

Palestine in Arabic and English Lexicography

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Abstract

Historically, since the formation and declaration of Jewish state named the State of Israel in 1948 by the British and the United Nations, Palestinians have been in the states of oppression, depression and suffering at the hands of Jewish politicians, armies and commoners and those peoples who supporting these Jewish people nationally and internationally in not recognizing the rights of Palestinians to their own lands and independent state. The Jewish politicians have politically exploited the Palestinians for their political gains in their national elections. The Jewish armies claimed that they have to kill some of Palestinians on the ground to defend the Jewish state and its citizens. In addition, the Jewish commoners have intentionally encroached and extended their housing estates and agricultural areas into the plots of land legally belong to Palestinians. Under such oppressive conditions, some of Palestinians have migrated to Arab and other countries looking for peaceful lives and secured securities. Palestinians who remain in their original and legal lands have been living in the refugee camps surrounded by the Jewish police and army. This paper plans to describe and analyze the meanings and connotations for Palestine in Arabic and English dictionaries. The main purpose of this study is to compare what the English and Arabic dictionaries write about Palestine covering history, identity, geographical location and condition of Palestine.

Keywords: Palestine, lexicography, Palestinian characteristics

Introduction

The issue of Palestine has been one of the international issues since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Since then and until the present days of the early 21st century, some scholars have considered that Palestinians have no state because of their own leaders and the divisive nature of Palestinian groups themselves. At the beginning of the last decade, the number of Palestinians was about five million peoples. "Nowadays, they might reach 7,000,000". They have three different statuses based on their locations; they are namely, 1. The Palestinians inhabit in the West Jordan Bank and the Gaza strip, 2. The Diaspora Palestinians, occurred after 1947, who have refugee status living in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Iraq and other Mediterranean, European and American countries, and 3. The Palestinians stay in the state of Israel. The great majority of Palestinians are Muslims and the minorities of them are Druze and Christians. The Palestinians speak Arabic with the Palestinian dialect. (Arnaiz-Villena et al 2001: 891-892).

The Palestinians who inhabit in the West Jordan Bank or the West Bank and the Gaza strip have two different leaders leading two different organizations of Palestinians namely Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) or Fatah and Hamas. "In Gaza, Hamas controls a permanent population in a defined territory (i.e., Gaza within the armistice lines of 1949). Gaza has a functioning, if odious, government." In the West Bank, the Fatah Palestinians take control and rule this geographical area. They signed the Oslo II agreement of September 1995 for the solution to the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian crises. They are recognized as the Palestinian Authority (PA). Mahmoud Abbas has been the Palestinian leader in the West Bank and Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza. (Rosen 2011).

Daniel Pipes holds the view that "No 'Palestinian Arab people' existed at the start of 1920, but, by December, it took shape in a form recognizably similar to today's." Pipes thought about the non-existence of Palestinian nationalism before December 1920 because the Palestinians who resided "in the region between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean identified themselves primarily in terms of religion: Moslems felt far stronger bonds with remote co-religionists than with nearby Christians and Jews.

Living in that area did not imply any sense of common political purpose.” In April 1920, “the British occupying force carved out a ‘Palestine.’ Moslems reacted very suspiciously, rightly seeing this designation as a victory for Zionism.... No prominent Moslem voices endorsed the delineation of Palestine in 1920; all protested it.” In July 1920 the French forces overthrew King Abdullah II of Jordan and killed the notion of a Southern Syria. In December 1920, the leadership of Palestinians “adopted the goal of establishing an independent Palestinian state.” Amin Hussein led this effort for few years.(Pipes, No date)

Arnaiz-Villena and others (2001) studied the genetic profile of Palestinians using human leukocyte antigen (HLA) gens variability and haplotypes and revealed that “Palestinians are genetically very close to Jews and other Middle East populations, including Turks (Anatolians), Lebanese, Egyptians, Armenians and Iranians. Archaeologic and genetic data support that both Jews and Palestinians came from the ancient Canaanites, who extensively mixed with Egyptians, Mesopotamian and Anatolian peoples in ancient times. Thus, Palestinian-Jewish rivalry is based in cultural and religious, but not in genetic, differences.”(Arnaiz-Villena et al 2001: 889). This existence refers to the existence of Palestinian profile as different from other ethnics and races including the closest ethnics or races like the Jews.

Efraim Karsh holds that Palestinians have no state. In 1948 the state of Israel was created but not the state of Palestinians. “Sixty-four years later. Palestinian society seems no better prepared for statehood.” And for Karsh, he could not imagine that the United Nations would accept the state of Palestinians into the United Nations because the leaders of Palestinians never united for the sake of Palestinian state. Hajj Amin Hussein and Yasser Arafat, the two Palestinian leaders during the 20th century, did not cooperate to form the state of Palestinians before the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel in June 1967. The present leaders of Palestinians namely Mahmood Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh have failed to cooperate for the creation of state for Palestinians Mahmood Abbas is the leader of Fatah while Ismail Haniyeh is the leader of Hamas. Both Fatah and Hamas have dominated Palestinian life.(Karsh 2011).

Palestine in English and Arabic Lexicography

Ibn Manzur (n.d., 7: 272) writes that Palestine is the name of the place or a district in Syria. He cites the view of Ibn Athir saying that Palestine is the popular district between Jordan and Egypt and its capital is Bayt al-Maqdis. With reference to Ibn Manzur, it is clear that Palestine is a place or district in Syria between Jordan and Egypt and its capital is Bayt al-Maqdis.

Al-Khalil bin Ahmad (2001: 754) states that Palestine or Philistine is a district in Sham or Syria. This scholar does not mention Bayt al-Maqdis as the capital for Palestine. He just locates Palestine in Sham.

William Little and others (1972, 2:1569-1970) write four connotations for the noun “Palestine”. They are “1. One of an alien warlike people who occupied the southern sea-coast of Palestine, and constantly harassed the Israelites. 2. *fig.* Applied (humorously or otherwise) to ‘the enemy’, into whose hands one may fall, e.g. bailiffs, literary critics, etc.; formerly, also, to the debauched or drunken 1600. 3. Philister, applied by German students to one not a student at a university 1824. 4. A person deficient in liberal culture; one whose interests are material and commonplace 1827.”

Based on the descriptions written by William Little and others, Palestine is a geographical name and peoples who occupied the southern sea-coast of Palestine are warlike people. This indicates that Palestinians are warlike people and they constantly harassed the Israelites. It seems that there has been a historical conflict relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelites. Other negative attributes or characteristics of Palestinians mentioned by William Little and others like Kirkpatrick.

Kirkpatrick (1983: 960-961) writes that Philistine is a noun indicating “one of the ancient inhabitants of south-west Palestine, enemies of the Israelites: a name applied by German students to sons not connected with the university (also Philister; Ger.): (also without cap.) a person of material outlook, indifferent or hostile to culture: (without cap.) an enemy (slang): (without cap.) a bailiff (slang) --- adjs. Philistean, Philistian (both Milt.), Philistine (sometimes without cap.). v.t. Philistise, ize (-tin-) – n. Philistinism (sometimes without cap.). [Gr. Philistinos, Palaistinos – Heb. P’lishtim.]”

Richard Soule (1989: 385) writes about the characteristics of Palestine stating, “philistine, n. commonplace person, prosaic man, practical man, utilitarian, mediocre person, narrow minded man; vandal.”

Brewer (n.d.: p.704) writes that “Philistines” are “The ill-behaved and ignorant; persons lacking in liberal culture or of low and materialistic ideas. This meaning of word is due to Matthew Arnold, who adopted it from Philister, the term applied by students at German universities to townspeople, ‘the outsiders.’ This is said to have arisen at Jena, because, after a ‘town and gown’ row in 1689, which resulted in a number of deaths, the university preacher took for his text ‘The Philistines be upon thee’ (*Judges xvi*).” Brewer also cites from the work of M. Arnold entitled, *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1869 about the characteristics of the Philistines. He cites, “The people who believe most that greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich, are just the very people whom we call the Philistines.”

Munir Ba`albaki (1982: 681) mentions that Palestine is the old Palestinian, conservative or the materialistic stand/inclination or individual who preserved on the old things. Kazem Adel Nasser (1989: 380) states that Palestine is a materialistic inclination or stand, the old Palestinian is the conservative or the preservation of the old things.

Conclusions

Based on the Arabic and English lexicography referred in this paper, Palestine is a name or a proper noun for a palace located in Sham or Syria and the peoples who lived there or its surroundings are known as Palestine or Palestinians. Their characteristics are mostly negative rather than positive.

With the introduction of IslamicJerusalem and IslamicJerusalem studies, it is hoped that there are studies done to these English and Arabic lexicographical sources and to compare them with the present characteristics of the Palestine or Palestinians when they have to live in three distinguished states or statuses namely the Palestinians ruled by Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinians ruled by Fatah in the West Bank, the Palestinian refugees or diasporas, and finally the Palestinians in the state of Israel.

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