Chapter 6
Jaziret Fadel:
A Symbolic Topology of a Palestinian Memory

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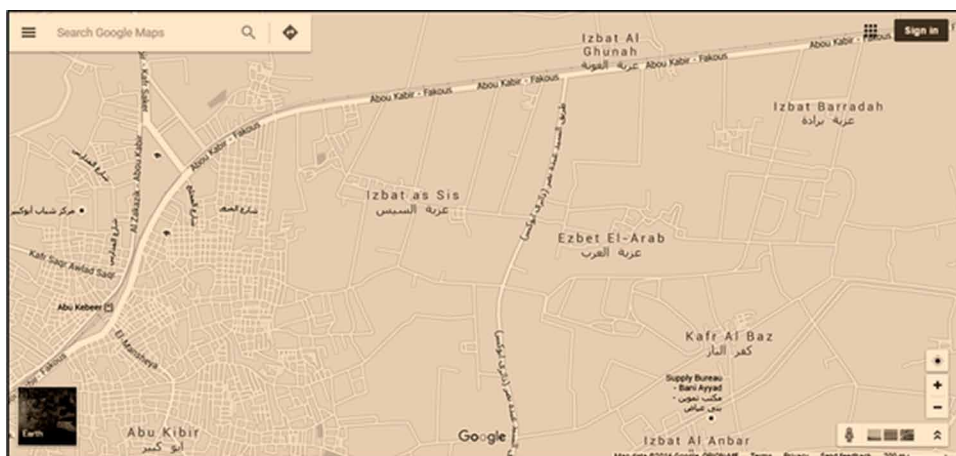*Alexandria University, Egypt*

ABSTRACT

The plight of refugees fleeing from Palestine in 1948 raises several key questions regarding their historical fragmentation as a nation and their future. From a social anthropological point of view, the existing literature seems to tackle the Palestinian case from different perspectives influenced by the mass exodus of Palestinians from their homeland. Such perceptions took for granted the recognition of the state of "refugeeness" of the exiled Palestinians around the globe, while, in reality, it is a mutual interaction between people, place, and time. In the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War at the beginning of the year 1948, more than 700,000 Palestinians fled their homes in Palestine to the nearby Arab countries, among them was Egypt. Some thousands settled in different areas all over Egypt. Based on a preliminary research on the literature, the author can argue that this is the first ethnographic study of the social life of the village of Jaziret Fadel and its Palestinian inhabitants in Egypt. The chapter is about tackling the historical trajectories, genealogies, memories, and present of the inhabitants of this village who seemed to be torn between two nostalgic pasts. The author's emphasis within this chapter is about how the narratives of the past memories could reveal a lot about the present time of the human societies and their future.

INTRODUCTION

Jaziret Fadel is a village of Palestinians inhabitants at *Al-Sharqiya* province of about 5,000 people who have lived in Egypt since 1948. The village is precisely located in *Al-Sharqiya* province about 150 kilometers (93 miles) east of Cairo (Figure 1). The village has hosted scattered Palestinian refugees who fled their home village of Beersheba (*Byr Sab' / Ba'ar Sab'*) after the 1948 exodus. There are no official records of the number of inhabitants in the village with the exception of insignificant information in newspaper articles (IRIN News, 2010; Omar, 2013). Moreover, the village was briefly mentioned in a previous ethnographic study about exiled Palestinians in Egypt done by the Palestinian researcher Oroub El-Abed, who very briefly mentioned the village within two pages (page 59 and page 199) under the name *Jazirat Abu Fadil* that is located 4 kilometers from *Abu Kabir* in the *Sharqiyyah* Governorate (El Abed, 2003).

Figure 1. the village of Jaziret Fadel on Google Maps appears under the name "Ezbet El-Arab".

Exploring the idea of memory in the context of Jaziret Fadel is not a repetitive act, as the fieldwork revealed new dimensions of memory among the same members of the community. The new opposing dimensions were noticed and observed in two different narratives when certain past memories

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