negotiation and no voice will rise higher than the voice of al-Aqsa. And those of feeble character that say that America is stronger than them, the blessed al-Aqsa answers and says God is stronger. And the Western Wall from within and from without is part of al-Aqsa and so are the other buildings and mosques within it including al-Musalla al-Marwani. This being the true nature of al-Aqsa, we will renew our covenant with God and our covenant with al-Aqsa and we will pin our hopes on our Islamic *umma* and our Arab world and our Palestinian people and reiterate: we shall redeem you in spirit and blood ⁵²

Rhetoric of this nature positions the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement as the most hawkish and reluctant regarding any concession over the Haram. Salah's attitude, which is backed by daily tangible actions, not only produces a public image of a zealot of al-Aqsa but also projects badly on anyone who is willing to consider a less obstinate approach. Against the backdrop of the continuous work to elevate the public status of al-Aqsa any alternative more lenient understanding amounts to being disloyal and even sinful to the fundamentals of Islam. Salah also makes the connection among the local, the regional and the global as part of his

⁵²*Sawt al-Haqq wa-l-Huriyya*, special supplement 15.9.2002, p. 5.

strategy to thwart or resist Israeli control over the place. This will be addressed further and for the moment I will confine myself to the construction and production of the place by the Islamic movement.

The Islamic movements in Israel are both in play when al-Aqsa is concerned. Both of the wings in their own style and emphasis are working towards the elevation of the place's status, certainly in Israeli politics, but also on a larger scale. Be it through renovation projects, fundraiser events or through the use of the mass media, al-Aqsa is constantly being produced, promoted and reminded. The audience varies greatly and a multiscale politics is being used. But before I address the issue of scaling and rescaling directly I would like to turn now and explore the way the place is being mystified, mythologized and construed.

Mystification and Demystification of the Sacred: Tinkering with the Past

Myth, argues Lincoln, has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification.⁵³ The strength of the myth is discovered when contingency and the temporary appear eternal, or in a different take, as if it has always been like that. Thus, the act of mystification is exposed and projected as a highly politicized act which aims to answer the contemporary needs of a group. This realization can never be truer than in the case of al-Aqsa. The idea that the past, often presented as history, is instrumental to present group needs is far from being earth-shattering news. This understanding was painfully addressed by scholars of different persuasions, be it environmental historians, students of religion, political theorists,

⁵³ Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 5.

or anthropologists.⁵⁴ My only contribution here is to suggest that while exploring the very act of mystification the role of places should be taken into consideration. The past of the place, argues Massey, is as open to multiplicity of means as is its present.⁵⁵ Claims and counter claims about the present character of a place depend in almost all cases on particular rival interpretations of the past. The past is up for grabs and it is in the present that we may produce a certain understanding of it, such a one that promotes our most urgent needs and political necessities. In the case in point the Islamic movement is moving in two opposite directions, albeit with complementary measures. On the one hand its representatives continually try to promote the place's status and religious importance among Muslims in a multiscale configuration. On the other hand these representatives are advancing a specific reading of the past of the place which basically refutes any Jewish connection, relations, indeed history in the place. The following excerpt from an

⁵⁴David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London; New York: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983); Nadia El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self fashioning in Israeli Society*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁵⁵ Massey, "Past of Place"

essay of Ra'id Salah fleshes out these two parts of current mystification of the place:

The Mosque of al-Aqsa is an Islamic, Arab, and Palestinian property and no one save them, regardless of their identity and who they are, and particularly the Jews, have any rights over there until the end of days. Whoever accepts their right on even a stone or anything else there is a traitor! It is our duty to confront this person and inform him he is indeed a traitor. It is a treacherous act against God, Muhammad, the believers, the Islamic nation, the Arab world and the Palestinian people. It is an act of betrayal in the first of the *qiblas*, in the second mosque, and the Prophet's ascension to heaven and it is a betrayal in the mosque in Mecca and the mosque of Medina. It is betrayal of the infant martyrs, of Muhammad Durra⁵⁶ and others. We say to whoever tries to undermine these standpoints: you will not succeed, the mosque of al-Aqsa is ours and no one of the Jewish public has any part in it. We firmly believe that no Muslim, Arab, or Palestinian with a shred of pride in his heart will forsake any part, stone, wall, path, monument, dome, or structure in the blessed al-Aqsa within and without, above

⁵⁶ Muhammad al-Durra was killed during an IDF operation in Gaza September 2000.

The dispute over cause and instigator of his death made him the symbol of the second Intifada. Hence, he became an iconic martyr in the Arab world and a symbol of Palestinian grievances against Israel.

ground or underground.⁵⁷

In order to establish the myth that supports his political aims (and surely religious beliefs) Salah is promoting a twofold understanding regarding the place. Firstly, its religious and political significance for Palestinians and Muslims worldwide. Secondly, total denial of Jewish heritage on the site. Early Islamic traditions openly acknowledge the Jewish history of the place.⁵⁸ The very name Bayt al-Maqdis (Temple Mount) as one of the common names of Jerusalem during the early Islamic period surely attest to that. In the face of these rarely disputed facts about the history of the city, how can we understand Salah's uncompromising position and decisive denial of the Jewish heritage therein? It should be clear that he is not the only one voicing such opinions. MK 'Abd al-Malik Dhamsha denies all historical evidence that attests to the existence of a Jewish temple in the compound: "there are neither archeological findings nor historical evidences that can imply that a Jewish temple actually existed on site."⁵⁹ A complete denial of the Jewish-Israeli narrative is not endemic to leaders of the Islamic movement. Shawqi Khatib is a well known political figure among Israeli-Palestinians. He served as the chair of the Arab Follow-Up Committee⁶⁰ as well as in several terms in office as a mayor

⁵⁷ *Sawt al-Haqq wa-l-Huriyya*, 25.1.2002, p. 5

⁵⁸ In the earliest traditions on Jerusalem (literature in praise of Jerusalem) transmitters often refer to the temple of Solomon or the Jewish history of the city. See Livne-Kafri 1995 and Elad, 1995.

⁵⁹ Interview with author, September 2002.

⁶⁰ This is the leading political independent body of Israeli-Palestinians. Its members

in Yafia, a town in central Galilee. He is a member of Hadash, a political party that states in its platform that in any would-be peace agreement Jerusalem will be divided among the two nations. In addition, special arrangements will be made in order to facilitate the continuation of Jewish worship at the Western Wall. However, when asked directly he made clear that for him the Jewish linkage to Jerusalem is indeed a myth based on lies and historical distortion: "I did not conduct serious research but I heard people saying that you [the Jews] have based your research on Jerusalem on lies."⁶¹

How are we to understand the complete denial of Jewish heritage? And along the same lines how can Islamic leaders promote al-Aqsa as the very kernel of Palestinian nationalism as well as being a highly significant Islamic site? It would seem that we cannot sever the contemporary political situation of Israeli-Palestinians and the way the past of the Haram is being mythologized both as an Islamic national symbol and as an all encompassing Islamic sacred site. The past of the place is highly instrumental to the political needs of Israeli-Palestinians in Israel. Albeit that it is a very specific past in much the same fashion as Nora distinguished between memory and history. While history is the representation of the past memory is life, borne by living societies.⁶² Put differently, memory is the vehicle through which myths are being carried further. But at the same time, it is also the medium through which agents can alter and change the way their

come from all political parties as well as leading intellectuals and public figures.

⁶¹ Interview with author, August 2002.

⁶² Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 7-24.

respective communities uphold those myths. The current understanding of al-Aqsa cannot be disconnected or understood in isolation from the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current situation of Israeli-Palestinians. The process of nation building is carried through the construction of a common past, shared symbols and accepted mythologies. The creation of an imagined community necessitates anchors of identity which are commonly accepted and shared by all. In the Palestinian case the Haram in Jerusalem is advanced as such a shared symbol. Indeed, the very fact that Christians, at least when confronting Israeli authorities and the Jewish majority, share this understanding clearly attests to the place's status as a national symbol. The invention of traditions is part and parcel of the social construction of the nation. Thus, as part of the nation-building project histories, memories, myths are blended together and invested in specific sites. These are the places where the cultural attributes of a group/nation are becoming accessible and concrete. The collective amnesia demonstrated by Salah and other Palestinian public figures needs to be understood above all as a much-needed component of the construction of a Palestinian national narrative. The existence of a competing and successful other (Israel as a Jewish state), especially when the Haram is concerned, is paving the way for the circulation of specific traditions of the past that serve the contemporary needs of the Palestinians.

As a marginalized minority within Israel and an often suspect community for Palestinians outside the Green Line, Israeli-Palestinians have been moving in recent years more and more toward the Islamic and Palestinian vertices of their identity.⁶³ The promotion of the Haram as a national icon is conducive to such

⁶³ The use of vertices is persistent with the metaphor of analyzing Israeli Palestinians'

inclinations and contemporary political needs. The role of the Islamic movement is crucial in this process. Not only is it an agent in the transformation of al-Aqsa and the way it is perceived among local devotees, but it also has a vital role in promoting this understanding far and beyond the local/national scale. The mystification of al-Aqsa along with the demystification of the Jewish past therein is underway through a constant and massive socio-political endeavor. The Islamic resurgence process is indeed local tinkering with the past but it reaches far beyond the local political scene. I would like to address now the very process of glocalisation as performed mostly by the Islamic movement in Israel.

Jumping Scales: Nationalizing, Globalizing and Glocalizing al-Aqsa— Concluding Remarks

Recently, Rekhess has promoted the idea that ever since the Oslo Accords Israeli-Palestinians are localizing their national struggle.⁶⁴ By this he refers to a variety of actions in which their Arab Palestinian heritage is fused locally with their Israeli daily lives and identity. Thus, for example the memory of the Nakba is publicly discussed and commemorated as part of what he calls the opening of the “48 files.” By internalizing their cultural-national heritage, Israeli-Palestinians are empowering themselves against the hegemony of the state and the Jewish majority.

identity as a triangle of which three vertices are: Islamization, Palestinization and Israelization. Sammy Smooha, *Index of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel* (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 2005).

⁶⁴ Eli Rekhess, "The Arabs of Israel after Oslo: Localization of the National Struggle," *Israel Studies* 7 no. 3 (2002), pp. 1-44.

This “jumping of scales,” as defined by Smith, is part of their emancipatory project against the hurdles and control imposed on them by the Israeli state through its various agencies.⁶⁵ This tactic (or strategy as the case may be) is quite common to subaltern groups and should be understood as a form of resistance. Moving between scales and publicly displaying their Palestinian identity empowers Israeli-Palestinians and enables them to oppose state regulatory force. It seems that this is exactly what Jonas was referring to while theorizing scale and the politics of spatiality:

This is a process driven by class, ethnic, gender and cultural struggles. On the one hand, domineering organizations attempt to control the dominated by confining the latter and their organizations to a manageable scale. On the other hand, subordinated groups attempt to liberate themselves from these imposed scale constraints by harnessing power and instrumentalities at other scales. In the process, scale is actively produced.⁶⁶

The nation state is one of the most effective domineering organizations as far as scaling our lives. Jumping scale from the national, either upward or downward, allows the subordinate national minority at least a partial liberation and control of its life. Following this understanding I argue that the Islamic movement (indeed

⁶⁵ Smith, " Homeless/Global: Scaling Places".

⁶⁶ Andrew Jonas, "The Scale Politics of Spatiality," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12 no. 3, (1994), p. 258.

resurgence) in Israel is promoting new understandings regarding the Haram as a way to actively produce scale, within a multiscale configuration.

Promoting the Haram as a national Palestinian symbol is effectively challenging prevalent notions about the place within the Jewish majority in Israel. But at the same time it enables the Palestinian minority to play a more active and meaningful role among their Palestinians compatriots. This explains perfectly the active role the Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement is taking in opposing various state initiatives regarding the site. A case in point is the above-mentioned demonstrations against the intentions of the police to allow Jewish groups to pray at the Haram during the Passover of 2009. But it does not stop there. The Israeli-Palestinian Islamic movement, and Ra'id Salah in particular, vehemently opposes any concessions made by the PA to Israel regarding right of access to the place. The Israeli movement proves to be more of a hardliner than some of the spokespeople of the PA. By advancing the place as a Palestinian national icon and actively defending it as such, the movement is bettering its position both on the local scale and on the national Palestinian scale. At the same time it is also actively approaching the regional (Arab) and the global (Islamic). I would like now to address directly what I initially termed the glocalisation of the Haram.

By glocalisation of the Haram I refer to the emancipatory project of rescaling the local and promoting it to the supranational and the global and simultaneously introducing a global understanding of the place within the local. The Islamic movement in Israel is actively engaged in a process of multi-scale configuration of the place as a way on the one hand to transcend the control of the national state (deterritorialization) and on the other hand to bring about a new understanding of the place into the national and local scale (reterritorialization). The interaction

between the local and the global is mediated by signs and symbols, images and narratives, and by circulating meanings.⁶⁷ Swyngedouw suggests that the ‘glocalisation’ of the world’s political-economic geography addresses the ways in which the former hegemony of the national scale is weakening and the local (subnational) and global (supranational) scales are gaining more importance.⁶⁸ Following this, I argue that through the process of glocalisation of the Haram the Islamic movement is indeed trying to work for a weakening of the national and the strengthening of the local and the global. Through the active engagement in the mystification of the place and circulating specific meanings of the Haram the Islamic movement is promoting a certain symbolic meaning of the place globally but at the same time promoting these understanding locally in what I address here as the constant glocalisation of the place. Needless to say, this process also introduces the movement as an active player and a glocal agent of the place, thus gaining respectability and agency not only locally and nationally within Israel but also reaching for the global.

⁶⁷ Adrian Ivakhiv, "Toward a Geography of “Religion”": Mapping the Distribution of an Unstable Signifier," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96 no. 1 (2006), pp. 169-75.

⁶⁸ See for example Eric Swyngedouw, "Neither Global nor Local: "Glocalization" and the Politics of Scale," In *Spaces of Globalisation. Reassreting the Power of the Local*, ed. Kevin. Cox. (New York London: The Guilford Press, 1997), pp. 137-166