

The Present Condition of Palestinian Resistance: An Examination through the Renovation Movement in the Old City of al-Khalil (Hebron)

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Place of fieldwork: Jordan, Palestinian Territory (Israel)

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Key Words: Palestinian Resistance, al-Khalil (Hebron), Holy City, Governance

- Research background

My research topic is the present condition of Palestinian resistance, particularly after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Since the Accords, the condition of Palestinian resistance has changed dramatically. There have been two typical forms of resistance; the first is peace negotiations, and the second is armed struggle. Although both of these have achieved some goals, they are in a stalemate today, and Israeli policy continues to be harsh. Even in this situation, Palestinians continue some kinds of resistance and are acting on behalf of future generations. In my research, I shed light on resistance in this era of stalemate.

- Research purpose and aim

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, after the Six-Day War of 1967, some religious movements emerged as powerful actors, and the conflict was gradually “religionized.” The city of al-Khalil (Hebron) was named after Ibrahim (Abraham), who is considered the first prophet in the three monotheistic religions. Thus, this city is regarded as an important holy city in both Judaism and Islam. With the “religionization” of the conflict, a holy city like al-Khalil (Hebron) became one of the points of contention.

My research tries to analyze the Palestinian movement for the renovation of the old city of al-Khalil. Furthermore, through the example of conflict in “the mixed holy city,” I would like to tackle the question of why the conflict has not been resolved.

- Results and achievements by fieldwork

The main actor in the renovation of the old city is the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC). I conducted interviews with HRC activists and collected annual reports. I also got information on HRC projects and demographic data on the old city, which has not been surveyed by any authority since 1995. The interviews made it clear that most HRC officers are from the city of al-Khalil and that they have some affection for, or assign special meaning to, the old city of al-Khalil.

- Implications for and impact on future research

I encountered problems due to my limited skills in speaking Arabic. I had the same problem last year; in this case, the residents of al-Khalil have an unusual dialect and speak too fast for me. Thus, I am unable to conduct a sufficient number of conversations with ordinary residents in the old city. By the time of my next visit, I plan to be better prepared for interviews with residents and will have improved my Arabic skills.



HRC's office in the old city of al-Khalil (Hebron City, Palestinian Territory, September 7, 2014)

The vegetable market in the old city of al-Khalil (Hebron City, Palestinian Territory, September 8, 2014)



Work at Takiya Ibrahimiya (Ibrahim's Hospice) in the old city of al-Khalil (Hebron City, Palestinian Territory, September 15, 2014)