

Palestine, Land of Olives and Vines
Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem Battir
A World Heritage Site

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This article is based on the research conducted for the preparation of the nomination document to inscribe Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2013¹. The work was elaborated by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation in cooperation with Battir Village Council and the Local Community in Battir. The file was prepared by a national team composed of Dr. Hamdan Taha-Program Coordinator, Fouad Hallak, Issam Juha, Mohammed Kattoush, Hassan Mu'amer, Ghadeer Najjar, Ghassan Olayan, Dr. Ahmed Rjoob, Younis Rjoub, Dr. Iman Al-Saca, Shireen Sahouri and Khalil Shokeh. The file was prepared with the technical support of UNESCO office in Ramallah, the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian delegation at UNESCO and Dr. Raymond Bondin as an international consultant. The file was submitted as an emergency case, due to the potential threats facing the site.

During its 38th session held in Doha, Qatar between 15 and 27 June 2014, the World Heritage Committee approved the inscription of Palestine, Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir on UNESCO's World Heritage List in Danger. The inscription on World Heritage List in danger came after realizing that the landscape had become vulnerable under the impact of socio-cultural and geo-political transformations that could bring irreversible damage to its authenticity and integrity, citing the start of construction of a separation wall that may isolate farmers of Battir from fields they have cultivated for centuries.

The Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, is the first site of a serial future nominations that aim to inscribe diverse cultural landscapes throughout Palestine. Together, these sites make up Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines, a group of fascinating cultural landscapes that distinguish Palestine. Olive trees and vineyards are characteristic, and deeply symbolic, features in the Palestinian landscape. They are highly representative of the identity and

¹ Taha, Hamdan ed., 2009, Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine, Ramallah - Palestinian department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, p. 28-29.

character of the landscape throughout history and the ways that people have interacted with their land, highlighting the attachment of these people to their land.

According to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention² cultural landscapes are cultural properties that represent the "combined works of nature and of man". They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. Cultural landscapes fall in three categories that include (1) Clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man: this embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles; (2) Organically evolved landscape: this results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features. The organically evolved landscape falls in two sub-categories: a relict (or fossil) landscape and a continuing landscape; and (3) associative cultural landscape. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage List is justifiable by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

Accordingly, the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir falls in the second category. The site encompasses various cultural heritage elements, which are built of stone available in the area, such as dry-stone walls, agricultural watchtowers, traditional footpaths, and olive oil presses. These represent an outstanding example of a landscape that illustrates the development of human settlements near water sources, here the springs that dot the mountainous area, and the adaptation of the land for agriculture.

The village of Battir, which developed on the outskirts of this cultural landscape, and was inhabited by farmers who worked and still work the land, attests to the sustainability of this system and to its continuation for the past 4,000 years. Battir has always been considered the vegetable garden of Jerusalem due to the abundance of springs in the area. This led to the development of a system of irrigation that permitted the development of agricultural terraces in a very steep mountainous landscape fed by a complex irrigation system that is managed by the eight main families inhabiting the village. It is simultaneously a simple and complex system, and is still in use today.

² World Heritage Centre, 2013, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, annex 3, article 47, page 14

The traditional system of irrigated terraces within the nominated property is an outstanding example of technological expertise, which constitutes an integral part of the cultural landscape. The methods used to construct the terraces illustrate significant stages in human history, as the ancient system of canals, still in use today, dates back to ancient times³.

Moreover, the strategic location of the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir and the availability of springs were two major factors that attracted people to settle in the area and adapt its steep landscape into arable land. Since the twelfth century, Battir has been one of the main producers of vegetable products for the central part of Palestine, and in particular the city of Jerusalem.

The property is an outstanding example of traditional land-use, which is representative of thousands of years of culture and human interaction with the environment. This human-made landscape has become vulnerable under the impact of socio-cultural and geo-political transformations that may cause irreversible damage. The agricultural practices that were used to create this living landscape embody one of the oldest farming methods known to humankind and are an important source of livelihood for local communities⁴.

Historical Background

Archaeological remains found within the borders of the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, whether at the excavations at *Khirbeh* or along the valley, have revealed that these settlements belonged to different civilizations⁵. Yet, it is difficult to determine the exact location where these settlements were located for two reasons: the first being that the remains that were found are relatively small and could have drifted from their original location carried by the rain or streams, and the second is that the fact that the area is composed of manmade terraces,

³ Operational Guidelines, Article 77, p. 20.

Criterion (iv) of the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention: be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

⁴ Operational Guidelines, Article 77, p. 20.

Criterion (v) of the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention: be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

⁵ Taha, Hamdan, *Present Pasts*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2010, 16-25, doi:10.5334/pp.17

and during the construction of the terraces the remains might have been moved from their original locations. Excavations in *Khirbeh* revealed findings that date back to the Canaanite period. Excavations also revealed that the site is actually an ancient Canaanite site of high significance, and is one of the largest excavated Middle Bronze Age sites in the region.

During the Roman period⁶, Battir was known as Beth-ther. Some researchers wrote that it meant the “impregnable fortress,” while others wrote that it meant the “corral” or the “fold of sheep.” Perhaps one of the most interesting finds in Battir is the Warren Cup, a silver cup found at the beginning of the twentieth century that dates back to between 5 and 15 BC⁷. The cup reflects the customs and attitudes of this historical context, and provides us with an important insight into the culture that made and used it⁸.

There is no clear record about the village of Battir during the period that extends between the Byzantine and the Crusader periods. All records reveal that the villages that surrounded Jerusalem played an important role in the agricultural activity of the various civilizations. Moreover, during the Islamic Periods, agriculture flourished around Jerusalem and Hebron, and the majority of the lands were planted with olives and figs. References mention that four villages to the south of Jerusalem, Battir, in addition to Artas, Al-Kahder, and Al-Walajeh, depended on springs for irrigating the fields, the majority of which were planted with olives⁹.

The Mamluk rule has been identified as a military feudal system. During that period, a reconstruction process of the villages, which were located around Jerusalem and contained water resources, took place. During that period, Battir became a *vaqif*¹⁰ for Al-A'thamieh School in Jerusalem. The village continued to pay for this school until the Ottoman period¹¹. The Sharia

⁶During the Roman period, the agricultural area of the village was known as the *ville* or *farm*. The population of the *ville* or farm varied between 100 and 1,000 inhabitants, and its area extended between 10 and 100 Dunums

⁷ British Museum, 2000, The warren Cup: Roman, mid-1st century AD Said to be from Battir (ancient Bethther) near Jerusalem

<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass/ix/goto?id=OBJ5831>.

⁸ British Museum Collection, highlights.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/t/the_warren_cup.aspx (revised on 12 January 2013).

⁹Shokeh, Khalil, 2012, *The History of Battir*, unpublished research.

¹⁰ A *vaqif* or *waqf* is typically a building or plot of land or even cash used for Muslim religious or charitable purposes under the context of an inalienable religious endowment “*sadaqa*.”

¹¹ Sharia Court Registrar, Jerusalem. No. 61, page 366, 660/1261.

Court Registrar also recorded that farmers were treated as workers in their land by the religious and civil government.

During the Ottoman period, Battir was one of the nine villages of Beni Hassan, which were located to the southwest of Jerusalem, and one of 174 villages that were annexed to the Jerusalem Central Governorate (*Nahiyat Al-Quds*). Battir was reported to be an agricultural village from the early Ottoman period onward. The villagers paid one-third of their revenues, as did those of Abu-Dis and Ain-Karem¹², to a *vaqif*. Its revenues belonged to *timar* then to *ze'amet*, and the village yielded a moderate quantity of products. However, according to the Ottoman Registrar (*sijill*), the estimated revenues from Battir doubled between the surveys of 960 *hijri* and 970 *hijri*¹³.

In August 1556, the village leaders were involved in a serious dispute over the revenues of Battir and payments due from them. The progress and resolution of this case demonstrates how the villagers could and did safeguard their interests with the help of the judge (*kadi*). Although this case was initiated by a complaint from the guardian (*nazir*) of the *vaqif*, the final decision favoured the villagers.¹⁴

During the middle of the nineteenth century, Dr. Conrad Schick, Sir Moses Montefiore, and other British notables initiated the idea of building a railway that linked the Mediterranean Coast with Jerusalem. But it was not until 1888 that the idea started to take shape. The franchise for laying the railway was obtained from the Ottoman government by Joseph Navon, but due financial difficulties, he had to sell the franchise to a French company which was set up to build the line, *Société du Chemin de Fer Ottoman de Jaffa à Jérusalem et Prolongements*. The land that the stations were built on was purchased at a very high price by the railway company. The stations were equipped with a telegraph and water cisterns.

The Jaffa-Jerusalem railway had five stations between the two cities, including Al-Lydd, Al-Ramlla, Sajd¹⁵, DeirAban, and finally, Battir. The three important stations along the route were Al-Lydd and Al-Ramla, because they were large cities, and Battir (Bittir). Battir was the most flourishing village in the southern part of Jerusalem, and it was known for its springs and vegetables. The construction of the railway station in the village of Battir was due to the availability of water, which was used to supply the steam locomotive. The railway station had

¹² Two agricultural villages also annexed to Jerusalem.

¹³ 1553 AD and 1563 AD.

¹⁴ Singer, A., 1994, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman officials: Rural Administration Sixteenth Century Jerusalem*, *Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation*, Cambridge University Press, P. 75.

¹⁵ Sajd Station was closed in 1915.

directly influence the life in the village, and the villagers used the train to transport their goods from the village of Battir to Jerusalem, which was the most important market.

After 1948 and the “temporary ejection” of its inhabitants, Battir village in the southern Jerusalem landscape found itself on the Green Line. Its inhabitants made a complete return to the village thanks to the strategic political initiative of their pioneer intellectual (*ustaz*), *Hassan Mustapha*. Hassan Mustapha dedicated his efforts to guaranteeing the right of the inhabitants of Battir to their land, and he was indeed able to obtain a permission that gave them the right to use lands they owned despite their location behind the Armistice Line. After the Jordanian-Israeli Armistice Agreement (1949), a progressive separation of the village from Jerusalem began with the closure of the Battir Railway Station. Since the 1950s, the village started to turn into an increasingly “Bethlehem-oriented” village, with the construction of its main road, a pathway historically not used, leading to Bethlehem.

Components of the Landscape

The Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir¹⁶ is located 7 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem, west of the top of the ridge of the mountain range that runs north to south through Palestine along the Mediterranean coast. The property includes a series of agricultural valleys extending from Wadi Al-Makhrour (Al-Makhrour Valley) to the west of Beit Jala towards the village of Hussan, and encircling the village of Battir. This cultural landscape is characterized by extensive agricultural terraces, water springs, ancient irrigation systems, remains of human settlements (*khirab*), agricultural watchtowers (*manatir*) locally known as palaces (*qusoor*), and olive presses.

The site includes traditional footpaths, used by the farmers and inhabitants of Battir to connect them with their land, starting from *Wadi Al-Makhrour* and heading towards the village. It also includes the various human settlements that developed around the many springs that dot the slopes of the mountains, starting from at least the Bronze Age and continuing until today¹⁷. These settlements have contributed to the creation of a unique cultural landscape composed of agricultural terraces that are supported by dry-stone walls, agricultural watchtowers (*manatir* or *qusoor*), olive oil presses, ancient irrigation pools to collect the water flowing from the springs, ancient irrigation canals, and the remains of human settlements (*khirab*).

¹⁶Battir was also known as Bittir during the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. The name Bether or Beth-ther appears on maps of Roman Palestine.

¹⁷ Conder, C.R and Kitchener, H.H. (1982) *The Survey of Western Palestine. Memoir of Topography, Orography, Hydrography and Archeology*, Vol. II, Samaria. London, P. 155.

Like the rest of the Mediterranean region, the landscape around Battir contains ample amounts of stone. Thus, traditional dry-stone architecture was extremely common, as gathering the stones had the added benefit of producing clean, tillable fields for agriculture. Due to the profusion of different varieties of stone, the local people used them for constructing their shelters, fences, and monuments, benefiting from each variety's particular aesthetic, physical, and geological characteristics. In addition, they used these stone to re-form the rocky mountainous landscape, and adapt it for their agricultural activities.

Visible signs of the dynamic relation between humans and the landscape are deeply integrated into Battir, which is a living marker of the history and development of the traditional construction techniques used in the area. The dry-stone vernacular architecture represents one of the most evident elements of the process of adapting the landscape, embodying the materialization of centuries of ability, knowledge, and modes of production. The construction and maintenance of dry-stone landscapes require a great amount of voluntary cooperative and collective work, called *al-'aona* in Palestine; according to scholars, the amount of labor involved in the construction of dry-stone walls and agricultural terraces suggests that it would require extensive planning and organization¹⁸. The collective work is an essential component of the local agrarian systems and landscapes and of the socio-cultural processes, and it plays a key role in the processes of socialization and of transmission of knowledge and abilities.

Extensive olive groves extend from *Wadi Al-Makhrour* north-west towards *Wadi Es-Sikkeh*. The man-made terraces that spread along the valley are planted mainly with olive trees, some of which are ancient. This adaptation of the landscape has created a stunning landscape. Similar terraces have characterized all the central hills of Palestine from ancient times until the present. Research on the origins of terraced agricultural documents indicate that this system dates back to the Chalcolithic period (4500 to 3000 BC). This is when advanced farming villages emerged and an intensification of agriculture, evidenced by the cultivation of fruits such as olives and grapes, evolved. Archaeological excavations in both Palestine and Egypt indicate that wine and olive oil were among the most important goods imported from Palestine to Egypt¹⁹, and the trade of valuable Canaanite goods from relatively small Palestinian villages was registered in documents from the Early Dynastic Period of the Pharaohs around 3000 BC²⁰.

¹⁸ Ditto, page 202.

¹⁹Sayej, G. I., 1999, "The Origin of Terraces in the Central Hills of Palestine: Theories and Explanations," *The Landscape of Equivocal Palestine*, Bir Zeit University Press, Palestine, P. 206.

²⁰Soumi, N., 2012, *L'Olivier & la Palestine: Une Passion Charnelle*, Sinbad: Fondateur Pierre Bernard, Actes Sud, France, P. 15.

The historical significance of the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir is integrated into the system of dry-stone terrace walls that characterize this rough landscape. The olive groves extend from the valley to the mountains. Thousands of stones were used in the construction of the dry-stone walls, which contain the soil and create many level areas on the hillside that are planted with olive trees. The stream flowing through the valley is bordered by similar stones to minimize soil erosion during the rainy season²¹. Just before Battir, a massive rock has been placed in the valley near the stream. The rock has a hole in one of its sides and appears to be a rock tomb or an old water cistern that has been turned 90 degrees due to natural forces.

The route from Wadi Al-Makhrour towards Battir is dotted with agricultural watchtowers called *manatir*, which literally translates to the house of the guard (*natour*). They were also known locally as palaces (*qussur*), since they stand alone in the middle of the field overlooking the cultivated lands²². About 230 *manatir* were registered along this route. The majority of the agricultural watch towers were constructed at an intermediate level of the property, and are used by the farmers to watch over their fields during the harvest season. Accordingly, the agricultural watch towers spread away from the village²³.

The placement of these watchtowers was affected by considerations of the local terrain. They were usually placed on higher parts of the agricultural fields on the slope that faces the prevailing wind and sunlight to ensure ventilation, and to protect the family from various natural and man-made threats. Watchtowers were usually placed near a water source, either a spring or water cistern, and they were placed so as to be close to the neighbors, and thus provide social contact, while maintaining the privacy of the family.

The agricultural watchtowers were connected with the origins of agriculture itself: the cultivation of grain and, somewhat later, the domestication of fruit trees. The role of the agricultural watchtowers was multifaceted: (1) to watch over the cultivated land and protect it from animals and thieves; (2) to provide a cool, shaded place for field workers and herdsman during hot summer days; (3) to protect people from wild animals and inclement weather; and (4) to afford their owners an alternate living space for staying temporarily at a distance from their homes. Watchtowers were also used as a permanent residence for farm laborers employed by wealthy landlords to survey, supervise, and cultivate their lands throughout the year. Just outside

²¹ Interview with Mr. Ghassan Olayan, a landowner in Battir.

²²Amiri, S., and Rahal, F., 2003, *Manatir, the Agricultural Watchtowers in Rural Palestine*, Centre for Architectural Conservation – RIWAQ, Palestine, P. 16.

²³ Al-Houdalieh, S., and Ghadban, S. 2013, *Agricultural Watchtowers in Al-Tireh Quarter and Ain Qinia Village*, *International Journal of Architectural Heritage*, 7: 509-535.

the building there was often a flat rock, called the *rukbah* or *derdas*, *al-badouda* that was used for crushing small amounts of olives or other fruits.

Many traditional olive presses (*bdoud*, *sg. badd*) are found among the fields and near the watchtowers, since it was easier for the farmers to press the olives in the fields than move them to other location. *Al-Badd* is a press usually made of two stones. The first was shaped like a huge dish, and was laid on the ground (*al-Qassa*), and the other rolling stone had a cylindrical shape with a square opening at its centre (*hajjar ad-dawar*) and was placed vertically inside the first stone. A wooden staff was placed at the opening and was rotated around the circumference of the first stone either by a mule or wheel. The crushed olives, which became a paste, were placed in hay baskets and squeezed to extract the oil.

Another important element in the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, is a permanent limekiln structure located a short distance from the village of Battir on the western slope of *Wadi Ni'meh*. The structure is rectangular, almost 8 meters high, and made of bricks, stones, and mortar. The limekiln has a lower furnace and a higher room surmounted by a vault roof with a central hole. The location of the limekiln near the Jaffa-Battir railroad, and the relatively small size of the village of Battir indicate that this particular limekiln was constructed for mass production, most probably for the nearby city of Jerusalem, and perhaps for other major cities located along the route of the railway. It remained in use and productive until the end of the 1940s, when it was abandoned as a consequence of the Israeli-Arab war and the introduction of concrete for construction.

The terraces near the village have a few scattered olive trees, but they are mainly associated with the agriculture of other crops, including grapevines, fruit trees²⁴, seasonal vegetables, and herbs²⁵. Some citrus trees, mainly lemon trees, are also found in these fields, but they are planted for domestic use only. The majority of the cultivation near the terraces depends on irrigation. The ancient pools and the water canals are used during the dry season to irrigate the terraces, and the distribution of the water among the farmers follows a traditional system known as shares (*al-ma'dud*). The agricultural terraces in Battir, which depend totally on irrigation, are called the paradises (*al-jinan*)²⁶.

The traditional irrigation system continues to be used by the inhabitants of Battir, and still meets the needs of the farmers, even though it is an ancient system. According to the farmers

²⁴ Such as apricot, almonds, and figs.

²⁵ Such as cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumber, mint, and parsley.

²⁶ Tameizeh, A.A., Water rights and uses in Midland Palestine. 2000, Birzeit University (Thesis Dissertation).

themselves, the system satisfies their needs and it continues to be implemented without any modifications. It is simple and easy²⁷; and it has been passed down from father to son from generation to generation.

This unique water system is the result of an ancient egalitarian distribution system that delivers water to the terraced agricultural land based on a simple mathematical calculation and a clear time-managed rotation scheme²⁸. The system is described by the farmers as just and fair, and satisfies the needs of the landowners. These two facts have contributed to its sustainability throughout the years. Canals for the distribution of water are made from the soil and the water runs through them to irrigate small garden beds (*mashakib*). Each one is about 1.5 meters by 2 meters. All the beds are linked together by a canal in between them, and separated from each other by borders made of soil. Every season, *Al Mashakib* have to be renewed and reshaped and should be maintained every now and then during the same season.

The availability of springs around the mountains, and the location of the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir along the ancient road that connected Jerusalem with the southern part of Palestine encouraged several civilizations to settle in the area. Archaeological remains²⁹; locally known as *khirab*³⁰, from different periods (Canaanite, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk, and Ottoman) attest to the presence of different layers of civilizations and of different phases of domestication of the local landscape. Seven archeological settlements (*khirab*) have been found within the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, the majority of which are located near the modern village³¹.

The major human settlement in Battir is *Al-Khirbeh, Khirbet Al-Yahud*. The site located on top of the hill to the south of the village, and is considered the most important archeological site in the property. It is known to the local inhabitants as *Al-Khirbeh*, identified by some scholars with ancient Betar, the site where the Romans suppressed Simon Bar Kokhba in 135 AD³². Excavations have been carried out intensively at the site since the beginning of the twentieth

²⁷ Although distributing the water can be implemented by anybody, young or old, man or woman, the presence of a wise adult man is necessary to monitor the equality in the measurements and distribution.

²⁸ Ar-Rabi, A. Tamimi, A., 1998, Hydrology and Director of Springs in the West bank. Ramallah.

²⁹ The description of the human settlements in Battir is based on the *Magazine of Battir*, edited by Gassan Olayan, first edition, 1998.

³⁰ Zickermann, E., 1906, Chirbet el-Jehud (Bettir), ZDPV 29: 51

³¹ Neef, H.D., 1981, Die Mutatio Betthar, Eine Roemische Strassentation Zwischen Caesarea und Antipatris. ZDPV 97.

³² Applebaum, Sh. 1987, Betthar and the Roman Road System. ZDPV 103: 137-140

century, and the site was highlighted by many scholars³³. Recent excavations at *Khirbeh* revealed remains that date back to the Middle Bronze Age (Canaanite period)³⁴.

The location of the *Khirbeh* along the ancient Roman road that connected the city of Jerusalem with Gaza and Caesarea, the availability of springs, and the location of the fortress on the mountaintop were three determining factors in the formation of the settlement. The defensive structure proposes that the settlement was built along the route to provide protection for the route³⁵.

Other Human settlements include, *Khirbet Al-Rukba*, *Khirbet Bardama (Bardamout)*, *Khirbet Al-Harith (Al-Hariq)*, *Khirbet A-Qasr*, *Khirbet Um Al-Shukaif* and *Khirbet Karzaleh*.

The modern village of Battir shifted to its current location probably during the Mamluk period. The inhabitants restored houses, stables, and storerooms from the Roman period. The majority of the traditional buildings in Battir date back to the late Ottoman period³⁶. These buildings incorporate the development of Roman-Byzantine techniques and reflect different phases in the village's history. The cross-arched room structure, a Roman-Byzantine technique introduced in Palestine in the first century BC, continued to be developed and was used until the beginning of the twentieth century. Other Roman-Byzantine techniques used over a similar time-span and visible in the village, include the arch, the vault, and the use of limestone (*cociopesto*) concrete, mortar, and plaster. A wide range of shapes and details are apparent on numerous buildings, which are unique personal creations of the owner and were made according to the capabilities of the builder.

Roman building techniques continued to be used until the arrival of the steam railway and the introduction of the steel beam and Portland cement. The opening of the Jaffa-Jerusalem line meant that, by 1910, the new I-Beam and Portland cement techniques had largely replaced all lime-based plaster, mortar, and Roman concrete construction³⁷.

³³ Scholars include V. Guerin, C. Clermont-Ganneau, J. Germer-Durand, E. Zickermann, W.D. Carroll, A. Alt, A. Schulten, A. Reifenberg, S. Yeivin, and others.

³⁴ Ussishkin, D., 1993, *Archeological Soundings at Betar, Bar-Kochba's Last Stronghold*, Tel Aviv 20: 66-97.

³⁵ Carroll, W.D. 1923-1924. *Bittir and its Archeological remains*. AASOR 5:77-97.

³⁶ Negev, A. and Gibson, Sh., *Bethar*, in *Archeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, New York, 2001: 76-77.

³⁷ Shaffer, Y., "Changes in the Building Technologies in Israel from Ancient Times Until the 20th Century and Their Influence on Everyday Life," from the UNESCO report, *More than Two Thousand Years in the History of Architecture, Safeguarding the Structure of Our Architectural Heritage*,

In addition, several architectural features can be found in the village of Battir, and are strongly related to the narrative history of the village. Maqam Abu Zeid is a shrine located to the north of the ancient pool of Ain Al-Balad and is dedicated to Abu Zeid's wife, Rabiea Al-Adawieh. In the local narrative, it is believed that the shrine belongs to the mystic Abu Zeid Al-Bustami and that Saladin, the Ayyubid leader, gave orders to build this shrine, in addition to many others, after Palestine's liberation from the crusaders, in order to give the country an Islamic appearance³⁸.

Other sites include Maqam Al-Sheikh Khattab, a shrine constructed for Al-Sheikh Khattab who is thought to be one of those who first settled in the village, and Al-Zawyeh Mosque, an Islamic endowment that dates back to the Ottoman period and served as a place of worship for some Islamic mystics. Part of the mosque can still be found in the Girls' School near the ancient pool Ein Al-Balad.

The plaza (*Al-Saha*) is an important feature in the urban composition of the village, and is considered a gathering space for the men of the village. Several guesthouses *sahat*, *madafat* are located throughout the village, each within the quarter of the family that uses it. *Al-Sahat* serve as gathering places for men, where they would spend the evenings, solve disputes, and discuss various matters, and are also collective spaces for celebrating various occasions.

Threats Affecting the Property

Cultural Landscapes throughout Palestine in general and the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir in particular have become vulnerable under the impact of socio-cultural and geo-political transformations that are contributing to bringing irreversible damage to the integrity of these landscapes. Moreover, the lack of a solid legal framework that provides a comprehensive management and protection to these cultural properties, and the shortage in financial resources that aim to contribute to the maintenance of these properties is also contributing to the abandonment of the agricultural terraces.

These negative transformation, are either a direct or indirect effect of the Israeli illegal construction of settlements on the mountains that surround the Cultural Landscape of Southern

Proceedings of the International Congress, in partnership with the Bethlehem 2000 Project (Maison De L'UNESCO, Paris), 2001.

³⁸ Araf, Sh. 1993, Prophets, Sanctuaries and Shrines in the Holy Land. Vol. 1, tarshiha - Makhawal Brothers Press (Arabic).

Jerusalem, Battir, the proposed illegal construction of the separation wall³⁹ that was decided in 2002, and the refusal of the Israeli Occupying power to allow the Palestinian farmers to maintain their land and the buildings therein. The separation wall was declared as illegal by the Hague court in 2004.

In Battir, the 1967 borderlines divide the antique agricultural terraces built along the slope of the valley. These terraces depend on one source of water on the side of the village. The `practical` division line between the two State has always been the railway track. Battir farmers can in the present circumstances still farm their land beyond the railway line. The construction of a separation Wall next to the railway line will mean that the Battir farmers, who are the very guardians of this cultural landscape, will not be able to maintain this landscape. Furthermore a barrier, whether it is a wall or a fence, would create a very strong visual interruption of the landscape. The building of a barrier will also mean the disruption of the natural areas of the valley and the landscape around it as part of it will be flattened for access roads to the area.

Since 2005, the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir in Bethlehem governorate has been the target of increased land confiscation by the Israeli Occupying power in order to implement a systematic policy of colonizing Palestinian communities from illegal Israeli settlers, expanding and consolidating their control of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including occupied Palestinian Jerusalem. Accordingly, the construction of a barrier would contribute to

1. Loss of high valuable agricultural lands, uprooting of plants and high damage to the agrobiodiversity; the land between the Segregation Zone and the Armistice line constitutes some of the most fertile land in the West Bank.
2. Significant damage to the biodiversity; the free movement of flora and fauna between the different ecosystems will be restricted by the wall, and the natural habitat of the native life will be fragmented and damaged.
3. Significant socio-economical negative impacts as result of land confiscation, land annexation, uprooting of trees and the loss of the sources of income from the confiscated or damaged land; more than 90% of the inhabitants of Battir depend on agriculture as an essential source of income, 10% of whom depend solely on agriculture as a source of income.
4. A significant damage to a landscape that bears an exceptional universal value, and to its integrity and authenticity, as well as to the visual negative affect that it will impose to its continuity.

³⁹The steps that have lead to the construction of the Wall and the Court case that the village of Battir have initiated are described in an Annex. This is important for one to understand the very serious threat that the site has.

5. The barrier will affect the watercourse and the natural water drainage system in the area. Cutting the landscape, wherever it is constructed, the Wall will prevent the natural flow of rainwater along the terraces and the mountain slopes.

It is of no doubt, the construction of the barrier, disregarding the material used in construction, or its location shall have a negative irreversible impact on this magnificent landscape, and it shall play a major role in terminating a cultural landscape that has survived for at least four thousand years, compromise its continuation, and have a negative impact on the visual aesthetics of the area, and thus threaten its integrity and authenticity.

Another major factor that is negatively affecting the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir is Water Losses and Contamination; the Middle East is one of the world's most water-stressed regions. It is therefore essential that water be shared equitably by all in the area. Israel allocates approximately 89% of available water resources to itself, leaving the Palestinian population less than 11%⁴⁰. This comes despite the fact that the great majority of the areas where the various aquifer basins are fed, or "recharged", lie within Palestine. If water resources were divided into equal per capita shares, Palestinians would receive approximately 33%. As a result, each Palestinian living in the oPt receives an average of less than 70 liters per capita per day for all uses. This is less than half the 150 liters per day recommended by the World Health Organization as the minimum per capita water availability.

Since 1967, Israel has assumed near complete control over all Palestinian water sources, thus depriving Palestinians of their right to control or have access to their own natural resources. At the same time, however, wells for Israeli settlements, which are often located over areas with the richest water resources, were approved and generally drilled deep into the aquifer. Due to high pumping rates, these wells very often dried up adjacent, shallower, Palestinian wells. The consequence of much of this action has been to force Palestinian communities to purchase water, at high cost, from Occupying Israeli authorities.

The village of Battir is connected to a water network which supplies water for domestic use, but the village is not connected to a sewage network; households of Battir rely on cesspits only. The water network that supplies water for domestic use was installed in the seventies of the past century, and is relatively old; water leakage through the network and the amounts of water provided are not sufficient for the inhabitants and do not meet their needs. Battir village council's request to construct two water cisterns to collect the water of the springs during the

⁴⁰ At present, the overall available water resource in Israel and the oPt combined is between 2'200 and 2'800 million cubic meter/year (M.C.C./year) on a sustainable basis, and varies each year according to rainfall and other factors.

winter period, and use it for domestic use was refused by the Israeli authorities which control area "C"⁴¹.

The limitation of Battir village council from constructing a sewage network, and the need of the local community to depend on cesspits is contaminating the water of the springs that are located close to the village. This contamination is preventing the local community from using it for domestic use, and is affecting the agricultural lands that depend on them for agriculture. The construction of the nearby settlements, which is expected to be followed by a construction of water cisterns, shall contribute to the dryness of the underground water that provide for the springs.

Moreover, the majority of the land of the Southern Landscape of Jerusalem, Battir is situated in Area "C"⁴², while the village of Battir is mainly located in area "B". Due to restrictions on planning and development efforts and the absence of concrete policy changes in Area "C" have affected negatively the state of the property. Therefore the farmers and landowners face obstacles in maintaining the terraces throughout the property, especially those that are located near the Israeli settlements, or in areas where future illegal settlements are projected.

Under the terms of the declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangement for Palestinians, (Decl. 1993, article 1) these negotiations must had be completed by May 1999. Eventually, this will include the entirety of Palestinian territory in the West Bank and Gaza. But unfortunately, the mutually agreed timetable called for this transfer in the transitional period has been delayed and never implemented by the government of Israel. However, in the absence of a final peace agreement, Israel remains a military occupant in the occupied Palestinian territories, and therefore remains bound by provisions dealing with cultural property.

Farmers mainly face obstacles in conserving the agricultural watchtowers, since the conservation

⁴¹ Issac, J., Halayqa, W., Hilal, J., Qubaj, A., EL-Butmahm M., Jubran , N., 2005 The Environmental Impact Assessment of the Segregation Plan on Battir Village. Arij.

⁴² According to the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

Area A - The vast majority of the Palestinian population lives in Area A, where the Palestinian Authority has responsibility for internal security and has wide civil powers. Consisting of approximately 17.7% of the West Bank, Area A is divided into separate, non-contiguous areas. Israeli checkpoints surround each of these areas.

Area B: the Palestinian Authority has civil control over the area, but overall security control rests with Israel. Area B consists of 21.3% of the West Bank.

Area C: the majority of the West Bank, 61%, is Area C, where Israel has full security and civil responsibility. Area C is the only contiguous area in the Occupied West Bank; it surrounds and divides Areas A and B.

works are prohibited in these area; developing new terraces and expanding the agricultural plots, and utilising the water of the springs that spread along the mountains for agriculture, conserving the existing water reservoirs in the area; the deterioration of the watchtowers and the water wells have prevented the farmers from using them during the summer.

Despite the willingness and commitment of the local community to sustain and protect the property, that composes an essential part of their livelihood, the threats that face the landscape because of the proposed barrier, the powerlessness to control the Water Losses and Contamination, and the inability to maintain the agricultural land. In addition, the artificial forests that were planted by the Israeli authorities with spruce and pine trees species prior to the 1967 War along the Armistice line have begun to colonise some of the agricultural terraces along the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, and are having a severe uncontrolled negative impact on the characters of the site.

The inscription of Palestine, Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir attests to the important role that Palestine has played throughout History as a meeting place for civilizations and a cultural bridge between East and West and to its pivotal role in the evolution of humanity, as attested by evidences of the existence of successive cultures all over its land, from prehistory onwards. It also manifests the importance of the Palestinian cultural landscapes as a representation of the evolution and development of human settlements near water springs and the adaptation of the steep mountainous area for agricultural purposes.

The inscription of the site should as well contribute to motivating the local community in Battir, and other areas of similar characteristics towards the preservation of their cultural landscapes and traditional practices. In addition, it should simulate the authorities to work together on the formation of solid legal frameworks for the protection and management of cultural landscapes since they represent a very important component of the Palestinian cultural heritage and the universal as well.

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