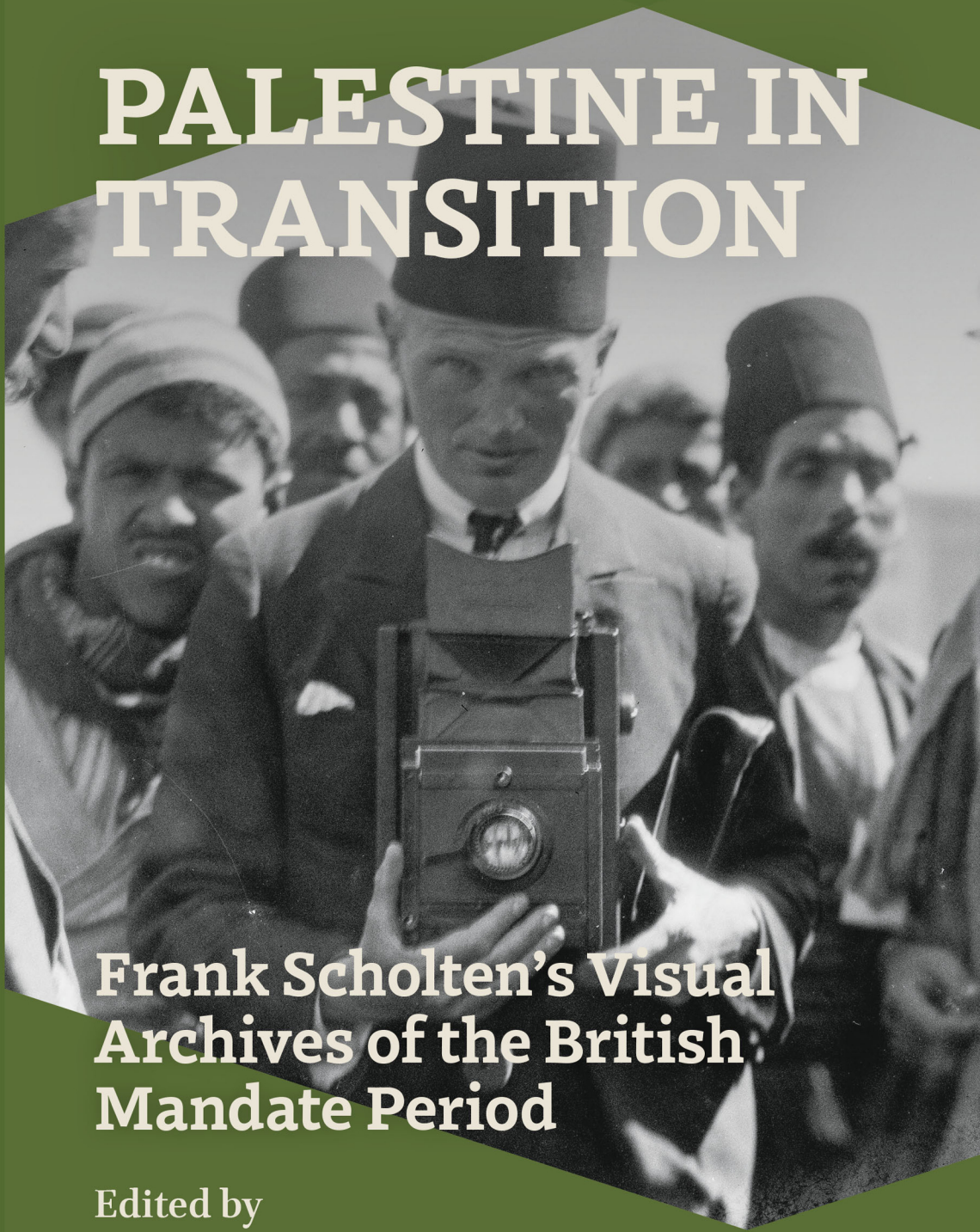
Global Heritage and Memory Studies in the Present

PALESTINE IN TRANSITION



Frank Scholten's Visual Archives of the British Mandate Period

Edited by
Karène Sanchez Summerer
and Sary Zananiri

CEU PRESS

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Global Heritage and Memory Studies in the Present

Global Heritage and Memory Studies in the Present is a ground-breaking book series that examines the dynamics of heritage and memory from transnational, interdisciplinary, and integrated approaches. Monographs and edited volumes critically interrogate the politics of heritage and dynamics of memory, as well as the theoretical implications of landscapes and mass violence, nationalism and ethnicity, heritage preservation and conservation, archaeology, material culture and (dark) tourism, diaspora and colonial memory, the power of aesthetics and the art of absence and forgetting, mourning and performative re-enactments in the present.

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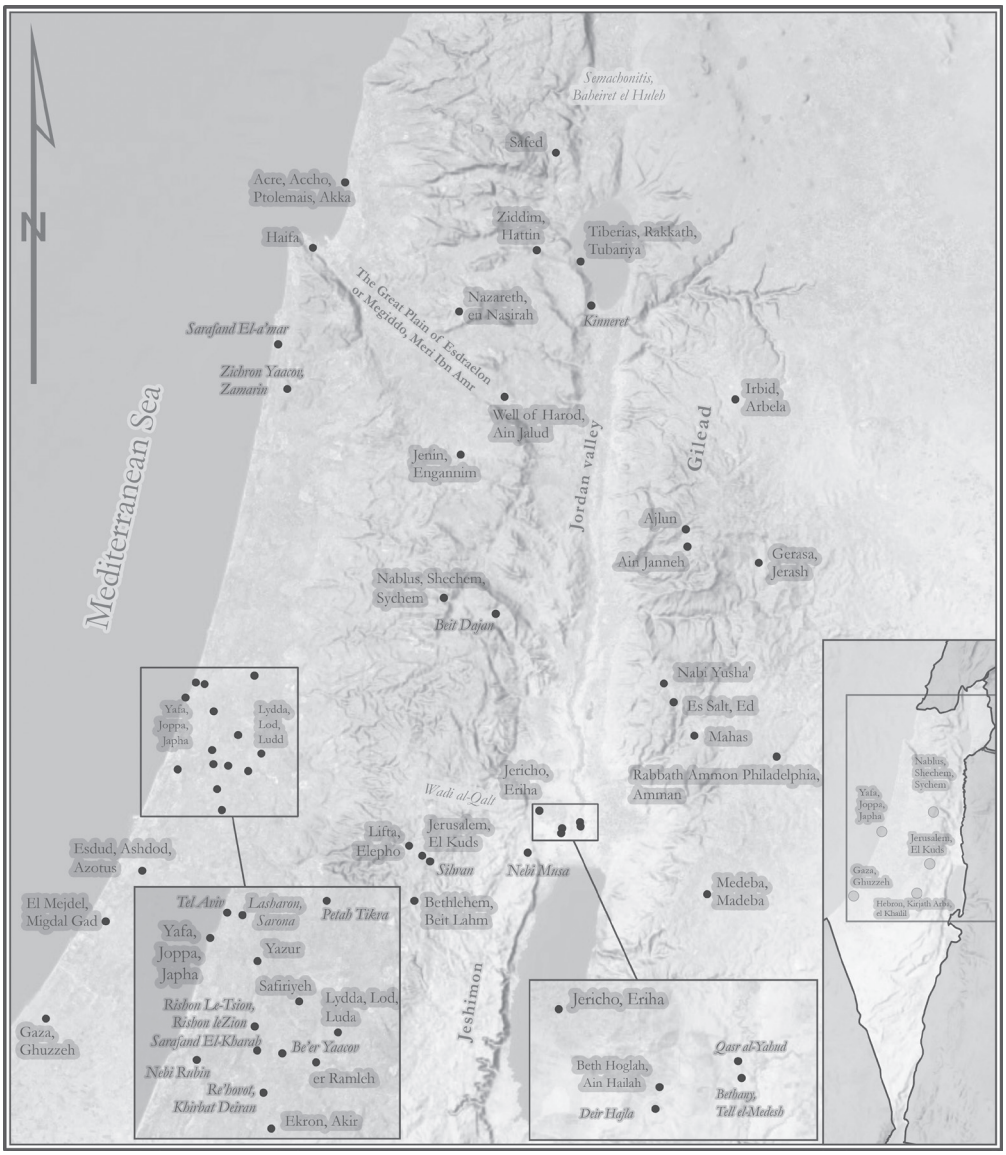

Map of the main places Scholten visited between 1921 and 1923 that are mentioned in this volume (source: *Times Atlas*, 1920; Geodienst RUG).

Note: The names and spellings are consistent with the source from which they are taken. Names of the new Jewish settlements, as well as places that do not appear on the *Times Atlas* map, are shown in *italics*. *Map created by GeoDienst* (*University of Groningen, NL*).

Some place names from the 1920s appear first, as they are the names Scholten used (Nablus, Jenin, Acre, Esdud, Es Salt, Yafa, Lifta, Majdal, Irbid).

Beyond the Frame: Window into the Unseen Histories of Palestine

Issam Nassar

The invention of photography marked a profound revolution in how we imagine, represent, and perceive the world. For the first time, this groundbreaking technology allowed us to see ourselves in ways previously limited to the mirror's reflection. Beyond self-representation, photography enabled spectators to glimpse images of people and places – both near and far – that were once only accessible through stories or the interpretive lens of painting. This transformative medium not only captured reality but also reshaped how we understood and connected with the world.

The emergence of photography coincided with a period of dramatic change in Europe. It arrived alongside the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the rise of nationalism, and the flourishing of new religious ideas, both from reformers and critics. Crucially, photography was born during a time of rapid advancements in transportation, which made travel faster and more accessible than ever before. These developments positioned Europe as the epicenter of innovation, power, and colonial expansion, enabling its so-called "pioneers" to "discover" and document lands beyond their continent.

However, photography was not a neutral or isolated endeavor; it was deeply intertwined with Europe's existing power structures and colonial ambitions. As a costly and cumbersome practice, photography outside Europe relied heavily on established transportation networks and was shaped by the dominant worldview on that continent. This resulted in a romanticized portrayal of non-European places, which were often framed as if they still existed in a time before Europe's modernity. These distant lands were depicted as relics of the past, reinforcing the idea that Europe represented progress while the rest of the world remained stagnant.

Palestine serves as a striking example of this dynamic. It became a focal point for European imaginations, a place where religious and historical

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narratives intertwined. Seen through the lens of the Bible – interpreted as a historical document – Palestine was transformed into a site for understanding Europe's so-called "occidental origins." In this process, the present reality of Palestine was often erased, overshadowed by a European desire to reconstruct its own past. Elsewhere, I have explored how this led to a phenomenon I term "biblification," where outsiders disregarded the contemporary lived experience in Palestine in favor of a mythologized past that served European ideological and historical interests. In this way, photography not only documented the world but also actively participated in shaping colonial narratives, reinforcing power hierarchies, and constructing a Eurocentric vision of history and modernity.

In early photography, Palestine was often portrayed as frozen in time – a land eternally tied to the era of the Hebrew patriarchs or, at best, the time of Jesus. This trend of representing Palestine as a relic of the past did not fade with the first generation of photographers; it persisted well into the twentieth century and, to some degree, continues even today. However, a more dynamic and multifaceted Palestine was captured by photographers local to the region who also catered to European audiences by producing images aligned with this worldview for profit. Through their lenses, they documented bustling markets, vibrant communities, and everyday life, offering a richer and more nuanced portrayal of the land. This is exemplified by the work of Khalil Raad, an early Jerusalem-based photographer, and by the works of other local photographers from that time.

Then we come to Frank Scholten, whose mission in Palestine initially aligned with the Eurocentric focus of earlier photographers. Yet, he diverged significantly by taking the time to depict Palestine as a living, socially inhabited place rooted in its present rather than Europe's past. Among his extensive collection of photographs, we find candid snapshots of daily life: a girl holding an egg in Jaffa, a newspaper vendor, orange harvesters at work, clergy from various faiths, shop assistants in the burgeoning colony of Tel Aviv, and a Boy Scout in Jaffa, among others. Scholten's Palestine was not reduced to an archaeological site or a biblical backdrop; it was animated by its people and their lived experiences.

This perspective is vividly reflected in the contributions to this volume, in which scholars have drawn on Frank Scholten's work to explore and reconstruct the microhistories of localities and communities in Palestine. Through his photographs, Scholten not only documented the land but also opened a window into the diverse and dynamic social fabric of early twentieth-century Palestine, offering a deeper understanding of its history and people. Unlike most European photographers of his time, who

focused primarily on Jerusalem and other sacred cities, Scholten captured the everyday lives of Palestinians. His work includes depictions of festivities (such as the Nabi Rubin festival highlighted in one study) as well as village life in communities like Yazur, Beit Dajan, Sarafand, and al-Safiriyya (as explored in another). Notably, Scholten appears to have been particularly fascinated by Jaffa and its surroundings, especially the emerging colony of Tel Aviv, which is discussed in two chapters of this volume.

However, it is important to contextualize Tel Aviv within the broader historical and political landscape. As the primary colony representing the vision of the Zionist movement, Tel Aviv was seen as the fulfillment of Theodor Herzl's vision presented in his novel *Altneuland* (The Old New Land). In this sense, Tel Aviv symbolized the ultimate negation of Palestine from the perspective of its indigenous population. Yet, Scholten's photographs of Tel Aviv reveal a more nuanced reality. They capture the presence of Palestinian workers, which inadvertently challenges the Zionist narrative of a land built exclusively by Jewish hands. This subtle but significant detail complicates our understanding of the colonial project in Palestine, highlighting the intertwined histories and labor dynamics of the time.

Scholten's photographs not only demonstrate his technical skills but also his keen eye for the beauty and dignity of everyday life. While all photographs are open to multiple interpretations, his work undeniably centers Palestinians within their homeland, offering a powerful counterpoint to colonial narratives. In doing so, his images contribute to the ongoing process of decolonizing the visual representation of Palestine.

Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri, the co-editors of this volume, have made an invaluable contribution by bringing this important archive to light. Their work provides a rich resource for anyone interested in the history of Palestine, the complexities of its colonial past, and the role of photography in shaping historical memory. This book is a must-read – and must-see – for scholars and enthusiasts alike, offering both insight and inspiration for further exploration.

Introduction: Revisiting *Palestine Illustrated*

Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri

Abstract: This chapter introduces the photographic collection of Frank Scholten (1881–1942), a Dutch photographer who documented Palestine extensively during the early British Mandate period. Scholten's project, aimed at producing an "illustrated Bible," instead created a visual archive that captured the daily lives, religious practices, and emerging modernity in Palestine amid competing national identities. His work, which is notable for its interdisciplinary approach that combines theology, anthropology, and historical geography, also highlights Dutch perceptions of the Holy Land shaped by biblical Orientalism. The chapter addresses methodological challenges related to archival silences and highlights Scholten's unique perspective, including the influence of his homosexuality and conversion to Catholicism. This collection offers insights into the socio-political transformations that took place in Palestine during the transition from Ottoman to British colonial rule.

Keywords: Frank Scholten, British Mandate Palestine, photographic archives, biblical Orientalism, archival silences

During the turbulent period after the First World War, Dutch photographer Frank Scholten (1881-1942) traveled to Palestine with the aim of producing an "illustrated Bible." He traveled first through Italy and Greece in 1920, then arrived in Palestine in 1921, where he stayed for two and a half years. While the bulk of his photographic collection is images of Palestine, his camera lens captured a snapshot of the modernity of the Eastern Mediterranean region more generally, as well as a small sample of images from Western Europe. The entire Frank Scholten collection – consisting of 12,000 negatives,

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14,000 prints, and sixty-four albums – represents a work in progress toward a sixteen-volume set of books on the Holy Land, only two of which were published (see References) due to financial difficulties.[1]

Scholten's documentary approach to photography gave us scenes of everyday modernity in Palestine, with particular attention paid to religion and ethnography. The chapters in this volume about his photographic collection revisits Scholten's views of the complex mosaic of communities in Palestine at the moment when the impacts of the First World War cemented competing nationalisms and at the beginning of the British Mandate for Palestine (created in the wake of war and established under article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations).

Scholten died in 1942 and bequeathed his photographic archive and documentation to NINO (The Netherlands Institute for the Near East). The collection was transferred from NINO to Leiden University Library (Special Collections) in 2007. Although it is one of the largest collections of images of Palestine, it was only sporadically accessible to researchers until 2017, when the NWO research group CrossRoads actively researched it. Seven photographic exhibitions have been organized since then (see References for the publications and the list of exhibitions).

As a prolific photographer, Frank Scholten created an incredibly diverse body of work. He covered a broad set of topics like events, both religious and secular, and architectural explorations ranging from villages that no longer exist to major cities like Jaffa, Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv (which was a decade-old Jewish suburban subdivision of Jaffa when Scholten arrived there). He photographed historical and archaeological sites alongside modern Palestinian building projects and various Jewish and German colonies. And, of course, he photographed people. Perhaps one of the hallmarks of Scholten's collected works is the thoroughness with which he photographed Palestine. His images of people cut across religious and confessional lines, ethnic backgrounds, class, and urban-rural divides. He portrayed people at work and at leisure but, most often, he portrayed them in the contexts of their daily lives rather than divorced from the landscape. The chapters in this book reflect the incredible diversity of subjects Scholten captured.

1 This was related to the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the early 1930s. Both Scholten and his sister lost a significant amount of money, as documented in postcard correspondence by Scholten to his friend Geertje Pooyar on 9 September 1931.

Photographing Ottoman and British Palestine

The landscapes of the Holy Land had long been of interest to Western photographers, and histories of photography in Palestine have been entwined in very particularized modes of imaging. Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet took the first photograph of Jerusalem in 1839, making it one of the first cities outside of Europe to be photographed.[2]

Scholarship on photography in Palestine spoke usefully to the transnational networks embedded in the study of photography, but it did not deal with specificities of the British Mandate for Palestine (Ali Behdad) or, alternatively, dealt with particular prisms (e.g., Silver-Brody). Others uncover the entanglements between indigenous photographers and the expatriates and visitors active in the Levant.[3] A growing body of non-scholarly publications, such as Nassar's *Gardens of Sand*, Wim Melis Nazar's *Photographs from the Arab World* and Elias Sanbar's *The Palestinians: Photographs of a Land and its People from 1839 to the Present Day*, do not deal specifically with the British Mandate period. That time is arguably the most significant period, in that it is the nucleus of current geopolitical constellations. Indeed, among the many aspects that the Scholten collection documents is the growth of Zionism and the competition this created with Arab nationalism.

This book is systematic and in-depth, but it is certainly not an exhaustive assessment of Scholten's unusually intimate view of Palestine as the British Mandate emerged from the ashes of World War I. It intends to make a unique contribution by bringing together visual archives with a cross analysis of the different fields of Middle Eastern history and the historiographies of urban studies and photography.

From a methodological perspective, this book is necessarily interdisciplinary. The intention is to demonstrate the methods by which archival photographs can be used as historical sources across a number of disciplines and subject areas to illuminate social, cultural, and political histories. Authors have used Scholten's images in different ways within the scope of their research expertise.

2 The holy sites and biblical histories of Palestine became a source of fascination for European photographers, both "scientific" and commercial. For example, Auguste Salzmann attempted to employ a "scientific" methodology by using photography in his attempt to prove C. de Saulcy's theory that the physical remains of Jerusalem dated from the time of Solomon rather than the Roman period. Commercial photographers like Félix Bonfils produced a vast quantity of images in the region, often in the form of photo books and souvenir postcards to feed the growing Western appetite for the Holy Land.

3 Sheehi, *Beyond Orientalism*.

Scholten also referenced a wide variety of materials in his published works: from theology to history, anthropology to archaeology, and the holy books for which he is best known. This volume takes a similarly interdisciplinary approach to revisiting his unfinished project and also analyses his pluralistic approach. Scholten read theological texts that ranged from Protestant to Catholic, he read socialist material and Zionist histories, he referenced texts in Dutch, French, German, and Italian, and approximately half of what he read was in English.

This is the first collective publication to deal meaningfully with the local, regional, and transnational aspects of Scholten's photographs, and it offers unusual perspectives on early 1920s Palestine and its legacy a century later. The volume examines key turning points in the urban contexts, villages, communities, and landscape history.

Scholten grew up in a Protestant family and later converted to Catholicism. His postcard correspondence with his friend Geertje indicates his devout outlook. Scholten's active meetings with clerical dignitaries in Rome, including the Pope himself,[4] are evidence of his connection to the church's hierarchy, while controversy around the sole exhibition of his photographs during his lifetime hints at his religious convictions.[5] Despite his conversion, he was attentive to documenting the holy sites of different Christian denominations.

His two-volume book of photographs, *La Palestine illustrée* (*Palestine Illustrated*), was published in short runs: first in French, then in German and English, and only the first of the two volumes in his native Dutch. Scholten's sole exhibition during his lifetime, titled *Palestine in Transition*, was held at the Brook Street Art Gallery in London from 15–19 February 1924. Unfortunately, no catalog exists from this exhibition. It ran for only five days, just after he returned to Europe from Palestine.

The exhibition was well received in the British press, with several reviewers commenting on the modern developments in Jaffa and Tel Aviv.[6] The photographs illustrated the many changes Palestine had undergone in recent decades. Though the exhibition was organized in conjunction with the Anglo-Palestine Society (a British Zionist organization), Scholten had conflicts with the organizers around the captioning of the 2,000 photographs

4 NINO, Frank Scholten special collection, postcards to Geertje, 26, 28, and 30 October, 1920.

5 Zananiri, *Photographing Biblical Modernity*, 19–21.

6 *The British Journal of Photography*, 29 February 1924, 130; "Life in Palestine." *Times* (London, England) 26 Feb. 1924: 5; *The Universe: The Catholic Newspaper* February 29th, 1924. We also do not know if Scholten, who passed away in 1942, ever returned to Palestine after 1924.

presented (as he briefly mentioned to his friend Geertje in a postcard). Interestingly, he recounts that the captioning conflict related to Protestant versus Catholic narratives.[7]

Scholten's began his journey to Palestine by first heading to Switzerland and then arriving in Rome, where he met with various Catholic agencies in preparation for his project. From there, he traveled to Greece, where he received his Palestine visa in Athens. Some photos of his time in Greece remain. From Athens, he traveled via Chania in Crete and Port Said in Egypt, eventually arriving in the port of Jaffa.

Dutch Perceptions of the Holy Land and Dutch Religious Travels to Palestine

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of new developments in biblical studies in the Netherlands and the rise of historical critical exegesis: the ensuing realization that the Bible was an "Oriental" book and its geographic context was key to a better understanding of the holy scriptures. Scholten's trip to the "Holy Land" is embedded in this Dutch biblical orientalism context.

The question of how and to what degree the contemporary "Orient" could contribute to knowledge of the Bible was a controversial topic in the Netherlands.[8] While Catholics focused primarily on traditional pilgrimage sites, various branches of Protestant communities focused more on landscapes imbued with spiritual significance.[9] The "Holy Land" landscapes became objects of devotion. Differences between progressive and orthodox Calvinist Christians influenced the degree to which people drew comparisons between the contemporary people from Palestine and the region's inhabitants in biblical times: adherents of modern biblical criticism equated contemporary Bedouins with Abraham and his followers, while orthodox believers were more cautious with the visualization of biblical stories. In the Netherlands, the "Arabization" of the Bible (in which biblical figures were depicted as inhabitants of the contemporary Middle East) was initially seen as a Protestant art, an artistic variation of modern biblical criticism; orthodox Calvinists remained suspicious of it.

7 NINO, Frank Scholten special collection, postcard to Geertje from London, 16 February 1924.

8 De Hond, *Verlangen naar het Oosten*, 30–47.

9 Some Orthodox Calvinists (including adherents to millenarism) saw in these landscapes certain allusions to God's prophecies and even the "End of time".

After 1900, biblical Orientalism remained present in other forms of art, and some illuminated Bibles continued to include illustrations of protagonists dressed as Bedouins in an Eastern landscape.[10] Scholten was a contemporary of other Dutch travelers to the Holy Land (among them, Jacob Israël de Haan). Theodoor Christiaan Vriezen (1899–1981) left for Palestine in 1924 on a trip to introduce theologians to the land of the Bible, archaeology, and the people.[11] He was a regular client of the photographer Chalil Raad, with whom he corresponded about his own photographs (around 200), and from whom he regularly bought photographs (around 180), including his *1924 Catalogue of Lantern Slides and views Made by C. Raad, Jerusalem, of Sites, Scenes, Ceremonies, Costumes etc. of Palestine and Syria Identical with Bible History*. The archives of Vriezen and Scholten do not indicate whether they met in Jerusalem or the Levant, nor when they met in the Netherlands. Like Scholten, Vriezen also visited Nebi Rubin and met with Toufiq Canaan.

Further, Scholten lived during a time of many initiatives relating directly to the Holy Land idea and its embodiment in the Netherlands. At the end of the 1910s, the Netherlands became the only place in the world to conceptualize this idea and to "recreate the Holy Land outside the Holy Land," as it was conceived of at that time. As a convert to Catholicism, Frank Scholten was certainly involved in the contemporary debates about this recreation. This was also the era of the founding of the Biblical Museum near Nijmegen, which opened its doors in 1915 (initiated in 1907). The *Heilig Land Stichting* (later named, until today, the *Museumpark Orientalis* open air museum) was founded in 1911 to give an overview of the time of the Bible and Palestine.[12] The museum was intended to invite visitors to focus away

10 For example, the Bible illustrated by J.H. Isings (1884–1977), in 1918, in the tradition of Biblical orientalism. Huis van het Book (The Hague), exhibition *Groeten uit de Orient*, November 2021 to June 2022, and Jan de Hond, *Verlangen naar het Oosten*, 101. In 1891, Antonius Brouwer completed a cylindrical panorama of Jerusalem in Amsterdam, with the aim of creating an illusion of reality; it received many visitors at the beginning of the twentieth century.

11 Vriezen took part in a *Lehrkurs*, a program of the German archaeological institute in Jerusalem (then under British administration) designed to introduce theologians to the land of the Bible, archaeology, and the people. Vriezen kept a diary on this trip. In 1913, Willem Jan Aalders (1870–1945) traveled through Palestine, which was still under Turkish rule. He processed his travel experiences in 1915 in the book *In the Land of Promise*. That same year, Aalders was appointed ecclesiastical professor at the University of Groningen for the Reformed Synod for dogmatics, church law, and the history of the Dutch Reformed Church.

12 Archieve of the Heilige Land Stiching (HLS), Katholiek Documentatie Centrum, Nijmegen, HLS-1 (1911-1927); HLS-22, 23, 24 (1907-1925); HLS-25, 26, 27 and 28 (107-1925); Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sahar Nazari, "Holland and the Holy Land, the Holy Land in Holland.

from communism, create an inexpensive alternative to a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and establish "the new Holy Land" on a hill. The area around the site was conceived of as a devotional one: several monasteries and care institutions were founded there, encouraged by the Modern Devotion movement. In 1923, the Catholic University of Nijmegen was established one kilometer away from it.

Piet Gerrits (1878-1957), the museum's artistic adviser and an artist and craftsman himself, founded the museum in collaboration with the Catholic priest Arnold Suys and the architect Jan Stuyt, with whom he spent some time in Ottoman Palestine[13] during a Dutch pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Dutch Catholic missionary endeavor was thus involved in cultural and patrimonial fields, combining an emotional mobilization materialized and transmitted in the museum and the churches Gerrits decorated in the Netherlands, and Scholten's endeavors should be understood within this specific Dutch context.

Archiving, Unsilencing, and Captioning the Frank Scholten Collection[14]

Recent scholarship on the archive has taken a critical turn, arguing for the abandonment of a system in which knowledge is produced in partial ways and within systems that support the production of specific kinds of knowledge.[15] Notwithstanding such legitimate critiques of the power dynamics embedded in the production of the archive, the Scholten collection must be read from the particular perspective of one individual situated in his particular interests and views. Nonetheless, the collection provides a wealth of supporting material for understanding the years in which the British Mandate was established. There are many layers to the collection, but also many silences.

Biblical Orientalism, Catholic Heritage, and Postwar Secularization at the Heilig Land Stichting, 1913–1960."

13 Gerrits stayed in the Middle East from 1906 to 1911. See Jansen, "Showing the Cultures of the East."

14 Since 2017, this research on the Scholten collection has been possible thanks to the constant and generous support of NINO and its directors, C. Waerzeggers and W. van der Wall, as well as the support of C. van Zoest and the financial support of NWO (Dutch Research Council) and CrossRoads (VIDI project 275-25-002, PI Karène Sanchez Summerer).

15 Azoulay, *Potential History.*

These silences are in many ways the key to understanding one man's vision. For instance, given the relatively equal representation of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in his publications, we might be tempted to describe them as an attempt to present an even-handed view of local populations. However, the problematic census conducted by the British administration in 1922 found unequal distributions of population by religion.[16] This fact undermines any notion of objective representation in Scholten's work. So how do we understand the implications of representation in this context, and what impact has the publication of his books in several European languages had for the audiences that they reached?

Another question that needs to be addressed relates to the quantity of photographs in Scholten's collection. Scholten repeatedly talked about taking 22,000 photographs during his time in Palestine, yet analysis of the collection after digitization suggests that there are around 17,000 individual photographs in the NINO collection (due to multiples in different formats). This suggests that some 5,000 photographs were separated from the main bequest and leaves us to ask what they might have portrayed and where they are now. Were these just duplicates or were they images that might have been deemed unsuitable for academic study in the 1930s and 1940s? Given Scholten's homosexuality (and the legal context associated with it discussed in detail below), might the missing images have given us other insights into the queer life of mandate-era Palestine?

The question of archival silences comes to the surface all the more with the context of digitization. The vast majority of Scholten's photos were untitled, though they almost always had a place name and sometimes a biblical verse. The advent of digitization creates new complexities around captioning and the metadata that are needed to make the collection searchable. In a landscape so vastly changed and erased by the traumatic events of 1947-48, culminating in the *Nakba* [Catastrophe] with the creation of Israel, there followed a re-narration and renaming of places. This creates problems around use of Arabic versus Hebrew place names, further confused by different names for those same places in various European languages.

Likewise, community knowledge about the people in Scholten's photographs is fundamentally important to understanding their social implications. This is an urgent task because the generation that remember the British Mandate is mostly gone and their children are now in their late 70s. The creation of new captions as part of any digitization process

16 For discussions of the census and statistics at the end of the Ottoman period and early British mandate period, see LOOP (PI J. Büssow), https://ercloop.hypotheses.org/.

requires careful time and resources from subject-matter experts, lest such an important collection reproduce many of the silences it already embodies.

While many photographic archives of historical Palestine exist around the world, Palestine is a nation without a state and consequently without a central national archive. Political tensions, destruction since the British Mandate, and geographical dispersal have affected the archives and made the tasks of historians and archivists particularly difficult. Several historians have highlighted the "dead-end" situation of Palestinian written sources: destruction, confiscation, and inaccessibility. The Palestinian Museum has digitized Palestinian family photo albums, and projects such as Mona Halaby's *British Mandate Jerusalem Photo Library* have been essential to centralizing and connecting the Palestinian diaspora to images of that place and period. Likewise, collections such as the Matson Collection at the Library of Congress, Ecole Biblique's archive, or the many biblical and orientalist prints of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries illustrate the central importance of photographic documents in shaping the image of the Holy Land in biblical imaginary.

Despite the silences embedded in the Scholten archive, his production of 22,000 images in two and half years provides an unparalleled insight into the establishment of the British Mandate and the social changes that took place during the shift from Ottoman rule to a contested colonial British protectorate. That is true whether they comprise the complete collection or not.

Scholten in Mandate Palestine: Yet Another European in the Holy Land?

Scholten photographed a very different side of Palestinian society than other photographers of his day and those who came before him. The collections at the Palestine Exploration Fund or *École Biblique et archéologique* (Dominicans, Jerusalem) focus more on archaeological or ethnographic imagery that relate to the research inquiries of their members. Contemporary digitization projects have resulted in many such archives circulating more frequently in the digital age, in similar ways to the recent uptake of the Scholten collection on social media sites today.

Likewise, the saturated market for biblical imagery – either for tourists visiting or for foreign markets abroad – played a significant role in shaping the image of an ancient Holy Land, one that was often devoid of people and privileged putative holy sites. Both local and foreign photographers were

involved in shaping this biblical lens, and such imagery still circulates widely on the second-hand market today.

Where many of these photographers – both scholarly and popular – coincide is in their established networks of production and consumption. Scholarly photography circulated in academic circles, documenting aspects of Palestine's history for the purposes of research. Likewise, despite the wide audience for popular biblical photography, such imagery was produced for those interested in the region's biblical history, not its contemporary reality. The confluence of the two tropes center on a past inflection, often with a focus on religious histories.

The range of photographs from the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods show this plurality morphing in different ways: scholarly uses in fields like archaeology or anthropology; commercial portraits, production of souvenirs, and travelogues; the documentation of current affairs and social events; humanitarian images that captured the plight of orphans and refugees during the turbulent years of World War I and its aftermath; or information gathering in the course of urban renewal and, indeed, even espionage. That is to say, many of these photographs actively produced or ruminated on historical (or quasi-historical) narratives, projecting multiple points of view in which religious narrative is often embedded, sometimes in the subtlest of ways.

This makes the interactions that Scholten captured quite unique. One such example is a series of portraits of a young man marked "Tel Aviv." In one image, the man wears a *tarboosh* with a wry smile. A handwritten caption on the back says: "Trying on a tarbouche" (Fig. 1). The caption indicates an intimacy and comfort between photographer and subject, even a playfulness that demonstrates Scholten's humor in inviting a presumably Jewish young man to wear an Ottoman hat. Scholten himself was known to wear such a hat, at least in photographs both that he took of himself and those used in newspaper reviews of his publications.

Another of the many incidents of Scholten's humor that punctuate the collection is an image of a shepherd boy (Fig. 2). Scholten recounts the incident in a rare and frank article discussing how the photo came to be. When the shepherd was reticent to be photographed, Scholten's driver told him that Scholten was a visiting Italian dignitary and if the photograph was not taken, a diplomatic incident with Italy might erupt into a war with Mussolini.[17]

17 Zananiri, *Photographing Biblical Modernity*, 97-98.

Fig. 1: "Trying on a tarbouche," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa-Tel Aviv-Sarona*, 09:0105.

Fig. 2: "A shepherd," NINO, F. Scholten, photographic print 2:1699.

Fig. 3: "Faiq Tamari and friends," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 02:0016.

The incident demonstrates several things in which humor is embedded. First, it demonstrates a sense of showmanship and an intimacy and closeness with his driver. Second, it demonstrates a class-based interaction in which Scholten and his driver happily used their status (or perceived status) to acquire the object of their desire: the photograph. Third, in the act of telling the anecdote in the Dutch press, Scholten delineates who shares in the laughter (his audience) and who does not (the shepherd). The image underscores the humor of both Scholten and those around him, as well as his position as a foreigner and member of the elite class.

Other photographs, such as the repeated images of Faiq Tamari, show just how close Scholten was to different local communities. Numerous images of the Tamari family were published in his books.[18] Faiq himself was photographed as a sharp young man in Jaffa's fashionable cafes, and as wearing Bedouin clothing at Sheikh Shaker Abu Kishk's camp (Fig. 3).[19] Scholten's photographs show multiple dimensions of Faiq's life, indicating a friendship between the two.

18 Kayali's notes in *Palestine Illustrated*.

19 Tamari in Sanchez Summerer and Zananiri, "Unsilencing Palestine."

Frank Scholten: Amateur Photographer and Ethnographer?

Frank Scholten, who was born in 1881 and died in 1942, lived through a period of transition. His class background and education cemented his elite status within Dutch society, but – given his familial rifts,[20] his homosexuality, and its related legal difficulties[21] – we can suppose he was also an outsider.

Since Scholten came from a well-to-do family with links to the Dutch aristocracy,[22] we can imagine that the commercial necessities of photographic practice played little part in guiding Scholten's lens and freed him from the commercial demands of the photographic market that influenced most professional photographers. Aside from the significant body of images he produced, the bequest also contains books and ephemera he collected as well as his postcard correspondence, mostly with his friend Geertje Pooyar. Scholten's photos appear to start in the late World War I period in the Netherlands, continue to images of his travels through Germany, Italy, and Greece in 1920, and then expand to the more than two years he spent in Palestine from 1921 to 1923[23] (photos of which comprise the bulk of the collection). There are also smaller collections of images from France, the UK, and other parts of Europe, presumably taken after he returned to Europe.

When Scholten died in 1942 from complications related to a car accident, he left this array of material to the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO). It included his library: a collection of "found images" (including photographs, postcards, prints, and images clipped from books) and other assorted ephemera. The found images were annotated and generally pasted to cardboard, in line with contemporary practices of archiving photographs of art history subjects. He also left notes related to a sixteen-volume set of photo books titled *Palestine Illustrated*, only two of which were published (though in four language editions), and a sum of money to continue the production of his unpublished work, for which he left behind some notes and arrangements of images. He had a significant library of 6,000 books with him in Palestine, from which we can suppose that he had planned his photographic project in advance.

20 For instance, he left home shortly after his father's death. Later, a series of exchanges between Scholten and his stepmother in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash show the turbulence of familial relations. See Kwiecień, "Frank Scholten."

21 van der Meer, *Jonkheer mr. Jacob Anton Schorer*, 159–63.

22 His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had been among the top officials of the Dutch investment bank Nachenius Tjeenk, and his mother was a *jonkvrouw* (an honorific title denoting nobility); van der Meer, *Jonkheer mr. Jacob Anton Schorer*,162, and Kwiecień, "Frank Scholten."

23 Kwiecień, "Frank Scholten."

As a photographer, Scholten took a documentary approach and one that was, at least in Palestine, high in output. The original photographic prints are small and some of the negatives show signs of editing with white marks. The photographic collections he left behind show a diverse array of local subjects and geographies including cities, towns, villages, countryside, agriculture, and the desert. In his time in Palestine, he traveled the country extensively and took trips to Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. He photographed people, archaeology, sites of religious significance, urban streetscapes and rural villages, domestic interiors, social and religious events, the new colonial networks that the incoming British Mandate brought with it, and the early days of Tel Aviv, still in its infancy in the early 1920s.

Scholten's background was in many ways fundamental to the lens through which he viewed Palestine. Born to a wealthy Protestant family, Scholten converted to Catholicism before traveling to Palestine,[24] though evidence of exactly when the conversion took place has yet to be found.

In the Netherlands, the social system of pillarization[25] broke society into confessional and political spheres that had wide-ranging consequences, ranging from the provision of health and educational structures to the media outlets that informed communities. Scholten's conversion perhaps points to the particular sensitivity toward similar structures of the Ottoman Millet system, which had been reshaped significantly during the Empire's nineteenth-century Tanzimat Reforms. Those were still very much in place (though beginning to morph) at the start of the British Mandate.

After Scholten grew up in Amsterdam, he was educated in Berlin around the turn of the twentieth century.[26] In this time spent traveling between his native country and Berlin's bohemian milieu, Scholten came into contact with the social and political world of the early homosexual emancipation movement. Berlin had become a place known for its sexual openness,[27] and Scholten is known to have stayed there with the famous German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld.[28] Scholten also frequented the working-class area of De

24 Scholten was baptized in April 1919 at St Vincent's Church in Volendam. In a postcard to his friend Geertje dated 16 January 1920, Scholten talks of attending confession and taking communion at St Peters in Rome (thanks to Lara van der Hammen for her translation of some of the postcards); Frank Scholten collection.

25 Post, *Pillarization*.

26 Kwiecień, "Frank Scholten."

27 Robert Deam Tobin quotes an aristocratic client of Havelock Ellis who had travelled extensively, suggesting that Berlin was "more extensive, freer and easier than anywhere else in the Orient or Occident." This makes an interesting point of comparison to someone like Scholten. Tobin, *Peripheral Desires*, 1.

28 van der Meer, *Jonkheer*, 215.

Pijp in Amsterdam, the setting for Jacob Israël de Haan's openly gay novel *Pijpelijntjes* (1904),[29] which was similarly colorful.

In 1920, Scholten left the Netherlands amidst legal charges. Court records show that he was accused of soliciting young military and working men on trains and at Amsterdam's Central station, and of keeping a room at a house run by the male pimp Adrianus Kakebeen. The introduction of 248bis to the Dutch Penal code raised the age of consent for same-sex relations from 16 to 21. Subsequently, Scholten was charged with having sex with minors, though no one he slept with was under the age of 18.[30] That led to a sentence of two years in jail, handed down in absentia[31] (that verdict was expunged on appeal in March 1932).[32] By then Scholten had embarked on his first year of travels, which took him to Italy, Greece, Germany, and Switzerland.

Scholten photographed on nitrate negatives using a silver gelatin process photographed with an old 9×12 camera for sheet film. This was a mobile photographic process suitable for his traveling project. Darkroom supplies like photo material, contact frames, chemicals, and developing trays were transportable with relative ease, though it is unknown whether he developed the negatives himself or had them developed by other professionals.

Scholten used a travel camera or a reflex camera of an unknown brand. In a postcard to Geertje, he briefly mentions that his camera broke in Rome and was replace by a "*kiekkastje*" (a "little snapshot box" in Dutch vernacular). It is likely that he had replaced the cameras several times during that period as he later mentioned problems with a camera sent to him in Jerusalem from Germany.[33] The contact prints of these images are in the 7.7 (7.9) x 10.6 cm format, though he also used tape and masks to edit the dimensions (including panoramas, portraits, or round crops).

Scholten employed a range of taxonomies in his photographs, attempting to make order of his vast photographic output. Those were apart from the designators of religion and ethnicity that he employed in captions in the albums and occasionally his loose photos. This constitutes an ethnographic approach to Palestine that may have been derived from the methodologies

29 De Haan, *Pijpelijntjes*.

30 A detailed analysis of these charges is in Sary Zananiri, *Photographing Biblical Modernity*, 28–35. For details, see the Noord-Hollands Archief, Gerechtshof Amsterdam 29-301 Dossier 8037 – 34 Gerardus Hendricus Backhoff Testimony.

31 van Waterschoot et al., *Onder De Toonbank*.

32 This was in a *Verzet* (Resistance) trial, 198 Arrondissementsrechtbank Amsterdam – Registers van strafzaken 960 -1920 – nr 3022.

33 Postcard to Geertje from Rome, 20 November 1920; postcard to Geertje from Jerusalem, 6 November 1922.

which Magnus Hirschfeld applied to taxonomize gender and sexuality.[34] Scholten also made significant use of shorthand nomenclature of biblical verses to interpret and narrate his photographs, albeit in the opaquest of ways. Reading his photos through these verses gives insights into his perceptions of what he captured, framing them in another layer of information.

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34 Zananiri "Documenting the Social: Frank Scholten: Taxonomising Identity in British Mandate Palestine," 274.

The collection is currently organized by type of material: mainly negatives, photo prints, albums, and clippings. Within these categories, the negatives were kept in the order applied by Scholten himself. Negatives were recently sorted out on Wiki Commons according to seven categories used in Leiden University special collections (Photography department). This work was performed under the supervision of Maartje van Heuvel, curator of photographic collections, and the NINO organized volunteer work on the collection (mainly focusing on texts added to the photo prints and negatives by Frank Scholten himself; no historians of Mandate Palestine or of photography were actively involved at this stage).

https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2023/03/workshops-palestinian-history-in-frame---frank-scholten-photographs. The rest of the photographic prints have been ordered according to Scholten's designations (largely geographical). Other materials collected by Scholten are ordered by the surname of the person who published it at the time (image maker or author/editor of the publication from which the item comes).

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About the Authors

Karène Sanchez Summerer is Professor and Chair of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Groningen and co-director of the Centre for Historical Studies. Her publications include Sanchez Summerer, K. and Zananiri, S., *Imaging and Imagining Palestine: Photography, Modernity and the Biblical Lens* (*1918–1948*) (2021).

Sary Zananiri is an artist, cultural historian, and Senior Lecturer at Monash University. His research interests are situated at the intersection of nationalism, colonialism, religious narrative, and visual culture, with a particular focus on photography.

1. "A Frivolous Affair": The Pilgrimage to Nebi Rubin

Salim Tamari

Abstract: Nebi Rubin was a major religious festival in coastal Palestine and Syria until 1948, significant among Palestine's pilgrimage seasons. It originated as a regional fair and cultic center of Baal worship, celebrating the confluence of the Rubin River and the Mediterranean Sea. The festival was revived after the Crusades to counter the influence of European pilgrimages. By the Mamluk era, Nebi Rubin had become a Waqf-controlled event, featuring significant participation by Sufi groups. Nineteenth-century records emphasize its central role for pilgrims from Gaza and the surrounding villages. Early twentieth-century secularization brought about the introduction of theatrical performances, music, cinema, and other amusements. The photographs Frank Scholten took between 1921 and 1923 capture both the festival's lively, carnivalesque atmosphere and its quieter, off-season moments that accentuate nature, trade routes, grazing animals, and the river's shoreline.

Keywords: Scholten, Nebi Rubin, religious festivals, Jaffa, Ramleh

Until 1946, Nebi Rubin's shrine and festival along the Rubin River south of Jaffa at the end of summer was the largest site of mass visitation in all of coastal Palestine. Its status as a popular pilgrimage destination was second only to the *mawsim* (festival) of Nebi Musa on the outskirts of Jericho.

Frank Scholten visited Rubin several times between 1921 and 1923, while he was staying in Jaffa. His interest in Nebi Rubin seems to have come from two related features of the festival: its carnivalesque character and its expression of popular religiosity. For the carnivalesque aspect, we have a great number of Scholten's photographs celebrating marching bands, Luna Parks, magic boxes, and the mixture of the sacred and profane in pilgrimages to the Nebi Rubin and Nebi Musa festivals. Popular religiosity was also a dominant focus in his albums, especially in the series entitled "sanctuaries" where

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Fig. 1: "The kite-flying competition became a major contest in Nebi Rubin," NINO, F. Scholten, photographic print 19:2324.

the photographer visited and documented a succession of caves, haunted springs, and healing rituals. Nebi Musa celebrations took the lion's share of attention in Scholten's albums; for some reason, Nebi Rubin does not appear in the "Sanctuaries" series. Most of the Rubin *maqam* (shrine) and Rubin River images come from the Jaffa files, particularly folders 16, 19, and 26. Frank Scholten was a pioneer photographer who gave a visual interpretation of two famous Jaffan expressions associated with the festival: one concerns women's yearnings to join the festivities ("Take me to Rubin or release me"), and the second relates to the excessive gambling and spending during the festival (*Rawban*, or "went bankrupt at the Rubin festival"روبن وروبني).[1]

His earliest photos capture the topography of the site where the Nahr Rubin flows into the Mediterranean Sea, and the jutting coves that historically constituted the Port of Yibna. Later he took a number of images of "pilgrims" on camels, donkeys, and horses hauling their tents and cooking wares to the site. A few images are of local villagers, presumably from the Arab al Mawalha tribe, watering and grazing their camels; finally, he captured the festival site itself with the pomp and circumstance involved in marketing religious paraphernalia and produce. Pictures taken at Nahr Rubin and the outlet to the sea seem to demonstrate the cleansing and cathartic features

1 See a discussion of these two verbs in the conclusion of this chapter.

Fig. 2: "Naher Rubin – where the sweet water is betrothed to the [Mediterranean] Sea," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 13:0029.

of the sacred river (See Figure 2). Two single shots give us rare glimpses of people playing in the water and suggestions of proscribed practices: a young man wearing a flowery crown is immersed in the water and evokes the ancient celebration of Baalism and Baal worship that identified this festival in antiquity. A second set of images shows several young semi-clad boys bathing with their donkeys at the seashore.

In what follows, I will use these images to examine the transformations of Nebi Rubin over several historical periods – as noted in the writings of Arab historians, European orientalists, and ethnographers, and contemporary observers of the Rubin festival – as a background to Scholten's treatment of these features. A main problem of attributions in Scholten's images is the lack of proper captioning on his part. Two main sources of captioning come from his handwritten notes in the album he compiled (especially the series titled "sanctuaries") and the two volumes of his *Palestine Illustrated*.[2] The latter includes a large selection from Rubin, but unfortunately the references are almost exclusively to what he saw as biblical and Qur'anic parallels.[3] Luckily, we also have eyewitness accounts of Rubin events that

2 Scholten, *Palestine Illustrated*.

3 For Scholten's use of Qur'anic and biblical parallels in his albums, see Zananiri, "Documenting the Social."

were published by Scholten's contemporaries in the 1920s. Those include Tawfiq Canaan, Philipe Baldensperger, and Jaffa's last mayor Yusif Haikal, in his memoir *Ayyam al Siba*.[4]

The Trading Fairs of the Philistine Plains

In his monumental volume on the historical geography of Palestine, Mustafa al Dabbagh identifies Nabi Rubin as a village of 1,420 people (1945 village survey) on the shores of the River Rubin. It occupied 31,000 *dunums*[5] (of which 683 were orange orchards), most of which were *waqf* (charitable endowments) for the *maqam* (shrine) of the Prophet Ruben. Its permanent inhabitants were descendants of the Malalheh Bedouins of Sinai and were known as "Arab al Nabi Rubeen."[6] In 1933, a plaque was discovered that indicated that the maqam was built in 1292 during the Mamluk period, under the patronage of Sultan al-Ashraf Khalil ibn Qalawun (1291–1293). He had directed the governor of Gaza, Timraz al Ashrafı, to build it as a religious defensive fortification and a resting place for pilgrims during the Ayyubid and Mameluke wars with the crusaders.[7]

Rubin's religious significance was most likely a derivative of its commercial and military-logistical placement. Archaeologists have noted the importance of the river basin for fortified settlements in the Byzantine period, as well as the crucial trade routes situated at via Maris between Gaza and Syria in the late Bronze Age.[8] According to Conder, it was the site of extensive trade between the merchants of Damascus and the crusaders of Northern Palestine. He refers to great "trading fairs" that continued until the 14th century, held at Nebi Rubin on the "Philistine Plain" where they attracted "men of every race and creed."[9]

This logistic significance continued until modern times, as can be seen from the number of aerial photographs taken by the German air force before and after the British occupation of Jaffa in December 1917.[10]

4 Haykal, *Ayyām al-ṣibā*; Baldensperger, *The Immovable East*, and Canaan, *Muhammadan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*.

5 A *dunum* is a unit of land area enclosing 1,000 square meters.

6 Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, 500–01.

7 Yazbak, "Nabi Rubin in Jaffa," 83.

8 Dothan, "An Archaeological Survey of the Lower Rubin River."

9 Conder, *Syrian Stone-lore*, 447.

10 Atrash, "Mapping Palestine," 98.

Fig. 3: "Nahr Rubin in the Bavarian State Archives. The German Luftstreitkräfte, January 12, 1918," https://www.gda.bayern.de/home/.

Fig. 4: "Nahr Rubin – where the sweet water meets the salt water," NINO F Scholten; the village of Rubin, on the river basin, and the shrine of Nebi Rubin built by the Mamluke governors and expanded by the Ottomans, and the location of what seems to be a British military encampment on the approaches of Jaffa, from WWI.

One of the earliest references to the festival comes from the geographical work of Mujir al Din al Hanbali. In his book *al Uns al Jalil* (1488), he wrote:

> To the west of Ramleh, near the Salt Sea (Mediterranean) there is the tomb of our lord Rubeen (Rubin) son of Jacob, may peace be upon them both. It is an inhabited place of visitation. During its annual mawsim people from Ramleh, Ghazza and other areas gather there and spend a great amount of money. The Qur'an is read as well as narratives of the prophet. The place was built by our lord and master Sheikh Shihab al Din ibn Raslan.[11]

During his 1872-73 survey of religious sites in the Holy Land, the Syrian surveyor and ethnographer Nu'man al-Qasatli, identified Rubin as the residual site of ancient religious pilgrimages, and the Rubin River, at Yibne, as the location of the major port for southern Palestine.[12] Khalidi, following archaeological evidence, also refers to Rubin's *maqam* as the site of a Canaanite temple, and to the *mawsim* as having pagan origins.[13]

The Rubin *mawsim* was variously claimed by pilgrims to Gaza, Ramleh, Lydda, and Jaffa. Nu'man al-Qasatli was very probably the earliest modern Arab traveler to witness and describe the environment of Nebi Rubin. In 1875, he was a draftsmen and interpreter working with the Palestine Exploration Fund when he visited the tomb of Nebi Rubin. Remarkably, he noted that the festival of Rubin was the main attraction for the peasants of Gaza. Under the entry "Wadi Rubin" he wrote:

> On Thursday 6th May, 1875 the captain and I left Yibnah walking for two hours on the North-West side of the shores of Wadi Rubin. The area was extensively planted and then we arrived at the sand (dunes). We walked an additional seven minutes to the west among the hills until we reached Nebi Rubin. There among the sand dunes is the shrine (maqam) built on a higher hill, with two big doors and a smaller door. There is a well on the southern side, and nine large mulberry trees give shade to the courtyard. This place is very active, receiving pilgrims every year from among the multitudes of Gaza fellahin. We walked a further 10 minutes to the West until we reached bahr al-Rum (the Mediterranean), with the Rubin River

11 Al-Hanbali, Mujir al-Din (1973). *Al-Uns al-Jalil fi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil* [The Significant Ambiance in the History of Jerusalem and Hebron]. Amman, Vol. 2, 72

12 Al-Qasatli, *Al Rawda.*

13 See IPS *Interactive Encyclopedia* www.palquest.org/en/place/16862/al-nabi-rubin-al-ramla, accessed 27 March 2025, and Dothan, "An Archaeological Survey of the Lower Rubin River."

> running to our right. Its waters gather strength from a number of rivulets before pouring into the Sea. In winter its waters flow strongly making it unbridgeable. At the northern side at a distance of a quarter mile near Yibnah, the (Rubin River) has a large bridge with two arches.[14]

Al-Qasatli makes further notes on what he calls Rubin's port:

> South of [Rubin's] shoreline at a distance of four or five minutes we found a large harbor—which, if restored, would be better than the port of Beirut. For the water here is deep and allows sailing boats to dock at a distance of 100 yards (dhira'). Opposite the harbor is a small hill at a distance of 48 steps from the water. The length of this harbor is more than 300 feet.[15]

Even though the area south of Asqalan was deserted in his time (the 1870s), al-Qasatli's claim that Rubin was primarily the destination of Gazans may have been due to his travel itinerary, which brought him from the south (Gaza). His observations also shine important light on the wider network of visitors to Rubin, which included pilgrims from Ashdod and Gaza, as well as visitors from the surrounding towns of Jaffa, Ramleh, and Lydda.[16] Another observation is his description of the depth of the Rubin River during the winter, a reference which is well documented in the sailing ships captured by Scholten.

However, it was Charles Clermont-Ganneau who connected the Rubin *mawsim* with Baalism and Baal worship.[17] He visited Nebi Rubin six years after al-Qasatli (in 1881) and noted the "curious festivities connected" to the shrine. He observed that Mujir al Din refers to "Rubin" as a "Mawsim" and relates that the sanctuary was built by Sheikh Chehab al Din, the son of Amir Arslan.[18] Clermont-Ganneau also suggested that Rubin was originally the site of ancient semitic gods, the Canaanite Baal and the Phoenician Rosefl: "Baal has preserved his Memnonium here, and even his cult, in the shape of the *wely* of Neby Rubin and the great annual feast that takes place there."[19]

14 Al-Qasatli, *Al Rawda*, 46–7.
15 Al-Qasatli, *Al Rawda*, 117.
16 Al-Qasatli, *Al Rawda*, 118.
17 Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, 164–6.
18 Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, 146.
19 Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, 166.

Fig. 5: "Riding to Rubin from Gaza," Nu'man al-Qasatli, *Al-Rawda al Nu'maniyyah*, 46–7.

Fig. 6: "Naher Rubin. Meeting the Sea, with the village of Rubin in the horizon," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 12:0044.

Elsewhere, he compares the pilgrims of Rubin to the festivals of Sheikh Ali b. Alim at Arsuf.

> [Rubin] is the object of extraordinary veneration and every year a great festival is held there to which Mussulmans [sic] crossed from several leagues around. This most popular pilgrimage is doubtless connected to an ancient tradition relating to some old semitic divinity under [according to our] guide.... [compared to] haram of Ali ben A'lim at Arsuf, which is simply the sanctuary of the Phoenician god Rosefl who gave his name to the town of Arsuf.[20]

Among contemporary local observers, a most striking and telling comment comes from Baldensperger, the Alsatian templar and apiculturist who was living in Jaffa at the turn of the nineteenth century. In his *Immovable East*, he also links the river Rubin to the Canaanites and Phoenician Baal celebrations – most likely influenced by his contemporary archaeologist, Clermont-Ganneau. In his view, the "frivolous character" of the modern Palestinian Rubin is a reminder of the Phoenician "feat of betrothal between

Fig. 7: "Naher Rubin." Rubin was the site of a Baal Temple and Baal worship, NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 11:0053.

20 Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*, 164–5.

sweet water and salt water" still observed, according to Baldensperger, in Tyre.[21] When the waters became muddy, the locals brought some salt water and mixed it with river to clean it, "…as the Rubin flows into the sea. It may be for this reason that the feast is celebrated here."[22]

Zaffit Nebi Rubin and the Sufi Orders

During the Ottoman period, the maqam belonged to the Ramleh district (*Qada'*). In 1890, the guardian (*mutawalli*) of the Rubin Waqf, Sheikh Abdul Majid al Taji, undertook the expansion of the shrine complex: with the support of the Ramleh Waqf administration, he added a mosque and a substantial courtyard. The mosque included a minaret and a budget for an imam, as well as the provision of food during the *mawsim* (festival).[23] During the Mandate period, thirty-two dunums of Rubin Waqf land were allocated to serve Wadi Rubin peasants and Bedouins, and to provide an evening meal to its pilgrims every day during the *mawsim*.[24]

Throughout this period, the Rubin procession was the domain of Sufi orders in Ramleh and Jaffa. This is confirmed by references to the chants, banners, and music that led the procession in what became known as *Zaffit* Rubin (the "heralding" of the prophet) which was made up of the procession of raising the cloths (*Thob* Rubin, basically the *Kisweh* cloth covering the tomb) starting in Ramleh and Lyddah, followed by *Zaffit al Nabi* Rubin, the major procession that started in the Great Mahumdiyyeh mosque in Jaffa. In both cases masters of Sufi orders (*turuq*) led the procession with their banners and musical bands. They raised what seemed to be a sacrilegious banner: "*La ilah illa allah, wa Rubin nabiyy allah*" ("There is no god but God and Rubin is his prophet"), rewording a phrase usually reserved for the Prophet Muhammad.[25] A late nineteenth-century painting by Gustav Bauernfeind entitled "Procession of the Dervish" (1891) marks the Sufi banners and the drummers with a star of David hoisted to celebrate the feast of Nebi Rubin. A striking feature of this painting is the six-pointed star of David held by the Sufi marchers, with the inscription "La Ilaha illa allah" inside the star.

21 Baldensperger, *The Immovable East*.

22 Baldensperger, *The Immovable East*, 164. He also compares the two great festivals of Moses (Jericho) and Rubin (Jaffa), calling both feasts "for the Resurrection of Nature," 163.

23 Arraf, *Tabaqat al Anbiya'*.

24 Arraf, *Tabaqat al Anbiya',* 579–80.

25 Rantisi, "Al-Nabi Rubeen."

Fig. 8: Gustav Bauernfeind, *Procession of the Dervish* (Jaffa, 1891; note the Star of David surrounded by the *La Ilah illa allah* epitaph).

There is no doubt that the Sufi orders that celebrated Rubin were aware of the biblical roots of the Prophet and his shrine. This is demonstrated by the inscription at Rubin's (Reuven) tomb, identifying him as the eldest son of Jacob the Patriarch, as well as in the use of the star of David as an emblem of the Sufi banners in their procession. For them, as with Nebi Musa and Nebi Saleh, these saints had an essentially Islamic progeny. In his review of the late nineteenth-century Hebrew press, Mahmud Yazbak also refers to Jewish involvement in the festival both as observers and as participants. Curiously, Rubin's festival was described in the Hebrew press as an "Ishmaelite" event. Yazbak quotes Rabbi Hamberger's reference to "Ishmaelite" celebrations and refers to Muslim dignitaries welcoming Jaffa Jews to share in the celebration of Reuben, the son of Jacob, referring to him as "your father" (*eid abukum*).[26]

Local Palestinian narratives about Rubin came mostly from memoirs and diaries written in the post-1948 period. One of the earliest descriptions came from the ethnographer Tawfiq Canaan, a contemporary of Scholten. In the

26 *Hamagid*, 10 October 1876, no. 315, quoted by Yazbak, "Nabi Rubin in Jaffa."

late 1920s, Canaan made a number of observations on his visit to Rubin in his seminal study of saints and sanctuaries. He notes that Rubin and the *Mawsim* of Ali ibn Alem (at the Auja River, north of Jaffa) are summer feasts "of the plains inhabitants," contrasting them with Nebi Musa and al-Khader (St. George), which belong to mountain peasants.[27] A striking observation by Canaan concerns the use of the new lighting technology (that can be observed in Scholten's photographs), which contributed to the prolonging of wedding celebrations into the night.

> At present [1925] Lux lamps are used in many villages, especially on festive occasions. This year I noticed at Nebi Musa that coffee houses and shops were lit up with Lux lamps, and at Nebi Rubin they were lit up with electricity. In 1927, when called at night to Bet Fadjdjar to visit a woman undergoing an abnormally difficult labor, I found the inhabitants gathered in an open place amusing themselves by the light of a Lux lamp in preparation for a wedding.

Fig. 9: "Open air bazaar – People, tents and flags," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 11:0051. Note the Ottoman flags still flying at Nebi Rubin four years after the end of the war and the ushering in of the Mandate. Note also the lighting (Lux lamps) described by Canaan above.

27 Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*.

From a Pilgrimage Site to a Virtual Summer City

Later accounts include the memoirs of Jaffa mayor Yusif Haikal (*Ayyam al Siba*) and of Khairy Abul-Jabein and Ali Hassan Bawwab. Abul-Jabein recalls his family's attendance at Rubin after the resumption of the *mawsim* following the 1936–39 rebellion. A number of eyewitness accounts of Rubin recorded impressions of the season in an oral history archival project, *Falastin fil Dhakira*.[28] Several of these accounts noted how Rubin was a season of excessive spending on clothing, food, and entertainment by the poor, one in which their annual savings were regularly depleted. Gambling was a common feature, to a point where many families went bankrupt. One writer suggested that the Rubin festival introduced a gambling culture to coastal Palestine.[29] An account by Sha'ban al Badawi, from Sarafand, suggested that a new Arabic verb was coined for the Rubin festival to describe this process:

> Many people saved during the year so that they could spend it at the Rubin *mawsim*. Some would return home without their shoes [having sold them to recover their debts]. I knew people who would sell their furniture in order to attend Rubin. A saying was coined for those people. "Fulan [so and so] Rawban" meaning that he and his home were ruined by the *mawsim*. Even the Sufi *darawish* [pl. for *derwish*] in Jaffa and its districts were infected by Rubin money. Quite a few participated in the trading during the *mawsim*.[30]

Abul Jabein notes that the Rubin *mawsim* was timed after the end of the orange picking and packing season in September, according to the lunar calendar.[31] During the early forties the Jaffa municipality had taken over the organization of the festival from the Ramleh Awqaf and several services were added or extended. The *maqam* now included a police station, a medical clinic, a dental clinic, a clothes market, bakeries, cafés, restaurants, and an outdoor cinema.[32] He mentioned the number of Egyptian theatrical groups and entertainers who used to frequent the encampment of Rubin during the season.[33]

28 https://www.palestineremembered.com/index.html 3, accessed 27 March 2025.
29 Habibullah, "Nabi Rubin: A Mawsim and its Transformations."
30 Testimony by Mr Sha'ban al Badawi from Jaffa, 2006 (cited in Habibuallah).
31 Abul Jabein, "Qissat Hayati fi Falateen wal Kuwait."
32 Abul Jabein, "Qissat Hayati fi Falateen wal Kuwait."
33 Abul Jabein, "Qissat Hayati fi Falateen wal Kuwait."

Fig. 10: "Expansion of Nebi Rubin Encampments," NINO, F. Scholten, Jaffa, 26:0016.

Fig. 11: "Expansion of Nebi Rubin Encampments," Eric Matson, 1930, Library of Congress Photo Library, https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/matpc.21957.

An extensive oral history of eyewitness narratives about Rubin come from the collection of *Zhakirat Falastin* (Palestine Remembered).[34] A number of participants recall spending their honeymoon at the *mawsim*.[35] Many of these accounts also note the participation of local Jews and Christians during the season.[36] These "hybridities" are also illustrated by many ceremonial pictures taken by Frank Scholten at the Jaffa celebrations. The following testimony from a Ramleh Orthodox Christian comes from the early 1940s:

> My mother Fumia Jabagi would prepare new clothes for myself and my sisters before the advent of the *mawsim* [Rubin]. The encampment was next to the river Rubin where a tent city emerged every year. Unlike other families we would go there for day trips only. My brother who spent summers with us during his student days in Lebanon would drive us in the family car. I remember the playgrounds full of seesaws, swings, and Ferris wheels. The place was full of musical bands, and cinema showings. Many Christian families from our neighbors in Ramleh and Lydd participated. Arabic speaking Jews came from Jaffa. My mother used to go there mainly to observe the women's costumes. Women's traditional [peasant] costumes in brilliant colors would blow your mind: Azure, Green, and White with the most elaborate embroidery. We would come back at the end of the day exhausted and carrying loads of pottery and the candy known as "arusat al sham" [the bride of Syria].[37]

The transformation of *mawsim* Rubin from a pilgrimage site into a virtual summer city encampment during the 1930s and 1940s is described in rich ethnographic detail in the Jaffa Probate Records by Ali Hassan al-Bawwab.[38] Of the twenty-three images al-Bawwab used to illustrate the Rubin sites, fourteen come from the Scholten collection.[39] Al-Bawwab gives us details about the spatial allocation of neighborhoods, markets, and municipal services by the Jaffa municipality in conjunction with the Jaffa Sailors Association and the Waqf Administration. *Mawsim* Rubin

34 https://www.palestineremembered.com/index.html, accessed 27 March 2025.

35 See the testimony of Fatmeh al Kayyali from Ramleh in Habibullah, https://www.palestineremembered.com/index.html, accessed 27 March 2025.

36 Rantisi, "Al-Nabi Rubeen."

37 Testimony by Laila Dawoud Jabagi from Ramleh, recorded in Beit Jala on 13 November 2022. I am indebted to Suha Khamis, who recorded this testimony from her mother.

38 Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah.*

39 Unfortunately, the source of the images is unacknowledged, but they seem to come from Scholten, "*La Palestine Illustrée.*"

built structures that were basically made up of wooden and foldable tent habitats, as illustrated in the Scholten, Raad, and Matson photographs. The municipality organized separate block assignments for pilgrims from Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh, Gaza, Majdal (Asqalan), and Asdud. It seems that village pilgrims were assigned separate blocks.[40] The Jaffa encampment was by far the largest, with many men (sailors, troubadours, government workers, and bank clerks) commuting to their work during the day with their families. In addition to the bulk of Jaffa's population: "…merchants and shopkeepers transferred their businesses to Rubin. This included cafés, restaurants, groceries, butchers, icemakers, spice shops, bakeries, jewelers, and children's playgrounds."[41] Map 13 shows the extent of services provided in Rubin, including specialty markets, residential quarters, clinics, a bus stop, a parking lot, and diesel generators (for electricity). Wedding parties and circumcisions were celebrated on Fridays, but the highlight of the season was the horse racing competitions organized on the eastern flank of the Rubin River, by the seashore (1359, 1369). These were accompanied by *shubash* (celebratory) chants.[42]

يا مهري لاكويك بالنار-- هاي هاي-- واقطع الاربعة اللي شايلاك
ما يوم فرحتي بمشوار-- هاي هاي-- دوم خيل العدا طارداتك

(My mare I will ignite you with fire, hey hey,
And speed the four [hoofs] that carry you
I will not enjoy parading with you, hey hey
Until you defeat the opponents' horses)

Al-Bawwab's court records indicate that the Rubin season was often followed by litigation involving losses from gambling and the return of gold and jeweler dowries in divorce cases.[43] This is the origin of the expression *rawbanni* (i.e., ripped off in Rubin).

Mahmoud Yazbak discussed the spatial features of Nebi Rubin by using the concept of Heterotopian *Unsettling* (Foucault), which describes a space that is "outside" and which mirrors and upsets what exists in its rural and urban landscapes. This "unsettling" of the spatial order includes women's rebellious claims about the shrine – "take me to Rubin or release me!" (lit.

40 Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, 1358.
41 Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, 1358–9.
42 Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, 1359–60.
43 Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, 1360.

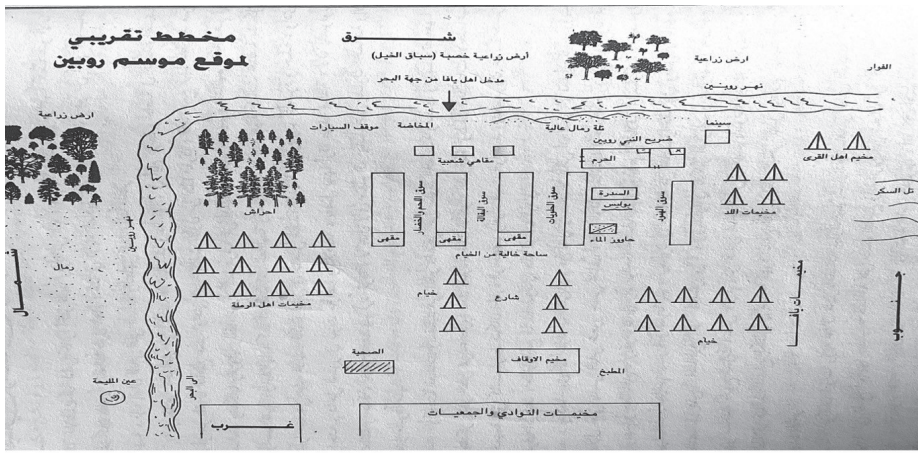

Fig. 12: "Internal spatial allocation of Nebi Rubin mawsim," Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, volume 2, 1369 (Beirut: Arab Institute, 2003). Allocation by economic services and location of markets (sweet shops, butchers, grocers, "Indian" markets) cafés, water facilities, police, public kitchens, and the regional encampments for Jaffa, Ramleh, Lydda and Waqf administrations).

divorce me, "*ya bitrawbini, aw bitaliqni*") – and their demand for exclusive visits to the shrine. It also includes the illicit practices – gambling, bordellos, etc. – within the holy compound and the inversion of traditional Sufi *dhikr* circles into a "secular theatre" and musical entertainment.[44] In contrast to Yazbak, ethnographers such as Canaan, Dalman, and Hammami viewed women's claims about shrine visits as a traditional right of intercession and not particularly rebellious.[45]

Yazbak's work also follows al-Bawwab's study by examining the spatial allocation of the tent city according to function and place of origin. For the major towns (Jaffa, Ramleh, and Lydd), the tents were allocated separately to city folks, surrounded by their rural suburbs.[46] Jaffan families were located to the west of the *maqam* and Ramleh to the north, separated by the tents allocated for families from Lydda. Waqf officials and official visitors were housed along the banks of the river.[47] In the transformation of Rubin's heterotopia, Yazbak perceives a process of secularization and desanctification taking place in the 1940s. He attributes a cathartic emancipatory function to the *mawsim's* modernity (following the work of Rema Hammami):

44 Yazbak, "The Muslim Festival of Nabi Rubin in Palestine," 192–3.

45 Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*. Canaan calculated that about 15% of all *awlia'* (saints) in Palestine are saints.

46 Yazbak, "Nabi Rubin in Jaffa," 90–2.

47 Yazbak, "Nabi Rubin in Jaffa," 91.

> ...the keen desire of people for a break, a temporary release, from the daily routine and the growing stress of their urban lives in the form of a lengthy vacation away from the town and for the "escape" they could find in recreation at the seaside; all points to that unfolding modernity....[48]

To understand this increased differentiation of space and possible "gentrification" of the site, one should compare the general view of the tent city taken by Scholten in 1921 to the expanded site taken over by the municipality of Jaffa in the 1930s and 1940s.[49]

However, I believe this view was born from an interpretation that is fueled by a retrospective modernist nostalgia for pre-1948 coastal Palestine. The spatial difference referred to here seems more quantitative than qualitative, resulting from increased accessibility to the site by modern means of transport and by the enhanced municipal services the municipality of Jaffa provided to the encampment. The notion of cathartic release, attributed here to newly bourgeois Rubin, is a perceptive phenomenon that precedes the *mawsim's* 1940s modernity and can be clearly observed in descriptions of the event from the turn of the twentieth century. This includes the "frivolous" nature of the event, the *joie de vivre* atmosphere, and the mixing of men and women in a public space that took place during the carefree month-long reveling.[50] Scholten's wordless photography of Nebi Ruben captured these moments of idyllic nature and class fraternization along the Rubin River in the 1920s, when the festival had just resumed it religious-commercial pace following disruption by the devastating years of World War I.

Conclusion

Rubin is the only prophet who lent his name to the creation of two new construct verb roots in the Arabic language. This feature is peculiar to Nebi Rubin: not Moses, nor Job – whose festival dominated the coastal celebrations of the Gaza region – nor St. George (al-Khader) or Jesus himself. Only the

48 Yazbak, "Nabi Rubin in Jaffa," 92. See also Hammami, "Gender, Nakba and Nation."

49 See several images by Eric Maston and others, "Nebi Rubin," September 1930, Library of Congress Images, https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/matpc.21957, accessed 30 March 2025.

50 Several Jaffa newspapers referred to religious authorities complaining about the "decline of moral standards" at the Rubin festival. Ali al-Bawwab referred to the municipality designating a special market for "women only," with police protection provided. It is not clear whether this was a market for female vendors or was exclusively for female shoppers; Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, 1359.

Virgin Mary has a similar but secondary claim in popular discourse (e.g., the magical attributes of consuming the plant identified with the Virgin Mary, *al Maryamiyyeh*). The two verbs are the women's beseeching *Rawwibbni* روبيني ("Release me or take me to Rubin") and *Rawwban* روبن ("went bankrupt"). The latter is a past tense form referring to somebody who spends his savings on gambling during the Rubin season. These two verbal usages were captured with visual spectacle by Frank Scholten long before any other photographer trod the shores of southern Jaffa. This singularity is quite striking given that substantial coverage of the Nebi Musa processions existed as early as the late nineteenth century (see the Ecole Biblique and Raad collections).[51] Scholten's preoccupation with indigenous popular culture provides us with images that can be seen as intersections illustrating the natural landscape of the river, its mythical roots, and the extravaganza of Nebi Rubin.

The festival of Nebi Rubin acquired a mythical aura in the pre-1948 collective memory of Palestinian refugee intellectuals. It was seen as the major spectacular event for the inhabitants of Jaffa and the coastal population of the south (Ramleh, Lydda, and Gaza). Memoirs written by the Jaffa intelligentsia recall the Rubin *mawsim* as the most important event of the year, surpassing the celebrations of Ramadan, Christmas, and Easter combined (as evoked by Haikal, Abul Jabein, and Sharabi).

Although Reuven, the eldest son of Jacob, was an Israelite figure, his *maqam* and festival became an Islamic shrine celebrated (and sometimes deified) by Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike. Historically, Rubin's shrine and river evolved significantly over time. Because of the fertility of the land around Nahr Rubin, archaeologists believe that the site was the location of a Canaanite temple in which Baal was worshipped and Baalist fertility rites were conducted. The earliest recorded history of the site originates from the Mamluk and Ayyubid period, when Sultan Salah Eddin and his successors rejuvenated local festivals as a pre-emptive strategy for mobilizing the coastal population (Nebi Ayyub, Nebi Rubin) and mountain peasants (Nabi Musa) against the resurgence of the Crusades by European pilgrims.

But it was the Ottomans who transformed these religious ceremonial events into a routine, worldly celebration in the spring, summer, and autumn seasons. During the Mandate period, the Nebi Musa celebrations reverted to their communal and nationalist mode as an anti-British, anti-Zionist event. To a much lesser extent, the Rubin festival also became engulfed within

51 See The Khalil Raad Photographic Collection (IPS Beirut), and the Ecole Biblique, https://www.ebaf.edu/phototheque/ (the latter currently under construction), accessed 30 March 2025.

the nationalist movement during the 1936–39 Rebellion. One of the chants heard during Rubin's *zaffet al-thob* refers to Jaffa as "the city of peace…city of lions…that does not allow the enemy to sleep at the point of the gun":[52]

يافا يا دار السلام فيك مربى الاسودي
عن العدا ما بنام والموت براس الباروده

(Jaffa, O abode of peace, in you
is the lion's preserve. I cannot
sleep from enmity, and death
is at the tip of a gun.)

However, for much of Mandate period, the *mawsim* remained a carnivalesque event, releasing the repressed yearnings of the masses into a public extravaganza of music, dance, and mundane commercial activities.

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52 Al-Bawwab, *Muwsu'at Yafa al Jamilah*, 1354.

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About the Author

Salim Tamari, senior fellow at the Institute of Palestine Studies and Professor Emeritus at Birzeit University, specializes in urban culture, sociology, and social history of the Eastern Mediterranean. Recent publications include *Camera Palaestina* (2022), *The Great War and the Remaking of Palestine* (2020), and *Year of the Locust* (2010).

2. A Transformed Rural Landscape: Scholten's Visual Representation of Coastal Palestinian Villages Destroyed in 1948

Iyad Issa

Abstract: This chapter explores Frank Scholten's photographic documentation of four Palestinian villages (Yazur, Beit Dajan, Sarafand, and al Safiriyya) in the early 1920s. Taken during the early British Mandate period, Scholten's photographs provide a rare visual record of the rural coastal landscape and the socioeconomic changes that affected these villages. This analysis examines how Scholten's biblical and Oriental influences shaped his portrayal of Palestinian rural life, and it contrasts his visual narrative with archival records and local oral histories. The chapter also considers the impact of modernization on these villages, reflecting the growing tension between urban expansion and rural traditions. Through a critical review of Scholten's work, this study sheds light on the complex dynamics of rural modernization in early twentieth-century Palestine.

Keywords: rural modernization, Jaffa-Jerusalem, Yazur, Beit Dajan, Sarafand, al Safiriyya

Introduction: Documenting the Biblical Landscape: Scholten's Jaffa-Jerusalem Journeys

During his relatively short stay in Palestine between 1921 and 1923, Scholten took several journeys between Jaffa and Jerusalem, capturing images of the two cities and the surrounding areas.[1] He took hundreds of photos of

1 Jaffa not only was given priority in documentation, but also in producing and publishing the first two books of Scholten's project to publish "an illustrated Bible" (see introduction of this volume for the bibliographic details).

Sanchez Summerer, Karène, and Sary Zananiri, eds. *Palestine in Transition: Frank Scholten's Visual Archive of the British Mandate Period*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/Central European University Press, 2026.
DOI: 10.5117/9789048562299-4

Palestinian villages, homes, shrines, archeological sites, and other features of the Palestinian landscape. They document the first years of the British Mandate for Palestine after the end of World War I and the devastating consequences for Palestine. Like other western photographers of that time, Scholten mainly focused on the biblical dimension of the villages and landscapes. Nevertheless, his documentation and spontaneous photographic style give an interesting visual account of rarely documented rural coastal landscape, including the Palestinian villages and cultural landscape destroyed in 1947–1948.

The photos of Scholten's journeys visually track the changing landscape and rural life, from the tip of the central highlands on the western outskirts of Jerusalem, such as Lifta village, to the sandy stretch of lands on the eastern outskirts of Jaffa, near the destroyed Palestinian village of Yazur. Comparing the first and last photos of such a path emphasizes the visual contrast of landscape details between coastal areas and mountains. Generally, rural areas are shown as traditional landscapes with "primitive" architecture and inhabitants with traditional clothes and daily activities that may be linked to biblical times.

This chapter critically reviews Scholten's photos of those rarely documented Palestinian coastal rural landscapes by focusing on four Palestinian villages destroyed in the Ramleh-Jaffa corridor. These include three villages from the Jaffa District located between the main motor road and the railway – Yazur, Beit Dajan, and al Safiriyya – and a fourth village from Ramleh District – Sarafand – that is adjacent to the main road.[2] This chapter also examines Scholten's representation of the rural landscape, cross-analyzing it with other archival sources and narratives from local oral history. The focus is on a visual analysis of Scholten's village photos in a period of rural modernization in Palestine: a period that began with Ottoman reforms and was followed by World War I and its impact on the rural areas.

This analysis comprises four sections, each focusing on one village. The first analyzes a rare panoramic photograph of Yazur and reflects on coastal villages in relation to biblical and oriental images of rural Palestine. The second focuses on the early transformation of Beit Dajan in relation to the neighboring and more urban city of Jaffa. The third looks at images of Sarafand and discusses the role of image captions. The fourth investigates Scholten's visual representation of al Safiriyya and contrasts it to archival photos taken or collected by Palestinians from the village who today form part of the diaspora, as part of building collective memory in the age of the

2 For detailed information about the village's depopulation and destruction, see Khalidi, *All That Remains*.

Fig. 1: "View of Lifta village," NINO, F. Scholten, *Lifta* album, *Judaea III*, 15.

internet and social media. These four loosely connected themes open possibilities for building a better understanding of the influence of modernization processes on rural Palestine during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Yazur: The Hidden Non-Majestic Coastal Rural Landscape

Palestinian villages and landscapes in the highlands have been documented by many western photographers since the mid-nineteenth century. The typical panoramic frame of the traditional village situated at the foot of a hill and surrounded by olive trees was a common representation of biblical Palestine.[3] In those images, the traditional village fabric is portrayed as a mosaic of cubic stone buildings concentrated at the heart of the village. Close frames were also used to document the outdoors or domestic activities.

Like other images, most of Scholten's photos of coastal villages were medium distance frames rather than panoramic. His photos include elements

3 See the work of Francis Frith (1858–1859), Francis Bedford (1815–1894), Félix Bonfils (1831–1885), and many other photographers who photographed Palestine in general and rural landscapes more specifically.

Fig. 2: "View of Yazur village," NINO, F. Scholten, *Yazur* album, near Jaffa.

found in visual representations of a typical "biblical village." For instance, Scholten's photos of Yazur contain several scenes and portraits. Most were dedicated to women filling jugs from the local water source, or to villagers working in the fields. However, one of Scholten's rare panoramas of coastal villages, a photo of Yazur (Fig. 2), is an example of one of the few attempts to document the coastal rural landscape.

Technically, this type of photography was possible because the village was situated on a relatively shallow hill, 25 meters above sea level and north of the main Jaffa-Jerusalem road. Scholten had the technical and visual capability to take one panoramic shot of the whole village, but only a low angle shot from street level. Such conditions of distance, the village form, the camera lens, and the angle produced a modest imagery of the village landscape; that may have been satisfactory for Scholten, but it may not have satisfied renowned commercial photographers.

The photo of Yazur highlights very few architectural features of the village. The rooftops of the mud houses seem to only create a general skyline of the village. The facades of houses are obscured, leaving the general view incomplete. The missing architectural features and details (such as building materials, windows, doors, or even alleys) contributed to creating a less defined image of the village than the photos of Lifta and Silwan, where such architectural elements and details contributed to expressing the village's visual character as part of Holy Land picturesque photography.[4]

4 It is worth noting that the Scholten archive includes another experimental panoramic photograph of Yazur village. Some of them have a more artistic style and traditional elements, such as peasants on the side of the road, dirt roads leading to the village, a more arid landscape, or an ancient shrine with a dome that fit more with images of biblical landscapes.

Fig. 3: "Women filling water jugs, Yazur," NINO, F. Scholten, *Yazur* album, near Jaffa, 04:31.

The panoramic photo of Yazur in Scholten's *Sanctuaries Album IV* is visually unimpressive compared to the majestic western imagination of the Holy Land. However, this photo gives a glimpse of the coastal Palestinian village's nature in the early twentieth century. It shows a different form of a traditional village center and landscape: instead of agricultural terraces in mountain villages, we see a village surrounded by lush greenery, and instead of masonry houses with vaults, these houses were examples of mixed stone and mud architecture with wooden pitched or flat roofs.

The socioeconomic transformation of rural Palestine had shifted since the mid-nineteenth century, when the Ottoman reforms of land ownership rules changed traditional urban-rural economic dynamics.[5] Urban elites and merchants started purchasing land in the villages around Jaffa to develop citrus orchards that would be cultivated by the local villagers. An initial comparison of aerial photography taken during World War I with nineteenth-century maps[6] is harder to capture through foreign broad-spectrum photography. The photos of the neighboring village of Beit Dajan better document this rural transformation.

5 Schölch, "The Socio-Economic Structure."

6 The Palestine Exploration Fund maps notably show signs of the emerging citrus industry in the Yazur region during the late Ottoman period; see Nadi Abusaada's chapter in this volume.

Beit Dajan: The Prosperous Village

Beit Dajan was a coastal village situated 6 km southeast of Jaffa. Traditionally, the village economy had mainly been based on agriculture alongside local crafts.[7] In the late nineteenth century, the village had witnessed more rapid developments than its neighbors, which had gradually entangled it with Jaffa's modern urbanity. That relationship impacted the socioeconomic life of the village.[8] Beit Dajan had some distinctive features that might have contributed to its particular history: its considerable population, its proximity to Jaffa, and the existence of historic social and economic ties between leading figures from Jaffa and the village.[9] This presumably attracted investments of urban capital and industries in the village. By the end of the British Mandate period, Beit Dajan had a local market, industrial facilities, light industry workshops, and a relatively large citrus industry. The non-agricultural activities demonstrate the village's role as peripheral to the Jaffa urban area. This economic boom had a tremendous impact on the socio-cultural life of Beit Dajan, which was reflected in features such as the local traditional costumes.[10]

Scholten's photographs of Beit Dajan document many features: the village square, some building construction activities, the craftsmanship of traditional mud block construction, intimate portraits of women in their traditional costumes, and young women handling water jugs, among other topics. At first glance, Scholten's photographs here seem to be a typical depiction of a coastal Palestinian village, such as the ones described above. However, an in-depth examination reveals some distinctive features of the village that document early signs of its modernization. This section focuses on three photographs: the first two in the village plaza, and the third of a mansion at the edge of the village on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road.

The first photo shows a relatively spacious outdoor area, a *saha*, surrounded by some village buildings (Fig. 4). Despite its traditional character, the rural fabric seen in this photo seems to have some urban characteristics,

7 Baldensperger, *The Immovable East*.

8 For preliminary reading about the village's socioeconomic dynamics, see Weir, *Palestinian Costume*, 204.

9 For instance, many resources indicated that the Dajani family in Jaffa had many ties to Beit Dajan.

10 The researcher Shelagh Weir dedicated a significant part of her book *Palestinian Costume* to documenting Beit Dajan's traditional dresses, costumes, and distinctive embroidery style, which she linked to the socioeconomic development dynamics of the village in the first half of the twentieth century.

Fig. 4: "In Beit Dedjan," NINO, F. Scholten, *Palestine Judaea V*, 010.

exemplified by the large number of shops around the plaza and what seems to be a coffee house. The two-story buildings in the background and around the plaza are examples of a more developed building typology of mixed stone and mud architecture; one that stands in contrast to the more modest architecture of adjacent villages. The four-sided pitched roofs and red tiles on the buildings' upper floors demonstrate the influence of coastal urban architecture such as that in Jaffa, as does the use of modern imported construction materials from Europe. One can also see quite an elaborate facade plastered with white lime wash as an extra layer of protection against weather conditions. This fine craftsmanship is rarely found in the photos of surrounding villages such as the ones of al Safiriyya, where village houses were much simpler with dark mud plastering.

The frame mirrors an almost urban skyline, with the red tiled pitched roofs demonstrating modern influences on Beit Dajan's rural architectural fabric. Interestingly, the frame also shows how these modern elements had been absorbed, adapted, and appropriated in rural life. The piles of straw and wood sticks over the roofs show how the replacement of the traditional flat wooden roofs with pitched ones did not stop the local people from using them to dry and store plants as part of their traditional everyday vernacular.

Fig. 5: "In Beit Dedjan," NINO, F. Scholten, *Palestine Judaea V*, 008.

This urban-rural hybridity in Beit Dajan's social life also can be seen in the second photo, at the plaza. A group portrait shows men and children posing in front of a shop, possibly a coffee house (Fig. 5). Some of the residents are wearing traditional dress such as *qumbaz* paired with a modern jacket, standing side by side with men wearing modern men's suits.

The third photograph shows a mansion that seems to be located on the main Jaffa-Jerusalem road at the edge of the village and was probably constructed in the final years of the Ottoman period.[11] This photo documents buildings erected outside the village center. Usually, such structures were linked to *bayarat* (orange orchards) owned by notable and rich Palestinians. The mansion's architectural style has urban features: the composition, the size, window style, classical elements and masonry, the central balcony, multiple roofs, and the stone facade. It may be seen as an example of the building of mansions within *bayarat* that were owned by merchants from Jaffa.

11 NINO, F Scholten photographic print 02: 1243. It was improbable that such a mansion would have been built in the first years directly after the end of World War I, since Palestine's economy and society had yet to recover from the aftermath of the war. Also, maps from the war show the existence of buildings in the same approximate area.

Archival material and photos from other sources show the house in different conditions and with architectural alterations. The building was found in later documentation of the industrial tobacco complex owned by Issa Hazboun, a renowned Palestinian merchant from Bethlehem. He went bankrupt in later years, and the entire property was sold at auction.[12] This mansion illustrates Jaffa's urban expansion and influence on the adjacent villages of Yazur and Beit Dajan, which started during Ottoman rule and intensified during the British Mandate period. It exemplifies the dynamics between urban expansion in rural areas and Zionist expansionist strategies in the Jaffa area, even against British partisan policies.[13]

Scholten's photographs of Beit Dajan show a close engagement with people and architecture; Scholten also may have found more familiar features that reminded him of Jaffa's urban and social life, like men's public gatherings. The close frames of women's portraits also share similarities with the portraits taken in urban areas rather than the typical ones of peasants in the fields. Nevertheless, his photos of village alleys and fields still look similar to the cliché imagery of the surrounding villages.[14]

Sarafand El-A'mar or El-Kharab: The Ambiguous Village Next to the Military Camp

Sarafand El-A'mar was a Palestinian village in the Ramleh sub-district, located three kilometers northwest of the city of Ramleh, less than 300 meters from the Jaffa-Jerusalem road. It was the first village after Ramleh in the direction of Jaffa. Sarafand El-Kharab was another Palestinian village; it lay around four kilometers southwest of Sarafand El-A'mar and east of the road toward al Majdal and Gaza. Both villages had typical Palestinian rural socioeconomic dynamics based on agriculture, particularly citrus. The area around the two villages "hosted" one of the main British army bases during and after World War I. This was later transformed into one of the main British army bases in the Middle East and included the notorious

12 It was then purchased by a Jewish businessman known to the locals as *Shakarman*. Other sources mentioned that the complex ended up in the hands of the Jewish National Fund, and it was used for various industrial activities in the 1940s. It was also used as part of an industrial complex. The building later became a spot for clashes and assaults, especially during the last years of the British Mandate period.

13 The four villages presented here were in Zone A, where British policies prohibited transfer of land to a Palestinian Arab, except in special circumstances.

14 Page 8 and page 15, album *Judaea V.*

Fig. 6: "Moissonneurs à Sarafand (Harvest in Sarafand)," NINO, F. Scholten, *Judea IX*, 038.

Fig. 7: "Sarafand—Geth (?), Patrie de Goliath (home of Goliath)," NINO, F. Scholten, *Palestine Sanctuaires IV,* 030.

Sarafand detention center, where many Palestinian activists and politicians were detained during the 1936–1939 Revolt against British authorities.[15]

Scholten's archive contains several photos of a village labeled "Sarafand." They do not indicate which village is shown specifically,[16] but the photos depict the daily life and built environment of a typical Palestinian village. Fig. 6 depicts a familiar scene of traditional Palestinian village life during the harvest season. Fig. 7 shows a typical pose of a local Palestinian boy standing beside an old stone column. Both frame a familiar narrative of oriental or biblical photography. The main title of the page where the photo was pasted is Sarafand, and there is a biblical reference to Kings XVII:7 (the story of David and Goliath) on the opposite corner. However, the caption below it is "Geth?" (a biblical site), the home of Goliath (in French).

Despite the critical analysis of the attached text, this section focuses on possible reasons for the use of labels that are hard to distinguish and open to interpretation. One example is the generic name of the village Sarafand, which is not only used in captions but also in written accounts of a tragic event there: a massacre of Palestinian villagers committed in December 1918, mainly by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) Mounted division from the nearby military camp.[17] Despite the local distinction between the two villages, most western sources, and some Ottoman sources too, called them by same name or used little variation.[18]

Many modern reviews[19] of the massacre, published around the centenary celebration of the end of World War I, asserted that it was committed in Sarafand El-A'mar,[20] but cross checks with Palestinian oral history and recent

15 Hughes, *Britain's Pacification of Palestine*, chapter 5 "Screwing down the population," footnote 208. A CID appreciation in November 1936 of the men held at Sarafand for their "extremist" views was that the greatest number of internees in the camp at any one time was 421 on 9 October 1936, down to 34 by November 1936.

16 Or even Al-Sarafand village, in Haifa district. https://www.palestineremembered.com/Haifa/al-Sarafand/index.html#Statistics, accessed 22 March 2025.

17 Sahhar, "Where is Palestine in the Anzacs' Palestine Campaign?"

18 A survey of western Palestine labeled Sarafand El-A'mar as Surafend, and Sarafand El-Kharab as Khurbet Surafend. It seems this was the start of using the generic name Sarafand or Surafend to refer to Sarafand El-A'mar.

19 "Massacre that stained the Light Horse," an article by Tim Elliott at https://www.theage.com.au/national/massacre-that-stained-the-light-horse-20090724-dv30.html, accessed 27 March 2025. Sources referring to Sarafand El-a'mar built their conclusion on official documents that mentioned only Surafend, and maps and other archival material for the same village name led to El-A'mar, not Sarafand El-Kharab.

20 The massacre Wikipedia page indicated the location as Sarafand El-A'mar https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surafend_massacre; another article in The First World War Centenary Programme Office in New Zealand did the same, https://ww100.govt.nz/surafend-incident. and

Fig. 8: "Sarafand Camp," NINO, F. Scholten, photographic print 16:1005.

extensive research show that the massacre was committed in Sarafand el-Kharab.[21] Another cause of this confusion might result from the fact that Jewish auxiliary forces in a police death squad murdered several inhabitants of Sarafand El-Kharab in 1936.[22]

Scholten documented both Sarafand villages – their non-modern architecture, lifestyle, and the ruins – through the romantic perspective of an ancient landscape, but he also documented the adjacent military camp, the modern war machine. Both were documented separately, apparently due to the different purposes and visual identity. One resembles traditional rural Palestine and was placed in the *Sanctuaries* album with biblical connotations; the other resembles the violent modern colonial presence in Palestine. Yet the two places influenced each other, as the massacre also shows.

many other recent reference did the same, meanwhile the archival documents in the reference showed Surafend only such as the official letters of compensation https://www.flickr.com/photos/archivesnz/46081784991/in/photostream/; accessed 29 March 2025.

21 Researcher Khalid Oudetallah conducted a detailed investigation of the massacre and confirmed that it occurred in Sarafand el-Kharab. Preliminary results of the ongoing research were presented in a lecture in el Bireh in February 2024. For online documentation, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Snj7wG-b668

22 Hughes, *Britain's Pacification of Palestine*, Chapter 8, "Dirty Wars and Extra Judicial Violence," footnote 109. Extract from a Letter from an English Friend in Palestine, 11 January 1939, Lees Papers, 5/9, LHCMA.

The relations between the villages and the Sarafand British military base mirror the complex dynamics between British authorities and Palestinians. The base was built very close to Sarafand El-A'mar's village center (less than a couple of hundred meters), which blocked village expansion to the south and west. Although the two villages had been affected dramatically in different ways by the establishment of this modern military camp,[23] both faced the same depopulation and demolition by Zionist forces in 1948.

Al Safiriyya: The Mysterious Local Photographer and the Football Club

Al Safiriyya was a Palestinian village eleven kilometers southeast of Jaffa. The village center was right next to the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway line and two kilometers away from the Jaffa- Jerusalem road. Al Safiriyya was the only village along the Jaffa-Ramleh corridor with a train stop (though it had no official station or building). It was the second village one came to after leaving Ramleh in the direction of Jaffa. The village inhabitants grew cereal grains, especially sesame, and produce such as tomatoes. By the late nineteenth century, orange groves became one of the village's main agricultural activities (as was common in other coastal villages).

Scholten's photos of Al Safiriyya are mostly midground shots taken in the lanes of the village center. It is the least documented of the four villages presented here. The photos show mud house facades and basic local commercial activities (labeled "Bazaar" by Scholten) taking place in shaded alleys between the houses. Men and children are photographed sitting in an outdoor cafe. Despite their limited number, Scholten's photos are valuable and rare documentation of parts of the village's daily life and offer a glimpse of its traditional building materials, such as stone-mud architecture. People stare at the camera in what appears to be a kind of spontaneous individual and group portrait. Unfortunately, the captions offer no personal information or names.

Yet, Al Safiriyya is a case study for which oral histories about village life before the Nakba are available. Photographs collected and circulated online

23 Especially during World War II, the camp employed hundreds of Palestinians from Jaffa, Ramleh, and other areas. This changed the socioeconomic dynamics of the local villages' economies, especially that of Sarafand El-A'mar, where local business and economic activities (e.g., cafes, restaurants, and other services) were developed to cater to Palestinians who worked at the military base. Then it became a strategic point to fight over between Jewish forces and Palestinians during the final months of the British Mandate.

Fig. 9: "Safariya," NINO, F. Scholten, *Palestine Judaea VI*, 005.

present visual and oral narratives from the last decade before 1948.[24] When we compare these with Scholten's photographs, taken twenty to twenty-five years earlier, one can see the transformation during the Mandate period, including radical differences in the built environment and in people's clothing and appearances.

Two distinctive photos are worth reflecting on. The first shows a young Khalil Abu Zeid posing in front of the village's modern sports club. The second is a group portrait of the Al Safiriyya village football team. The first photo, found on the internet, shows a modern building with a modern layout and stylish windows, designed with a pitched tiled roof. Such buildings are related to the modern urban buildings of Jaffa rather than rural traditional homes. The form of the building's modern architecture demonstrates the shift in the rural lifestyle, but the building's function shows social changes, like the creation of modern institutions like a village sports club. Oral histories offer a lot of insight about this sports club and the people engaged in its activities and administration.[25] In contrast to community organizations

24 https://www.palestineremembered.com/Jaffa/al-Safiriyya/index.html, accessed 29 March 2025.

25 https://www.palestineremembered.com/Jaffa/al-Safiriyya/index.html, accessed 29 March 2025.

such as local Boy Scout troops like *Najjadh and Fotowah* (which suffered violent confrontations), locals had a positive impression of the sports club and perceived it to be neutral and nonpartisan.

In contrast to portraits of unknown people that are usually labeled as "a typical peasant" in western photography, in this photo Khalil Abu Zeid is dressed in a modern suit. Abu Zaid was a local photographer, but little is known about his professional career and whether it began before or after 1948.[26]

The second photo is a group portrait of the Al Safiriyya local football club. This team photo is an important archival document for the village's collective memory. Each player was identified by name, and the photo circulated widely. It was not rare for a village to have a football team in the Mandate period, but this photo boosted the value of such a social activity in the collective memory of the village's former residents in the diaspora. This brings the memorialization of rural village heritage closer to modern urban life and farther from typologies of biblical peasants in the fields.

The two photos illustrate radical transformations from the traditional rural environment Scholten documented. They add another dimension to youths' social activities before the Nakba and provide a basis for comparison to Scholten's images of the influence of modern urban building techniques. When one sees the differences between Scholten's local photos taken in the early 1920s and images taken in the 1940s, it is evident that such radical change could not have occurred without the seeds of socioeconomic change being planted before World War I. Scholten's foreign perspective may have made it difficult for him to define these sites of transformation, or perhaps such new developments were incompatible with the biblical visual narrative about rural areas in Palestine that lived in Scholten's mind.[27]

Conclusion

While Scholten's urban photographs portray a society in transformation, his initial point of view when documenting rural areas includes elements of oriental and biblical perspectives. His approach is typical in that it portrays

26 By the 1960s, he was a professional photographer in Amman covering official national and international events.

27 Alsafiriyya Football Team, https://www.palestineremembered.com/Jaffa/al-Safiriyya/Picture2564.html and Khalil Abu Zeid portrait https://www.palestineremembered.com/Jaffa/al-Safiriyya/Picture59572.html, accessed 30 March 2025.

a traditional rural setting built on an "eternal" relationship between the anonymous peasant and the "ancient" landscape and ruins of the Holy Land.

While the books he published about Jaffa reflect how he documented, selected, and annotated the city's scenes and people, his photos of rural Palestine and these four villages probably constituted a preliminary documentation/partial selection for publications that did not come to fruition.[28] This unfinished work of selection gives us opportunities to examine them critically within a wider context of modernization at the margins of urban centers or within active urban-rural interdependency, rather than as an isolated time capsule floating in a theological geography.

These photographs should be read as existing in different sets of relationships. Sarafand was pictured within the dynamics of modern war and biased military accounts, while Beit Dajan's distinctive socioeconomic activities and urban influence were starting to gradually manifest in the architectural and built environment (raising questions of rural class stratification and urban-rural elite interrelationships). In Al Safiriyya, the entangled approach of various archives allows for the identification of individuals, replacing images of anonymous peasants in a biblical landscape.

This approach also helps to account for some contradictory aspects of Scholten's experimental on-site documentation versus his later selection and taxonomy. It reveals different levels of engagement with the subject of his photography.

Reading these images through a relational framework (oral history, formal archival material, and local photography) helps us understand coastal rural Palestine in the 1920s to a level beyond the minimal visual manifestation of modernization framed by a western photographer with limited time and local knowledge. Each village appears as a dynamic entity with its own networks and influences.

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About the Author

Iyad Issa is an architect and researcher exploring architecture, urbanism, and geography. He teaches at Birzeit University and examines the intersections between urban form, social practice, and artistic expression in Palestinian and Arab contexts.

3. A Middle Eastern Photosphere: 1920s Tel Aviv as Space, Statement, and Idea

Rebekka Grossmann

Abstract: This chapter examines Frank Scholten's photographic documentation of Tel Aviv during his 1921 visit to Palestine. Tel Aviv, which was emerging as a Zionist Mediterranean hub, became a focal point for Scholten's exploration of urban life and social diversity. His images reveal the city's layered history and rapid transformation, capturing the tension between longstanding regional traditions and modern Zionist ambitions. Scholten's extended stay allowed him to engage deeply with Tel Aviv's social fabric, documenting diverse communities and their connections to the city's growth. His experience also reshaped his perspective as a queer European traveler, which influenced how he portrayed Tel Aviv's evolving identity. Scholten's work serves as both a record of urban change and a reflection of his active role in shaping its narrative.

Keywords: travel, transnational urban cultures, queer sociability, multiethnic encounters

When Frank Scholten traveled to Palestine in 1921, he had the creation of a large set of illustrated volumes in mind to showcase the country's landscape, flora, fauna, and people. Yet, the only two volumes that would actually see the light of day would be the ones on Jaffa. His collection reflects these results; of the 26,537 pictures in the Frank Scholten collection, more than half (13,769) appear when a search is limited to "Tel Aviv." Even though some places, figures, and scenes cannot be verified as having been photographed in Tel Aviv or Jaffa, many can indeed be located in the larger Jaffa-Tel Aviv area, including villages in their hinterland. But the area seems to have been more than a mere subject of Scholten's studies. It was also a base for his

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various trips to regions beyond the immediate shoreline. The panorama of Tel Aviv is the backdrop for a plethora of Scholten's encounters and impressions from his visit to Palestine. Scholten's images help the viewer explore Tel Aviv as part of an amalgam of communities that reach to Jaffa and beyond, rather than a separate city whose history is usually narrated through the lens of a teleological Zionist narrative of national renewal and urban growth.

This chapter discusses Tel Aviv as both a dwelling place and a social space that helped the photographer make sense of urban life in the Middle East. I will argue that while Scholten came to Palestine with a clear idea in mind as to what he wanted to see, Tel Aviv transformed his gaze in return. The city and the encounters he had there further shaped his positioning of himself as a male, queer European traveler in the Middle East. At the same time, the collection shows that in documenting Tel Aviv, Scholten not only recorded the fast transformations the city underwent but also took part in forging them.

Traveling Tel Aviv

Frank Scholten arrived in Tel Aviv in June 1921 after having traveled to Italy, Greece, Germany, and Switzerland. By visiting Palestine in the early 1920s, Scholten exemplified a new kind of tourist: he went beyond earlier European aspirations to travel to holy sites and also documented the development of villages, cities, and local infrastructure. By so doing, he responded to the offer created largely by Zionist travel agents to show visitors a "renewed" Palestine, presenting secular (or secularized) sights worth seeing beyond the usual pilgrims' routes.[1] In recreating Palestine's touristic landscape, they competed with Arab-Palestinian travel and tourism agents in highlighting local continuities.[2]

European travelers' accounts of these years reflect this twofold impression of Palestine. The German-Jewish travelers Artur Rundt and Richard A. Bermann, for example, reported on their 1923 trip in a book titled *Palästina: Ein Reisebuch* (*Palestine: A Travelogue*). On the first pages, they describe Tel

1 Daam, *Tourism and the Emergence of Nation-States,* 124–5. Cohen-Hattab, "Zionism, Tourism, and the Battle for Palestine," 62. On travel to Palestine and identity formation in the history of Jewish nationalism, also see Siegel, "Visiting the Orient."

2 Daam, *Tourism and the Emergence of Nation-States*, 125; Cohen-Hattab, "Zionism, Tourism, and the Battle for Palestine," 65.

Aviv as a city growing quickly out of the dunes near Jaffa yet lacking the organic connections of a European city.[3] In contrast, a Jewish convert to Islam, Leopold Weiss , wrote in his travelogue *Unromantic Orient* (1924) that his trip to Palestine meant a complete disconnection from everything he knew and was familiar with; he called it "unbridgeably foreign."[4]

Frank Scholten was part of the new postwar tourist wave whose numbers quickly exceeded those of tourists before the war.[5] His images and the two books he published likewise merge impressions of a place both "new" and "old." The fact that Scholten's travels in and around Tel Aviv offer us insights of a large spatial area means that he was oblivious to – or consciously ignored – the boundaries drawn around Tel Aviv and Jaffa as results of attempts to strengthen Zionist or Palestinian national narratives. While it is unclear whether this reflects his belief in the region as a functioning multi-ethnic ecosystem and the integration of long-time visitors and immigrants, it attests to his aspiration to present himself as an insider to the region's various ways of life, habits, and trends, and as a mediator between them. His insights attest to his awareness of the growth and development of Tel Aviv (which branded itself in ideologically inflated terms as the "first Zionist city" and "Zionism put in stone") while also showing it as part of a region that reflected ties and networks that had organically grown before the city's founding.[6] His camera served to help him actively engage with the sights, the people, and the political realities around him.

Tel Aviv's denizens had been familiar with photography since the early days of the history of the city – both studios and individual photographers had roamed the area to document its beginnings. Some photographers who would later move to Tel Aviv had their first studios in neighboring Jaffa. One of the first documented Jaffa photographers with a successful studio was Daoud Saboungi, a member of what appears to have been a successful family of portrait and landscape photographers working all across the Middle East.[7]

A photographer who made a name for himself as the first Jewish immigrant to document the first years of Tel Aviv was Abraham Soskin, who arrived with the second Zionist immigration wave (Aliyah) in 1905.

3 Rundt and Bermann, *Palästina: Ein Reisebuch*, 12, 15.

4 Weiss, *Unromantisches Morgenland,* 6. In 1926, Weiss would take on the name Muhammad Assad.

5 By 1923, 7,000 tourists were registered for the year, more than in 1913–14, which until then had been the record year. Daam, *Tourism and the Emergence of Nation-States,* 134.

6 Schlör, *Tel Aviv,* 63, 118.

7 Sheehi, *The Arab Imago*, 30. Sheehi dates the beginnings of the studio to the early 1890s.

He first ran a photo studio in Jaffa before moving it to Tel Aviv in 1913.[8] Soskin has been credited with creating a distinct early Hebrew identity through his studio portraits, in which he allowed his Jewish sitters to stage themselves as East-Western hybrids. In doing so, they embraced elements of both cultures but made sure to include visual markers and props in the images that reflected their Western origin.[9] Another photographer roaming the streets of Tel Aviv was the immigrant Zvi Orushkes, who arrived in Palestine after World War I as part of the Jewish Legion. Having spent much of the 1910s in the United States, he was influenced by the aspiration to understand photography as a tool of social critique.[10] Pointing at local social and political affairs – often with a pinch of irony – Orushkes' images portray some of the tensions caused by the quick growth of a city in which migrants from various backgrounds not only sought a new home but also a new national identity to replace the imperial realities that had governed their lives before their arrival.

While the influence of men like Soskin and Orushkes on the photographic economy of Tel Aviv cannot be denied, their presence in the public memory has directed the focus away from other, less prominent photographers who likewise populated the streets of Tel Aviv during its early years and who further expanded the archive of Tel Aviv views. Frank Scholten was one of them, and his numerous contributions to recording the city's scenes and landscapes considerably broaden the picture of its atmosphere in the early 1920s. On the one hand, they reflect the aspiration to provide a complete visual inventory of the region. On the other hand, they record Scholten's slow but steady turn away from merely being an onlooker to becoming an active participant in the spectacle he created, a director of views.

Tel Aviv at First Glance

Scholten's images show a variety of realities existing in close proximity to each other. In some images, Tel Aviv is still a city in the making (Fig. 1). Little of the views of tents on the beach and fields with sparsely scattered houses remind one of the city these houses were going to become or the

8 Silver-Brody, *Documentors of the Dream*.

9 See Guez, *Orientalism Trom-Israeli*, 158. While similar to earlier European forms of cultural cross-dressing, Zionist sitters made a stronger point of belonging through full adaptation to local dress and habits. Zerubavel, *Desert in the Promised Land*, 42.

10 One of Orushkes' photography role models was Lewis Hine. Silver-Brody, "HaTzalam Zvi Orushkes (Oron)". See also Ben Tovim, *In the Service of the High Commissioner*.

Fig. 1: "Gate leading to buildings," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv,* 451-500:35. Scholten's travels in Tel Aviv included trips to the young city's outskirts, showing that the metropolis it was to become consisted of areas that still had a very rural outlook.

cosmopolitan character other neighborhoods already claimed for themselves with an infrastructure that had been developed before the outbreak of World War I.[11] Those latter neighborhoods were the ones featured in early Zionist publications and pamphlets, attesting to the city's quick growth and its aspirations to be perceived as a Western metropolis. Instead, Scholten's images point to the different stages the city was going through, which also offers a visual connection with the land.

At the same time, Scholten explores the city's center and captures it as an international space. The black Hebrew and Latin letters neatly drawn on the façade of a menswear shop present traces of Eastern European immigrant culture.[12] The letters of the owner's Ashkenazi name, Shlomo Salzfass, accurately adorn the façade; the painter will probably return to fill in the white gaps between the letters in the color of the wall (Fig. 2). A single palm tree in the background flanked by a few houses underscores the impression that the shop – just like the many other views – has just been added to a cityscape ready for shoppers to arrive in the country. At

11 Schlör, *Tel Aviv,* 24.

12 This does not mean that Ashkenazi Jews did not populate Palestine before the large waves of Zionist immigration. See Wallach, "Tourist, Pilgrim Migrant, Settler."

Fig. 2: "Man looking at the display window of a menswear shop," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa-Tel Aviv-Sarona*, 09:020. The shop's façade looks like it has been renovated only recently, adding to the new appearance of Tel Aviv's center. A first window shopper inspects the new wares.

the same time, these visual markers suggest a certain disconnect from local consumer cultures and the architectural eclecticism mass migration would cause.[13] The worker in the lower right corner, perhaps the painter, is still busy cleaning up while a passerby already inspects clothes that are neatly presented to him. He not only embodies a potential first customer but also represents part of a new kind of Middle Eastern habitus reflecting the emergence of a local modern leisure culture, which included shopping and strolling. That this phenomenon was not bound to one ethnic group alone and might have offered space for inter-ethnic encounters is reflected in the fact that other Middle Eastern cities, such as Jerusalem, had their own designated flaneurs.[14]

If shops like the one opened by Shlomo Salzfass offered a new consumer culture and a way to ponder its meaning for the city, the Casino Galey Aviv restaurant symbolized a place to test trends and openly display, exchange, and develop fashion styles and tastes. Scholten witnessed the building

13 Schlör, *Tel Aviv,* 69.

14 One of them was Wasif Jawhariyyeh, whose life and routes were traced and retold by Tamari and Nassar in *The Storyteller of Jerusalem*. On the impact of urban change on the Arab self-image, also see Abusaada, "Urban Encounters," 375–86.

Fig. 3: "Groups of people on the beach," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 11:02. The popular Casino Galey Aviv restaurant (building on the beach on the left) opened in 1922 and decorated Tel Aviv's shoreline until its closure in 1936, introducing European leisure habits and looks.

and opening of the popular Tel Aviv venue firsthand in 1921 and 1922, and he portrayed it as a landmark surrounded by numerous beachgoers who adopted the building into the landscape and would celebrate its existence until it was torn down some fourteen years later (Fig. 3).[15] Whereas the beach of Jaffa was dominated by the hustle and bustle of the harbor and its workers, the beach of Tel Aviv lent itself to a leisurely stroll. Class rather than ethnic divides seems to separate the two spheres. The strolls around the restaurant have the character of a performance of status and belonging to the city. In their styles and fashion, these people resemble members of the international middle class emerging across the globe, including in adjacent Middle Eastern cities. They adopted new urban spaces or turned previously private spaces into public venues marked by the sounds of many languages.[16]

Echoing the dilemmas of other local national groups in their encounters with cosmopolitan trends, the Casino Galey Aviv posed a symbolic challenge to the boundary between diasporic habits and the identity that Zionist

15 Helman, *Young Tel Aviv*, 122–3.

16 On coffee houses accelerating the creation of a new public sphere see, for example, Chakrabarty's discussion of the Bengali tradition of *Adda* in his *Provincializing Europe*, Chapter 7. On the variety of languages in 1920s Tel Aviv, see Schlör, *Tel Aviv,* 115.

Fig. 4: "Two men on the beach posing behind two warning signs," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 14:075. The naked men, posing behind signs warning beachgoers about the dangers of swimming in the sea, are a tongue-in-cheek play on the beach's ostensible dangers of moral decay.

settlement in Palestine sought to establish.[17] Instead, it embodied a kind of consumerism that was simultaneously celebrated and despised by Zionist figureheads because it created social hierarchies or, worse, advertised hedonism and lavish glamour.[18] Moreover, these figureheads thought that institutions of this kind helped turn the beach – an area crowded by strollers and offering a platform for a variety of appearances – into a potential den of iniquity, lacking morals and decency.[19] Nakedness or promiscuity was one of these alleged sins and photographs of naked young men on the beach show that Scholten witnessed and possibly further forged these freedoms by having the men pose for him.[20] His photograph showing two men behind signs in Arabic, English, and Hebrew that warn beachgoers of the dangers of bathing in the sea is a tongue-in-cheek visual play on the perceived dangers of the beach (Fig. 4). Fashion and clothing (or the lack of it) as well as the presence of different languages and styles offer Scholten

17 See, for example, Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 4.

18 Helman, *Young Tel Aviv*, 91–2. On Zionist attempts to control local consumption in nationalist terms, see, for example, Shoham, "'Buy Local' or 'Buy Jewish'?"

19 Helman, *Young Tel Aviv*, 110–3.

20 For contemporary discussions of beach dress codes, see Helman, *Young Tel Aviv*, 113.

a means to make statements about the international and cosmopolitan outlook of Tel Aviv.[21]

Expanding Boundaries

Additional images suggest that rather than merely documenting bourgeois life in Tel Aviv and a nascent culture of bohemian sociability, Scholten was also an active participant in shaping them. Scholten's trip was not only a result of an intrinsic desire for travel and interest in the region, but it also served as a way to leave his native country for some time. In the Netherlands, he was facing a jail sentence after being accused of having sexual relations with men and participating in prostitution rings that introduced working class men to the possibility of working at gay brothels in the Amsterdam district De Pijp.[22] Earlier contacts with figures like Magnus Hirschfeld – whom Scholten had met during an extended stay in Berlin in the 1910s – allow for the assumption that Scholten was not only drawn to men sexually but aware of the possibility of actively engaging in forging a discourse on queer identity.[23]

As recent research on the queer histories of the Mandate period has shown, German gay sociability experienced an active expansion to Mandate Palestine as many of its immigrating German Jews settled, in particular, in Tel Aviv. In 1932, Magnus Hirschfeld would visit and discover it as a place with a lively queer culture.[24] Yet, gay life in the Middle East and the Arab world did not start with and cannot be limited to the sexual identities of Jewish immigrants to Palestine; it appears in the writings of travelers and local Arab intellectuals

21 Fashion culture and the insights it offers for understanding Jewish nationalism are currently being investigated on a larger scale by Svenja Bethke. See, for example, S. Bethke, "How to Dress Up in Eretz Israel, 1880s–1948." It is not clear whether such images could also have been found on Jaffa's beaches, although it can be assumed that Arab Palestinians (as opposed to some new immigrants) had not been as widely exposed to the kind of European "free body culture" that began in central Europe around the turn of the twentieth century. At the same time, as Kirsten Scheid has shown, the Mediterranean Arab world was developing more tolerance of nudity in the arts, with Lebanese nationalist artists embracing nudity as "indexes of modernity." See Scheid, "Necessary Nudes," 215.

22 Zananiri, "Documenting the Social," 266–306, 270.

23 Zananiri, "Documenting the Social," 270, 274. On Hirschfeld's influences on transnational queer culture, also see Sluhovsky, "Introduction," *Queer Jewish Lives Between Central Europe and Mandatory Palestine*, 12–13.

24 See Yonay, "Gay German Jews and the Arrival of 'Homosexuality' to Mandatory Palestine."

long before that time.[25] Scholten's visit, which preceded that of Hirschfeld by a decade, attests to a flourishing local bohemian subculture that included spaces for the expression of same-sex desires. While shaped by international trends, these spaces also allowed for a distinctly local ethnic fluidity.

While photographs like the one of naked men on the beach alone cannot serve as proof that Scholten was involved in performing queer sociability, other photographs suggest he had close ties with many representatives of local queer entertainment. One image hinting at Scholten's interest and access to local drag culture is a rare insight into what seems like a flourishing local tradition of gendered cross-dressing and entertainment (Fig. 5). The subject wears a feathered vest, a headdress, and the kind of make-up that turns her into a dark-eyed beauty. In her left hand she holds a bar, and in her right hand a lavishly long pearl necklace. In combination with her feather crown and the dismissive or even pitying look on her face, these objects turn into emblems of quasi-royal authority. The neutral background, a wooden paravent, directs all attention to her while also shielding her from the outside world, which hints at the borderline character of the culture she represents. Another person with a similar appearance can be found in the collection, which shows that Scholten was eager to present them as part of a larger Middle Eastern subculture of the kind that has also been studied in the nightlife of other Middle Eastern cities, such as Cairo.[26]

As Sary Zananiri has shown, cross-dressing is not an unfamiliar feature in images of early twentieth-century life in Palestine. While Zananiri has focused largely on "cultural cross-dressing," he shows that it is closely connected to transgressions of gender.[27] At the same time, Scholten's image above differs from the form of gender cross-dressing Zananiri describes: it does not carry markers of any particular interest or affinity to oriental fashion or habits; rather than an affirmation of any kind of local or national affiliation, it seems to be part of an active, self-confident, semi-public performance of cosmopolitan trends.[28]

The embrace of plumes, for example, as a commodity traded all over the world speaks to the desire for an internationalist appearance and against the aspiration to identify with any one particular style.[29] During the first decades of the twentieth century, plumes developed to become a product of

25 Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, Introduction and Chapter 1.

26 Cormack, *Midnight in Cairo*, 82, 117, 119, 120.

27 Zananiri, "Costumes and the Image," 80–1.

28 On the private character of gender cross-dressing in the images he describes, see Zananiri, "Costumes and the Image," 83.

29 Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes*.

Fig. 5: "Person in fancy clothing," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa-Tel Aviv-Sarona*, 13:87. The person's clothing, lavishly decorated with feathers and pearls, hints at the existence of a flourishing queer entertainment culture with which Scholten, a gay traveler in Palestine, seemed familiar.

utmost importance for global fashion culture and were eagerly adopted as an element of queer culture and drag dress code.[30] Ornate animal feathers adorning flamboyant accessories worn by both men and women allowed their wearers to hint at the fluidity of their identity with animalic appearances serving as a proxy for other kinds of fluidity.[31] Scholten's photos of Tel Aviv thus should not simply be classified as yet another appearance of the homoerotic fantasies of the Orient as they have been unearthed and analyzed in recent years, even if the combination of Scholten's fascination with Palestine and his homosexual identity warrants further study.[32]

Complementing the Metropolis

The same awareness of transgressions between ethnic groups and genders that marked Scholten's insights into the city's leisure culture also dominates his more haphazard city views.

30 Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes*.

31 "Queering Manchester Museum," https://queermuseum.wixsite.com/queermuseum/peacock. Last accessed 10 October 2023.

32 Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*.

One of these images shows a group of Catholic girls walking after a nun through the Templer colony of Sarona. The girls are dressed in white – potentially First Communion candidates – and are wearing floral wreaths around their heads and baskets with petals around their necks. They are probably on their way to a procession led by the nun in a black habit whose veil waves in the wind and makes her appear even larger and more authoritative. A few women wearing headscarves, potentially the girls' mothers, walk next to the procession. Some additional groups of nuns mingle under handheld parasols (Fig. 6). Along their way, they meet an Arab woman wearing a hijab with a small child. In the back, they are framed by a group of men on and next to horses standing in the street. This multi-ethnic and -religious encounter is mirrored symbolically by a variety of flags adorning the street.

Scholten's first two volumes of *Palestine Illustrated* show that he was invested in presenting Palestine as a place of different religions, traditions, and realities. Sary Zananiri has explained this ambition as the desire to provide a complete impression of Palestine's ethnic groups while displaying a particular sensitivity to the complex social realities of the country. This may have originated in Scholten's awareness of both the Dutch tradition of pillarization and the Ottoman millet system.[33] The book project increased his desire to foster the impression of Palestine as a multifaceted place. Through his images, Scholten – a Catholic convert – spotlights the Catholic inhabitants of Sarona, people who are not usually part of the visual memory of Tel Aviv. Moreover, he showed the same sense of nuance in portraying the differences between bourgeois habits and the more precarious conditions of poorer inhabitants.[34] The photo of a small child sitting at a makeshift table on sandy ground with some fruit and a glass of milk offers a view into a lifeworld where poverty prevails. The child only wears a shirt, which is torn and dirty, and their gaze is skeptical or shy as they look up while nibbling on a fruit or nut (Fig. 7). By choosing to omit any context, Scholten universalizes the experience of poverty while also depicting the child as lonely and in need of support.

Older children in Tel Aviv would sometimes wander the streets, looking for ways to occupy themselves and potentially earn some income. Scholten photographed one of them strolling through Tel Aviv with a bear, which gained him some impressed views from his Jewish peers (Fig. 8). A dancing

33 Zananiri, "Documenting the Social," 278–9. Moreover, as Zananiri shows, Scholten was hostile to Zionist politics. Zananiri, "Documenting the Social," 280. It might also have been this political stance that drove him to show Palestine's various other social groups, too.

34 Zananiri also observes a class consciousness in the whole of Scholten's Palestine collection.

Fig. 6: "Parade of girls led by a nun," NINO, F. Scholten, photographic print 11:098. The procession of young Catholic girls documented by Scholten in the German Sarona neighborhood attests to his aspiration to capture the breadth of ethnic and religious realities in Tel Aviv and its surroundings.

Fig. 7: "Child sitting at a small table," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 451-500:05. The child, sitting on a makeshift chair in the bare sand, represents Scholten's interest in the city's lower classes, including its youngest members. Devoid of any context, the picture universalizes apparent poverty.

Fig. 8: "Group of people standing around a bear on a chain," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 07:012. The bear tamer adds to the cosmopolitan aura of the city, which was performed not only by affluent migrants and travelers but also by showmen and circus people of lower social strata.

bear was not a daily sight in Palestine; it was known as a predominantly Eastern European tradition with only occasional cross-border appearances by bears and their tamers in adjacent regions of the Ottoman Empire.[35] In Tel Aviv, the appearance of a bear tamer might have evoked memories of the kind of Eastern European Jewish *Luftgeschäft* that Zionism sought to erase, while also fueling a certain fascination with indigenous Hassidic traditions that were venerated by cultural Zionists like Martin Buber, to whom Zionism presented the successful coda to the process of necessary renewal of Jewish tradition.[36] The difference between the bear tamer and the admiring boys is clearly visible: while the urban spectators are neatly dressed with shoes, socks, white shirts, and hats, the young bear tamer walks barefoot and wears only black darned trousers and a jacket. In this image, poverty is represented by an outsider while the city's inhabitants attest to the successful making of an urban middle class. While in one version of the series the bear tamer stands confidently and meets the camera's gaze, gaining him some standing despite his poor appearance, the bear's movement in

35 Tünaydin, "Pawing Through the History of Bear Dancing in Europe," 56–8.

36 See for example Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen,* 174.

the next moment seems to leave him insecure, even if the appearance of danger and threat was often part of a bear dancer's show.[37]

Everyday scenes of shopping, strolling, building, or working in Tel Aviv are among the most common themes of Scholten's collection of images of the city, but the bear offered a divergence from the pattern of everyday life. A bear tamer, who possibly came from far away, provided a twofold provincialization of Tel Aviv: adding the simultaneous appearance of a certain cosmopolitan connectivity of the kind migrants or salesmen brought to the region on the one hand, and the timelessness of a bygone tradition of traveling circus people on the other.

Tel Aviv in Time and Space

Next to various images of Tel Aviv's cityscape, photographs of landscapes, plants, and animals populate the collection. They connect the city not only with other metropolises but also with the rural parts of the country (Fig. 9). Scholten's early sunset photo over the Mediterranean presents the calm, pastoral, and non-commercial side of Tel Aviv while also hinting at its central location and the status of nearby Jaffa as a Mediterranean harbor. While the sea offered photogenic sunsets, it was not usually the first motif photographers saw. Indeed, early Tel Aviv artists usually turned their back to the sea, infatuated with the new land growing under their feet.[38] For Scholten the sea belongs to the city's scenes as do formations of clouds, trees, and empty fields. They all connect the Tel Aviv and Jaffa with the region's various landscapes, while at the same time rendering the city a gateway to the country, as reflected in the title of one of the two volumes on Jaffa, "Port of Entry."

But ultimately, images of Palestine's nature are also part of a series that reflects a modernist aesthetic absent even in Scholten's city views. Images of fruits, plants, or rising dough draped before a white, black, or neutral background appear eccentric in comparison with his street views of Tel Aviv (Fig. 10). They echo the features of straight photography that demands a special focus on photographic detail of the kind forged a few years earlier in New York by photographers like Paul Strand. Their sterile mise-en-scène, devoid of any natural context, offers the urban impression of a museum-like presentation of animals and plants, conserving the last remnants of

37 Tünaydin, "Pawing Through the History of Bear Dancing in Europe," 57.
38 Hever, "The Zionist Sea."

Fig. 9: "Beach and sea," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 351-400:30. Sunsets over the beach remind viewers of Tel Aviv's location on the Mediterranean and connect it with other harbor cities in the Levant. In contrast, early Zionist depictions of Tel Aviv neglected to depict the sea as part of its views.

Fig. 10: "Chameleon," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 21:6. Images of animals and plants compromise Tel Aviv's claims of being a modern city and corroborate claims of the region's ostensible timelessness. At the same time, the sterile depiction renders them views similar to those in a natural history museum, conserved simulacra of their true selves.

a country undergoing massive transformations. Taken out of their natural environment, they suggest that what is original and "authentic" will soon merely be represented in a taxidermic version. In this, these images present a sarcastic comment on the aspiration of other photographic travelers at the time, who claimed to capture "the last" visual traces of the country before it was devoured by modernity.[39]

After two and a half years in the country, Tel Aviv had visibly become familiar terrain for Scholten. His collection of images of the city includes a series of the ever-same people – presumably acquaintances he made – engaged in different activities. At the same time, Scholten did not seem to identify more with any of the groups he captured than with others. His images attest to his identity as a strolling documenter who knew how to make himself feel at home in a variety of spaces, a man who put his own identities to use in shaping the city's views and expanding them along the way.

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39 This aspiration can be seen in the production of photo books like the German photo book series *Orbis Terrarum*. Jaeger, "Die Länder der Erde im Bild."

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About the Author

Rebekka Grossmann is Assistant Professor of History at Leiden University. Her research examines Jewish political history, migratory mobility, and global visual culture. Her dissertation on photography and national belonging is being developed into a book.

4. Echoes of Daher al-'Omar: Land, Labor, and Architecture in Scholten's Galilee

Sarah Irving

Abstract: Frank Scholten's images of the Galilee region contribute to our understanding of the social, cultural, and architectural diversity of northern Mandatory Palestine. From the fading grandeur of Daher al-'Omar's Tiberias to rural hill villages and the cosmopolitan life at Safed's Kabbalah center, Scholten's photographs capture aspects of Galilee life rarely seen in collections focused on Jerusalem and Jaffa. His images depict both peasant labor and urban life, reflecting the region's complex social fabric. Scholten's studies of cloud formations, landscapes, and the Sea of Galilee showcase both his technical skill and artistic sensitivity. This chapter examines the impact of Scholten's work on representations of the Galilee, exploring its significance in terms of Orientalism, modernity, and photographic practice.

Keywords: Nazareth, Tiberias, Marj ibn Amer, Zahir al-Umar al-Zaydani, agriculture

Trying to think about Frank Scholten's photographs in relation to how they represent their subjects and where they fit into the creation of knowledge about Palestinian society in the Mandate era highlights some of the challenges of working with images as a historical source. Looking at some of these photographs on their own might suggest that Scholten's gaze replicates that described in many analyses of Orientalist image-making: the landscapes empty of human beings, except perhaps for the occasional lone figure with a few sheep or goats, evoking notions of an uninhabited space ripe for colonization or of a land frozen in biblical time.[1] But looking at the collection

1 See, for example: Nassar, "Biblification"; Merli, "New Art in an Ancient Land."

Sanchez Summerer, Karène, and Sary Zananiri, eds. *Palestine in Transition: Frank Scholten's Visual Archive of the British Mandate Period*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/Central European University Press, 2026.
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Fig. 1: "Boy standing on the back of a horse," NINO, F. Scholten, *Galilee*, 22. The agency of Scholten's subjects emerges in this image of a boy standing on the back of a horse, showing off his skill for the passing photographer. His clothes and the structures in the background suggest that he is an inhabitant of one of the Galilee's Jewish or German Templer settlements.

Fig. 2: "Camel with branches on his back," NINO F Scholten, *Galilee*, 28. A camel stands in the road, laden with bags and topped with branches. The subject matter and the absent human being – out of shot, holding the camel's reins – are a standard trope of Orientalist image-making. In the context of Scholten's other photographs, though, the animal and its burden are one of many everyday encounters, a catalog of varied road users.

or sections of it as a whole, and considering how pictures may have been taken over the course of days or weeks, and the circumstances in which this happened, starts to provoke questions.[2] While one image might conform to the broader analyses of how images contributed to the construction of imperial ideas about "the Orient," the next may well defy such expectations. A couple of images, obviously taken a few moments apart, show a young man proudly showing off his equestrian skills; in another, a girl guides a horse in concentric circles, threshing grain using methods employed from Central Asia to Western Europe; a landscape image does not present a scene redolent of the Bible, but a townscape of Tiberias, dominated by the mosque built on the orders of Daher al-'Omar in the eighteenth century.

Despite its importance for the country's agriculture and the politics of Zionism, the Galilee – the well-watered, hilly northern region of Mandate Palestine – is underrepresented in the historical literature. Lacking the religious weight of Jerusalem, the modern dynamism of Jaffa and Haifa, or the rebellious glower of Nablus, towns such as Nazareth, Tiberias, and Safed had their heydays before or after the Mandate and have their high points in other narratives, whether the cotton industry under al-'Omar or the birth of Kabbalah in seventeenth-century Safed. But, as Scholten's photographs show or at least suggest, Galilee was subject to the same processes that impacted the rest of Palestine during British rule, and its inhabitants were participants, for good or ill, in the same social and political changes.

For the sake of clarity, I am defining Galilee here as the hilly zone that stretches from the north of Jenin, east as far as Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee, north to Safed, and west to the Mediterranean coast at Akka and Haifa. Significant places within it include the city of Nazareth, which during the late Ottoman and Mandate periods had grown under the influence of church and missionary institutions such as the Russian-funded school and hospital;[3] symbolic battle sites such as Hittin (when Salah al-Din defeated the Crusaders) and Ayn Jalut (where the Mamluks halted the Mongol advance); and unique environments such as Lake Huleh. However, the Scholten photos I discuss do not include those from the coastal plain, an area with a complex history that deserves its own consideration.

2 For a detailed discussion and theorization of the effects of the arrangement and curation of images, see *Camera Palaestina* for Issam Nassar, Salim Tamari, and Stephen Sheehi's work on the Palestinian collector Wasif Jawhariyyeh and his albums, compiled through the late Ottoman and Mandate periods and framed to act as a pictorial history of modern Palestine.

3 See Agsous, "Making Stage" and Gerd, "Palestine Society" for in-depth explorations of the importance of Russian educational establishments in Late Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine, and their impact on Palestinian culture.

Fig. 3: "Child working the land with a horse," NINO, F. Scholten, *Galilee*, 03. A girl, head covered against sun or rain, drives a horse in circles around a huge pile of wheat or barley, the board she rides separating the grains from their husks. The image highlights the role of women's labor in Palestinian agriculture.

Al-Jalil: Women, Land, and Labor

As highlighted by Rawda Morkus-Makhoul, a Palestinian scholar whose farming family is deeply embedded in the land and history of the Galilee, the region's economy and society are principally agricultural, and much of the work done there has been performed by rural women.[4] Contrary to the many European stereotypes of female roles in Middle Eastern and Islamicate societies, peasant women in Palestine carried out all kinds of physical labor, growing and processing farm produce and sometimes traveling long distances to sell it,[5] as well as taking on paid work when it was available.[6]

Frank Scholten's unique style of photography offers some rare glimpses of female work in the Galilee of the early 1920s. In Figure 3, a young girl, well wrapped up and with her hair covered against inclement weather,

4 Morkus Makhoul, "Decolonising the Social History."
5 Morkus Makhoul, "Decolonising the Social History," 126–33.
6 Irving, "Women versus Wheelbarrows," 431–3; Irving, "Excavating the Subaltern," 16–26.

Fig. 4: "Children and women in the street," NINO, F. Scholten, *Galilee*, 17. An outstanding feature of Scholten's photography is the spontaneous, human portrayal of ordinary people who he apparently met on his travels. Here, two women are accompanied by a group of children; one woman seems to be speaking while two girls smile shyly as a toddler wanders off.

uses a horse-drawn threshing board to divide grain from their husks, driving the horse in long, repetitive circles around a huge pile of wheat or barley. Most of the cereal crops grown in Palestine in the early twentieth century would have been for domestic or local consumption, but not all. The Gaza region, for instance, had grown barley as a cash crop for export to the British beer industry between 1850 and World War I,[7] and the size of the pile of grain being worked by this lone girl suggests that some of it might have been for sale as well as subsistence (conversely, it may have been that the harvests from several farmers were being threshed together for efficiency's sake). But, as has been increasingly pointed out about late Ottoman and Mandate Palestine and other parts of the Levant, women's labor was vital to local and national economies, not just on the domestic scale but for cash sales that helped families pay taxes or buy tools or livestock.[8]

7 Halevy, "Stripped," 55–116; Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation*, 163–4, 285.

8 Irving, "Women versus Wheelbarrows," 431–3; Khater, *Inventing Home*, 19–47.

Agricultural Production

Even a cursory consideration of the agricultural history of the Galilee confounds another stereotype that permeates Palestinian history. Zionist literature at the time and since has portrayed the Holy Land as a barren and degraded landscape, once the fertile "land of milk and honey" from the Bible but allowed since antiquity to slowly drown in malarial marshes or wither into desert.[9] Whether implicitly or explicitly, Zionist thinking – both Jewish and Christian – created a narrative in which this represented the (Promised) land pining for its Chosen People; according to this logic, the degradation of the land was the responsibility of Islamic rulers, be they Arab or Turkish, and served as evidence for why the Palestinian peasants who farmed the land could justly be evicted from it.[10] Indigenous knowledge was dismissed as worthless and Palestinian peasants were depicted by health researchers and agronomists as desperately poor, ignorant subsistence farmers who had starved the soil and allowed disease to proliferate.[11]

In his autobiographical account of a career as an official in the British Mandate administration, Edwin Samuel (son of Herbert Samuel, the first high commissioner of Palestine) admits that he had been in error when he tried to make peasants in the area under his control remove rocks from their fields so that they could plow them more efficiently. After some time, and after witnessing farming methods and listening to the explanations given for them, he conceded that the stones dotting the fields actually served an important purpose, their cool surfaces condensing valuable water from the air overnight.[12] But Samuel was an exception, and on a much larger scale it was only after many decades that the State of Israel has had to reverse large-scale schemes like the drainage of the Huleh marshes, as the environmental damage wrought by these modernist-nationalist megaprojects makes itself known.[13]

Indeed, a focus on the Galilee as a space of agricultural production also allows us to pay attention to the region's important history as a large-scale producer – very far from the stereotype of the marginal subsistence farmer on land verging on the uninhabitable.

9 Sufian, *Healing the Land*.

10 Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile within Sovereignty."

11 A classic example from the Mandate period is Lowdermilk's *Palestine*.

12 Samuel, *Lifetime in Jerusalem*, 76–7.

13 Avisar and Fox, "Chemical Evolution," 1096–7; Tal and Katz, "Rehabilitating Israel's Streams and Rivers," 323; Dajani, "Thirsty Water Carriers."

Fig. 5: "Clouds over a landscape," NINO, F. Scholten, *Weg Tiberias Safed*, 02. One of a series depicting striking cloud formations over the Sea of Galilee, looking toward the hills on the other side of the Jordan Valley. Scholten seems to be reveling in the simple glory of the landscape.

The hub of Tiberias

The dome and minarets of the grand mosque erected by Daher al-'Omar in his capital of Tiberias, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, are a graceful silhouette in Scholten's photograph taken from the edge of the town. The mosque, tragically neglected under Israeli rule (along with many of the Galilee's other Islamic heritage sites) is now dilapidated and (to judge by what was visible during a visit in 2022) used by the municipality to store machinery for street cleaning.[14] But it was once an important landscape with thriving Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities and, at the time when Scholten took his photographs, good relations between them.[15] During the Mandate period, Tiberias was an important regional hub for the Galilee, the crossing-point for major roads and close to major bridges across the Jordan Valley, including the bridge bearing the Haifa spur of the Hijaz railway.[16] The

14 Gilad, "How Israel Destroyed Old Tiberias."
15 Abbasi, "End of Arab Tiberias," 7.
16 Abbasi, "End of Arab Tiberias," 6.

Fig. 6: "Gathering of men and boys. Man playing music," NINO, F. Scholten, *Galilee*, 46. A group of Palestinian men and boys, some watching the foreigner as he photographs them, others focused on the musicians. A drummer is visible in the image, his hands blurred with speed; other players are cropped out of the image, to the left.

city's heyday, though, was its years as the capital of Daher al-'Omar's rule of the Galilee as a semi-autonomous entity under the Ottoman Empire – and much of the success of that political experiment was down to the growth and export of cotton for international markets.[17]

Scholten and the Exotic Others

Although many of Scholten's images diverge from the Orientalism of most European photographers creating images of Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century, his pictures of the Galilee are not wholly free of his positionality as a privileged white male traveler in a colonized land. On the one hand, his pictures of ordinary Palestinians are unstaged, lacking the biblical or Orientalist themes imposed by Europeans and Americans creating images for sale to tourists or for use in accounts focused almost wholly on stories from the Bible. Several images of a group of women and children,

17 Yazbak, "Politics of Trade."

Fig. 7: "Landscape view with four camels," NINO, F. Scholten, *Weg Haifa Nazareth*, 07. Four camels stand on a hillside, roaming but ready to be laden with baggage or saddles. Scholten seems to be focused on the symmetry of the standing animals and the perspective of the hills and plain behind them.

Fig. 8: "Tiberias seen from a distance," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tiberiade,* 20. A newly surfaced road into the city of Tiberias, running through the dilapidated walls and past a ruined fortress. The Great Mosque of Daher al-'Omar, now tragically neglected and used to store machinery by the Israeli municipality, stands proud in the distance.

ranging from an almost-grown boy to a babe in arms, seem spontaneous and unforced. Their faces display a range of emotions at the odd experience; Scholten could well have simply met them in the street and asked them to stay one moment while he set up his camera. Similarly, a photograph of a group of men listening to musicians presents us with a second in the lives of a whole range of real, ordinary characters: some squint curiously at the outsider, others stare with frank interest, while others ignore his presence and focus on the musicians, some out of shot but including a man whose hands are a blur of movement above the skin of his small drum.

On the other hand, despite their spontaneity and ostensible lack of staging, these images still have an ethnographic quality to them which is not entirely free of a sense of the exotic Other; they are part of a collective cultural entity rather than interesting as individuals in their own right. This becomes especially clear in juxtaposition with two more pictures. The first, of a boy or young man balancing on the back of a horse, is striking for the almost palpable sense of agency and interaction; one can almost hear this lad calling out to the traveler with the camera to come and take his picture while he shows off his equestrian skills. Despite the apparent innocence of the image, though, its background (the front of a motor car, large heaps of newly dug earth beside large metal container drums) suggests that its setting is either one of the German Templer colonies scattered across the Galilee or a newly founded Zionist settlement. The lack of obvious links to either the Zionist project or the British colonial presence in Palestine means that the Templers, a German Christian sect who settled in the Holy Land to await the imminent second coming of Christ, often escape analysis as part of the settler colonial dynamics of the period. But, as Mahmoud Yazbak has shown, their attitudes toward their Palestinian neighbors, and the ways in which they established their agricultural settlements, were often extremely similar to these other colonial projects, and they had similarly disastrous consequences for the peasants thrown off their lands to make way for the European newcomers.[18]

The second image is one of the very few for which the subject is named: a caption calls him "Architect Weydeveld," the well-known Dutch architect and graphic designer Hendrik Wijdeveld (1885–1987). A number of companion photographs carry information indicating that they show his first wife, the cellist Ellen Kohn. It is reasonable to assume that Wijdeveld and Scholten knew one another from intellectual and artistic circles in the Netherlands. Wijdeveld was visiting Egypt and Palestine on a trip with his friend Erich

18 Yazbak, "Templars as Proto-Zionists?"

Fig. 9: "Wharf and the Sea of Galilee," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tiberiade*, 37. A jetty projects into the Sea of Galilee from the Tiberias waterfront; fairly recent work is visible in the intrusive metal gate, designed to bar access to the jetty, and the metal girders used to reinforce the waterside. In companion photos, a group of Palestinian fishermen sits further down the pier while their boats float alongside.

Fig. 10: "Architect Weydeveld in a garden," NINO, F. Scholten, *Safed*, 09. One of a selection of photographs of Dutch Catholic architect and writer Hendrik Wijdeveld and his wife, taken in Safed. The relaxed, sometimes playful, tone of the images suggests that they already knew Scholten or were perhaps just enjoying the company of a compatriot.

Mendelsohn:[19] the two were important figures in the architectural scene of post-WWI Europe and Mendelsohn was to go on to become one of the leading thinkers and builders of the Zionist architectural movement in Mandate Palestine, constructing villas for the likes of Chaim Weizmann.[20] Ellen Kohn was also Jewish and from what is now Poland, and thus may also have influenced Wijdeveld's interest in Palestine, as may his connection with Charles Ashbee. When he was training in London, Wijdeveld had met Ashbee, a British Arts and Crafts movement figure. In 1918, then governor of Jerusalem Ronald Storrs had appointed Ashbee as his "civic adviser," and thus Ashbee became one of the instigators of the far-reaching decisions made by Storrs and his administration about the infrastructure and visual nature of Jerusalem, in particular the Old City.[21]

The very fact that it is possible not only to put a name to the image of Hendrik Wijdeveld sitting in a Safed garden, surrounded by plants and drying laundry and swathed in heavy winter clothing, but also in a few sentences to sketch his networks across a trans-European intelligentsia and into circles of men (sic) who would shape the built environment of Palestine, highlights the gulf between this picture and others by Scholten, even that of the youth on horseback. While Scholten's practice does genuinely display a qualitative difference from most images of Palestine and Palestinians taken by European and North American photographers in this period, the comparison between the nameless groupings of ordinary Palestinian people he captures and the intimate pictures of his countryman and the latter's wife makes clear the limits of that difference.

As Nassar, Tamari, and Sheehi emphasize in their volume on Jawhariyyeh, captioning, arranging, and labeling are all acts of power and, in some cases, theft and appropriation.[22] While Scholten's humanistic approach to his subjects and his openness to the contemporary culture of Palestine set him apart from other producers of images, the fact that his Palestinian subjects often remain nameless and elusive, consigned to anonymity by the scantness of the information recorded on them, both aligns him with other Orientalists and foregrounds his entanglements with the colonial projects that would impose themselves so catastrophically on Palestine in the ensuing decades.

19 Stralen and Lootsma, *Landhuizen*, 141.
20 Nitzan-Shiftan, "Contested Zionism," 152.
21 Pullan and Kyriacou, "Charles Ashbee."
22 Nassar, Tamari, and Sheehi, *Camera Palaestina*.

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About the Author

Sarah Irving is an Associate Professor at Staffordshire University, specializing in the social and cultural history of Ottoman and Mandate Palestine. She is also Editor-in-Chief of *Contemporary Levant* and works on Palestinian cultural history and the broader history of the Levant.

5. Part of the Palestinian Landscape: Jews in Scholten's Photographs of 1920s Palestine

Yair Wallach

Abstract: The Jewish colonies in early twentieth-century Palestine are often portrayed as the starting point for a Zionist movement that was foreign to and in profound antithesis to Palestine. Frank Scholten's photographs from the early 1920s challenge this perspective by depicting the colonies as integrated into the Palestinian landscape. Unlike most European photographers, who focused on Palestine as the Holy Land, Scholten captured hundreds of images of the colonies, presenting them alongside neighboring Arab communities. His photographs contrast with the ideological depictions of Zionist photographers and highlight the presence of Palestinian workers in the colonies – a reality well known from other sources but rarely captured on film. Scholten's work situates the colonies within the broader social fabric of 1920s Palestine, offering a nuanced perspective on colonial life and interactions.

Keywords: Yishuv, colonies, Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Palestine

In his memoirs, the first chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Ahmad Shuqayri, tells of a carriage trip in Palestine during World War I. He was only eight years old, and his mother had just died in Tul Karim. Shuqayri was on his way to Haifa to visit relatives of his estranged father, Shaykh As'ad. The carriage stopped for the night in the Jewish colony of Zamarin (Zichron Ya'acov in Hebrew). The carriage driver and the other passengers lodged in the local inn, while young Ahmad slept in the carriage. When he woke up, he writes, he saw a woman walking up the steps of the inn. He

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was mesmerized: he was convinced that this was his mother. Everything about the woman resembled her: her height, her body shape, her face, the way she moved. The only difference was that she did not wear a headcover. Shuqayri was overcome by a desire to run to the woman, embrace her, and breathe in her smell. But when she entered the inn, he realized this could not be his mother because she was dead. This was Shuqayri's only visit to a Jewish colony. Soon afterwards, he writes, the struggle with Zionism erupted and Shuqayri came to play a leading role in it, as a lawyer, activist, diplomat, and political leader.[1]

This story is surprising because Shuqayri is remembered, perhaps more than anything else, for his hardline rhetoric against Israel. On the eve of the 1967 war, he threatened to expel all Israeli Jews from Palestine after its liberation.[2] In the Arab world, Shuqayri's comments were condemned as foolish and self-defeating. They are still invoked as evidence for the impossibility of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. Yet here, in his 1969 memoirs, Shuqayri describes a confusing and deeply emotional encounter with a Jewish woman; not least, a Jewish colonist, mostly likely an Ashkenazi migrant-settler. It appears that even for him, the Jewish colonies and their inhabitants were part of the Palestinian landscape. A strange, curious, fascinating part, yet somehow not completely alien.

Can we think of the Jewish colonies as part of the early twentieth century Palestinian landscape? The early colonies do not appear in Walid Khalidi's pictorial history of Palestine, *Before Their Diaspora*. This canonical volume, a "visual journey into Palestine before 1948," presents an Arab Palestinian society that was thriving before its expulsion and destruction.[3] The early Jewish colonies, which were established in the 1880s and later, are typically presented in the historiography as the foundation of Zionism, and as such they stand in an inevitable contradiction to the very existence of Palestine and Palestinians. In Zionist pictorial histories, such as *The Pillar of Fire*, the early colonies are part of the Jewish revival and the construction of a Hebrew *Erets Israel*.[4] Here, again, they are not part of the Palestinian landscape but set against it.

Frank Scholten's unique photographic collection of early 1920s Palestine allows us to rethink the colonies – and more generally, Jewish presence in

1 al-Shuqayri, *Arba'un 'ama Fi al-Hayat al-'arabiyya Wal-Dawliyya*, 35.

2 Shemesh, "Did Shuqayri Call for 'Throwing the Jews into the Sea'?".

3 Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora*. Of the 427 photographs in this volume, there are two of Jews at the Western Wall and fifteen of Zionist settlement, migration, and military activities in the 1930s and 1940s.

4 Losin, *Pillar of Fire*. A similar book is Naor, *The Twentieth Century in Eretz Israel*.

Fig. 1: "Arrival of East European Jews at the port of Jaffa," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 16:0005.

Palestine – as part of Palestinian social scenery and its networks of exchange, labor, and sociability. Scholten's humanistic gaze captures a heterogenous country where the dichotomy between a majority Arab native society and a Jewish settler society had not yet solidified; a country in which differences and encounters were still largely manifested in productive tension, rather than through irreconcilable contradictions.

Scholten stayed in Palestine from 1921 to 1923. In political terms, Palestine was being abruptly transformed: no longer part of the Ottoman Empire, it was now a British Mandate territory. Not only was it ruled by a colonial power – the British Empire – but it was designated as a "Jewish National Home." Arab opposition to Zionism was vocal and unmistakable.[5] There had already been outbreaks of Arab political violence, in Jerusalem in 1920 and in Jaffa in 1921. But in other terms, there was much continuity with Ottoman Palestine and the country's social makeup had not changed much. Jewish immigration resumed in 1918, and Scholten photographed the arrival of East European Jews in Jaffa (Fig. 1).

Even with 35,000 new arrivals by 1923, Jews still constituted a mere eleven percent of the population, and most of them had lived in Palestine before

5 Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*.

Fig. 2: "British and Zionist flags in a Jewish colony," NINO, F. Scholten, *Colonies juives-Judée*, 04:0068.

the war.[6] Scholten's photographs certainly capture changes, such as the assertive way the Jewish national home was celebrated by displaying large Zionist flags (Fig. 2). But mainly his photographs depicted a post-Ottoman world that was still very much the same.

In Scholten's depiction, Palestine was a place of great diversity in ethnic, class, and confessional identities, marked primarily in clear sartorial codes: through dress and headgear, one could easily tell the difference between urbanites and peasants, middle class and poor, and different religious identities. It was a society that was far from static: the transformation could be seen in the different clothes worn by people of the same family (Fig. 3). In a photograph from Jerusalem, an older Ashkenazi man is wearing the "Jerusalem attire" that characterized long-standing Ashkenazim in the city – a combination of the Palestinian striped robe (kaftan or, in Arabic, *qumbaz*) and the Eastern European fur hat (the *Shtreymel*).[7] In contrast, the younger generations were wearing European clothes: suit and tie, buttoned jackets, and caps. It was also not static in the ability to move across boundaries, between communities and locales, which comes across in Scholten's images,

6 Palestine and Barron, *Palestine*. For a recent study of that migration, see Alroey, *Erets miklat*.

7 On Ashkenazi "Arabized" dress, see Harari, "'The Arab Clothes of Our Forefathers.'"

Fig. 3: "Jerusalem Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews (Three men with two children)," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jerusalem, Juifs* 2:79.

conveying a sense of mobility and fluidity that also created conditions for encounters like those mentioned in Shuqayri's memoirs.

It is Scholten's photographic technique that made him so unusual in comparison to previous photography in Palestine. European photographers who had operated in Palestine since the middle of the nineteenth century endeavored to portray Palestine as the Holy Land. They focused on ancient and holy sites, in what scholars have termed a "biblified" gaze.[8] When photographing local people, these photographers focused on "exotic" types in various typical clothing, often recreating biblical scenes. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, local studios were established by Armenian, Arab, and Jewish photographers. These local photographers catered largely to European tourists but also found local clientele among the urban middle class, as well as commissions from the Ottoman authorities and other institutions.[9] Portraits of individuals and families were taken in studios; photographs outside the studios were typically staged. Photographers documented celebrations, ceremonies, and visits, typically in a highly formulaic and staged manner.

8 Yeshayahu, *The Bible and the Image;* Nassar, "'Biblification' in the Service of Colonialism."

9 Sheehi, *The Arab Imago.*

Scholten broke with these styles of photography. Like with other European photographers, the ethnographic fascination is clear in his gaze; yet, his compositions did not seek formulaic exotic "types," but rather communicated the richness and ambiguities of people from different communities in a humanizing way. Unlike other European photographers, he did not pay special attention to holy sites, nor did he seek to create biblical tableaux by restaging scenes from the scriptures. He took an enormous number of portraits, and yet his portraiture differed substantially from the staged portraits taken in local photographers' studios. Scholten photographed people in their homes, on their balconies, and, most often, outside in fields, on streets, or at the beach: they captured work, movement, play, sadness, and joy. In his collection, we see the emergence of the mobile photographer who carries a camera and takes "snapshots" and impromptu portraits, resulting in street documentary photography.

Most of Scholten's photographs of Jews in Palestine were taken in the large urban centers, where the wide diversity of Jews was most obvious. In the early 1920s, it was still impossible to speak of a single Jewish community separate from the Arab Palestinian society. Palestine's Jewry, who had mostly immigrated to the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was made up of multiple ethnic communities.[10] The largest groups were the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, the Ladino-speaking Sephardim, and the Arabic-speaking North African Jews, yet there were many other Jewish communities: from Bukhara, Georgia, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. There was also a minority of secular East European Jews, who were identified with bourgeois and socialist forms of Zionism. A pan-Jewish Hebrew identity was emerging in modern Jewish schools. In Scholten's photographs of Jerusalem, Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and Tiberias, we can see clear differences between Orthodox Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Yemenites, Bukharan Jews, and others. At the same time, it is often impossible to tell if fez-wearing men are Sephardic or North African Jews, Arab Muslims, or Christian Arabs.[11] The Ottoman urban middle-class dress code cut across different communities, and the transition to European clothing was widespread.

The embeddedness of Jews as part of the 1920s Palestinian urban landscape is a feature in Scholten's photographs. While popular narratives still present segregation between Jews and Arabs as natural, recent historiography has challenged this perception and has shown that cohabitation was

10 While the literature often speaks of a single Jewish society in Palestine (the "Yishuv") there is growing agreement that Palestine's Jewish communities and recent migrants coalesced into a single society only in the 1930s. See Wallach, "Rethinking the Yishuv."

11 Kahlenberg, "The Tarbush Transformation: Oriental Jewish Men and the Significance of Headgear in Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine".

Fig. 4: "Jewish restaurant on King George Boulevard," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 01:0077.

widespread in the late Ottoman period and persisted to some extent during the British Mandate.[12] In Scholten's photographs of Jaffa, Jewish presence is unmistakable. We see this in the frequent presence of commercial signs in Hebrew on Jaffa's main streets (Fig. 4) or in the photograph of the Jaffa municipal council meeting, featuring Yoseph Elihayu Celouche, a Jew of Moroccan origin and a council member.[13]

Scholten's wide-ranging portraits of people in Jaffa include many different kinds of Jews in the markets, on streets and at the beach. There is a clear contrast with Tel Aviv, a suburb of Jaffa that became an independent borough in 1921 and is described as "the first Hebrew town." The photographs of Tel Aviv show a town in which residents, including workers on building sites and in factories, were almost entirely Jewish. The signage was also almost entirely in Hebrew. Palestinians can be seen in Scholten's pictures of Tel Aviv's streets, but they do not appear as residents of Tel Aviv; instead they are pictured as passers-by, vendors, or providers of services: shoe shiners, fruit sellers, entertainers, and shepherds (Fig. 5).

12 Jacobson and Naor, *Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine*; Michelle Campos, "Placing Jerusalemites in the History of Jerusalem: The Ottoman Census (Sicil-i Nüfūs) as a Historical Source".

13 See his memoirs, Chelouche, *Between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, 1870–1930: A Memoir*.

Fig. 5: "Boy with dancing bear in Tel Aviv (Boy holding a bear on a chain. Group of boys standing around them)," NINO, F. Scholten, *Tel Aviv*, 401-450:22.

In addition to the cities and Palestinian villages, Scholten also took hundreds of photographs of Jewish colonies. That was also unusual. European Christian photographers operating in Palestine had been uninterested in Jewish colonization efforts.

Only around the turn of the century, after the emergence of political Zionism, had Jewish photographers begun documenting the colonies in albums and postcards. The album *The Views of Eretz Israel and the Colonies* was published by three Jewish Jerusalemite photographers in 1899 and included pictures of colonies from Metula in the north to Be'er Tuvya south of Jaffa.[14] In 1912, a Jewish newspaper hired Leo Kann, a Viennese photographer and journalist, to photograph Palestine, and his photographs of the colonies were published as postcards by the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Ya'acov Ben Dov, head of the photography department at the Zionist Arts and Crafts school Bezalel, also produced numerous postcards of the colonies for the JNF before World War I.[15]

14 Raffalovich and Sachs, *Mar'eh Erets Yiśra'el Ṿeha-Moshavot,* published in Hebrew and German editions. A Yiddish and English edition was also published. See Hacohen, "Moshava Lo Noshava."

15 On these and other early photographers (Abraham Soskin, Shlomo Narinsky, Zvi Oroshkes, and others) see Levin, "Tsalamim Yehudim;" Silver-Brody, *Documentors of the Dream*; and Guez,

Fig. 6: "The colony Kinneret on the shore of the Sea of Galilee," Leo Kann, 1912, from the Digital Collection of Younes & Sorya Nazarian library, University of Haifa; image attributed to Bitmuna, Nadav Man.

These photographs were meant for a Jewish audience supportive of Zionism or curious about Palestine. The framing and staging were ideological and even propagandist, presenting the colonies as shining examples of Jewish national revival and colonization. Many photographs showed wide vistas of the colonies: a main street, houses on a hill, fields, and vineyards. Such landscapes included very few people, typically only the farmers or passers-by. By focusing on architecture and the street layout, the photographs aimed to present the colonies as enterprises of European endeavors of civilizing – in implicit contrast to the Arab Orient (Fig. 6).

There were also portraits of the colonists, in groups or as individuals. Photographs of individuals presented settlement tropes such as a Jewish farmer plowing the field or a Jewish guard on a horse, clad as a Bedouin. These represented the new Jewish men who had returned to the soil to rejuvenate it and themselves through productive work. Palestinians rarely appear in Zionist photographs of the colonies, and when they do, they are in the background of the photograph, extras in a Jewish drama. In their

Arab clothes, these Palestinian men and women can be seen as tokens of the Orient amidst a landscape that has been Europeanized.[16]

Scholten was likely the first non-Jewish photographer with no institutional or ideological connection to the Zionist movement to undertake a wide photographic survey of the colonies' human, built, and agricultural landscapes. Unlike previous Zionist efforts, which focused on the colonies and Jewish sites, Scholten's survey was part of a much larger corpus, encompassing manifold groups and locations in Palestine. The collection demonstrates not only Palestine's diversity but also the clear predominance of Arab Palestinians in the urban centers and rural areas alike. The colonies' photographs are characterized by the same ethnographic and humanistic gaze, which evinced Scholten's fascination with young and old, men and women, urbanites, nomadic people, villagers, and colonists.

Scholten took several hundred photographs of the colonies, mainly in the coastal plains near Jaffa. His collection features, among others, the colonies of Rishon Le-Tsion, Petah Tikva, Rehovot, Be'er Yaacov, and Ekron. Some images show the colonies' streets and public buildings as well as orchards, fields, and plantations. The colonies appear to be provincial and sleepy hamlets where life revolves around agricultural activities, such as the grape harvest, almond tree harvesting, and the drying of tobacco leaves. While the colonists pose for the camera in heroic pioneer scenes in some photographs, in most they do not. These are not "ideal types," but actual people.

Unlike Zionist photography, Scholten presents a wide range of subjects. Some photographs show old men and women who seem to have stepped out of Eastern Europe (Fig. 7).

Jewish women and girls, who seldom appear in early photographs of the colonies, featured in a variety of situations: in agricultural work, dancing, or walking to school. Another striking feature of Scholten's photographs is the Jewish Yemenite presence. In the early twentieth century, Zionist institutions encouraged the immigration of Yemenite Jews, who were seen as "natural workers" who could replace Arab workers. Once they arrived in Palestine, Yemenite Jews faced considerable discrimination and maltreatment. In earlier photographic surveys of the colonies, photographs of Yemenites were omitted from the images for publication, as their poor living conditions could reflect poorly on the colonies. When they are shown, they are often depicted as an exotic group. In Scholten's photographs, the Yemenites appear as part of the workforce, including child labor (Fig. 8). While they wear the traditional sidelocks, their clothes are similar to those of other colonists.

16 See Guez, *Orientalizem*, 97–121.

Fig. 7: "A man and a woman in a Jewish colony," NINO, F. Scholten, *Colonies juives-Judée*, 01:0028.

Fig. 8: "Yemenite boy in a Jewish colony," NINO, F. Scholten, *Colonies juives-Judée*, 03:0090.

Perhaps the most interesting dimension of these photographs is the portrayal of Palestinian presence in the colonies, to a degree that was not captured by any other photographer, before or after Scholten. Palestinians are a constant presence in his photographs of the colonies, not just as minor details but often in the heart of the composition. The early Jewish colonies that were established in the late Ottoman period were not segregated spaces. They relied heavily on Arab Palestinian laborers, who provided the main workforce, particularly in colonies in the coastal plain with citrus plantations and vineyards. In the early twentieth century, there was increasing pressure to employ Jewish workers at the expense of Arab workers, as agricultural laborers and guardsmen. Socialist Zionist Jewish migrants launched campaigns for the "conquest of labor," assisted by Zionist institutions such as the Palestine Office of the World Zionist Organization. However, these efforts were largely unsuccessful in the colonies, leading to the development of fully segregated Jewish cooperative settlements.[17]

Palestinians were not only workers but also residents of the colonies. Some Palestinians lived permanently in virtually all the colonies, as we know from accounts and from the 1922 census. In the aforementioned Zichron Yaacov (Zamarin), more than a fifth of the residents were Muslim Palestinians in 1922.[18] Beyond agriculture, Palestinians also worked as cleaners, cooks, coachmen, and nannies. At the same time, the colonies also provided a range of services to the nearby Palestinian villages. Arab Palestinians came frequently to the colonies to see the local doctor, fix their shoes, or mill grains.

In Scholten's images, the dominance of the Palestinian workforce comes to the fore in photographs of grape picking and almond harvesting. Some photographs only show Palestinian workers (adults and children); sometimes they are accompanied by a Jewish foreman; other pictures show Jews and Palestinians working together, side by side, involved in what appears to be similar physical work (Fig. 9).

The primary form of visible difference we can see in Scholten's photographs was articulated in sartorial terms. Jewish workers in the colonies wore white or checkered long-sleeved buttoned shirts, short trousers, and boots (Fig 10). The men were usually clean-shaven, although some, especially older colonists, wore long beards. They covered their heads with caps or wide-brimmed hats. Even on more celebratory occasions, formal

17 Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*.

18 Palestine and Barron, *Palestine. Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922. Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922.*

Fig. 9: "Palestinians and Jewish workers harvesting grapes," NINO, F. Scholten, *Colonies juives-Judée*, 02:0048.

Fig. 10: "Two Jews and one Arab in a Jewish colony," NINO, F. Scholten, *Colonies juives- Judée*, 02:0020.

attire was unusual. This was one difference between Jewish and German Templar colonists: the latter wore formal clothes for various occasions, as we can see in Scholten's photographs of the colony Sarona. Jewish women worked wearing long skirts, long-sleeved white shirts, and a white headcover. Palestinian workers in the colonies wore the striped *qumbaz*, and covered their heads with a turban, knitted hat, or *kufiya*. Palestinian women and girls wore wide embroidered dresses, a loose headcover (or no headcover), and a coin necklace. Palestinian child laborers – boys and girls – are featured in many photographs, working to harvest grapes and almonds.

In memoirs and literature written by colonists, relations with Palestinians are shrouded in nostalgia and orientalist cliches. This serves a mythology of coexistence that was later destroyed by – in the colonists' accounts – Arab nationalism, extremism, and violence. As Liora Halperin has argued, it would be more appropriate to term these relations "hierarchal coexistence." Halperin demonstrated that the rhetoric of warm and close relationships between colonists and their workers masked the unequal power relations between them and helped to cement the colonists' sense of mastery over the landscape and engender a sense of "nativeness."[19] Such interactions between settlers and the native population are familiar from other colonial contexts, and so is the combination of intimacy, dependency, exploitation, and violence. These employment relationships were unambiguously unequal in nature. The colonists were the landowners, and they had access to capital, machinery, and skills. They enjoyed the support of European and North American networks and organizations of charity and education.

Yet at the same time, the colonies and their quotidian, unequal embeddedness in the Palestinian landscape stand in contrast to the model of separatist Jewish-only settlement. That was to become dominant during the British Mandate period, and it would form the conditions for partition and the expulsion of 1948. Until the 1920s, the common parlance in the colonies was a mix of Yiddish and Arabic, and visitors often complained of the "Arabization" of the youth in the colonies.[20] As one Zionist intellectual discovered to his horror, it was common for children in the colonies to be brought up by an Arab maid. "The first word, that a Hebrew baby hears before he learns to speak, is in Arabic! I was shocked to my core."[21] The Hebrew poet Esther Raab (1894-1981), who grew up in Petah Tikva, reminisced nostalgically about her nanny, Khadija Shalabiyya from the

19 Halperin, *The Oldest Guard*, 89.

20 "Yesod Ha-Ma'ala," *H-Olam*, August 4, 1910.

21 Klausner, *Am ve-Erets Kamim Li-Tehiyah,* 151.

village Yahudiyya (Abbasiyya), who sang her songs and told her folktales in Arabic.[22] Colonists had an Arabized version of their name. In his memoirs, Yitzhak Rokach notes forty such Arabized names of Jews in the colony of Petach Tikva: Mordechai became Murad, Appelboym was rendered Abu al-bum, and Hirschel became "Ghazal" (gazelle).[23] During the late Ottoman period, the Rishon Le-Zion Orchestra played at official functions in Jaffa, such as the annual celebration for the Sultan's birthday. Arab workers in the colony Petach Tikva, who developed proficiency in Yiddish, attended Yiddish theatrical performances in that language.[24]

"[R]emember the time / Before the wax hardened / when each of us was like a seal" writes Primo Levi in his poem, "To my friends."[25] Scholten's photographs provide a glimpse of Palestine before the wax hardened; before the 1930s emergence of two separate and segregated societies: the Jewish Yishuv – composed mainly, although not entirely, of recent migrants from Europe – and the Arab Palestinian native society. Palestine, as captured in the photographs, was a society of deep differentiation as well as inequality, and it already displayed the seeds of a segregation that would later become rigid and much more difficult to overcome. And yet we can also see it as a site of circulation, encounter, and exchange. The Jews of Palestine appear in those photographs in their diversity and multiplicity, even in places associated with the image of a new settlers' society, such as the colonies and Tel Aviv. Even in those places, their situatedness within the overwhelmingly Arab society of Palestine cannot be mistaken.

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22 Ben Ezer, *Yamim Shel La'ana ve-Dvash*, 55–9.

23 Rokach, *Pardesim Mesaprim*, 109–10.

24 Lev Tov, "Shkhenim Nokheḥim," 42–54.

25 Levi, *The Mirror Maker*, 5.

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About the Author

Yair Wallach is Reader at SOAS London, specializing in the social and cultural history of modern Palestine and Israel, and the entangled and relational histories of Jews and Palestinians. He explores visual and material culture and urban history during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods.

6. Capturing Urban Modernity: Architecture and Agriculture in Modern Jaffa

Nadi Abusaada

Abstract: This chapter traces Jaffa's transformation from the late nineteenth century to the end of the British Mandate, focusing on its citrus industry. Using historical sources and Frank Scholten's photographs from the 1920s, it explores Jaffa's urban and agricultural growth, which was driven by access to global markets, agricultural innovations, and changes in landownership. The study focuses on the spatial dynamics of citriculture, highlighting the *bayyara* (orchards), landowners' mansions, and *sakina* (workers' dwellings) as reflections of Jaffa's socioeconomic layers and its integration into global trade. It also examines the relationships between landowners, gardeners, and laborers, revealing disparities and dependencies within the citrus economy. Jaffa's citrus industry proved pivotal to the region's urban modernization, shaping its identity and position within broader Mediterranean and global contexts.

Keywords: plantations, Palestine, photography, urban history, citriculture

The Inner Worlds of Jaffa's Modernity

Driving through the outskirts of Jaffa today, east of the Old City, one is intermittently faced with historical Palestinian structures that appear incongruous amidst the backdrop of Israeli places, industrial shops, highways, and parks. These remnants of the past, nestled between the new urban landscapes, evoke an uncanny feeling. Some of these structures have retained their original features, bearing witness to the passage of history, while others have experienced remarkable intervention. Some continue to stand alone, while others have

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been incorporated into newer constructions. These edifices are the remnants of once-thriving citrus plantations, which once dominated Jaffa's landscape. Among them were opulent mansions owned by wealthy landholders, and more humble structures that sheltered the laborers toiling on these fertile lands. These intermittent structures, often overlooked in urban studies, persist as poignant reminders of a significant chapter in the city's Palestinian history.

This chapter revisits a pivotal episode in Jaffa's history: its transformation due to its flourishing citrus industry from the late nineteenth century until the early 1920s, when Scholten photographed them. It examines the extent to which Scholten's images contributed to shaping a European colonial gaze on Jaffa that idealized the citrus industry and reinforced orientalist perspectives that framed Palestine's agricultural landscapes as timeless, while largely omitting Arab workers from the visual narrative. But more prominently, these images serve as a valuable source for analyzing the city and the evolving architecture of the plantations in the early 1920s. The chapter underscores this economic boom's enduring and substantial imprint on the city's physical and natural environments and delves into the various spatial manifestations of this boom, with a particular focus on the spatial characteristics of the *bayyara* (citrus orchard), the mansion, and the *sakinat* (humble dwellings).

To achieve this, the study draws upon a diverse range of historical textual sources, enriched by a valuable resource: the photographic collections from Dutch photographer Frank Scholten, who resided in Jaffa during the early 1920s. Scholten's images of Jaffa are exceptional, as they capture both the city and its plantation landscape. Moreover, they offer a unique perspective on Jaffa during a crucial phase of its evolution: postulating the economic boom of the late nineteenth century but preceding the destruction of the Old City and urban expansion of the 1930s.[1]

Notably, Frank Scholten had envisioned a comprehensive sixteen-volume series titled *Palestine Illustrated* that would showcase his photographic work in Palestine. However, only two volumes materialized, and both were dedicated to Jaffa. These two books reveal a common characteristic of European photographers who undertook similar missions in Palestine during that era: Scholten's captions for places and individuals were steeped in a biblical narrative.[2] Although this framing itself presents a crucial avenue for study, it does not form the primary focus of this study. Instead, with its

1 Abusaada, "Urban Encounters."

2 On photography and the "biblical lens" in Mandate Palestine, see Sanchez Summerer and Zananiri, *Imaging and Imagining Palestine.*

emphasis on Jaffa's urban transformation, this research utilizes these rare photographic records of Jaffa's citrus landscape to interpret the materiality of the spaces they capture, albeit realizing the limits of Scholten's biblical gaze. I argue that it is not only possible but imperative to narrate a history through Scholten's photographs that transcends his own limitations. By interpreting the photographs in their own right, we begin to see spaces that were otherwise erased from the photographic memory of Palestine: the inner worlds of Jaffa's modernity, driven by its citrus boom.

Jaffa's Citrus Boom

As with the other major port cities and trade centers in the Ottoman Mediterranean basin, Jaffa's historical dependence on agricultural surplus was essential to its development as a hub for regional commerce and light industry. Unlike most of those cities, however, where surplus agricultural yields predominantly came from their surrounding villages and hinterlands, in Jaffa, they derived from the belt of urban citrus gardens that surrounded the city.[3] These gardens had fenced the outskirts of the walled city since at least the mid-eighteenth century. However, it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that they began to witness substantial levels of growth, transforming both the city and its surroundings (Fig. 1).

This growth was the result of a culmination of several global and local factors. Among these influences were the relative political stability in the aftermath of the Egyptian campaign in Palestine and the Crimean War; the development of steamships and the opening of new global markets; the relaxed European restrictions on orange imports relative to other products like cotton; and the shifts in the Ottoman land codes allowing the private sale of *miri* (state-owned) lands to Arab and foreign investors who found a lucrative form of financial investment in Jaffa's orchards.[4] Equally critical,

3 On the dependence of "Islamic" cities on agricultural surplus from their hinterlands, see Hourani, "The Islamic City in the Light of Recent Research."

4 On the development of Jaffa oranges, Alexander Schölch notes: "Regular exportation of this commodity was established after the Crimean War. It was mainly organized by Greek coastal shipping. In 1873, there were already 420 orange groves in the vicinity of Jaffa, yielding 33.3 million oranges annually. One sixth of the total was consumed in Palestine, while the rest was shipped to Egypt and Asia Minor on Greek fruiters. After 1875, Jaffa oranges were also exported to Europe (France, Germany, Austria, Russia) on a significant scale. This long-range trade increased markedly when the oranges were packed more carefully and exported in boxes. For shipping to Europe only the egg-shaped, thick skinned *shamouti* oranges were suited; the round and smaller *baladi* type were sold on the local and regional markets. The yield of 1880

Fig. 1: "Jaffa from the Orange Groves, 1898-1914," American Colony Photo Department, Matson Collection, Library of Congress (LOC), https://www.loc.gov/resource/matpc.06520/.

Arab farmers in Jaffa cultivated a new variety of oranges, known as the *shamouti* or Jaffa orange, with a sweet taste and thick peel that made it especially suitable for long-distance export.[5] This innovation, coupled with conditions that enabled citrus export to new global markets,[6] contributed to Jaffa's bourgeoning citriculture in the nineteenth century.

The growing investments in citriculture had an immense impact on Jaffa's urban landscape, particularly its relationship to its surroundings. Between 1850 and 1880, the orange grove area surrounding Jaffa had quadrupled.[7] By the turn of the twentieth century, Jaffa's orange gardens had become regarded "as the best form of capital investment," and citrus had become

was 36 million oranges. In his report for the year 1881, the British consular agent remarked that orange gardens were now regarded as the best form of capital investment, as annual net returns of 10 percent of the invested capital could be expected. This long-range trade increased markedly when the oranges were packed more carefully and exported in boxes." From Scholch, "The Economic Development of Palestine," 49.

5 Scholch, "The Economic Development of Palestine," 49.

6 Karlinsky, *California Dreaming*, 5–7, 47–53, 8–83, Palestine's citrus industry adopted modern irrigation, transportation, and marketing strategies.

7 Scholch, "The Economic Development of Palestine," 49.

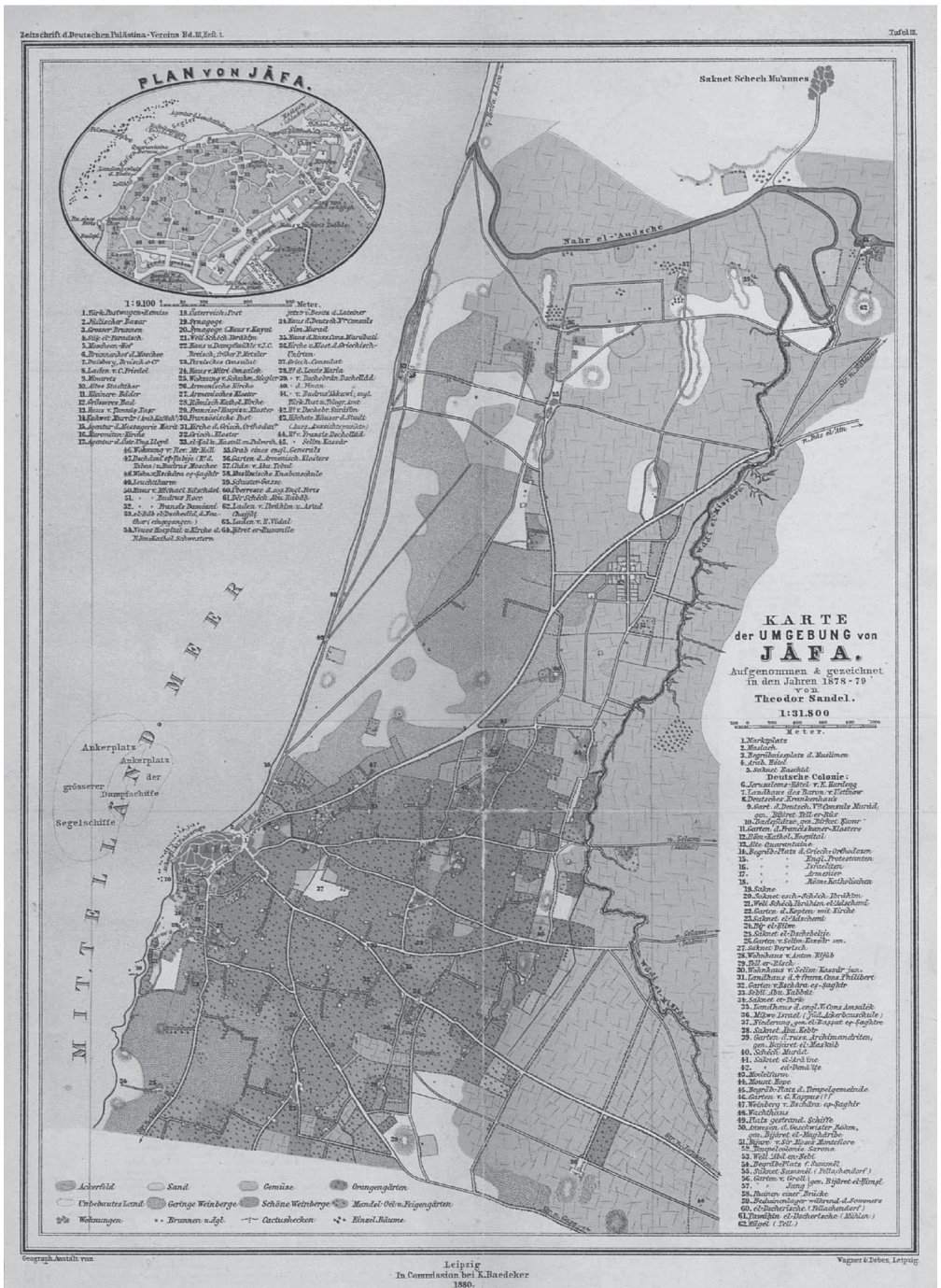

Fig. 2: Map of Jaffa and its Environs by Theodor Sandel, 1878-79, from G. Shwarz, *Jafa und Umgebung* (1880). Jaffa's Old City appears in red, surrounded by orange groves in green. Built-up areas within the groves also appear in red, indicating the presence of landowner mansions and *sakināt*.

one of Palestine's primary export commodities.[8] As their Arabic name *bayyārāt*, derived from *bi'r* (water well), suggests, the cultivation of those orchards was mainly possible due to Jaffa's suitable waterscape: the coastal city's rich groundwater resources at a relatively shallow depth enabled the local population to harness it at a large scale before the introduction of industrialized water pumping methods.[9] The gardens thus had to be concentrated in the lowlands east of the city, where water could be found at no more than twelve meters deep in the ground, the depth limit of the "traditional" human- or animal-operated Persian well.[10] This concentration appears vividly in Theodor Sandel's 1878 map of Jaffa and its environs, where the vast belt of gardens surrounding Jaffa appears to mainly occupy the eastern sides of the three main Jerusalem, Nablus, and Gaza roads radiating out of the city's main eastern gate, away from the hilly terrains and sand dunes that border the city's southern and northern coastlines (Fig. 2).[11]

Entangled Typologies: The Bayyāra, the Mansion, and the Sakina

Jaffa's growing citriculture ushered in three interdependent spatial elements, which, together, comprised what can be considered a holistic "plantation typology": the *bayyāra*, the mansion, and the *sakina*.[12] The spatial and temporal phases in the plantation's development were ultimately tied: the passage of cultivation cycles based on harvest seasons took place in tandem with the transformations in the plantation's physical structure. Based on a detailed 1896 account of orange growing in Jaffa by Reinhold Palmer, it is possible to identify three main spatio-temporal phases for the development

8 Scholch, "The Economic Development of Palestine," 49.

9 On the politics of water provision in late Ottoman Jaffa, see Abusaada, "The Pit and the Pond."

10 For more on the technological aspect of citriculture in Palestine, see Abusaada, "The Pit and the Pond," 92.

11 Sandel's 1878 map was first published in 1880 with an accompanying article; see Schwarz, "Jafa Und Umgebung. Erläuterung Zu Tafel III."

12 Despite several articles about the economic, demographic, and social changes caused by the rise of Jaffa's citrus industry, the materiality of the agrarian landscape as a physical site of extraction and settlement has not received sufficient scholarly study. The only exception is an article by Yael Allweil that offers an important preliminary sketch of some of the primary features of Jaffa's plantation landscape; however, its overt effort to justify its classification as a type of "modern vernacular" settlement precludes the prospect of thorough analysis. Allweil also offers an analogy with the American plantation, which this study finds useful, albeit only in a limited sense. Allweil, "Plantation," 15.

Fig. 3: "Sand road leading to buildings," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 19:72.

of Jaffa's citrus plantations in the nineteenth century.[13] The first phase constituted the initial works that usually took place in the first year after acquiring an estate. Landowners hired workers to level, plow, and fertilize the soil to prepare it for cultivation. A fence of cactus hedges was planted around the estates to demarcate their boundaries from adjacent plots and keep away probable intruders (Fig. 3). The water-intensive nature of citrus cultivation also requires reliable water pumping technologies and irrigation methods. Each plantation thus included at least one water well, usually with a mule-driven Persian wheel, to serve as its primary water source in the non-rainy months (Fig. 4). It also had an intricate system of irrigation pools and stone-built canals to pass water through the groves. By the time the land had been prepared and fertilized and the Persian wheels had been fixed, the construction of animal stables and accommodations for the gardener and his family would also have been completed, paving the way for the subsequent second and third stages in the plantation's development.

The fact that the gardener's house was built in the earliest stages of a plantation's development points to the centrality of the gardener, or *bayyargi*, in the life of the plantation. Gardeners were practically estate managers. The landowners entrusted them with planting, regularly maintaining,

13 Palmer, "Orange-Growing in Jaffa," 668–70.

Fig. 4: "Camel at work, man watching him," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 25:46.

and guarding the plantation. As evident in Scholten's photographs, these gardeners were usually accompanied by their wives and children, who lived with them on the plantations and were an additional long-term workforce. The year-round and labor-intensive work of gardeners and their families was fundamental to a plantation's success. Their work included preparing and fertilizing the soil, planting trees and vegetables, tending to the animals and grazing them, operating the water wells, and regularly clearing irrigation channels.

The nature of the remuneration gardeners received for their work changed with the plantation's development. In the first four years following the initial planting – what can be considered the second phase in a plantation's development – the orange-grafted lemon trees did not yield sufficient produce to become self-sufficient. In this period, landowners paid the gardeners a fixed wage that varied according to the plantation's size. In the third phase, around six years after the initial planting, landowners began to enjoy returns on their investments, and the estate became a productive and profit-making enterprise. Landowners were now typically willing to grant the gardeners a percentage share of the produce, around one-twelfth to one-tenth of the crop. The owners trusted that this would give the gardeners an interest in the general upkeep and productivity of the estate.[14] This is

14 Palmer, "Orange-Growing in Jaffa," 670.

Fig. 5: "Field with plants. Building and a palm tree in the background," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 28:030.

also the stage where major alterations were made to the plantation's layout and architecture.

The spatial characteristics of the plantations facilitated the accumulation of wealth for their proprietors in these latter stages. While some of the owners' profits were spent elsewhere, a significant sum went into further developing the plantation itself. Some owners chose to purchase additional adjacent plots to merge with their plantations. Others invested in digging new wells or replacing traditional mule-driven hydraulic systems with imported steam engines. However, the most remarkable manifestation of the plantation owner's expanded wealth materialized in mortar and stone: the landowner's mansion (Fig. 5–6).

The addition of the landowner's mansion transformed the physical structure of the plantation from a site of investment to a place of habitation for the landowners. A mansion served as the landowner's temporary residence, a place where some would spend the summer months away from their permanent homes in Jaffa or other nearby cities like Beirut or Jerusalem. In architectural terms, the mansions represented a departure from the features of the Old City's buildings. Unlike the compact and close-knit fabric of the Old City, the landowners' mansions were freestanding structures that evinced a new spirit of modernity.

Fig. 6: "Building with a garden," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 28:033.

The mansions varied considerably in size and layout. Generally, they were two- or three-story structures with red-tiled roofs, ornamented windows, and iron-rail encircled balconies overlooking the plantations. The second and third stories of the mansion echoed the increasingly popular detached "central hall" layout of suburban villas in other nearby Mediterranean port and trade cities, including Beirut.[15] But unlike those suburban villas, Jaffa's mansions were embedded in its plantation landscape. This embeddedness was both urban and architectural. Mansion basements frequently included elements that served the estate's productivity, including wells, reservoirs, and harvest storages. Thus, residing in the mansion became synonymous with residing over the sources of the plantation's wealth.[16] Mansions also

15 On the "central hall" style of house in Lebanon, see Ragette, *Architecture in Lebanon* and Davie, *Beyrouth 1825–1975*.

16 "In each of [the garden-houses at Jaffa] there is a summer residence, which, besides serving for this purpose, is used as a magazine to store and preserve the gathered fruit. […] In these country-houses a channel is made to traverse the centre of the lower rooms, through which the water is made to flow, after being raised by the wheel, on its way to the jalia or reservoir, affording thereby the convenient use of this element to the inmates; and, besides being gratifying to the eye in the heat of summer, it contributes to cool the atmosphere of the apartments," Quoted in Hamilton, "The Field and the Garden: The Bible Illustrated by the Plants of Palestine," in *Lectures Delivered Before the Young Men's Christian Association, 1845–46*, 150.

noticeably contributed to the plantation's spatial segregation, separating the big house where the landowners lived from the "back of the big house" where the gardeners' families resided.[17]

In addition to their influence on the spatial layout of the plantations, the mansions imposed a new spatial order on Jaffa's cityscape more broadly. Landowners built their mansions at the plantation's edge, close to the main streets. Lining the three major roads leading to Jaffa's Old City, the prominent mansions were visible to travelers approaching or leaving the city from any direction. They conspicuously signified that most of the city's wealth was concentrated not in its Old City but its surrounding gardens.

However, the landowners' increased influence was often at odds with Ottoman imperial desires. The tensions between them manifested clearly in a protracted dispute over the transfer of the registration of orchards in Jaffa from *miri* (state-owned) to *mulk* (privately owned) estates in the 1890s.[18] They also were clear in the numerous complaints about the state of the citrus industry that landowners wrote in the local Arabic newspapers. Nakhleh Bayrūtī, a reputable landowner, frequently advocated for new state-led strategies to address the financial losses Arab citrus investors in Jaffa incurred as a result of unregulated markets, poor coordination between landowners and citrus merchants, and heavy Ottoman taxation.[19] Bayrūtī also requested that the Ottoman tithe on orange cultivation of *mīrī* land in the Jaffa subdistrict be reduced to encourage further expansion of citrus plantations outside Jaffa. He argued that the arrangement would be of "dual benefit" to the Ottoman government and Palestine's orange investors.[20] Thus, Jaffa's thriving orange industry became viewed not only as an urban enterprise but as a replicable model for enterprise across Palestine's coastal plains.

The improved economic stature of Jaffa's plantation owners and their desire to expand their citrus cultivation outside the city mirrored their rising political influence. By the late nineteenth century, the financial wealth of orange investors granted them a dominant position in city politics and newly established Ottoman civic institutions, including agricultural banks, chambers of commerce, and municipalities. Jaffa's late Ottoman mayors were all major landowners or had relatives involved in the city's citrus

17 Architectural segregation in plantation landscapes was not unique to Jaffa. For a significantly more radical example, see Vlach, *Back of the Big House*.

18 On the controversy in Jaffa, see Kark, "Consequences of the Ottoman Land Law".

19 See, for example, Bayrūti, "Orange Trading," 1.

20 See, for example, Bayrūti, "A Dual Benefit for the State and the People," 1.

industry.[21] As oranges became Palestine's major global export commodity, these landowners' interests became embedded in international and regional financial, commercial, and diplomatic channels. The foreign consulates, banks, shipping agencies, and official regulatory institutions and associations that began to line the streets of Jaffa's new city center were operated by classes closely affiliated and intertwined with the plantation-owning families.[22]

At this stage, mansions were built and evolved into structures that signified both control over land and connections to outside worlds of trade. They cultivated an architectural language imported from other trade cities. No mansion in Jaffa embodied these global entanglements more than the Kassār mansion built by Salīm Kassār. Its Venetian-style ornamented stone and carved-wood windows, marble columns, painted ceilings, imported chandeliers, and diesel-powered hydraulic engine embodied the Maltese family's local power as well as their expanding familial and entrepreneurial ties across the Mediterranean world.[23]

Jaffa's physical landscape unmasked the disparities caused by the exclusive ownership of its citrus industry's wealth. The elaborate mansions contrasted with the living conditions of the short-term wage laborers working on the plantations. Yet, in Scholten's photographs, as in many other European photographs of that time, it is rare to see the laborers who formed the backbone of the citrus industry. Their labor was necessary to regularly maintain the plantations, and there was a great need for a large labor force during harvest season.[24] They toiled under the supervision of landowners and gardeners who observed their work from distant outdoor pavilions.

Unlike gardeners, these short-term workers did not reside on the plantations. Instead, they lived in *sakināt*, a type of residential settlement that

21 This included mayors Ḥusnī Bey'Alī Amīn al-Arnā'ūṭ (1897, 1903), Michel Bayrūtī (1903), Salīm Shaykh'Alī Efendi (1908) and municipal councilors Iskandar Efendi Rok (1893) and Antoine Efendi Kassār (1903), among others. See Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 233–4.

22 Municipal councilor Antoine Kassār (1867–1934), for instance, had also served as a judge and prosecutor in the Jaffa Commercial Court and as an agent of the Egyptian Khedivial Line. See "The Speech Delivered by His Excellency Andre Bertrand, Consul of France and Dean of the Consuls of Foreign Countries, at the Funeral of the Late Antoine Kassar, Consul of Greece and Spain in Jaffa," 4.

23 Salīm Kassār, an owner of a large plantation and mansion in Jaffa, had also invested great sums in agricultural estates throughout the subdistrict. Among these was an estate he controversially sold to Jewish entrepreneur Baron Rothschild, paving way for the development of Petah Tikva, the first Zionist agricultural colony in Palestine, on an estate that previously belonged to the Arab village of Mullabis.

24 Kabha, *The Lost Orchard,* 142; Karlinsky, *California Dreaming*, 83.

Fig. 7: "Street with palm trees in the background," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 26:36.

included hundreds of densely built, detached mud dwellings. Jaffa's Islamic court records mention more than twenty *sakināt*, mostly built on *miri* land, in the vicinity of Jaffa in the late nineteenth century.[25] Scholten's photographs offer a rare glimpse into these labor settlements (Fig. 7-8). Though the *sakināt* included spatial elements commonly found in coastal Arab villages, including a guesthouse and communal plaza for social events, their camp-like layout and proximity to the city rendered them a unique form of satellite concentrations, or early suburbs.[26] The lives of the *sakināt* dwellers were as embedded in webs of movement as those of the landowners. They were part of migrant communities who mainly arrived from Egypt but also from South Asia, North Africa, and the interior of Greater Syria in search of work on Jaffa's plantations and in other labor-intensive urban trades and industries.[27]

25 For more on mentions of the *sakināt* in nineteenth-century Islamic court records, see Bawwab, *Mawsūʿat Yāfā al-jamīlah*, vol. 1, 2 vols, 694–702; Yazbak, *Madinat alburtuqal yafa*, 385–7.

26 Islamic court records indicate that the *sakināt* contained a plaza and a guesthouse. See Bawwab, *Mawsūʿat Yāfā al-jamīlah*, vol. 1, 2 vols, 700–1.

27 For instance, Islamic court records indicate that the *sakināt* workers also worked at nearby vineyards, tanneries, stockyards, gardens, and the grain mills on the Auja River. Bawwab, *Mawsūʿat Yāfā al-jamīlah*, vol. 1, 2 vols, 700.

Fig. 8: "Women sit in a street with children," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 27:08.

While the relationships between the *sakināt* and their surrounding plantations were not devoid of intercommunal strife, they were strongly interdependent.[28] Tucked behind the mansions and the *bayyārāt*, and primarily accessed from secondary roads instead of main streets, the *sakināt* were the clandestine powerhouses of Jaffa's citrus industry. Numerous gardeners and "head gardeners" originally came from the *sakināt*.[29] Moreover, the temporary labor force that the *sakināt* housed was essential for turning the plantations into mass production sites and enabling large-scale orange exports to global markets. This labor supply was critical because, despite

28 *Filastin* newspaper published dozens of articles warning of the threats posed by organized armed gangs in Jaffa (mainly made up of Afghan and Moroccan guards) to the city's "public security," particularly the plantation owners. One *Filastin* article explained that such groups were coercing landowners to pay a tax in exchange for their "protection" services and those who did not succumb to their intimidation suffered attacks on their *bayyārāt*. See "A Talk with the Honourable Mutasarrif to the Owner of This Newspaper."

29 Like other craftspeople in the late nineteenth century Middle East, Jaffa's gardeners were also organized within the Ottoman guild structure and were led by a city-wide *sheikh al-bayyariyya* ("head gardener") with trusted expertise. He was usually summoned to resolve issues related to land disputes, output valuation, or the spread of plant disease. Those *sheikhs* were also sometimes the heads of entire *sakināt*. Islamic court records, for instance, indicate that Sheikh Darwish Abu Taha, the founder of the Darwish Sakina, served as a *sheikh al-bayyariyya* in Jaffa. Bawwab, *Mawsūʿat Yāfā al-jamīlah*, 696.

Fig. 9: "Men packing boxes," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 21:013.

Fig. 10: "Boxes being loaded onto a ship," NINO, F. Scholten, *Jaffa*, 24:66.

technological improvements, Jaffa's expanding citrus industry remained labor-intensive.[30] In addition to the wage farmers employed in the *bayyārāt*, a significant number of specialized workers from Jaffa's *sakināt* – including men, women, and children – were involved in the different stages of preparing oranges for export: harvest, storage, delicate wrapping, boxing, camel transport from the eastern groves to the port area, and transport from the harbor via small boats to large vessels anchored at sea (Fig. 9-10).[31] All these people were relatively absent from Scholten's photographs, but he does give us a rare view into these entangled spaces. In his photographs, we see the journey of the orange in great detail, from the plantation field to its voyage across the Mediterranean, well integrated into a broader transnational network of citrus agribusinesses.[32]

Conclusion

The development of Jaffa's citrus landscape from the mid-nineteenth century onwards had a remarkable impact on the city's future. Despite their gaps, Scholten's photographs captured views of the Palestinian citrus industry at its peak (and before the high taxation imposed by the British Mandate authorities). The entanglement of agricultural production within an urban sphere produced a particular type of modernization, dissimilar to that in other trade centers where agricultural surplus derived from distant hinterlands. This distinction had a significant influence not only on the city's relationship with its broader Mediterranean connections but also on its internal socio-spatial stratifications.

Three interrelated spatial typologies (the *bayyāra*, the mansion, and the *sakina*) emerged in nineteenth-century Jaffa as a direct result of the city's expanding citrus industry. The distinctive layouts and spatial features of these typologies engendered the stark variations in the wealth and living conditions of the plantations' owners and laborers. However, interpreting the spatial relationships between these typologies beyond their contrast reveals that they had deep-rooted interdependent ties, albeit ones forged on unequal terms. Institutionalized and informal material networks of people, expertise, and goods entwined these typologies into a set of inevitable socio-spatial entanglements, both desirable and forced. These entanglements

30 Abusaada, "Jaffa."
31 Abusaada, "Jaffa."
32 Kabha, *The Lost Orchard*, 138–42.

were at once a product of the city and of its position in the world. In their dependence on global trade markets, foreign and regional investors, and migrant wage workers, Jaffa's citrus plantations were a type of modern enterprise made possible through a set of relationships that tied the city to its broader geographies of modernity.

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About the Author

Nadi Abusaada is an architect and historian, currently Visiting Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture and Design at the American University of Beirut (AUB). He co-founded Arab Urbanism, a global network focusing on historical and contemporary urban issues in the Arab world.

7. In the Southern Jordan Valley with Frank Scholten: Sacred Topography and the Revival of Jericho

Marc Dugas

Abstract: This chapter examines Frank Scholten's photographic documentation of the southern Jordan Valley. The first part explores his images of the region's rich biblical landscape, including major Christian holy sites like the baptism site of Jesus, as well as lesser-known shrines, reflecting Scholten's ties to Jerusalem's scholarly community. The second part analyzes Scholten's photographs of Jericho in the early 1920s, comparing them with historical records to trace the city's post-war revival. These images reveal Jericho's renewed social diversity and document its evolving urban fabric. Scholten's work captures both the sacred and everyday aspects of the Jordan Valley, providing a valuable visual record of the region's historical and social transformation.

Keywords: Jericho, Jordan River, holy places, pilgrimage, tourism, churches of Jerusalem

This chapter examines the material Frank Scholten prepared for what was intended to be the sixth volume of *La Palestine Illustrée*, according to a fundraising prospectus.[1] Devoted to the eastern region of Palestine – "*langs den Jordaan en rondom de Doode Zee*" ("along the Jordan River and around the Dead Sea") – this volume would have focused on the northern shore of the Dead Sea, as evidenced by the dozens of photographs Scholten took of the area. This key "holy circuit" of Christian pilgrimage was central to the photographer's biblical illustration project.

1 "Frank Scholten's Palestina." Promotional document held in the Scholten collection at NINO.

Sanchez Summerer, Karène, and Sary Zananiri, eds. *Palestine in Transition: Frank Scholten's Visual Archive of the British Mandate Period*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/Central European University Press, 2026.
DOI: 10.5117/9789048562299-9

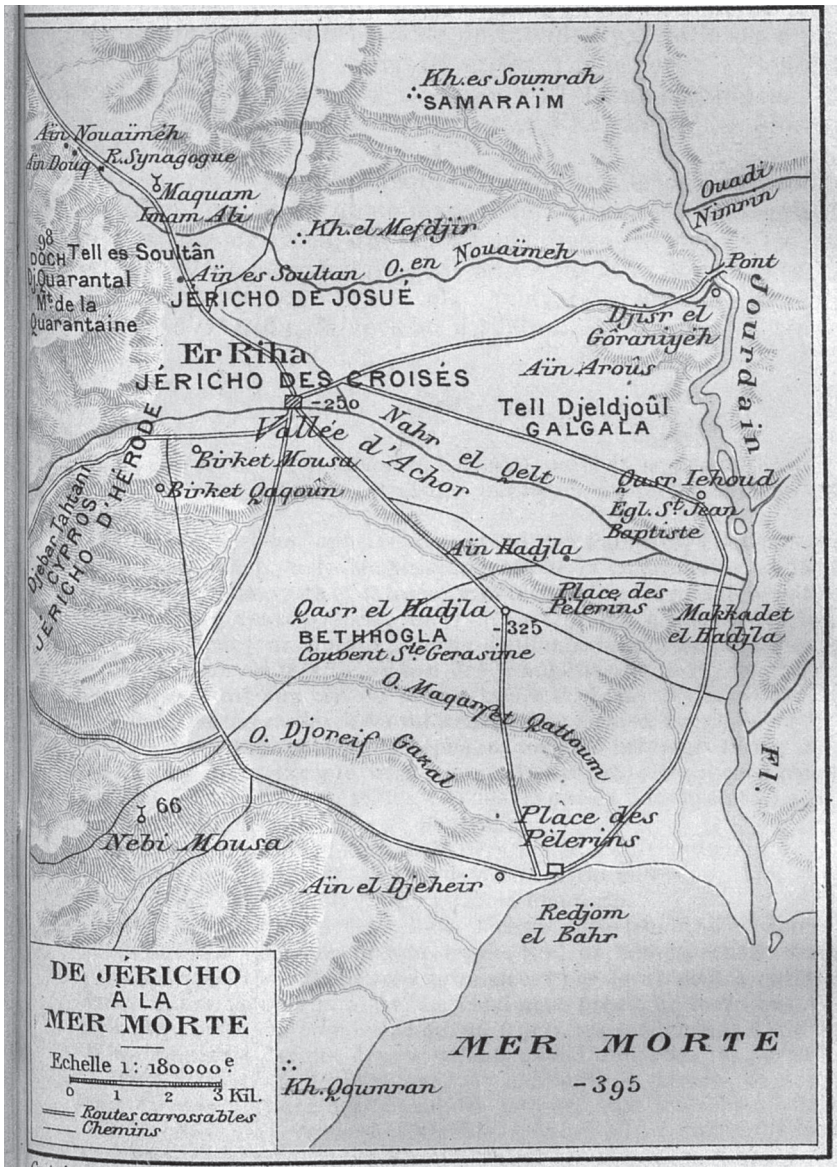

Fig. 1: The Jordan River circuit according to the guidebook used by Scholten: Barnabé Meistermann, *Guide to the Holy Land (Guide de la Terre Sainte)* (1923).

Scholten gathered his material during several excursions between 1921 and 1923. One of these visits occurred in January, as shown by images of a liturgy specific to the feast of the Theophany, the "Great Blessing of the Water" at the Jordan River. On at least one visit, the Dominican friars of

Saint-Étienne of Jerusalem acted as guides; photographs show two of them, including Father Ceslas Lavergne.[2] Scholten himself assembled his pictures in regional albums titled *Weg Jerusalem Jericho*, *Plaine du Jourdain*, *Jéricho I*, and *Jéricho II*.[3] Thematic albums accessible online, such as *Sanctuaires*, *Choses intéressantes*, and *Maisons religieuses*, also contain photographs related to the region.

The Jericho sub-district held special interest in the early 1920s. Its re-emergence, begun at the end of the nineteenth century, was halted by the First World War. Scholten captures the resumption of this development, revealing signs of social diversification in its early stages. With its rich scriptural heritage, the Jordan Valley represents a case where deep history and fragile modernization intersect.

Scholten and the Sacred Topography of the Valley

Jericho and its region, from the north of the Dead Sea to the Wadi al-Nu'eima, hold profound significance in the shared sacred history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Before the Christian era, various sites mentioned in the Jewish Bible had woven a solid hagio-topographical web across the valley. Christians and Judeo-Christians adopted this framework, interpreting scriptural geography through the lens of typological exegesis. Later, with the establishment of Islam, Muslims turned their attention to Jericho, "the city of the Giants," identifying places associated with Musa/Moses, Yushaʿ/Joshua, and the *Banu Isra'il*.[4]

2 See "Group of people sitting on a hill," NINO F Scholten, *Plaine du Jourdain*, 073 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3433603 and "Group of people in a field," NINO F Scholten, *Plaine du Jourdain*, 080 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3433610. I am grateful to Jean-Michel de Tarragon O.P., head of the photographic archives at the Priory of Saint-Étienne, for identifying Ceslas Lavergne. Lavergne (1890–1985) was a close collaborator of Marie-Joseph Lagrange O.P., the founder of the *École Biblique et Archéologique Française* in Jerusalem. Father Augustin Georges may be the other Dominican in the pictures. Scholten is not mentioned in the priory's diaries.

3 These regional albums are not available online, but the images are displayed individually on the website.

4 The Jewish topography of the valley is known through Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* (*De Bello Judaico*), IV, 8. Another perspective is offered by the copper scroll discovered in cave III at Khirbet Qumran; Puech, *The Copper Scroll Revisited*. A transition point from this Jewish heritage to Christianity is the field investigation conducted by Origen in the first third of the third century; see his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, Book VI. The geographer al-Muqaddasi provides information on the valley's sacred topography from the point of view of a Muslim Jerusalemite before the year 1000; *Aḥsan at-taqasim fi Maʿrifat al-Aqalim*, § 185 and § 227-232, among others.

This maze of interwoven traditions naturally drew Scholten's attention. Traveling through the Judean Desert and the Jordan Valley, the Dutch photographer documented the state of many famous holy sites. Most of these places had already been extensively documented, including the Inn of the Good Samaritan, the Mount of Temptation, the Fountain of Elisha, the Jordan River, and the shores of the "Sea of Sodom." Postcards, notably from the Bonfils studio, had popularized this imagery since the 1870s.[5] Yet Scholten, guided by experts, managed to capture lesser-known facets of the sacred topography.

Among these, Scholten photographed the "Moukam Imam Ali, Muslim Sanctuary (near Jericho)" (Fig. 2). The image testifies to the quality of his information, as this shrine reflects a vernacular application of an Islamic exegetical mechanism, which aims to construct a typological link between Ali ibn Abi Talib, successor of the Prophet Muhammad, and the biblical Joshua, successor of Moses.[6] The legend underpinning the *maqam*'s location, collected by Charles Clermont-Ganneau from the inhabitants of the valley in the 1870s, attributes the conquest of Jericho (Josh 6:11-21) and the miracle of the sun at Gibeon (Josh 10:12-14) to Ali ibn Abi Talib. This local tradition illustrates the intricacy of the valley's sacred topography, composed of overlapping popular, learned, and liturgical traditions – whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. These relate to the biblical cycles of Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha, as well as King David and the Gospels.[7] Although Scholten may have simply relied on Meistermann's guidebook (regularly quoted in *La Palestine Illustrée*), it is remarkable that his attention was drawn to this minor shrine and that a well-informed guide led him there.[8]

It is hardly surprising, however, that Frank Scholten, a fervent convert, was particularly drawn to the Gospel sites of Jericho and its environs. His contribution here was to photograph two distinct places associated with the baptism of Jesus: one corresponding to the liturgical tradition of the churches, the other reflecting a debate specific to Jerusalem's ecclesiastical milieu in the early twentieth century.

Surprisingly, three images from the *Sanctuaires V* album address a relatively obscure hypothesis (Fig. 3). Titled "Tell el-Medesh, Bethany (of

5 On the Bonfils studio, see for example Nir, *The Bible and the Image*, 101.

6 Sindawi, "Link between Joshua Bin Nun and 'Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib."

7 Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873–1874*. Vol. II, 23-24 and 40-42.

8 Meistermann, *Nouveau guide de la Terre Sainte*, 273.

Fig. 2: "Moukam Imam Ali, sanctuaire musulman (près Jéricho)" (Moukam Imam Ali, Muslim sanctuary (near Jericho)), NINO F. Scholten, *Judaea XIII*: 803.

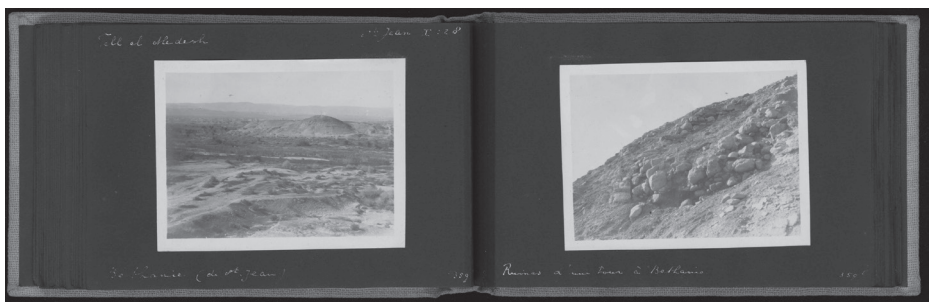

Fig. 3: "Sanctuaries," NINO F. Scholten, *Sanctuaires V*: 359 a, b.

St John)" by Scholten, these images illustrate a gospel verse he noted above and to the right of the first image: "St John 1:28." This verse locates the preaching of John the Baptist: "This all happened at Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing."

These images, the location, and Scholten's caption can only be understood within the context of a debate among Jerusalem's Christian scholars. Since the early third century, the location of Jesus' baptism has been debated. While the topographical tradition maintained by the Jerusalem churches has never wavered, scholars have suggested places that correspond better to John 1:28, beyond the River Jordan. One such site, proposed in 1908 by Louis Féderlin, the superior of the Greek-Catholic seminary of Sainte-Anne

in Jerusalem, is *Tell el-Medesh*, the site photographed by Scholten. It is located on the eastern bank of the river, three kilometers north of the present-day Allenby Bridge. Féderlin was guided there by a villager from Abu Dis and became convinced that the ruins he discovered were those of Bethany, where John baptized.[9] Scholten's visit to this obscure place demonstrates the high quality of his guidance. As Féderlin's hypothesis gained little traction, very few images of Tell el-Medesh exist. To this day, the site remains unsurveyed and unexcavated.

Further south, Scholten documented the traditional site associated with the baptism of Jesus. Revered by pilgrims since at least the early third century, this site lies near the monastery of St. John Prodromos, known as *Qasr al-Yahud,* eight kilometers north of the mouth of the Jordan. It was referenced in all the guidebooks Scholten would have consulted.

For the most part, Scholten's photographs of this holy place are conventional. Among them are images of pilgrims immersing themselves after the water has been blessed by the Orthodox Patriarch on the day of the Epiphany celebration.[10] This ritual has been practiced in the same location since the sixth century. While in the past it may have been performed during the Holy Week rather than in January, its core elements have endured: the text of the blessing, traditionally attributed to Sophronius of Jerusalem;[11] the triple immersion of the Cross, evoking the fusion of Paschal and baptismal themes; and motifs such as the "turning back" of the river or the immersion of pilgrims in their white albs, later preserved as burial shrouds. These elements are modulated differently for the same ritual – at the same time and place in the liturgical calendars – by all the Eastern churches represented in Jerusalem.

9 Féderlin, *Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain* (*Tell El Medesch*). Trained in Algiers by Charles Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers order, Louis Féderlin (1855–1935) directed the Greek-Catholic seminary from 1888 to 1914. His publications, scattered in journals now difficult to access, provide precise, original insights into the villages surrounding Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. They bear witness to a genuine familiarity with the Palestinians and a solid command of the dialect, which were not common in Jerusalem's ecclesiastical circles at that time.

10 Three of these photographs were published by Karène Sanchez Summerer in 2022; see Irving, Nassif, and Sanchez Summerer, *The House of the Priest: A Palestinian Life*, 62-64. Among many images of the Theophany at the Jordan River at the time, we should mention those taken by Stephen Graham in 1912, for his book *With the Russian Pilgrims*; and those of the Matson collection, deposited at the Library of Congress, as some of these images are practically identical to those of Scholten. Compare for instance "Greeks celebrating the Epiphany," NINO F Scholten, *Jourdain Mer Morte* 1: 037 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432932 with "Epiphany ceremony," matpc 07454 https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/matpc.07454.

11 Sophronius, the last Patriarch of the Byzantine era (ca. 634–638), is an emblematic figure in the history of Jerusalem. He is credited with a probably legendary encounter with Caliph Umar, to whom he is said to have opened the gates of the Holy City.

Fig. 4: "River Jordan," NINO F Scholten, *Jourdain Mer Morte 1*:050.

The influx of Russian pilgrims at the end of the nineteenth century gave the celebration a massive scale.[12] For Western Christians and even for Muslims, Theophany at the Jordan River became an object of fascination, sometimes tinged with derision; by 1912 a viewing platform was erected on the edge of the river to allow the public to witness the spectacle.[13] However, the context in which Scholten experienced the liturgy was different: the outbreak of World War I and the Revolution of 1917 had stemmed the flow of Russian pilgrims. Scholten's photographs show diminished crowds gathered on the banks of the river.

Finally, Scholten's most perceptive depiction of the baptismal site is perhaps his simplest (Fig. 4). Through a minimalist grammar, this image conveys the singular nature of this place. Every sacred site has its own Holy of Holies,

12 According to D'Alonzo, *La Russie en Palestine*, the number of Russian pilgrims rose from a few hundred before the Crimean War to over 8,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century.

13 See the article printed in *Falastin* (11 January 1912, 1-3), mentioned by Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 440. For Christians of the Eastern Churches, the Blessing of the Jordan River and the celebration of the Holy Fire during the Easter Vigil at the Anastasis are the most significant events of any pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Western Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism), on the other hand, has largely lost the meaning of these rituals, for deep-seated reasons that may explain the astonished, even mocking, assessments of them by Western witnesses.

the most sacred space in the sanctuary. And each Holy of Holies requires a setting, a *mise-en-scène*, like the Star of the Nativity in Bethlehem or the Aedicule of the Anastasis, reaching out to pilgrims and inviting them to enter the mysteries of the place. But at the Jordan River, Scholten captures the radical humility of a holy place unlike any other. Four twisted branches, knotted and driven into the mud, form a makeshift rail inviting the pilgrim to step into the water. The rail points to the heart of the holy place; yet here, the Holy of Holies is a liquid interstice, a liminal and elusive space, almost a non-place. Where Jesus was baptized, earthquakes, floods, and wars have swept away the built sanctuaries. Here, pilgrims undergo an elemental experience where nature itself serves as the temple, where worship is conveyed through sensory experience, and remembrance through impermanence.

Jericho Reborn: A Photographic Promenade with Frank Scholten

Amid the ancient network of holy places, a new reality emerged at the turn of the twentieth century: Jericho (Ariha) was awakening from centuries of dormancy. Scholten's photographs capture this social stirring across the valley.

In the early 1920s, during Scholten's visit, Jericho was a small village nestled in a palm grove; the entire sub-district counted fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, including nomads.[14] Yet, a comparison of Scholten's photographs with numerous accounts available from the Ayyubid period until the end of the nineteenth century reveals that significant changes had already occurred. Fifty years earlier, Jericho was still invariably described as a hamlet of a few dozen shacks and hovels clustered around a ruined tower, once built by the Templars to secure the pilgrims' route. Behind a thorn hedge, the hamlet sheltered a population often portrayed as the poorest in Palestine.[15] Stripped of its fertility and plagued by insecurity, Jericho had

14 McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine*, 66.

15 The sources are unanimous on the misery of Jericho before 1870. See Bonfils' postcard (final plate, Fig. a), which was probably taken at the very end of the 1860s from the roof of the Templars' tower. For Henry B. Tristram, who visited in 1864, Jericho was "a wretched collection of hovels with a large square redoubt or castle." In 1868, according to Porter's handbook, "a filthier and more miserable village could not be found in all Palestine." In 1876, the Cook Agency guidebook referred to Jericho as "one of the filthiest spots in the Holy Land, the town consisting of a mere heap of rubbish." Some authors attribute this devastation to reprisals by Ibrahim Pasha in 1840, but earlier sources clearly note that the village had been in this reduced state since the end of

Fig. 5: "Four men in front of a large tree," NINO F. Scholten, *Jericho 1*:10.

ceased to fulfill its role as a base for the valley's monks and a stopover for pilgrims bound for the Jordan.

In contrast, the village of 1922 appears flourishing. Jericho's re-emergence began in the 1840s, when an Ottoman garrison was stationed in the ruined tower. However, Jericho's recovery truly took hold in the 1870s. Driven by the Hamidian reforms and other factors, the region started to develop. First came an agricultural revival. Simultaneously, the village re-established its religious prominence through the involvement of the churches. Finally, Jericho emerged as an administrative center and a winter retreat for the Jerusalem bourgeoisie.

The profusion of Scholten's work and the photographer's humanistic eye offer documentation of Jericho in the wake of the First World War, fifty years after the beginning of its rejuvenation. Let us now follow the photographer on his promenade, cross-referencing his images with our knowledge of the period, seeking to identify some of the buildings, stories, and faces that played a part in Jericho's vitality in the early 1920s.

A commanding figure stands before a palm tree amid a young orchard (Fig. 5). With one hand resting on his paunch, perhaps to check his pocket

the Latin Kingdom period. However, the descriptions of passing travelers must be nuanced, as they often failed to notice the scattered settlements in the palm grove.

watch, the mustached man looks into the camera with assurance. His European suit, his S*tambuli* tarbush, and his proprietary demeanor suggest that he is part of Jerusalem's elite, by then well established in Jericho. The three young men around him stand submissively, eyes downcast and shoulders slumped. The men to his right might be gardeners; the third, on his left, an orchard keeper. The disparity in their clothing reflects a new social situation, a hierarchy born of modern agricultural enterprises, a dynamic nonexistent in Jericho a few decades earlier.

The emergence of such modern farms reconnected the region with its ancient history. Jericho was first and foremost an oasis. Two biblical sites surrounding it – both documented by Scholten – underscore the city's agricultural significance. To the east, Gilgal recalls the local produce consumed during the Israelites' first Passover in the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10–11). To the west, Elisha's Spring ('Ain es-Sultan) commemorates the miracle that made the waters wholesome for irrigation (2 Kings 2:18–22). Indeed, the valley soil became fertile only through a proper irrigation network. Already established in Herodian times, this network remained functional only under political authority strong enough to ensure its maintenance. Its deterioration was a primary cause of Jericho's decline, starting in the Mamluk period.

Jericho's renaissance, therefore, depended on local notables gaining sufficient power to restore the canals, wells, aqueducts, dams, and cisterns inherited from the past. This development began fifty years before Scholten's visit, when the prominent families of the "aristocracy of service" administering Jerusalem turned their attention to Jericho.

The Husayni family seems to have been the first to become involved. In 1872, Musa Kadhem al-Husayni reportedly "acquired at auction 1,000 acres of fertile land, including two thirds of the land of Jericho."[16] The family then actively participated in the oasis's rejuvenation, undertaking the restoration of the irrigation system connected to Aqabat Jabr. According to an inscription still carved on a cliff in Wadi al-Qalt, the work began around 1880 and lasted until 1912.[17] These efforts transformed the entire region, enabling

16 Pappe, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty*, 112. Musa Kadhem al-Husayni (1853–1934) was a senior official in the Ottoman administration and mayor of Jerusalem (1918–1920). He later became a leading opponent of the British Mandate. However, Musa Kadhem would have been barely nineteen years old at the time of the purchase of the Jericho land in 1872.

17 Sharon, "Dayr Al-Qalt," 113. Stephan's guidebook notes that "the late Mhieddin al-Husseini" had used the historical irrigation channels for his "model banana plantations in the plain of Jericho" (*This is Palestine*, 117). The works related to the northern source ('Ain Dûk) are less documented, but the changing shape of the pool collecting water from Elisha Spring in photographs suggests parallel developments.

the development of a pilot farm renowned for its innovative agronomic methods, still known today in Jericho as *Mazra'at al-Husayni*.

In her memoirs, Serene al-Husayni (born in 1920, daughter of Musa Kadhem's nephew Jamal) recalled the house her father built in Jericho amidst his orchards, where he wintered while she remained a boarder in Jerusalem. She reminisced about her paternal family's preeminence during those years at the foot of the Mount of Temptation: "Some cousins of my father had orchards nearby and had formed cordial relations with the monks."[18] Another influential family in Jerusalem – Serene's maternal family, the Alamis – had likely owned land in Jericho for some years when Faidy al-Alami (a former member of the Istanbul parliament and mayor of Jerusalem from 1906 to 1909) built his winter residence in 1919.[19] Decades later, in 1951, Musa al-Alami must have remembered his father Faidy's tales of Jericho's rebirth when he founded his ambitious pilot farm, the *Arab Development Society*, on the road from Jericho to the Allenby Bridge. The Khalidis, another prominent family, were involved in the agricultural development of the valley at least from 1922, when Fouad al-Khalidi founded *Mazra'at al-Bassa*, another farm, on the road to the baptism site, two kilometers west of St. John's Monastery.[20]

The mustached man, photographed in a still-young orchard, may well belong to one of these families. His bearing, his costume, and the staging of the shot fit well within this context. From agricultural restoration to the establishment of winter residences by Jerusalem's bourgeoisie, Scholten's image opens a window onto a decisive moment of Jericho's renaissance.

Frank Scholten took several photographs of this cubic building (Fig. 6).[21] The building is small, yet its ashlar masonry suggests a certain degree of significance. Such construction has historically been uncommon in Jericho; in Scholten's time, most houses were still made of mud brick, brushwood, and spolia.

The mountains in the background orient the viewer: these are the Judean mountains, bordering Jericho to the west. Other images by Scholten, taken from a slightly greater distance, reveal a trellised garden in front of the cubic building and, to the south, a large house with a pitched roof. In this

18 Husseini, *Souvenirs de Jérusalem*, 72.

19 Furlonge, *Palestine is my Country*, 86.

20 Al-Khalidi, *Dhikrayyat min bab al-silsila*, 155–64.

21 "Small square building," NINO F Scholten, *Jericho* 2: 055 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432125; "Building," NINO F Scholten, *Jericho* 2: 097 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432167. See also "Orangerie," NINO F Scholten, *Jericho* 2: 085 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432155 which may be the Franciscan Guest House.

Fig. 6: "Group of people in front of a small square building," NINO F. Scholten, *Jericho 2*: 060.

frame, however, a small group has gathered: seven men, five women, and two children posing for the camera. Their diverse, elaborate attire suggests an important social gathering, yet the occasion remains elusive.

Scholten provides a partial clarification in the *Judaea XVII* album, where Figure 6 appears, accompanied by the caption: "Après la S. Messe (Jéricho)" ("After Holy Mass"). Further context is provided in the album *Maisons religieuses*, which includes a photograph of the cubic structure – this time with a monk waiting at the door – under the title "Jéricho. La Chapelle des P. Franciscains."[22]

This suggests that the group depicted in Figure 6 is the Latin parish of Jericho, gathered outside their chapel after mass.[23] Scholten captures an early, often forgotten chapter of the Catholic presence in the valley. While Jericho was only formally recognized as an independent Latin parish in 1937 – with the first baptism recorded in 1939 – the Franciscan Custody had acquired land as early as 1901. By 1906, a small convent and a modest chapel stood

22 Scholten, *Maisons religieuses.* "Jéricho, La chapelle des P. Franciscains," image 4 (Leiden University special collections).

23 The parish of Jericho is a Franciscan parish, according to the terms of an agreement between the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, re-established in 1847. Under the terms of this agreement, the majority of parishes on both sides of the Jordan River are administered by the Patriarchate, but the Custody retains control of parishes linked to holy sites, such as Jericho.

within an orchard; this is likely the cubic building in Scholten's photographs. Shortly after his visit, however, the chapel was demolished to make way for the Church of the Good Shepherd. Designed by Antonio Barluzzi, the new sanctuary was inaugurated in 1925. It remains in use today.[24]

Archival records link the early Franciscan presence in Jericho to a Croatian friar, Girolamo Mihaich. Might Mihaich be the friar waiting outside the church in the photograph in the *Maisons religieuses* album?[25] His primary mission was undoubtedly to welcome pilgrims en route to the Jordan River. In this, he joined a broader trend. By the early 1870s, the Greek and Russian Orthodox had already established monasteries and hostels in the area. They restored the valley's historical monasteries: St. George in Choziba, the Mount of Temptation, St. Gerasimus and St. John – alongside the modest *laura* of 'Ain-Hajla for which Scholten's photographs provide rare documentation.[26]

During Scholten's visit, the Coptic Archbishopric of Jerusalem was pursuing a similar endeavor: building St. Anthony's Church adjacent to its existing monastery.[27] The Dutch photographer captured a striking image of this construction (Fig. 7). A Coptic monk – possibly Abuna Filibus al-Maqari, the project supervisor – stands before archaeological remains uncovered on site. One can discern a chancel balustrade and a column capital, while other photos reveal mosaics.[28]

24 See "Jéricho et la nouvelle église franciscaine dédiée au Bon Pasteur," *La Terre Sainte,* IV (9), 15 September 1924, 225–7. After arriving in the Holy Land in 1917, the Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi (1884–1960) was commissioned by the *Custodia Terrae Sanctae* to build several important sanctuaries, including the Church of All Nations in Gethsemane, the Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, the small church of the Convent of the Flagellation on the *Via Dolorosa*, and the Church of Jericho. See Cohen, *Saving the Holy Sepulchre*, 67-70.

25 Department of Antiquities of Palestine file, 1924-1926, *Jericho: Stone diggings*, now kept at the National Library of Israel as ATQ/822, ref. IL-IAA-ARC-039500. See also Pena, "Chrétiens de Terre Sainte, Jéricho," *La Terre sainte. La Revue des Lieux saints*, 1985, 114. We propose this identification as a hypothesis and an invitation to researchers who can easily verify it in the archives of the Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem.

26 The titles given in the NINO online catalogue confuse the two monasteries neighboring the Jordan River: St. John (*Qasr al-Yahud*) and St. Gerasimos (*Qasr Hajla*).

27 Meinardus, *The Copts in Jerusalem*, 79. See Scholten, "Type de maison de Jéricho (monastère copte)," album *Judaea XVII*, 1068 (Leiden University special collections). Also, on the website of the Coptic Archbishopric of Jerusalem, "Kanisa wa-dayr al-Anba Antunius bi-Ariḥa," http://copticj.com/churches_patriarchate_7.aspx. Accessed on 14 March 2024.

28 Album *History I*, "Fouilles par les Coptes, à Jéricho," image 12 and "Mosaïque: fouilles par les Coptes à Jéricho", image 13. Like Girolamo Mihaich, al-Maqari appears regularly in the archives as a contact person for the Palestinian Antiquities Department, to whom he reported his chance archaeological discoveries on Coptic building sites in Jericho. The memory of Maqari's work in Jericho remains strong at the Coptic Archbishopric in Jerusalem. His identification in the Scholten photograph seems plausible.

Fig. 7: "Père copte et les fouilles à Jéricho" (Coptic Father and the excavations at Jericho), NINO F. Scholten, *Choses intéressantes 1*: 35.

Fig. 8: "Overlooking a village," NINO F. Scholten, photographic print 02: 1067.

Scholten documented more than just the return of Jerusalem's churches to Jericho; he captured the historical depth of this revival. On the very sites where Byzantine Christians had built pilgrim hostels, these early twentieth-century churches picked up the threads of tradition. In the quieted oasis, they followed in the footsteps of Saint Sabas, who used his mother's fortune around 490 AD to acquire "the house of the guests of Jericho, with its gardens, after buying a well for irrigation."[29]

The value of Figure 8 lies in its ordinariness. Its framing, orientation, and perspective align with most postcards of *Ariha* from the turn of the twentieth century (Fig. 10-12). Taken together, these images form a chronological series tracking the city's development. Gradually, Jericho unfolds from a fixed vantage point.[30] As the built environment evolves, more sophisticated structures appear, signaling new activities, businesses, and demographics. It is within this sequence that Scholten's image gains its interest.

A neighborhood of modest dwellings occupies the center of the panorama. This is the oldest part of the new Jericho, evolving from the informal settlement of mud, branch, and straw huts that constituted the entire town until the 1870s. A comparison with earlier images reveals the transformation. In the 1880s, the area still resembled a residential magma, an organic slum (Fig. 10 and 11). Forty years later, the layout had regularized. The housing was more formal, featuring stone walls and pitched roofs. Yet, this remained the home of Jericho's longtime inhabitants – the people of the *Ghawr*, the impoverished, dark-skinned *Ghawarneh* – of whom Westerners had long captured through a condescending lens.[31] They now shared Jericho and the photographers' frame with newcomers: monks, shopkeepers, gardeners, Jerusalemite and Bethlehemite landowners wintering in the valley,

29 Cyrille of Scythopolis, *Vie de Saint Sabas*, 36.

30 Cross-referencing written, photographic, and cartographic sources confirms that this recurring vantage point for pre-war images was the famous Templar tower. Likely destroyed in the late 1910s, the tower was replaced by (or incorporated into) a small mosque, the nucleus of the current structure. Later images were taken in the same direction, either from the mosque or from the roof of the Russian hospice, discussed below.

31 The people of the *Ghawr* are not absent from Scholten's work; they are pictured alongside the recent inhabitants of Jericho. See "Habitants de Jéricho" in the album *Choses intéressantes* II, 112; "In Jericho" album *Judaea XV*, 914 (Leiden University Special Collections). It would be interesting to compare the grammar of these images with that of photographs of Native Americans or Indigenous Australians taken at the same time. Stigmatizing descriptions of the *Ghawarneh* are common, if not systematic. Meistermann's guidebook, which Scholten used, describes nineteenth-century Jericho as "a group of wretched hovels inhabited by a mixed and degraded race," 369. This register of description is also common among Arab geographers, who refer to the dark skin of the valley's inhabitants. On the origin of these dark-skinned populations, see Büssow, "Jericho (Ariha)."

pioneering tourism entrepreneurs, and lower- or mid-level civil servants. This new population settled to the west of Jericho, beyond the Jordan Hotel, in a garden area barely perceptible in the background of Figure 8, marked by the dark vegetation of willows and upright cypresses.

Three buildings on the left, bottom, and right of Scholten's picture seem to frame the *Ghawarneh* neighborhood; they are notable for their size and masonry. To the right, toward the north, the hipped-roof house was built in the 1890s and served as a post office. In 2023, a modern building serves a similar function in the same location, though the original house no longer exists. The two other buildings still stand near Jericho's main square and retain their distinctive features. Both deserve attention.

Identifying the first building (in the foreground on the left side of Figure 8) presents an interesting challenge, as it allows for a journey through the administrative history of the area. At first glance, this long building seems clearly identified by reference to another photograph taken by Scholten himself (Fig. 9). The context here shifts. Four children play in the courtyard, two palm trees sway in the breeze, and the Union Jack flies against a cloudy sky. Scholten identifies the building as the Jericho Serai. A study of the 1930 British Mandate map removes any doubts: the building is marked "Military Frontier Force & Police Post."[32]

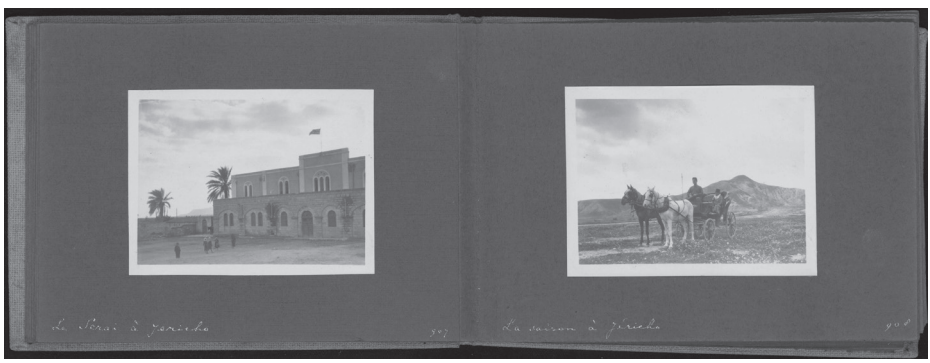

Fig. 9: "Le Serai à Jéricho," NINO F. Scholten, *Judaea XV*: 905.

The elongated building on the left is likely the Serai, retaining the Ottoman designation for the main administrative building well into the 1920s. Records mention a Serai in Jericho in 1907; it may have been built in the 1890s under Abdülhamid II.[33] This marked a milestone in the administrative

32 Survey of Palestine, "Jericho. Sheet 190-140. 15. Plan I-V." 1:1250 scale map (EBAF archives).

33 Meistermann, *Nouveau Guide de Terre Sainte*, 270.

consolidation of Ariha, which became a formal sub-district (*nahiye*) in 1906.[34]

However, this initial identification creates a puzzle, since the same building appears in much earlier photographs with a different function. A Bonfils postcard from the late 1870s shows it standing west of a square structure, labeled: "the tower of Jericho and the Russian establishment."[35] Remarkably, the building still stands today, a few dozen meters from Jericho's central square, as part of the Russian compound.

The history of this building therefore appears difficult to trace. If it is indeed the hostel built by the Russian Orthodox Mission in 1875 to accommodate pilgrim caravans, when was it repurposed to become the administrative building Scholten saw? Did this shift occur at the beginning of the British Mandate? Or earlier, at the end of the Ottoman era (which would better explain the persistence of the name "Serai" cited by Scholten)? Finally, when and why was the building returned to the Russian ecclesiastical mission, itself only a shadow of its former self after the war?

Another remarkable structure in Figure 8 is the two-story building in the background bearing the Jordan Hotel sign. The Jordan Hotel features early in the photographic record. Built in the early 1870s, it still stands on the southwest corner of the main square in modern Ariha, likely the oldest building in use. It underwent major restoration in 2021, perhaps to mark its 150th anniversary.

The Jordan Hotel's spatial centrality illustrates the role of tourism in the city's development. Tourism emerged as a modern alternative to pilgrimage, and modern hotels rose as counterpoints to the re-establishment of monastic hospices. It is significant that the first major structures built in the 1870s – both shown in Scholten's picture – were the Jordan Hotel and the Russian Mission Hospice. Subsequently, the Greeks, Franciscans, and Copts built their own facilities in parallel with the emergence of other modern hotels. Thus Jericho, once considered an unhealthy and dangerous hovel, transformed into a city of leisure and celebration. This shift gained momentum after the war, as British and Australian soldiers came to appreciate the valley's climate.

Scholten witnessed this development. A survey of his albums reveals several hotels: the Jordan Hotel again (showing the now-vanished annex at the back) and the Hotel Belle-Vue, built between the Wadi al-Qalt bridge and the Franciscan estate.[36] Christian entrepreneurs, recent arrivals from Jerusalem,

34 Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine*, 70-71 and 93.

35 "Tour de Jéricho et établissement russe", Portfolio 408 [c 1867-c 1914], British Library, EAP644/1/41, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP644-1-41, accessed 11 November 2023.

36 Album *Judaea XVII*, 1092; album *Judaea XVI*, 1020; "Vegetation and buildings", NINO F Scholten Jericho 1: 09, http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432035 ; "Men on a horse-drawn carriage",

Nablus, or Salt dominated Jericho's fledgling hotel economy. In 1887, the *Joanne* guidebook mentions the manager of an establishment – probably the Jordan Hotel – whose name, Hanna Habach, is clearly Christian.[37] In 1904, another well-informed guidebook noted that the four hotels then open in Jericho – an impressive number for a city of that size – were all run by Christians:

> Hospitality [...]. Jericho: Belle-vue Hotel and Guilgal Hotel (local Catholics), Jordan Hotel and Park Hotel (Greek), Russian Hostelry. – If need be, one can also seek accommodation at the Greek monasteries of Saint John the Baptist (Jordan) and Saint Gerasimus."[38]

These words enhance our understanding of the scenes captured by Scholten during his walks through 1920s Jericho. Alongside the social stratification stemming from the agricultural revival, a new differentiation emerged with the influx of Christian entrepreneurs attracted by the tourist economy. This brings us back to the small Franciscan chapel in the gardens to the west, beyond the Jordan Hotel (Fig. 6). Who formed the nucleus of this Latin parish, caught in lively conversation after Mass? Did these colorful costumes and varied faces belong to Jericho's new tourism entrepreneurs, or to Christians from Bethlehem or Jerusalem, wintering in the City of Palms?[39]

Conclusion

Clearly, Scholten did not deeply integrate into Palestinian society, nor did he become a scholar of biblical geography. However, his significant resources allowed him to spend time *in situ*, thoroughly documenting areas usually only traversed. His extended stay provided a sense of spatial and social orientation without dulling the freshness of his gaze. He forged connections within Christian scholarly circles in Jerusalem that offered valuable guidance.

Many other examples could serve to illustrate the richness of the documentation he left about the southern Jordan Valley in the early 1920s. The

NINO F Scholten Jericho 2: 009 http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432079 with, at the foot of the horse-drawn carriage, the Dutch poet and jurist Jacob Israël de Haan, identified by Sary Zananiri.

37 Chauvet and Isambert, *Itinéraire descriptif, historique et archéologique de l'Orient*, 373.

38 Professeurs de N.-D. de France à Jérusalem, *La Palestine*, p. xxxii.

39 According to the British census of 1922, the Christian population of the Jericho sub-district accounted for just over 7% of the population. The 1931 census provides more detail, showing that Latins made up about 13% of the total Christian population, the majority being Orthodox (69%). McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine*, 73, 78.

stilt houses photographed near the Jordan River strikingly evoke similar structures depicted on the sixth-century Madaba Map.[40] This vernacular architecture, noted by Gustaf Dalman, seems to have been rarely photographed. Similarly, the extensive series devoted to the monastic sites of the Jordan – Deir Hajla, ʻAin Hajla, Qasr al-Yahud – presents a reliable record of these ancient sites, re-established by Jerusalem's churches from the 1870s onward. This record is all the more important given that the buildings were heavily damaged by the 1927 earthquake.

Scholten thus provides precious documentation of the emergence of a region. Paradoxically, this marked the end of an era. The landscape he recorded was soon to be submerged by the wave of refugees that swept over Jericho, filling the camps of Aqabat Jabr and ʻAin al-Sultan after 1949.[41]

Final plate: Jericho, 1870–1900

Fig. 10: "Vue générale de Jéricho pris [sic] de la tour" (General view of Jericho taken from the tower), ca. 1870, Bonfils.

40 Among others, NINO F Scholten *Jourdain Mer Morte* 1: 089, http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3432984. See Dalman, *Orte und Wege Jesu*, 96.

41 See Al-Husseini, "The Dilemmas of Local Development and Palestine Refugee Integration in Jordan."

Fig. 11: "View of Jericho," Thévoz, 1887, in *La Palestine Illustrée*, vol. 2, plate 81.

Fig. 12: "Jéricho," *Fonds Ste Anne, École Biblique et Archéologique Française*, 1900, ref. 16211–Ste A–0392.

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About the Author

Marc Dugas is a PhD candidate in anthropology, studying the baptism site of Jesus and the idea of territorial centrality. His research, supported by IFPO and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, explores sacred spaces.

8. Scholten's Transjordanian Journey: A Kaleidoscopic Perspective on a Modern Holy Land

Norig Neveu

Abstract: Frank Scholten's journey to the Emirate of Transjordan occurred during a time of political, territorial, and social transformation. His photographs capture the tension between biblical imagery and an evolving urban society. Scholten took a documentary approach to depicting taxonomic portraits, urban landscapes, and religious transformation. His innovative visual method presents Transjordan as a modern Holy Land, offering a detailed exploration of its material culture and local figures. Scholten's kaleidoscopic vision and thematic diversity create a pictorial lexicon of Transjordan as a contemporary Gilead, blending tradition with modernity. His work contrasts with earlier visual representations and offers a fresh perspective on the region's evolving identity.

Keywords: taxonomy, materiality, picture book, Holy Land, Emirate of Transjordan

Scholten's peregrinations took him to what he perceived to be areas of the Holy Land "beyond the Jordan." His visit took place between 1921 and 1923, against the background of the political and territorial upheavals that followed the First World War. In April 1921, the British Mandate for Transjordan was established by the League of Nations and entrusted to Emir Abdullah, son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca.[1] Scholten's photographic work presents a

1 For a visual documentation of this period see the photographs of the American colony album as for instance: American Colony, Photo Department, John D Whiting, Lewis Larsson, and G. Eric Matson, photographer. *World War I and the British Mandate in Palestine*, https://www.loc.gov/item/2007675259/.

Sanchez Summerer, Karène, and Sary Zananiri, eds. *Palestine in Transition: Frank Scholten's Visual Archive of the British Mandate Period*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/Central European University Press, 2026.
DOI: 10.5117/9789048562299-10

visual narrative of unity across the two banks of the Jordan River: that of the Holy Land. It reveals the persistence of a territorial perception that runs counter to the recent establishment of borders and the reconfiguration of mobility regimes. However, Scholten provides an innovative representation of these territories that contrasts with that of earlier or contemporary Western scholars and travelers. The originality of Scholten's work lies in the visual representation of the Emirate of Transjordan as the Holy Land, and in the use of an original visual method: a picture book of the Holy Land, differing in theme and presentation from earlier illustrated or photographic books.[2] In doing so, he places his approach in a double material dimension. First, he proposes a kind of thematic picture book of the Holy Land (with its vegetation, landscapes, and inhabitants). He also shows how this Holy Land fits into a universe of Christian practices, within a material environment that he deciphers in its ongoing evolution.[3]

Scholten traveled mainly in the northern regions of the Emirate of Transjordan. His pictorial output seems to have been organized around excursions from the city of Salt, where he may have settled for a time, probably in connection with the Catholic mission that was established there at the end of the nineteenth century.[4] From Salt, he visited the regions of Jerash, Anjara, Ajlun, Fuhays, and Irbid. His photographs show that he also traveled to the outskirts of Amman without visiting the city itself.

Three albums are dedicated to the photographs of these journeys – *Transjordania I, II, and III* – and their internal organizational logic is sometimes difficult to grasp. The photographs seem to follow the chronology of Scholten's visits; they shift between different locations within the same album, and there is no thematic organization. The photographs sometimes echo each other or repeat from one album to the next. Recurring themes and objects include documentation of the land of Gilead, portraits of its inhabitants, urban landscapes, and religious life.

A significant number of photographs of the Emirate of Transjordan can be found in other albums, in particular *Palestine Varia* and *Choses intéressantes*. These albums deal with similar themes, juxtaposed with observations made in Palestine. In this way, Transjordan is both singularized (in light of the progressive establishment of the border) and inscribed in a narrative

2 See for instance the pictorial studies of Salzmann, *Jérusalem: études et reproductions photographiques de la Ville sainte depuis l'époque judaïque jusqu'à nos jours* but also of Wilson, *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt.*

3 Cohen and Mottier, "Pour une anthropologie des matérialités religieuses", 361.

4 For the history of this mission see Medebielle, *Salt:* histoire d'une mission.

and territorial unity with Palestine. Surrounded by urban dignitaries and Christian networks, Scholten offers rare images of recent urban mutations, while rendering certain political changes invisible, particularly British colonial landscapes. Scholten's work is a production of the in between, freezing the image of a biblical Emirate of Transjordan while at the same time depicting an urban society in motion, focusing on taxonomic portraits, urban landscapes, and the figuration of religious change.

This visual production reflects the overlap of two traditions of representation of Transjordan. The first is biblical studies, which from the second half of the nineteenth century saw these territories as the land of Gilead, Moab, Edom, or Sodom and Gomorrah. The pre-war period was marked by numerous studies and publications on the subject, although fewer than on Jerusalem and its surroundings. After 1921, production shifted between the decline and redefinition of the subject. This is what makes Frank Scholten's approach so original. The second traditions is a focus on archaeological remains or an "ethnological" perspective. In the areas through which Scholten traveled, such photographic production and documentation had already emerged. The work of Antonin Jaussen, for example, includes photographs of the cities he visited.[5] It also embraces portraits, notably of the Twal family in Madaba.[6]

How does a new relationship to the space of the Holy Land and to the Emirate of Transjordan as part of this whole mark Frank Scholten's visual production? What does Scholten's visual approach suggest about an original way of documenting the Holy Land? How does Scholten's documentary approach to the Emirate of Transjordan fit into the context of the post-World War I redefinition of objects and subjects? What kind of ambiguous modern Holy Land does he depict?

Picturing the Move, Shadowing the Move?

Between "October 1918 and 1921, Transjordan experienced a wide range of administrative experiments"[7] related to the development of national

5 Scholten was close to the Dominican friars of the Biblical School in Jerusalem, whom he seems to have followed on several journeys across the Jordan. He probably benefited from their contacts with Catholic church leaders, especially in Salt. This makes it possible to understand the range of social worlds covered by Scholten and his closeness to the Biblical School's visual productions.

6 Jalabert, "De l'exégèse biblique au monde arabe"; Neveu and Sanchez Summerer, "The Dominicans' Photographic Collection in Jerusalem: Beyond a Catholic Perception of the Holy Land?".

7 Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 241.

governments. Scholten criss-crossed Transjordan at a time of major political reconfigurations that destabilized urban dignitaries. In Transjordan, as in Palestine, Scholten looked closely at the contemporaneity of the societies and territories he visited. The complexity of his approach lies in his ability to combine an imaginative or "biblicized" description of the northern region of Transjordan with an undeniable closeness to the population, in particular to its political and religious representatives. The result was the production of a contemporary lexicon of the Holy Land that counteracts the territorial dynamics of disrupted regimes of mobility by insisting on continuity and symbolic territorial unity. To this end, he relied on an innovative documentary method.

Yet, even his descriptions of contemporary dynamics contained an ambiguity: the British Mandate administration and its policies are barely visible. In the early 1920s, the Mandate's presence was mainly organized from Amman and the surrounding area. Scholten's decision not to visit Amman or to include Mandate representatives in his taxonomy was the main reason for their invisibility.[8] This silence put him at a distance from the authorities of the British Mandate who, from 1921 to 1923, were concentrated in Marka, on the outskirts of Amman. Instead, he insisted on local forms of authority. He described the process of building state structures in filigree. Scholten's original approach oscillated between making the chosen subject visible and invisible. In contrast to what he proposed in Palestine, here he preferred to highlight local issues and the results of the First World War's upheavals on local societies, while ignoring the emerging colonial dynamics.

Several of his photographs in Transjordan focus on the physical traces of the First World War, particularly in the Jordan Valley.[9] Until then, it had mainly been the military who had documented the war through aerial photography or troop images, especially during the years of conflict.[10] These photographs mark both the landscapes of a modern Holy Land from Scholten's perspective, and his interest in the traces of change and political rupture. This is why the absence of representation of the British colonial presence is so striking. This "silence" also contrasts with the documentary approach adopted by some of his contemporaries, notably those of American Colony photographers such as Eric and Edith Matson and the album compiled

8 Neveu, Ababsa, and Naïli, *'Ammān's Social History through Photography*.

9 See in particular the History I album, 67 https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/3306672?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=55a4742bb7b44de61c09&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=10#page/1/mode/1up

10 Several pictures were taken by the Australian War Memorial, Imperial War Museum (British), National Library of Australia, Bavarian State Archives, American Colony.

Fig. 1: "Reading of the proclamation of the British Mandate to the population of Salt," American Colony (Photo Department, John D Whiting, Lewis Larsson, and G. Eric Matson, photographers. *World War I and the British Mandate in Palestine*. Israel West Bank Damascus Jordan Palestine Syria Jerusalem, None. [Between 1917 and 1926] Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2007675259/).

for John D. and Grace Whiting[11] titled *World War I and the British Mandate in Palestine*. This album includes the famous photograph of the announcement of the British Mandate in Salt in 1921, which is a remarkable example of this documentary approach to politics. It combines the representation of local leaders with the embodiment of the British Mandate.[12]

Yet, Scholten succeeded in providing rare evidence for the establishment of the young Transjordanian state. First, he included several photographs of the bridge linking the two banks of the Jordan, which was rebuilt by General Allenby in 1918[13] and marked the passage into the Emirate.[14] To these he

11 Lev, "John D. Whiting, Diary in photos, 1934-1939".

12 American Colony. Photo Department, John D Whiting, Lewis Larsson, and G. Eric Matson, photographer. *World War I and the British Mandate in Palestine*, photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2007675259/. Reading the Proclamation to the inhabitants of Transjordania in Es Salt Aug. 20th, 1920, LC-DIG-ppmsca-13291-00186 (digital file from original, page 58, no. 186)

13 Bontemps, "Entre Cisjordanie et Jordanie, l'épreuve du passage frontalier au pont Allenby".

14 See for instance 'Bridge and river', NINO F Scholten photographic print 16: 0274, https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/3473836?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=75d63968659

added photographs of the establishment of the administration and the border, for example, with a representation of the customs administration.[15] Yet, apart from these examples, Scholten's pictorial approach did not mark a break between the representation of the two banks of the Jordan, but rather illustrated a continuity of this Holy Land.

Second, in Transjordan, as in Palestine, Scholten mainly portrayed local dignitaries and representatives, but he also photographed *fellahin* and rural life. His portraits display a close relationship with local society, especially with Christian dignitaries and families. For each town or village he visited, he applied his "taxonomizing identities"[16] approach to portraiture, drawing on biblical studies and the Orientalist tradition. He presents the inhabitants according to their religious or group affiliation: Arab, Circassian, or Turkmen. There are also many posed shots of "Bedouins," a classic figure of colonial ethnography; these images are reminiscent of those taken a few years earlier in Madaba by the Dominican Antonin Jaussen[17] or in the Matson's album mentioned earlier. His albums also include photographs of men and boys (sometimes naked), like those pictured swimming below (see Figure 3). And yet, as in the Palestinian case described by Sary Zananiri, he superimposes biblical influences on documentary influences, especially in the rare unposed depictions of village women going about their daily routines in Anjara and Fuhays.[18]

His interest in local sources of power led Scholten to publish rare photographs of the camp where Emir Abdullah settled with his followers between 1921 and 1924, before the construction of Raghadan Palace in Amman. The photograph below (Figure 2), titled "In Emir Abdallah's camp in Shune," reflects the interest he took in the emergence of Arab nationalism and local forms of political mobilization. It echoes the image of Emir Abdallah's camp taken by photographers from the American Colony in 1921, when the Emirate was proclaimed under the British Mandate.[19] The originality of Scholten's photograph is evident in the fact that it does not depict the Emir; instead,

58a1b068d&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=11.

15 See for instance: https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/3305133.

16 Zananiri, "Documenting the Social: Frank Scholten Taxonomising Identity in British Mandate Palestine".

17 Chatelard, "Ethnographie occidentale, écriture de l'histoire et construction de l'identité politique dans la Jordanie contemporaine."

18 Zananiri, "Documenting the Social: Frank Scholten Taxonomising Identity in British Mandate Palestine", 278.

19 See for instance the album mentioned in n. 1.: American Colony. Photo Department, John D Whiting, Lewis Larsson, and G. Eric Matson, photographer. *World War I and the British Mandate in Palestine*, Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2007675259/.

Fig. 2: "Dans le camp d'Emir Abdullah à Shune" (In Emir Abdallah's camp in Shune), NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania I:* 12. Picture of the flag bearer inside the camp where Emir Abdullah and his followers settled between 1921 and 1924 before building Raghadan Castle in Amman.

the central subject of the photograph below is the flag bearer. The flag was inspired by the banner of the Arab revolt.

The modernity of political recompositions is central to his documentary approach. In Transjordan, however, he chose to focus his attention on subjects he considered to be "local" or "indigenous," in contrast to his approach in Palestine, where the traces of the Mandate's presence probably seemed more obvious. Transjordan appears to have been an experimental field for observing a representation of the past, imbued with a paradoxical modernity.

Towns and Villages of the "In Between": Transformation and Biblification

Until the 1920s, Salt was the regional capital of the northern part of the Emirate of Transjordan. During the late Ottoman period, it had been the capital of a *vilayet*. It was also the center of the Ottoman state's reforms, including the establishment of administrative, educational, and legislative structures.[20] From the second half of the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman state made the central areas of Bilad al-Sham the breadbasket of

20 Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Fig. 3: "Swimmer, Wadi Arrat near Es-Salt," NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania I:* 11. The photograph represents a group of young swimmers, probably boys from the Catholic parish of Salt, and an adult who may be their instructor. The image depicts this group's leisure practices and provides new artistic canons, notably the rare depictions of nude subjects.

the empire, agricultural development led to the expansion of Salt's economic dynamism and the settlement of Syrian and Palestinian merchants. The city's wealthy families were influential urban landowners, merchants, intellectuals, and political leaders. This dynamism is clearly visible in the architecture and expansion of the city as depicted by Scholten. However, the early years of the British Mandate were a period of uncertainty for the city's inhabitants, as Amman was chosen to become the capital of the fledgling Emirate. Amman's nomination was a challenge to the status of Salt, and Scholten, who was close to the dignitaries of Salt, did not represent it.

The persistence of certain portraits and representations of local personalities, especially the posed portraits of sheikhs, is striking in Scholten's albums. His photographs feature classic figures inspired by the biblical representations of the time: the little shepherds[21] or the (Bedouin) mother and child.[22] But these are in dialogue with more innovative subjects, such as boys bathing by the river at a time when the nude (especially the male nude)

21 See Bedouin schoolboy from al-Salt, *Transjordanie I*, 2 (photo album; Leiden University Special collections).

22 Album *Transjordanie II,* 101 (photo album; LeidenUniversity Special collections).

Fig. 4: "In Es-Salt," NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania I:* 27. Street scene in Salt: a group of men gather around a bridge. The photograph appears to be a posed image of a social moment, captured by Scholten during his urban wanderings. The photograph also depicts the streets of Salt, their shops and social uses.

was becoming an integral part of the region's artistic creation and canon.[23] Here, Scholten offers unposed portraits of a group of young parishioners from Salt, whom he seems to have followed in their various activities (classes, excursions, mass); Scholten very probably lived in the parish or in one of its members' houses.

At the same time, Scholten introduced new photographic objects: towns and villages. He presented himself as a witness to the latest developments, from Salt to smaller villages. His general views of Salt did not differ much from those of other photographers in the same period, such as Jaussen or the American Colony. But Scholten's originality lies in the diversity of his views of the city. He described the city's streets accurately, its buildings and the way they changed with the weather or time of the day. He not only offered a visual study of the architecture, but also of the social spaces and parts of the Salti society, with a focus on the Catholic parishioners.

He also documented the city of Ajlun, as well as Irbid and Jerash, villages in full development. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the promotion of agricultural policies in Ottoman Transjordan had fostered

23 Scheid, "Necessary nudes: Ḥadātha and Muʿāṣira in the Lives of Modern Lebaese".

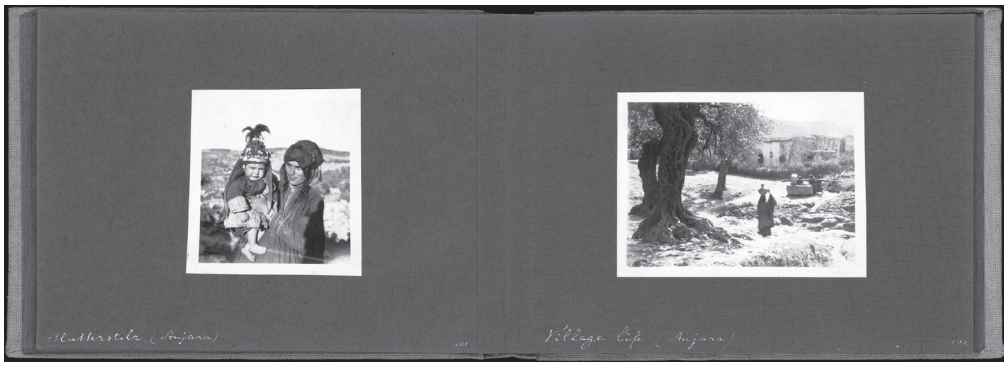

Fig. 5: A double-page spread from the album *Transjordania II*: 18, NINO, F. Scholten. It illustrates the prominent place given to the female subject in Scholten's visual production in Transjordania, and the ambiguity of their representation as modern, folklorized actors in a rural world in transition.

the development of villages and the establishment of agricultural colonies, as Raouf Abu Jaber documented in the case of al-Yaduda, near Amman.[24] Scholten documented this dynamic with rare images of Irbid, which was undergoing rapid development, as well as smaller villages such as Fuhays, Husn, and Anjara. This interest led to new representations, particularly of female subjects, who are at the heart of Scholten's paradoxical modernity. One of the distinctive features of Scholten's *Outre Jourdain* (Transjordan) work is the visibility of women, in portraits that are both posed and in motion. He frequently adopted the canon of a folkloric approach, for example, through the appeal of costume. Paradoxically, these portraits are also very contemporary in that they give a central place to women in urban or rural landscapes. The photograph below establishes a classic trope, that of the traditional village, but it also shows a woman as an actress, going about her daily work as a water carrier in Anjara.

Scholten's Transjordan is a Holy Land of urban or village modernity in which the Bedouin still find their place. He also sketches a form of cosmopolitanism[25] there by insisting on the figures of circulation, mobility, and connection through his taxonomy. Scholten depicts a fixed rural world, etched against the backdrop of contemporary urban development. His documentation of villages and their architectural forms, but also of local social worlds, echoes two movements: the development of the folkloristic

24 Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*.

25 Zananiri, "Documenting the Social: Frank Scholten Taxonomising Identity in British Mandate Palestine", 296; Smyrnelis. "Réinterroger le(s) cosmopolitisme(s) en contexte urbain dans l'aire méditerranéenne".

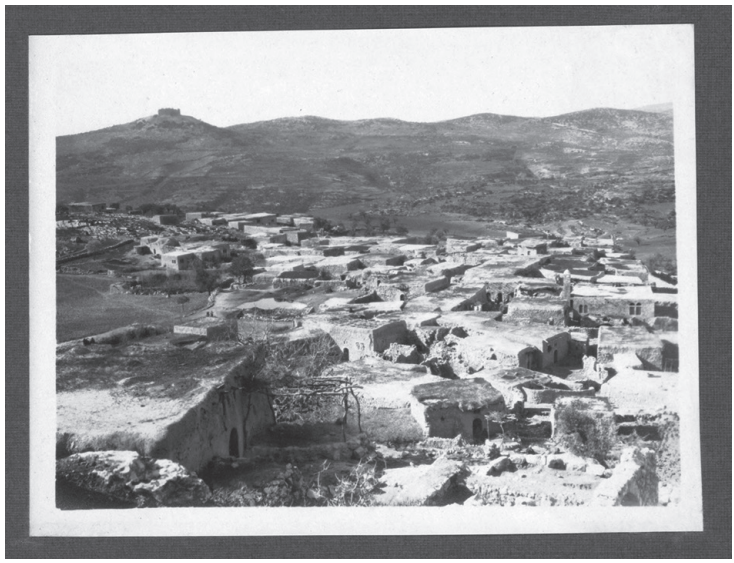

Fig. 6: "View of Anjara (near Adjlun)," NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania II*: 16. Overview of the village of Anjara, which was undergoing missionary redeployment, documenting its architecture and expansion as a paradoxically frozen form of modernity.

approach, embodied in particular by figures such as Tawfiq Canaan,[26] and the reconfiguration of the objects of study of certain proponents of biblical studies, such as Antonin Jaussen who, after the First World War, preferred to study the cities rather than extend his studies to rural Transjordan.

Reinscribing Transjordan in the History of Visual Production in the Holy Land

Scholten's approach to the territories beyond the Jordan contrasts with known photographic productions about Ottoman Transjordan. This difference is primarily due to the paucity of visual representations of the northern part of this territory before the First World War. In the second half of the nineteenth century, biblical studies had developed from Jerusalem outwards, but the territories "beyond the Jordan" remained secondary or even peripheral objects, even if they were sometimes perceived as more "authentic." A number of Western travelers took part in these biblical studies,

26 Tawfiq Canaan (1882-1964) was the son of a Lutheran pastor. He studied medicine at the American University of Beirut. He was associated with the Palestine Oriental Society, working on Palestinian folklore and history with a strong nationalist influence.

including Rudolf-Ernst Brünnow, Alfred von Domaszewski,[27] and Claude Reignier Conder.[28] They made detailed surveys of the lands east of the Jordan, and their observations were always related to the biblical text. In this context, the territory of the Emirate of Transjordan was defined according to the biblical territories of Edom, Moab, and Gilead.

The first contemporary visual representations of this territory from a biblical study perspective emanate from the account of James Silk Buckingham's expedition, published in 1821. This first pencil sketch of the region, with black and white illustrations at the beginning of each chapter, shows vast mountainous areas criss-crossed by wide valleys. Subsequent expeditions, such as those of Oliphant[29], Bliss[30], Merill,[31] or Schumacher, left few visual traces, except for a few drawings that also depict the mountains traversed by the Yamouk Gorge[32] and highlight the vegetation of these hills, particularly in the Ajlun region.[33]

These expeditions made little use of photography, and the images taken by the Fathers of the Biblical School of Jerusalem and by members of the Palestine Exploration Fund focused more on the southern part of the Emirate of Transjordan, perceived as the biblical lands of Moab and Edom. Archaeological sites such as Petra and Jerash were photographed extensively. Scholten shared this interest in archaeological remains, as photographs of the Roman Jerash form a constant backdrop to his work on the Emirate of Transjordan. Scholten's archaeological approach followed the canons of the time, such as the views of the archaeological site proposed by Philipps in 1867, Dumas in 1875,[34] or Jaussen at the beginning of the twentieth century. These offered wide-angle views of the site and focused on specific monuments.

However, it was as part of his research into the modern re-use of Roman remains that Scholten accurately documented the Circassian village of Jerash, providing never-before-seen snapshots of the social life of the village, which was founded as an agricultural settlement by Circassian refugees

27 Brünnow and Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia*.

28 Conder, *A Survey of Eastern Palestine 1881*.

29 Oliphant, *The Land of Gilead: With Excursions in the Lebanon*.

30 Bliss, "Narrative of an expedition to Moab and Gilead in March, 1895".

31 Merill, *East of the Jordan* A Record of Travel and Observation in the Countries of Moab, Gilead and Bashan.

32 For example, Oliphant, *The Land of Gilead*, 94.

33 Oliphant, *The Land of Gilead*, 173.

34 See the reproduction of these photographs in Abujaber and Cobbing, *Beyond the River. Ottoman Transjordan in Original Photographs*.

Fig. 7: "Rue bâtie avec des restes des ruines de la Gérash romaine (village circassien de Gérash)" (Street built with remains of the ruins of Roman Gérash (Circassian village of Gérash)), NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania II*: 20. A view of the Circassian village of Jerash after its foundation in 1878 as an agricultural settlement. The legend mentions the re-use of stones from the archaeological site. The flat-roofed house on the right is typical of Circassian architecture in Transjordan.

fleeing Russian persecution after the Ottoman defeats in the Crimea.[35] In addition to views of the village, Scholten captured its institutions, including the school, and its inhabitants during his visit to the town. This contrast is also evident when Scholten photographed schoolchildren in the site's amphitheater.

Before the First World War, images of Transjordan were primarily the work of archaeological expeditions. This context strongly conditioned the type of images produced, although the expeditions sometimes also showed a secondary interest in ethnography, always from the perspective of elucidating biblical text. The most commonly featured biblical landscapes were those of the Dead Sea, linked to the biblical episode of Sodom and Gomorrah. Traces of these episodes were photographed, such as Antonin Jaussen's *Lot's Wife*, a statue made of salt on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.[36]

35 Hamed-Troyansky, *Empire of Refugees: North Caucasian Muslims and the Late Ottoman State*.
36 See photograph collection of the Biblical and archaeological school of Jerusalem.

Fig. 8: "The Mountains of Galaad (near Es-Salt)," NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania II*: 2. Scholten's depiction of the mountains of Gilead, with an emphasis on the mountainous landscape. The picture clearly shows the agricultural terraces developed in the region of Salt since the end of the nineteenth century, which had been instrumental in the town's economic development.

Some of Scholten's photographs also inscribed Transjordan in biblical imaginary and largely adopted the canon of illustrations from earlier biblical studies: see the description of an uninhabited mountainous landscape, largely uncovered and traversed by narrow gorges and valleys. Scholten thus visually recorded the Transjordan within the Holy Land.[37] However, this construction of a phantasmagorical biblical Transjordan was not devoid of hints to contemporary developments: for example, Scholten did not hesitate to depict the area around the Gilead Mountains, with its newly developed agricultural terraces.

Depicting the Materiality of the Holy Land: A Picture Book of Sacred Topography

With his picture book of the Holy Land, Scholten inaugurated a documentary approach to the materiality of the Holy Land. He offers neither a guide to

37 For example, Matson Photo Service, photographer. *Trans Jordan. River Yarmuk in Gilead*. Jordan, None. Between 1950 and 1977. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2019705571/.

the Holy Land, following in his footsteps in Jordan, nor a survey of the sites visited. Instead, with a kaleidoscopic vision and a multiplicity of subjects, he creates a pictorial lexicon of Transjordan as a contemporary Gilead.

This documentary method is based on several elements (at the center of which is the representation of a mountainous territory and its vegetation), but above all it aims to define the elements of a materiality of the Holy Land. In this, he echoed the documentary approaches of some of his predecessors, such as Lynch, who studied the water, minerals, and shells during his expedition to the Dead Sea in 1848, in a reading of science as a service to Christianity.[38] For Scholten, the Holy Land was home to a number of subjects, especially the flora, which he documented extensively. While he reconstructed certain landscapes (such as the forest of Ephraïm in the photograph below) as a scene from a biblical episode, his documentary approach to flora seemed to take him beyond a simple search for biblical theater. Thus, he proposed a lexicon or visual herbarium, with an understanding of the materiality of sacred topography. It offers both a catalog of flora and fauna and more detailed studies of individual objects, some of which are dissected and detailed. In this way, he extended other initiatives for the material restitution of the Holy Land, such as the herbarium in the American Colony. Once again, his approach oscillated between biblical study and documentation, as close as possible to the realities observed in the field.

Scholten's documentary approach is also based on other markers of sanctity, such as secondary holy sites. This is the case of the mausoleum of the Nabi Osha in the Salt region, a holy place of local importance visited by both Christians and Muslims. In Transjordan, however, Scholten's approach was to depict places of worship without worshippers, a far cry from his images of the procession to Nabi Musa in Palestine, for example. Scholten's book of images of the Holy Land thus takes up a number of leitmotifs, including the timeless depiction of the physical embodiment of religious dynamics. The materiality of this other Holy Land is based on the incarnation of a religious life. It is represented by places that are often distant from practices and actors. Here they serve as witnesses, the faithful documenting the development of religious life and, in particular, the renewed missionary activity.

However, in his study of religious dynamics, Scholten described in detail the groups to which he was closest, namely Catholic Christians. In Scholten's work, we find both physical markers of a Holy Land frozen in time, and

38 Lynch, *Official Report of the United States' Expedition to Explore the Dead Sea and the River Jordan*.

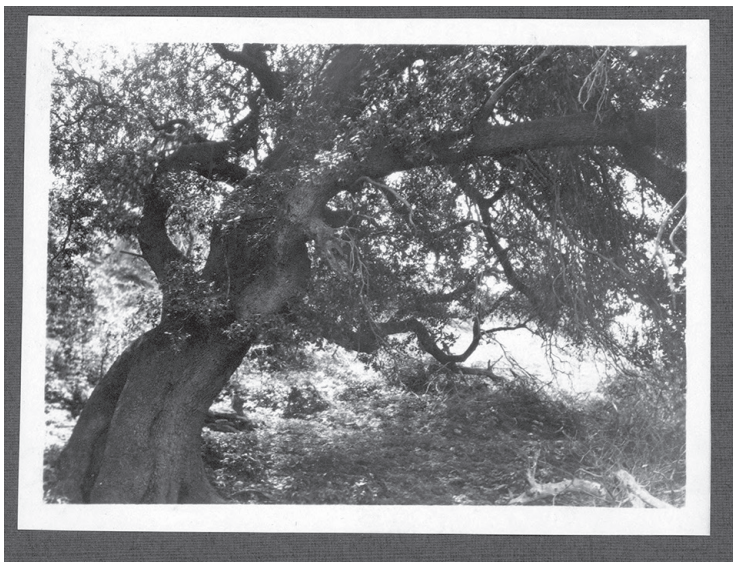

Fig. 9: "Dans le Forêt biblique d'Ephraïm" (In the biblical forest of Ephraïm), NINO, F. Scholten, *Transjordania II*: 34. Depicting a tree, with no further presentation or identification.

Fig. 10: "La tombe d'Osée, près d'Es-Salt (Nabi Osha)" (The tomb of Hosea, near Es-Salt), NINO, F. Scholten, *Es-Salt*: 24. Mausoleum of the Nabi Osha in the region of Salt. The photograph shows a well-preserved mausoleum with an original architectural form, especially the dome. The photograph does not show the person in charge of the site, nor the worshippers.

markers that bear witness to the dynamism of missionary action after the First World War. In fact, in most of the villages Scholten visited, he observed local society through the mission, probably because of his close relationship with the brothers of the Biblical School of Jerusalem. Schools, masses, and excursions mark the social spaces and times of his visit to Transjordan and those of his photographic subjects. Portraits of the local religious authorities clearly show both the Arabization of the clergy and the reorientation of missionary strategies, particularly through the expansion of Melkite missions in the north of the Emirate of Transjordan.[39] Several portraits show Melkite priests from the village of Anjara, as well as Coptic and Maronite priests who had recently settled in these regions.

While the physical landscape Scholten described may appear to be static, it embodies the complexity within the religious and social. This landscape constitutes his lexicon of the Holy Land through a taxonomy that also serves as a picture book of the actors and actresses performing this holiness. Based on this taxonomy, Scholten depicts the image and materiality of a Holy Land that is undergoing reconfiguration but marked by the dynamism of faith practices.

Conclusion

Scholten's documentation aptly captures Transjordan at a turning point in its history, with his innovative depiction of the cosmopolitan social scene and local subjects, especially women and children. It is above all the paradoxical biblification of the territory and the construction of a visual continuity with Palestine that distinguish his work from previous or contemporary visual productions. By proposing a method – that of a picture book – and documenting materialities, Scholten paints a portrait of the modernity of the Holy Land, its landscapes and worship. Scholten's kaleidoscopic vision not only defined a lexicon of the modern Holy Land, but also of its spaces and centralities. He placed the rural communities at the heart of his picture book, focusing both on the development of villages and towns and on the reshaping of the Christian universe in this period of the in between and its missionary redeployment.

39 Neveu, "Between uniatism and Arabism: missionary policies and diplomatic interest of the Melkites in Jordan during the Interwar period".

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About the Author

Norig Neveu is Senior Researcher at CNRS/IREMAM, specializing in contemporary history. Her work focuses on sacred topographies, religious politics, and authorities in Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq from the nineteenth through the twenty-first century.

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