

The Story of Hasan Mustafa as Part of Today's Narrative

By Andreas F. Kuntz

In gratitude to my father Hermann Kuntz, who works tirelessly for dialogue, justice and peace through understanding since 1962

Summary

This article explores the relation of history, contemporary history and the meaning of stories and narratives for the Palestinian identity in the case of Battir. It examines the possible use of stories in a touristic product for Battir and the possibility of conflict-sensitive tours using the example of Hasan Mustafa and Beitar. It argues for a conscious and critical use of stories to engage visitors of all kind to experience Battir as a place to learn about Palestine in a new and fresh way.

Epilogue: History and the Contemporary in Battir

When I arrived in the year 2000 with participants of the Intensive Course for Palestinian Guides of Dar Annadwa AdDawliyya to the village of Battir, I was stunned by the beauty of the village at the slope, the spectacular view along the valley including a railway line and the ancient technique of irrigating terraces with water from a strong spring.

Actually, I was there to look for ancient historic relics that tell a devastating story of violence when centuries ago the superpower crushed a revolt. At Khirbet al-Yahud the final chapter of a violent revolt against the Empire of Rome took place¹. The place, the village and the landscape fascinated me more and more after I understood that something amazing had happened here during the Palestinian catastrophe, an-Nakba, in 1948. I argue here that this story has to be told as a narrative of today.

During my first visit to Battir I heard for the first time the name Hasan Mustafa, which means I never heard of it in Bethlehem, not during a tour nor did I read about it in a guide book². Since then, and even more in the last years, Battir became a standard hike of the "Introduction to Profession" Course for the Palestinian Tour Guide Diploma program of Dar Al-Kalima College for Arts and Culture. In the same time I realized that I needed to understand better how it really happened.

I. Hasan Mustafa's Role in Contemporary History

The stories of Hasan Mustafa are more than one, and I try to tell those stories connected, but in six parts: First of all, Hasan returns back to the home country, then he is able to develop a strategy while observing the world and analyzing the situation. Hasan mobilizes citizens by organizing resistance in a non violent way. You can call it intelligent, non-violent, smart, or creative resistance. Hasan tirelessly lobbied with decision makers and gathered information. Hasan's charme in negotiation, to stem the tide, interfered with decisions of the powerful by non-violent resistance. Hasan had a talent to organize the community, and to implement a development strategy. I argue here that one part of the story cannot be understood without another part.

¹ Two archaeological guide books include Battir. Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome: *The Holy Land, an Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times till 1700*, Oxford Press New York, fifth edition 2008, pp.449-450, mentions irrigated terraces, a ditch and an assault ramp at the saddle linking to the hilltop of 'Khirbet al-Yahud' and the legion camps as visible from the air. Keel, Othmar; Küchler, Max: *Orte und Landschaften der Bibel: ein Handbuch und Studien-Reiseführer*, Volume 2, Zürich / Göttingen 1982, pp.737-743 explains 'Bittir' from historical sources and archaeological research including the fortifications at Khirbet al-Yahud, Circumvallatio and the camps seen in aerial pictures.

² It is fair to say that the first touristic book pointing to the story of Hasan Mustafa was published in 2012: Szepesi, Stefan: *Walking Palestine, 25 Walks into the West Bank*, Interlink Books Northampton 2012, p.250

1. Learning from exile

Living in a foreign country is not easy, coming back to your home country is even more difficult. Your perception is different after studying abroad or living in exile. Hasan Mustafa returned even two times to his home village. In 1935 he came back from his studies in Cairo. And he had to leave his home village again in 1938, after he became a persona non grata organizing strikes and civil resistance. Hasan went to Iraq, worked as instructor in a college and he came back in 1941 (Botmeh 2006, p.29). What would you do if your home, your village is threatened and even threatened after a war, when the guns already ceased to fire?

Hasan Mustafa observed and analyzed the world around him and the conflict in his home country. And he decided to be pro-active. Hasan was an instructor at An-Nahda College in Jerusalem and he published, to mention only one example, a radio-show of Near East Radio in Yaffa called 'Rawiat As-Sabah'. His active role was influenced by various experiences, as his grandson Jawad Botmeh summarizes: "He was a concerned individual, activist, writer and broadcaster. Hasan Mustafa was born in Battir in 1914 a son of a tribal chief. He graduated from American University Cairo in 1935." (Botmeh 2006, p.29)

In the following paragraphs I rely on several researches conducted on those years during and after An-Nakba. But mainly I rely on a thesis of Jawad Botmeh who researched the events in terms of Civil Resistance and conducted interviews (Botmeh 2006, p.7). Jawad Botmeh is a grandson of Hasan Mustafa. Special thanks go to the Hasan Mustafa Cultural Archive and Nadia Botmeh, the daughter, for additional information.

Excursus A: The Yaffa-Jerusalem Railway and Battir

Before looking on the events after 1947 I would like to point to the history of the village with the railway. Battir had a railway station of the Yaffa-Jerusalem line, opened in 1892, which connected the village to Jerusalem, the Mediterranean coast and later even to Cairo. In the 19th century irrigated terraces were in use on the other, lower side of the railway³, as villagers used their lands on both sides of the wadi for traditional agriculture.

Inhabitants of the village worked for the railway and the Battir station, and they would be able to sell products of Battir at the markets of Jerusalem. Battir and other neighbouring villages like Al-Qabu, Husan and Nahalin with Wadi Fuqin were called the "basket of Jerusalem" (Gola et al. 2010, p.57).

In the beginning of the 20th century, on Sundays special trains for nature lovers would travel the opposite way, to Battir and back to Jerusalem, a forerunner of tourism coming to the village⁴. After WWI the railway was soon reopened and the village was again connected. During the British Mandate there were times when in the morning a train would travel from Battir to Jerusalem only

³ See Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, BS-Palästina 766, accessible at http://www.gda.bayern.de/bestaende/viewer/viewer.php?show=/bestaende/palaestina/bayhsta_bs_palaestina_0766 , retrieved on 30.01.2014

⁴ In the profile of the railway line during the Ottoman period the exhibition "Train Tracks To Jerusalem" of the Israeli Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem in Spring 2005 mentions special trains, catalogue Spring 2005, p.12.

and in the afternoon back. Therefore inhabitants would have access to services in Jerusalem, to education, and to work.

But with the war 1948 the railway line posed suddenly a problem to the village. Why would a railway line connecting the village to the world become a threat? The city of Jerusalem, or Al-Quds for its Arab inhabitants, according to the Zionist leaders was supposed to be the capital of the future state of Israel. Therefore the connection of Jerusalem to other settlements under the control of the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement in Palestine prior to the State of Israel, was essential. In November 1948, the road from Yaffa to Jerusalem was under Israeli control except Latrun, while the railway line from Yaffa to Jerusalem was under Israeli control except between Beit Safafa and Battir. On April 4th, 1949 Ben Gurion explained in front of the Knesset that negotiations were underway to renew the railway lines⁵. Because of the railway line the division of the country came to Battir (Botmeh 2006, p.25).

2. Observation and analysis

The importance of the railway, its role for war and state was known to Hasan Mustafa by his personal experience. He had travelled to Cairo and used the train for his work in Yaffa and Jerusalem. The train station in Battir and the meaning of the railway line was more than familiar to him: This was in the terms of the 1940ies and the British Mandate a lifeline for Jerusalem. Andrew Rigby analyzes Non-violent resistance in Palestine in its different shapes (Rigby 2010). According to his findings the sense of the population of the rural areas in Palestine in the 1920s was not nationality oriented, but determined by loyalty to family, clan etc. (Rigby 2010, p.11). In the case of Battir, nevertheless a village leader orchestrated a kind of non-violent resistance.

3. Organization of resistance

So far the village had defended itself (Botmeh 2006, p.30). And here already Hasan Mustafa plays an important role: Since 1947 he had volunteers patrolling and reporting on incidents, so “to foster vigilance and community spirit rather than develop any significant military capability.” (ibid, p.30)

So what exactly posed the threat to Battir? Looking at the map of the cease fire lines prior to the final decisions, we see Battir in between a green (Jordanian Arab Legion) and a red line (Israeli Defence Forces) (ibid, p.23f). This meant that the area between those two lines is No-Man’s-Land and should be evacuated by forces of any side, and as well by civilians (ibid, p.26 and p.31). Those lines were drawn in case of insoluble disagreement and should be solved later by the Mixed-Armistice-Commission (MAC) with UN supervision (ibid, p.23). But Jordanians and Israelis preferred a specially agreed bilateral, non supervised “Special Committee” (ibid, p.23, footnote 22). Botmeh states that “the real substance of negotiations happened in Jerusalem and Shuneh, with Rhodos negotiations mainly as sideshow”, to keep the UN concept of Jerusalem as international city out (ibid, p.23).

Because the railway line was partly in the No-Man’s-Land, Israel would not be able to use it (ibid, p.31). Therefore the negotiations in the MAC were crucial for the Israeli side. A single line had to be drawn putting the railway on the Israeli side of the single line (ibid, p.27). Both facts, the

⁵ See Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs website <http://www.jcpa.org/art/knesset2.htm>, retrieved 29/07/2013, cf. Botmeh 2006, p.25

location of Battir in the No-Man's-Land and the expected drawing of a single line, posed threats to the existence of Battir. By his contacts to officers of the Arab Legion (ibid. 2006, p.31f.) and by analyzing the events on the ground after the second truce of July 1948 (Pappe 2001, p.182 according to Botmeh 2006, p.23) and what happened to villages along the coast (Botmeh 2006, p.29), Hasan Mustafa was aware of those threats.

Facing this, Hasan Mustafa developed a strategy to defend the village against the threats. The villagers were experienced by hosting refugees from Ein Karem and Al-Malha, which were under attack (ibid, p.26). I agree with Jawad Botmeh that indeed Hasan Mustafa realized that his village had been forfeit by King Abdullah (ibid, p.29) by surrendering the railway line (ibid, p.20). During October 1948 many villagers of Battir left to Beit Jala or crossed the Jordan to Shuneh (ibid, p.26). With a small group of defenders and a few families enacting a village life as normal village life the inhabitation was maintained. The village should never look abandoned (against the requirement due to the location between the lines in No-Man's-Land). Mustafa needed to decide also in details like which crops to plant (ibid., p.31) in areas the Israeli Defence Forces would shoot at, incidents that happened before the cease fire of November 1948 (ibid., p.25f).

4. Lobbying among decision makers

In the same time, Hasan Mustafa kept his contacts to officers of the Arab Legion in Jerusalem and gained knowledge about the process in the negotiations in Amman and Shuneh about the No-Man's-Land line drawing on the map. When the negotiations took place in Amman he even stayed in Amman early 1949 (ibid, p.31).

Even more, decision makers in the MAC from the Jordanian side should be made aware of the implications of their decisions for the population in the valley, and especially in Battir (ibid.). This must have impressed the officers, as they wrote in a report of a Special Committee meeting April 18th, 1949 that "the evacuation of Battir is cancelled" (ibid, p.32) because the map presented by them had the village on the Jordanian side of the single green line, and the Israelis accepted. Hasan Mustafa read about the negotiations in the newspaper, still he did not trust the officers fully and made sure that during the last ten days of April 1949 the village looked inhabited, by lighting the houses at night, putting up the laundry during day and letting the animals into the yards (ibid., p.33).

In the same time, Hasan Mustafa kept himself and others up to date about the upcoming decisions and their consequences. And here lies the key to the next part of the story, when Hasan Mustafa got information about the MAC visit and became pro-active. Hasan confronted the decision makers who were in charge in defining the implementation of the cease fire agreement on the ground by inspection of the demarcation line. On the morning of May 2nd, 1949 Hasan Mustafa told his wife that he would meet that day "the Jews" and – I quote Botmeh here – that "he did not know if he would be back, but that he would make sure that the lands of Battir would be preserved" (ibid.).

5. Negotiate in front of the enemy

Hasan Mustafa went down towards the railway station with six other villagers, and then continued alone with his hands raised as he approached the Israeli soldiers and the MAC members (ibid.). He insisted on speaking with the commander, and – I quote Botmeh – "Moshe Dayan arrived from Jerusalem, and in the presence of the MAC officials, discussed the details of the agreement with

him” (ibid.). In all the boldness of confronting the MAC visitors, including the enemy of the war with the catastrophic consequences for the Palestinian population, Hasan's charm played an important role. The story as told by Albert Aghazarian mentions the funny sentence, “before you shoot me, let us have a cigarette.”⁶ From the following laughter the dialogue unfolded, and Hasan was able to make his voice heard.

The ownership of Battir’s land was reconfirmed, and step by step the demarcation line 200 yards south of the railway as well as the borders of Battir’s land were set, with the help of six villagers (Botmeh 2006, p.33). Rules were established that villagers could use already built houses, the school and their fields inside the Israeli side of the green line as well as north of the railway, but had to underpass the railway line, not to walk on it (ibid, p.34). This was possible due to the bridges crossing secondary wadis leading into Wadi es-Sikke called in the Hebrew Bible “Emeq Refaim”.

The map of Abu Sitta’s Atlas of Palestine 1948 shows the three important lines, in red the one demarcation line, in black the borders of the village of Battir and in grey the railway line. The validity of the black line north of the demarcation line even for today is due to the interference and negotiation of Hasan Mustafa and six other villagers with the MAC officials. You clearly see that the border of the village land is on the other side of the demarcation line and on the other, northern side of the railway. This open border was in the fifties and sixties a challenge to the security priority of the Israeli officials, and the villagers tell you stories when the Israeli officials were trespassing the agreement, which had allowed them to enter the area of the village only for the railway maintenance and emergencies related to the train.⁷

In his Atlas of Palestine Abu Sitta stresses that negotiations were not a regular setting: Usually any doubts about the location of the demarcation line were interpreted against the villagers (Abu Sitta 2004, p.66 according to Botmeh 2006, p.34). Hasan Mustafa made sure that “not one square meter was given away unduly by the disinterested MAC officials or by Israeli deception” (Botmeh 2006, p.34). At the end of the day, Hasan Mustafa had confronted the delegation visiting the demarcation line and he had negotiated the interests of his village even with the commander of the former attacks on his village, Moshe Dayan⁸.

6. Community Development as Answer to Isolation

Hasan Mustafa was successful in his strategy of non-violent resistance, but the struggle for the survival of the village was not yet over. According to Rigby the leader figure Hasan Mustafa implemented a sort of constructive resistance, by negotiating with military commanders, activating villagers, first a small part, than even the majority and in developing community development schemes (Rigby 2010, p.28). In his book Mustafa himself writes about his growing awareness that the resistance would not end in settling the issues with influencing the cease-fire-agreement, but – I quote Hasan – “something needed to be done if this village was to be saved” (Mustafa 1959, p.2). But maybe the very first sentence of the book is more important, stating “Battir is a living example of what a community can do to help itself.” (Mustafa 1959, p.1)

⁶ During the discussion and after the panel at the conference, Albert Aghazarian 28.8.2013 at Dar Annadwa.

⁷ Information obtained from Nadia Botmeh, 21.08.2013.

⁸ Moshe Dayan commanded the 6th Brigade in operation “Yekev” (vinery) to take over the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway line (Tal 2004, pp. 407-8, according to Botmeh 2006, p.26).

In order to keep the steadfastness, Hasan Mustafa had to fight for a situation that had some promise for the villagers. Therefore, Hasan Mustafa developed relations to the agencies able to support his strategy of ongoing village development and succeeded in several projects that kept the life in Battir in a promising perspective. His work for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and later for the United Nations Relief Work Agency (UNRWA) (Botmeh 2006, p. 30, footnote 40) was surely helpful in winning support for the different projects in Battir.

Among those projects were first of all the improved irrigation system and fountain reconstruction in 1950 (Mustafa 1959, p.3) and a new road connecting Battir to the world (ibid.). In all those work Mustafa insists that – I quote him – “the villagers would do their part” (ibid.), therefore applying the concept of al-‘Ona, the community work, or as he puts it, the sense of community (ibid, p.4).

In the book that Mustafa produced in 1959 we can sense the responsibility he felt, after he had persuaded so many villagers in 1949 to come back from their exile across the Jordan to the new reality of the frontline village, which led to his efforts to convince UNRWA to be more active in those villages at the frontline especially in education (Botmeh 2006, p.36, footnote 60). There is also a sense of proud stemming from the success that could serve as an example in development for the Arab world.

In the following years Mustafa continued his efforts for the village development in Battir: 1952 the first room of the school for girls was ready, more rooms followed. By 1957 all girls were enrolled in school, eight classes operated (Mustafa 1959, p.7). 1953 a road connecting the village to the fields was completed, 1954 steps from the fountain to the reservoir pool (ibid, p.8-9). 1955 the post office with telephone line was opened (ibid, p.11). 1957 a sewing center, a clinic and a child welfare center were established (ibid, p.12ff). Manure piles were substituted with gardens (ibid, p.15), a community center followed 1957 (ibid, p.16). Tree planting and a sports field were also important (ibid.). Even today all of those activities can serve as examples for community development. According to his friends and family Hasan Mustafa was obviously an extraordinary man, dedicated, courageous, and most importantly, a man with vision (Botmeh 2006, p.41).

II. The Horizon of Experiencing Palestine

The story of Battir is an amazing story. It is not by accident that this village is still there in its place, in a location that was not a location for a village according to the power of violence and war. The case of Battir could serve as an example of non-violent resistance as analyzed by Botmeh and Rigby. As researcher of the work of tour guides and as lecturer and trainer of future Palestinian Tour Guides I was interested in elaborating on elements of a narrative to be presented, maybe even to be narrated on site. For the part of the story that unfolds after the cease fire I emphasized just a few short parts of it. I concentrated on what I think could be part of a narrative for today visitors, Palestinians and foreign guests alike. Those short parts of the story can serve as examples that can shape the future. In the second part I argue that the story of Hasan Mustafa is worth a careful presentation, as well as the parallels of Hasan Mustafa’s story to the history of resistance against the empires and the threats of the present. Those parts of a narrative of today can be told to foreign guests, tourists and pilgrims as well as to Palestinians, pupils, students and visitors from other Palestinian villages and cities. The horizon of experiencing Palestine as a visitor can be widened by using different stories in an explaining narrative of the place and historical events.

7. Contrasting historical events

Battir has a site called Khirbet al-Yahud for more than a century by the local people, the ancient location of the village during different historic periods reaching back beyond the Roman period. But let us take a closer look at the site: The ancient village according to some scholars can be identified with Beitar⁹. During the revolt against the Roman empire starting in 132 CE the village Beitar was even enclosed by a Roman siege wall, a circumvallatio, as mentioned by the Roman writer Dio Cassius in his imperial history¹⁰. At least the walls of two military camps are still visible inside the village area. For this and other reasons the identification of Battir with historical Beitar is very likely. The enormous effort and the terrible violence of the Roman army to crush the revolt is obvious by the historic sources and the remnants of the structures: Aerial pictures of 1917¹¹ show parts of the circumvallatio opposite the old village¹². Those walls became incorporated into the terraced landscape of dry-stone walls, partly as dividers between lands of clans and families.

Excursus B: Narratives about the Revolt

In which way this revolt can be told in contrast to the story of creative resistance? The terrible events and the devastating outcome of the violence of both, occupiers in behalf of the empire as well as resistance fighters with an extremist religious ideology, are recorded from imperial perspective through the eyes of Dio Cassius. It is very important and interesting to note here that also the perspective of the surviving local community is preserved and survived in what is today a heart piece of Jewish tradition.

The story can be found in the Jerusalem Talmud, where the local religious leaders try to answer the question why the revolt failed. According to those rabbis it failed because the revolt turned against its religious leaders, when Rabbi Ele'azar was killed by the leader of the revolt Bar Kokhba. The violence against the oppressor starts to kill the oppressed as well. The culture of violence infects the local community¹³. According to this voice in the Talmud the violent resistance fails because God rejects it, quoting the words of the Biblical prophet Zechariah.¹⁴

It is also interesting to keep in mind the devastating results of the Bar Kochba revolt for villages and cities in Judea, the Southern highlands of Palestine. The story of the revolt is not a success story, and is considered not as important as other stories in Judaism of today or in the national Israeli narrative. Therefore and because of scarce findings during the excavations at Beitar, the place was never considered to be developed into an Israeli national site¹⁵. But the letters of the 'Cave of

⁹ David Ussishkin conducted archaeological soundings, see Ussishkin, David: Archaeological Soundings at Betar, Bar Kochba's Last Stronghold, in: Tel Aviv 20, 1993, p.66-97. According to valid agreements Palestinian archaeologists cannot conduct soundings or excavations in most areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

¹⁰ Dio Cassius: Historia Romanorum 69. 12,3

¹¹ See Atrash, Nada: Mapping Palestine: The Bavarian Air Force WWI Aerial Photography, in: Jerusalem Quarterly, Issue 56/57, 2014, p.95-107

¹² See Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, BS-Palästina 766, accessible at http://www.gda.bayern.de/bestaende/viewer/viewer.php?show=/bestaende/palaestina/bayhsta_bs_palaestina_0766 , retrieved on 30.01.2014

¹³ Cf. Raheb 2014, p.121: "Once violence enters the arena, it creates a culture that is very difficult to eradicate."

¹⁴ Jerusalem Talmud Ta'anit 4:6 (68d-69a), quoting Zechariah 11,17, accessible at [http://www.cojs.org/cojswiki/Jerusalem_Talmud_Ta'anit_4:6_\(68d-69\):_Rabbi_Akiva_and_Bar_Kokhba](http://www.cojs.org/cojswiki/Jerusalem_Talmud_Ta'anit_4:6_(68d-69):_Rabbi_Akiva_and_Bar_Kokhba) retrieved 23.08.2013

¹⁵ Emek Shaveh points to the fact that at Khirbet al-Yahud remains of the MB II B and the Roman period were found, but nothing that attests to the revolt directly, see Emek Shaveh: The Palestinian villages of Al Wallajah and Battir, Archaeological View (2012), accessible at <http://alt-arch.org/en/west-bank/>

Letters' in the wilderness of Judea and the coins minted during the revolt with the words "for the freedom of Jerusalem" are very important and even venerated in the "Shrine of the Book" of the Israel Museum in West-Jerusalem. They are used as evidence for a historical national fight for freedom by some Jews today and by Zionism.

The name "Beitar" was used by right-wing nationalist and revisionist Zionists for naming associations and sport clubs of a nationalist, anti-socialist movement which were sometimes affiliated with the Irgun, militant underground groups involved in armed struggle. The Moshav "Mevo Beitar"¹⁶, meaning the entrance or introduction to Beitar, was founded by members of the Beitar movement in 1950 on the land of Al-Qabu (Khalidi 1992, p.308), the depopulated Palestinian village west of Battir. The Israeli colony inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories using the name of historic Beitar, "Beitar Illit"¹⁷, which means "Upper Beitar", was founded by a nationalist-religious Jewish group. Beitar Illit was built on land of the Palestinian villages Husan, Nahalin and Wadi Fuqin. The modern use of the ancient name "Beitar" points to a nationalistic reading of the story of Beitar, adopting it for colonizing and controlling the land.

Although the fighters of the revolt against the Empire of Rome were not successful in holding the palace-fortress of Herodion (Jebel al-Furdeis) for long against the Roman Empire's army, their tunnels are presented as a special attraction of the Israeli National Park in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Beitar was totally destroyed, while Jerusalem was made a Roman city under a new name 'Colonia Aelia Capitolina' and the country was called 'Syria Palaestina' in 135 CE. It is interesting to note that the highlands were not totally "cleansed" from local population. Origenes, a writer of the early, pre-imperial Christian church who visited Bethlehem, does not know of any desecration of the shrine which was kept by locals to venerate the birthplace of Jesus when he wrote the apology 'Kata Kelsou' ("Against Celsus") around 248 CE¹⁸. A part of the local population stayed in villages and continued to cultivate the land¹⁹. Maybe Roman soldiers took over the cave as a worship place after the persecution of Christians all over the empire 250 CE²⁰. The story of the failed revolt against the superpower, the Empire of Rome ruling from the West on the other side of the Mediterranean, has to be told in my opinion as well, but from the eyes of the locals, even in front of visitors from the West who might sympathize more with the "high" Roman culture. In the same time, the story of creative resistance in 1948 and 1949 contrasts the story of failure and points to another future.

8. Conflict-sensitive Tourism

Tours can be developed in a conflict-sensitive way. What does it mean? One aspect is the

¹⁶ By facilitation of Friends of Earth Middle East (see FoEME, Community Based Problem Solving on Water Issues 2013, p.11-12, accessible at [http://foeme.org/uploads/13841891381~%5E\\$%5E~Community Based Problem Solving on Water Issues 2013.pdf](http://foeme.org/uploads/13841891381~%5E$%5E~Community Based Problem Solving on Water Issues 2013.pdf)) the Israeli settlement Tzur Hadassa inside the Green Line has good relations to their neighbours inside the Palestinian Occupied Territories, Wadi Fuqin, but not the Moshav Mevo Beitar of today just beside Tzur Hadassa (retrieved 30.01.2014).

¹⁷ The Israeli colony Beitar Illit is today inhabited by more than 45.000 Jewish inhabitants, members of mostly Hassidic congregations originating from Eastern Europe. The colony was awarded in Israel several prizes concerning water management, greening and beautification, while it is known among Palestinians as water-polluting by sewage overflow, for obstructing access to agricultural land of Palestinian farmers, and for cheap labour for Palestinians.

¹⁸ Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 1,151 (BKV 52,70)

¹⁹ Cf. Raheb 2014, p.18

²⁰ I agree here with the suggestion of Strickert, see Nalbandian, Garo; Strickert, Fred: *The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem: Diyar* 2013, p.5

community: When the German NGO Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst supported Tour Guides in Jericho planning conflict-sensitive tours²¹ in 2013, the inclusion of the community and those groups which are usually marginalized in tourism was one essential factor. Engagement of the local community is not new to tourism and tourism development. Even Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General, in his message on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2014, states: “Tourism can only prosper if it engages the local population by contributing to social values such as participation, education and enhanced local governance.”²² For the case of Battir, Carol Zoughbi-Janineh suggests the development of a rural tourism approach²³: “The local community has to feel that it has ‘ownership’ of the industry in order to accept and support tourism activities on its land.” (Zoughbi-Janineh 2009, p.156) Zoughbi-Janineh can list many assets for Battir, among them an ambitious village council, archaeological remains, terraces, springs and oral history “like the stories related to the local leading figure, Hassan Mustafa, who has become a legend and a hero in his community, ...” (Zoughbi-Janineh 2009, p.160).

The tours developed in Jericho had a special focus on stories and contain conflict-sensitive narratives as well: They don’t avoid mentioning conflict and challenges of a society under occupation. Instead, during those tours, conflict, the challenges of Palestinian society and the efforts to overcome obstacles are explained. Moreover, the narratives tell about historical examples of coexistence, of creative resistance and convey stories of hope. In this conscious use the stories do not follow the typical ruling narratives of the Western perspective. Indeed, many narratives and stories told actually reinforce stereotypes and prefer stories of violence in order to have visitors’ blood run cold. The Western trajectory, as Christine Nasser has described it²⁴, is very powerful, but it is not inevitable when guiding in Palestine. Therefore, elements of a Palestinian narrative have to be developed.

It is not enough that journalists from all over the world are coming to Battir and write about the struggle of today. Even groups of foreign visitors in main stream tourism and pilgrimage can pay Battir a meaningful visit. Tour Guides play an important role in facilitating the visit and supporting the impressions of the visitors by background information and story-telling. Tour guides need to fill the gaps in typical Western commentatorship and give the place a Palestinian profile with the full history, including a perspective that offers a reflected position on the history of the different empires occupying areas of the Land of Palestine including 1948.

Those conflict-sensitive tours contain narratives that explain diversity, the challenges and chances in Palestine. They contain stories of hope. Hasan Mustafa’s stories are stories of hope in stories of

²¹ By the initiative of Forum ZFD Civil Peace Service Jericho Office and the author, conflict-sensitive tours for Jericho were elaborated, discussed and trained 2013 with the “Jericho Guides”, a group of tour guides educated through a program in the framework of the “Sustainable Tourism Development in Jericho through Public-Private Partnership – Phase I” of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Japanese International Cooperation by Dar Al-Kalima University-College for Arts and Culture in 2011 and 2012.

²² World Tourism Day: Celebrating Tourism and Community Development, PR14044, Madrid, 23.06.2014 accessible at <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2014-06-23/world-tourism-day-2014-celebrating-tourism-and-community-development>, retrieved 29.08.2014

²³ Zoughbi-Janineh, Carol: The Development of Rural Tourism in the Hidden Parts of Palestine: A Case Study from the Bethlehem District, in: Issac, Rami; Platenkamp, Vincent; Portegies, Ariane (ed.) : Voices in Tourism Development; Creating Spaces for Tacit Knowledge and Innovation, NHTV Expertise Series 8, Breda 2009, pp.151-175

²⁴ Nasser, Christiane: Silenced Voices in the Development of Palestinian Tourism, in: Issac, Rami; Platenkamp, Vincent; Portegies, Ariane (ed.) : Voices in Tourism Development; Creating Spaces for Tacit Knowledge and Innovation, NHTV Expertise Series 8, Breda 2009, pp.132-150

loss. They explain resistance in another context than known in conventional narratives. It is a quite complicated subject as I experienced in researching for this article, but it can be explained, for example if the guide would use teaching aids like maps and old photographs. As long as we do not have a place which shows maps and stories of Hasan Mustafa, the guides have to bring them on the visit.

This is an important task for the stakeholders of tourism development in Palestine. Researchers and instructors of tour guides and tourism experts, tour operators and marketing experts, tourism board and Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities: Develop such tours for Battir, develop the narratives and train a special course for licensed Palestinian Tour Guides. Develop tours which give the local community a chance to participate in a fair way. Organize a Training Course for Battir and the Western Bethlehem Governorate Guide, as Dar Al-Kalima University-College did for Jericho and around, and train those tours. Guides are also important to frame the visit to the village in an inter-culturally sensitive way that helps to integrate tourism into the life of the local community.

9. The Threats of the Present

A conflict-sensitive tour does not shy away from explaining conflict. In Battir we see new threats later on, the occupation 1967 and most recent, the threat by the construction of the separation barrier. These realities should play a role in a narrative presented on the way to Battir or in Battir. The separation barrier²⁵ is built by the Israeli army since 2004, also around Bethlehem. It was not built on the Green Line of 1949, but rather according to the infrastructure of the Israeli colonies, along the tunnel road and by-pass road in the west of Bethlehem. It threatens to isolate Battir and the other villages in the west of Bethlehem area A in between walls and fences. We speak here of two barriers that would separate Battir along the Bethlehem by-pass from the West Bank and along the Green Line from Israel, a process that can be called “enclavisation” (Gola et al. 2010, p.59). The route of the separation near Battir was approved 2005 which would separate exactly those lands from the village (Isaac et al. 2005, p.7) that Mustafa had secured for the village. In 2012 a petition of Battir landowners resulted in a planning and building stop²⁶. The recent decision of the Israeli government leaves open what will exactly happen in the future²⁷. How destructive the construction of the barrier can be is already well known from Al-Wallajeh²⁸.

I agree that history and tradition, nature and culture of Battir, religion and Bible, all subjects are so rich. Dr. Hamdan Taha presented in behalf of Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (DACH) and the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) the great chance to preserve the special landscape around and in Battir. Dr. Georg Röwekamp presented in this conference also an approach for tourism in Palestine with the example Battir, Mr. Hani Abu Dayyeh explained to us the Biblical imagery visible along the hiking path, and Dr. George Hintlian brought the presence of Christian monks and leaders in the

²⁵ Katz-Mink offers an overview on objections against the separation barrier, including the case of Battir, see Katz-Mink, Elena: *Dangerous Separation: An Ecosystem and Way of Life in the West Bank at the Brink of Destruction*, in: SDLP 2013, Vol.13 Iss.1, p.47

²⁶ According to Haaretz the Israeli Supreme Court in a provisional ruling decided against the Israeli Ministry of Defense and asked to propose an alternative route (Hasson, Haaretz 14/12/2012).

²⁷ According to the Jerusalem Post the Israeli government “did not see fit to change its previous decisions” despite the Supreme Court ruling and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee’s decision (Lazaroff, Jerusalem Post 22/09/2014).

²⁸ See Emek Shaveh: *The Palestinian villages of Al Wallajah and Battir, Archaeological View* (2012), accessible at <http://alt-arch.org/en/west-bank/>

area to our attention. With very good reasons an application to the UNESCO committee for world heritage sites was prepared, but withdrawn in June 2013²⁹. Recently, the DACH as part of the work of the MoTA filed again the application to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee³⁰. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee recognized “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir“ 2014 as World Heritage³¹, and included it in the list of endangered sites³².

I believe that the stories of Hasan Mustafa blend into points of interest in terms of landscape, in terms of history, in terms of traditions, in terms of the Biblical images. The stories fit to pilgrimage, and Battir itself offers additional benefits for travellers with interest in faith and religion. For Muslims the local tradition of a shrine related to Sufism might be interesting³³. For Jews the tradition of discussing the implications of violence on religion could be important. For readers of the Hebrew Bible the imagery of the landscape is striking, for Christians the tradition of St. George, who was a Roman soldier before he was martyred, is very significant. I suggest to include the stories Hasan Mustafa, even when tours start or end at the Al-Khader shrine, as done in the field trip program at Dar Al-Kalima University-College. Use the narrative also when you start at the Environmental Education Center in Talitha Kumi with its bird observation overlooking Al-Makhrour. From there you can walk down towards Battir.

Landscape, culture, nature and history belong together. I believe tour operators and guides should not be afraid to combine thematic tours and to use several themes during tours. As long as the story is rooted in the landscape surrounding the visitors it will widen the perspective of the visit. Also the threat by the construction of the separation barrier has to be explained, because it strikes the achievements of Hasan Mustafa as well. However, visiting Battir is not necessarily dark tourism³⁴, because it offers beside the current threat to the village also stories of hope. The stories can be combined with pilgrimage tours, and will add a new facet to it. In this way pilgrimage does not inevitably follow the typical ruling narratives of the Western perspective (cf. Nasser 2009, p.135), but adds new images and metaphors of a Palestinian profile to the pilgrimage experience.

10. Display and Media for a Battir Experience

I think that the stories of Hasan Mustafa have to be included, because they can contribute to an enriching experience of Palestine by visiting Battir and the landscapes around. How to integrate the story of Hasan Mustafa as a part of a narrative for today? Allow me to envision a practiced narrative and let me suggest a few ideas to make the stories an added value for the Battir experience.

²⁹According to AP and Reuters the bid was postponed as a good will gesture to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (Haaretz 26/06/2013).

³⁰ See the UNESCO World Heritage Committee website <http://whc.unesco.org/en/committee> , for Bethlehem see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433> , retrieved 30.01.2014

³¹ For “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir” see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1492> , retrieved 28.08.2014. At the same session 2014 Beit Guvrin in Israel was declared World Heritage, the place of former Palestinian town Beit Jibrin, of which many refugees live since 1948 in the area of Bethlehem.

³² See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/> , retrieved 28.08.2014

³³ In 1999 I heard people of Battir saying that the shrine was dedicated to Rabi’a Al-‘Addawiyya, who has a famous shrine attributed to her on the Mount of Olives (cf. Natsheh 2004). In 2012 I heard the shrine is dedicated to Abu Yazid al-Bistami, another leading sufi, both pointing to the divine love.

³⁴ Isaac points to the lately evolving wall tourism in Bethlehem as possibly dark tourism because of the intensity of the visit, see Isaac, Rami: Alternative Tourism: Can the Segregation Wall in Bethlehem be a Tourist Attraction?, in: Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development, 1479-0548, Vol. 6, Iss. 3, 2009, p.250

An interactive museum, exhibition, display of Hasan Mustafa's stories, illustrated by audio and audio-visuals could be established. It could also refer to the local traditions, but as a presentation of the social, economic and political reality of Battir (cf. Zoughbi-Janineh 2009, p.166). It will exhibit the different steps of the actions taken by the villagers, and by Hasan Mustafa. It can include those maps and images used in the different sources of this article, the educational and intellectual activities of Hasan Mustafa prior to 1948, An-Nakba, resistance, the cease fire negotiations and the MAC, the work of UNRWA in frontline villages, village development, Al-'Ona, education and more. Films could be produced by a competition for students of the Dar Al-Kalima University-College Documentary Film Production Diploma. Digital media and audio explanations can also be accessed by mobile phone outside the museum and make it real landscape museum where information is directly connected to the site. To establish such a museum something like a Hasan Mustafa Museum Trust would be founded, supported by local educational institutions, initiatives and local NGOs in Battir and the Bethlehem governorate. For coordination and facilitation the MoTA can act because it is the principal public body (cf. Zoughbi-Janineh 2009, p.163).

A set of maps has to be produced that show the heritage of Battir, for example the irrigated terraces below and Northern of the railway tracks, combined with old images³⁵. In this case it illustrates also the threat by the construction of the separation barrier. Maps also can visualize the threat of the cease fire negotiations in 1948 and 1949, if they include Wadi es-Sikke between Qabu and Beit Safafa. Another map can explain the importance of the railway line prior to 1948 and trigger creative ideas for a future peace agreement, including a corridor train on existing tracks from Gaza to Battir (via Ramleh) or Qalqilia to Battir (via Lid / Lod)³⁶.

A new type of guide book for Palestinian destinations is needed, practical, small enough for easy use, including a wide range of information. It should introduce diverse Palestinian narratives. In a multi-cultural approach it can develop insights into each one of the many human cultures that formed the landscape of Wadi es-Sikke, as well into the ways of living of today³⁷. It should serve rather as an appetizer to use a tour guide person to go there and to learn more about this or that subject, to enjoy the place as well as to realize the amazing richness of a place like Battir. A guide book production needs sponsors and for a high quality, meeting international standards, excellent contributions are needed, as well as a hard working coordination and editing.

Add Battir to the school tour destinations of Palestine. A hike in the spring time should be a pleasant experience. More hikes can be developed, which lead close to historic sites like the remains of the circumvallatio. The school tour can be combined with an extracurricular school activity to complement history curricula. A Hasan Mustafa Museum Trust as suggested or similar initiatives can provide an outline of a class available for teachers preparing the school tour and a website with material for students could be available as well. For example eight-graders learn about personalities

³⁵ See Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, BS-Palästina 766, accessible at http://www.gda.bayern.de/bestaende/viewer/viewer.php?show=bestaende/palaestina/bayhsta_bs_palaestina_0766 , retrieved on 30.01.2014

³⁶ A corridor train travels non-stop through another territory, like the Austrian corridor train used to travel between Lienz (East-Tyrol) and Innsbruck (Tyrol) with no stop in South-Tyrol which is since WWI territory of Italy. With the open borders of Europe today this train is now obsolete and travelers take both Italian and Austrian trains.

³⁷ Emek Shaveh points to the chance of learning not through conflicting narratives, see Emek Shaveh: The Palestinian villages of Al Wallajah and Battir, Archaeological View (2012), accessible at <http://alt-arch.org/en/west-bank/>

like Hasan Mustafa as they can learn about Jabra Ibrahim Jabra in Bethlehem, Tawfiq Canaan in Bir Zeit or Mussa Al-Alami in Jericho. Eleven-graders can learn about the Cease-fire-line and creative resistance. College students can learn about village development strategies.

For foreign visitors the use of the Mock-permit as a tool can raise awareness about the separation, segregation and “enclavisation” of the different areas in the Occupied Territories. Also the pressure on every day life of Palestinians by the permit regime under the occupation can be explained. Battir like Husan, Nahalin and Wadi Fuqin will be in a specific way separated from Bethlehem if all separation plans are implemented. An example of a Mock-permit was initiated by the Arab Educational Institute, and beside a Mock-permit to visit Bethlehem there should be others, like visiting Battir, Husan and the other villages, or Herodion, or Mar Saba, or Jericho. In the case of Battir especially it would explain the agreement regarding the railway line and show the threat by the separation wall to the legacy of Hasan Mustafa.

11. Market the Tours to Battir

Market the tour also for individual tourists at least once a week. Bethlehem should offer tours of a high quality. One of those tours could be a tour or even different tours to Battir. The aim could be a high quality tour with a licensed Palestinian Tour Guide. The Battir experience can be enabled by tours and their guides, the narrative of Hasan Mustafa can be practiced as part of a review on resistance and empire, both very important in the Bible and in the same time closely connected to the Palestinian people. Hasan Mustafa’s stories are waiting to become a part of today’s narrative in tours to Battir. If done in a conflict-sensitive way, tours to Battir can even contribute to a perspective towards the future. It is an important task for Palestinian tour operators, Palestinian tour guides and educators, as well as for Palestinian activists and officials to represent all stories of Battir in a meaningful combination and perspective to their people, to their guests and even to their neighbours. It is not just about raising awareness among travellers about the necessity of conflict-sensitive tourism, Battir could be practicing conflict-sensitive tourism. Battir can be the place where the responsible tourist can hear the stories of hope³⁸, as shared by Palestinians. Experiencing Palestine with a consciously developed narrative would offer a much wider horizon than we might expect from tourism as conducted today in Bethlehem.

Conclusion

The inclusion of the story of Hasan Mustafa and of 1948-49 will enrich the Palestine experience and pilgrimage tourism if it is told in a conflict-sensitive way. This story can be told as a story of hope in difference to keeping quiet about conflict or transmitting a message of despair and hopelessness. Palestinian identity can be expressed in the framework of correct history, in terms of survival on the land with creative resistance, in well told, accurate stories as opposed to propaganda.

Tourism in the Bethlehem area does not necessarily need to follow the Western trajectory, but can develop a Palestinian profile based on an approach aware of the diversity in the land and openness of borders existing before 1948. This approach can be called a multi-cultural, multi-faceted and conflict-sensitive approach in opposition to one-sided, simplifying and nationalistic approaches. It is worth to develop and market a Palestine experience and a tourism product in hiking through the

³⁸ Isaac suggests that responsible tourism can “... create hope” “... by contributing to improvements”, and in the same time, can offer “... communities the chance ... to tell their stories, request solidarity and foster tolerance ...”, see Issac, Rami: Responsible Tourism and Development in the Context of Peace Building, in: Wohlmutter, Cordula; Wintersteiner, Werner: International Handbook on Tourism and Peace, Klagenfurt 2014, p.97

landscape or in visiting the village of Battir connecting to the stories of non-violent resistance and failing resistance in a conflict-sensitive way. Experiencing Palestine is not necessarily dark tourism, but can convey a message of hope, especially in the stories of Hasan Mustafa.

It is a desirable option to develop a museum or exhibition that guides visitors through the dramatic events in Palestine from 1930 until 1960 and onward, particularly in the life of Battir's citizens and of Hasan Mustafa.

It is a necessity to train tour guides well in facilitating an experience without harm to the citizens of Battir or other Palestinian villages and in telling those stories that are different from dominant narratives of exclusion, subordination and the often claimed endless necessity of violence.

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