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**Al-Lajjun: A Social and Geographic Account of a Palestinian Village
During the British Mandate Period**

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The research makes use of oral history interviews from the Palestinian Rural History Project (PRHP). Research was conducted with the much-appreciated consideration and advice of Lajjun's former residents living in Israel, including Mr. Wajdi Hasan Jamil. The authors thank them for sharing their knowledge of their native land.

Marom carried out his research as a Fulbright postdoctoral fellow at UC Berkeley, which sits on the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the original landscape of the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County, CA.

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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Abstract

This paper provides a social and geographic account of al-Lajjun (Jenin Sub-district), a prominent Palestinian village during the British Mandate period (1918–1948). It portrays a countryside in renewal, encapsulated in the story of Umm al-Fahm’s expansion and Lajjun’s resettlement. In contrast to existing scholarship, the present work contextualises the site within the wider diachronic, *longue durée*, history of the region, and the synchronous, shifting pattern of settlements in the Marj ibn ‘Amir (Jezreel Valley), Bilad al-Ruha (Ramot Menashe), and the Wadi ‘Ara (Nahal ‘Iron). It focuses on the development of the physical outlines of the (re)new(ed) village, with the development of three ‘Lajjuns’ reflecting its founders’ Hebronite/*Khalīlī* patterns of settlement. Furthermore, it explores Lajjun’s diversified economy and its metamorphosis from a derelict hamlet into a hub of utilities and transportation infrastructure of regional importance under the British Mandate of Palestine (1920–1948).

Keywords

British Mandate, Palestinian Rural History, Rural Development, British Army Camps, Lajjun

Introduction

Al-Lajjun (henceforth, Lajjun; Palestine/Old Israel Grid ref. 167/220) was a Palestinian village in the sub-district of Jenin, situated on three low-laying hills (ca. 175 m above sea level) along the interface of the Marj Ibn ‘Amir (Jezreel Valley) and Bilad al-Ruha (Ramot Menashe; Figs. 1-2). Strategically situated at the intersection of two main roads—the international road between Syria and Egypt and the regional road connecting Jenin and Jabal

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Nablus with Haifa and Acre—it benefited from its proximity to principal trade routes, prime arable land, and copious perennial water sources.¹

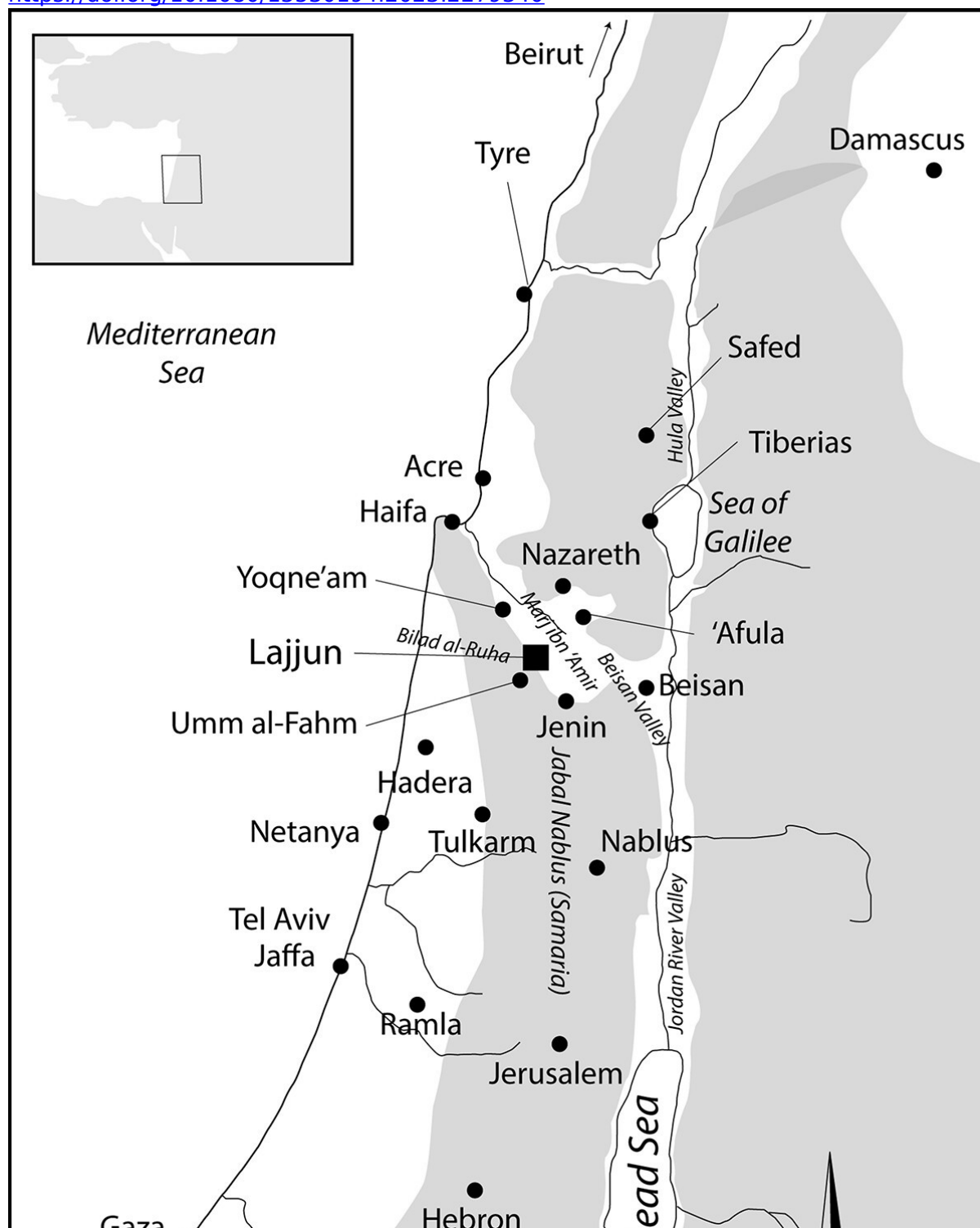
By the Late Ottoman period, Lajjun was in decline from its 17th-century glory as a provincial capital and was abandoned by the mid-19th century.² The modern village of Lajjun (c. 1880–1948) was re-established as a satellite village of the nearby town of Umm al-Fahm. Nevertheless, in a short time, it came to eclipse its mother settlement in both infrastructure and economic importance. This paper thus portrays a countryside in renewal, encapsulated in the story of Umm al-Fahm’s expansion and Lajjun’s resettlement. It focuses upon the development of the physical outlines of the (re)new(ed) village, with the development of three ‘Lajjuns’ reflecting the Hebronite/*Khalīlī* settlement pattern of its founders and exploring Lajjun's diversified economy and its metamorphosis from a derelict hamlet into a hub of utilities and transportation infrastructure of regional importance. Overall, this paper offers a portrait of a Palestinian village during a dramatic period of transformation, showing the dynamic and vibrant nature of the local Palestinian society and the dialectic between internal and external development factors.

As the paper concerns the modern village of Lajjun, a detailed treatment of the history of the pre-Ottoman village is beyond its scope. Furthermore, it will not delve into the history of the site during the War of 1948, which, notwithstanding its significant implications, has been dealt with extensively by all previous scholars.³

¹ For further historical source overview of the settlements at the site, see Yoram Tsafrir, Leah Di Segni, and J. Green, *Tabula Imperii Romani; Iudaea-Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods; Maps and Gazetteer* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994): 170; Yotam Tepper, “Lajjun – Legio in Israel: Results of a Survey in and around the Military Camp Area” in *Limes XVII, Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, edited by Philip Freeman, Julian Bennett, Zbigniew T. Fiema, and Birgitta Hoffmann, 231–42 (BAR Int. Series 1084/1. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2022).

² Roy Marom, Yotam Tepper and Matthew J. Adams, “Lajjun: Forgotten Provincial Capital in Ottoman Palestine (1517–1800 CE),” *Levant* 55.2 (2023): 218–241

³ Sharif Kana‘ina and Omar Mahamid. *Al-Lajjun*, Silsilat al-Qura al-Filastiniyya al-Muhajjara 6 (Ramallah: Birzeit University, 1987), 68–79; Mustafa Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin* (Kafr Qara‘: Dar al-Huda, 1991), iii, 173; Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 227; Wadji Hasan Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm wa-l-Lajjun:*



Rihla 'Abra al-Zaman (Unpublished, 1998), II: 43–75; Mustafa Kabha and Nimr Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha fi Fatrat al-Intidab al-Baritani: al-Sindiyyana Numudhjan* (Nazereth: Bayt al-Dhakira wal-Turath, second edition, 2023), 124–6; Eitan Bronstein, ed., *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun* (Jaffa: Zochrot, 2004); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 242, 346; Omar Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun* (Umm al-Fahm: Mat-haf Turath al-Lajjun and Mu'asassat al-Jami'a li-l-Hiwar wal-Ta'lim, 2015); 46–52; M. Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha: Watan wa-Juzhur* (No place of Publication: no publisher, 2016); 221–22. See also: Bethell Nicholas. *The Palestine Triangle: the Struggle Between the British, the Jews and the Arabs, 1935–48*. (London: Deutsch. 1979); Rosa I.M. El-Eini, *Mandated Landscape: British Imperial Rule in Palestine, 1929–1948* (London: Routledge. 2006). Sherman, A. J. *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918–1948*. (Thames & Hudson. 1998). Mark Sary. *Imperial or local case? British Army presence in Palestine 1918-1948*. (Dissertation, University of Haifa. Haifa. 2018).

Fig. 1. Map of the Marj ibn-Amr and lower Galilee showing places mentioned in the text.

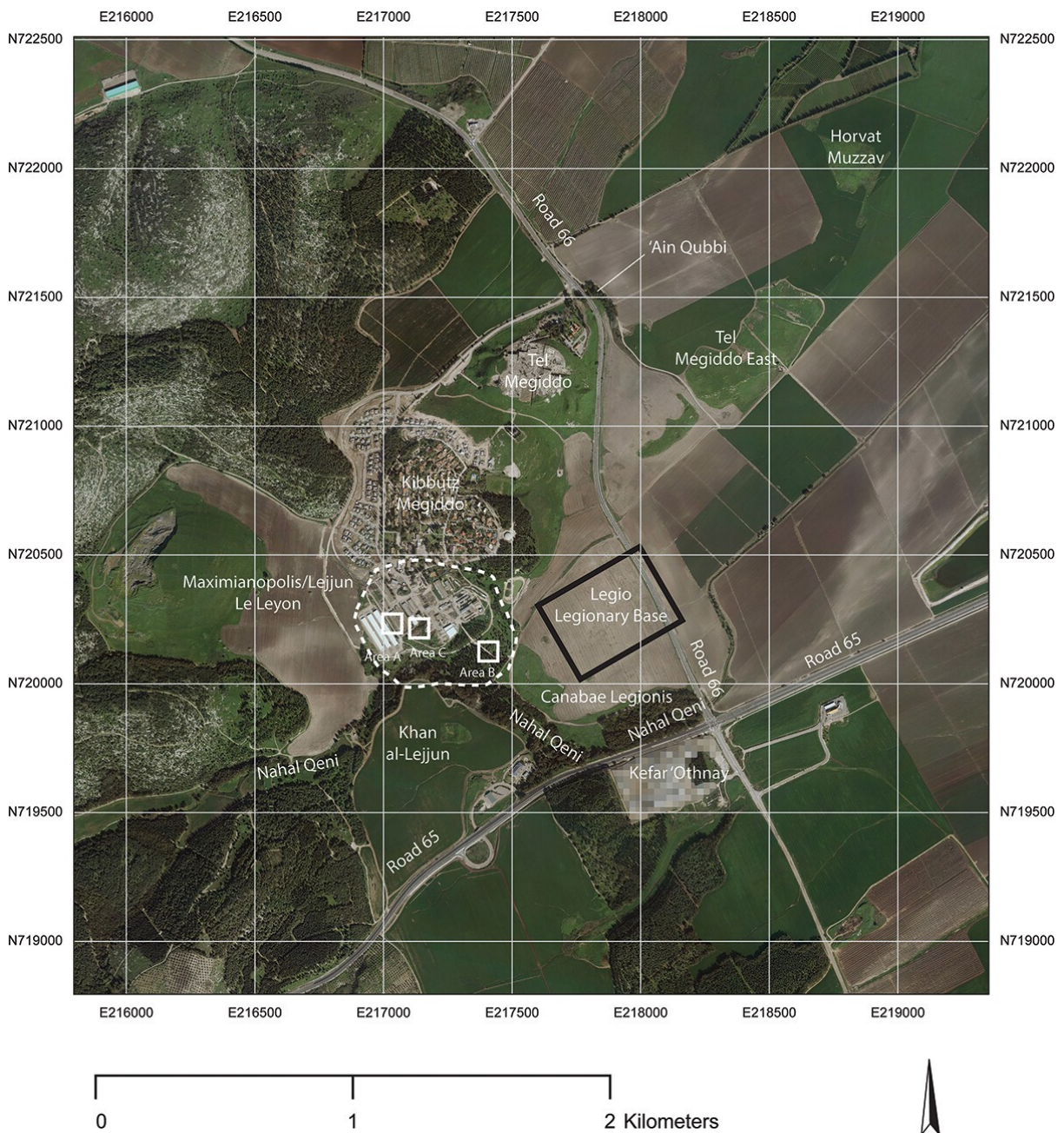


Fig. 2. The area of greater Lajjun.

Historiography and Methodology

Previous studies of modern Lajjun have primarily been ‘village books’ focusing on it as a ‘depopulated village’ (Ara. *qarya muhajjara*).⁴ As a subjective genre, these studies focus on

⁴ See also, note 1, above.

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ethnographic descriptions and are primarily written to defend contemporary Palestinian

political issues.⁵ To date, village books have been dedicated to Lajjun by Sharif Kana'ina and

Omar Mahamid, Wajdi Hasan Jamil, Eitan Bronstein and Omar Mahamid,⁶ and Lajjun has

also been mentioned in works concerned with the history of Palestinian villages on the

national⁷ and regional levels.⁸

Thematically, the works mentioned above deal with the social structure of the village, the economy, education, and the armed Palestinian struggle. Chronologically, they tend to focus on the last decade before 1948 and emphasise key episodes in the conflict with the British and the Yishuv. Thus, they offer very little discussion of the broader history, which is the focus of the current work, and their atomistic perspective is emphasised by a dearth of information concerning the connections between the village and its surroundings.⁹ For all its indispensable value for historical reconstruction, there are significant problems with this genre from a historian's point of view, particularly the minimal comparative research and a lack of published scholarship in English. Most significantly for Lajjun, these studies do not reference the diachronic *longue durée* of settlement dynamics nor synchronous connections between Lajjun and other settlements in its region, in contrast to the prevailing recommendations of practitioners of local history.¹⁰

Reconstructing the history of a town through literary sources must consider the broader settlement patterns and the archaeological findings. Thus, in this local historical

⁵ Rochelle A. Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011).

⁶ Kana'ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*; Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm wa-l-Lajjun*; Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*.

⁷ Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, III:164–73; Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 336–37.

⁸ Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 121–6; Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha*, 212–25.

⁹ Roy Marom, 'Dispelling Desolation: The Expansion of Arab Settlement in the Sharon Plain and the Western Part of Jabal Nablus, 1700–1948' (PhD diss., University of Haifa, 2022); Roy Marom, "The Study of the Arab Countryside throughout the Generations: The Arab Settlement in the Sharon Region as a Case Study," *The New East (Hamizrah Hahadash)* 62 (2023): 65–91.

¹⁰ David Hey, *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); John Beckett, *Writing Local History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

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account, we have adopted an integrative approach in which the historical narratives are

analysed within their spatial context. In other words, this paper follows both the geographical definition of a village as a human settlement within a defined territory and the socio-historical presentation of the village in village books as a social space (while we also tie it to the broader fabric of the surrounding countryside, as noted above).

This paper highlights the voices of the residents of the Mandate Period village as a significant lens for elucidating economic, social, and settlement change. Generally speaking, oral sources, although subjective, are important carriers of local knowledge to consider for reconstructing Rural Palestinian history.¹¹ They can provide vital information on the residents, geography, economy, land use, and topography otherwise unrecorded in surviving records.¹² Oral evidence is admittedly subjective and biased,¹³ but its shortfalls can be mitigated by cross-referencing sources, preferring the testimony of early, independent sources, and finding the common denominator among the various accounts.¹⁴

Due to the general lack of easily accessible sources concerning Palestinian villages, researchers usually make extensive use of official British Mandatory statistical sources, such as the 1922 Palestine Census,¹⁵ the 1931 Palestine Census¹⁶ and Village Statistics 1945.¹⁷

¹¹ Roy Marom, 'The Village of Mullabes and Its Residents: Before the Establishment of Petah Tikva', *Cathedra* 176 (2020): 53–54; Roy Marom, 'The Abu Hameds of Mulabbis: An Oral History of a Palestinian Village Depopulated in the Late Ottoman Period', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (2021): 6–8.

¹² Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley, 1997), 1–37; Mahmoud Issa, 'Oral History's Credibility, Role, and Functionality: From the Arab Islamic Tradition to Modern Historiography', in *A New Critical Approach to the History of Palestine*, ed. Ingrid Hjelm, Hamdan Taha, Ilan Pappé, and Thomas L. Thompson (London: Routledge, 2019), 125–40.

¹³ Alice M. Hoffman, 'Reliability and Validity in Oral History', *Communication Quarterly*, 22.1 (1974): 23–27; Trevor Lummis, 'Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence', *International Journal of Oral History* 2.2 (1981): 109–120.

¹⁴ Paul Thompson, and Joanna Bornat, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Fourth Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–70.

¹⁵ Barron, John Bernard, ed., *Palestine-Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922 Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922* (Jerusalem: Ptd. at Greek Convent Press, 1923).

¹⁶ Eric Mills, *Census of Palestine 1931: Report* (Vol. 1) (Alexandria: Printed for the Govt. of Palestine by Whitehead Morris, 1933).

¹⁷ Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*; Khalidi, *All That Remains*.

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These sources are a staple of historical-geographic studies. However, when used alone, statistical sources give a shallow, partial, and anonymised picture of rural Palestinian life. Therefore, in this paper, we combine these sources with other little-used ones (1938 Village Statistics and 1943 Animal Enumeration)¹⁸ to quantify, for example, patterns of land use, agriculture, and animal husbandry known from written and oral narratives. In accordance with the established practice in historical geography, this paper uses Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), precision mapping and digitisation of cartographic evidence to present and analyse these historical data.¹⁹ These data are further compared to neighbouring villages to give a more complete, balanced, and nuanced picture of its relative significance and spatial meaning.

A word must be said about the use of statistics in this paper. Available statistics are colonial data meant to classify, categorise, and control local population(s), map, measure and manage resources through taxation, and formulate colonial policy.²⁰ These statistics are sometimes arbitrary, contradictory, and incomplete. The data collected by the Mandatory Government of Palestine in 1938 and 1945 (village statistics)²¹ was presented to international committees considering the future of the British Mandate of Palestine and was also utilised by Zionist organisations for their purposes.²² Due to the lack of other sources, after 1948, this data was also used by Palestinian scholars like al-Dabbagh²³ and Khalidi²⁴ for historical and

¹⁸ Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics*. Jerusalem, 1938; Government of Palestine. *Estimation & Acquisition of the Olive Oil Crop*.

¹⁹Ian N. Gregory and Richard G. Healey, 'Historical GIS: Structuring, Mapping, and Analysing Geographies of the Past'. *Progress in human geography* 31.5 (2007): 638–653.

²⁰ Béatrice Touchelay, 'British and French Colonial Statistics: Development by Hybridization from the Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Centuries', in *British and French Colonialism in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East*, ed. James R. Fichter (Cham Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 249–74.

²¹ Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics*. Jerusalem, 1938; Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics*. Jerusalem, 1945.

²² See 1948 statistical population lists entitled 'enemy settlements' in the Haganah Archives, files 105/ 224, 227.

²³ Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*.

²⁴ Khalidi, *All That Remains*.

The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies since January 3, 2024: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2023.2279340> geographical studies. For the most part, Lajjun was not itemised independently but tabulated together with Umm al-Fahm and its satellite villages.

Lajjun's Early History, from a Provincial Capital to an Abandoned Ruin

The site of Tall al-Mutasallim, ancient Megiddo, a kilometre to the north of Lajjun, was the seat of native kingdoms and imperial presence along the Via Maris in the Bronze and Iron Ages (3500-400 BCE). Under the Romans, the Legionary Base of Legio (2nd-3rd c. CE) and later, in the Byzantine period (300-700 CE), the city of Maximianopolis, served as a key administrative centre and military base in the north of Judea-Palestine. In the Early Islamic, Crusader, and Mamluk periods (7th-15th c. CE), it was a key station along the Damascus-Cairo highway.²⁵ Under the Turabay dynasty (1517–1688 CE), Lajjun rose to prime importance as one of Palestine's provincial capitals, alongside Gaza, Jerusalem, Nablus and Safed.²⁶ Its territory encompassed Marj Ibn 'Amr, al-Karmil (Carmel Mountains), Bilad al-Ruha, Beisan Valley, al-Shafa al-Gharbi (Ramat Sirin), Jibal Faquq'a (the Gilboa) and the highlands around Jenin (Fig. 3).²⁷ Lajjun itself remained a major road station, and its bustling *sūq* made it a thriving market town. The remains of the Ottoman town include a large khan (caravanserai), a bridge, residential buildings, market grounds, water canals and numerous watermills.²⁸

²⁵ Guy Le Strange, *Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from AD 650 to 1500, Translated from the Works of the Medieval Arab Geographers* (Houghton: Mifflin, 1890), 492–93; Andrew Petersen, *The Towns of Palestine under Muslim Rule, 600–1600* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), 41; Yotem Tepper, 'Lajjun – Legio in Israel: Results of a Survey in and around the Military Camp Area', in *Limes XVII, Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, ed. Philip Freeman, Julian Bennett, Zbigniew T. Fiema, and Birgitta Hoffmann. BAR Int. Series 1084/1 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002), 231–42.

²⁶ Marom et al., 'Lajjun,' 223–9.

²⁷ M. 'A. Al-Bakhit, and N.R. Hmoud [al-Sawariyyah], *The Detailed Defrer of Al-Lajjun: Tapu Defteri No. 181 1005 A.H. / 1596 AD: A Study, Edition, and Translation of the Text* (Amman: University of Jordan, 1989); M. 'A. Al-Bakhit, and N.R. al-Sawariyyah, *Defrer-i Mufassal of Marj Bani 'Āmir. its Dependencies and Appendices Entrusted to Amīr Tarabay 945 A.H. / 1538*, Second edition (Amman: University of Jordan, 2010).

²⁸ Petersen, *The Towns of Palestine*, 201–2; Marom et al., 'Lajjun', 229–239.

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The waning of Ottoman Lajjun began as early as the turn of the 17th century, with the Turabay's administrative seat being transferred from Lajjun to Jenin. Around 1670, the Jarrar clans moved from Transjordan to the Jezreel Valley and in 1682 the Ottomans disestablished the Turabay Emirate.²⁹ In the early 18th century, the districts of Lajjun and 'Ajlun were combined into a lesser administrative unit, called the sub-district of Jenin, under the control of Nablus. In the north, Acre's maritime trade, administrative importance and political clout over Galilee and southern Lebanon reached their zenith under al-Dhahir al-'Umar (d. 1775). By then, 'what was left of Lajjun [...] was severely diminished between the hammer of Acre's political power and the anvil of Nablus's economic muscle'.³⁰ 'Ellegoun' was surveyed during Napoleon's campaign (1799).³¹ In 1825, an American missionary called Mr. King visited the humble village, and was attacked by Bedouins.³² In 1838, Edward Robinson saw Lajjun from afar and tentatively mentioned it as a ruin.³³ However, we have no evidence of any settlement in Lajjun after this date. In 1851, the British Consul James Finn reported finding 'no village' in Lajjun,³⁴ and a year later, Carl Van de Velde described the 'ruins of Lejjûn' in detail.³⁵

The reasons for the decline and abandonment of Ottoman Lajjun remain unclear. In part, it seems to have resulted from growing nomadic pressures on the sedentary populations,

²⁹ H.A. Jarrar, *Jabl al-Nar: Ta'rikh wa-Jihad* (Amman: Al-Diya', 1990), 65–66; Khaled 'Abdul Latif Shanti, *Banu Jarrar min al-Qastal ila al-Lajjun: Ta'rikhuhum wa-Abraz Shuyukhihim* (No Place of Publication: Dar al-Ma'mun, 2014).

³⁰ Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1995), 37–8.

³¹ M. Jacotin, *Carte Topographique de l'Egypte et de Plusieurs Parties des Pays Limitrophes, Levée Pendant l'Expedition de l'Armée Francaise*, 1:100,000 (Paris, 1826).

³² Mr. King, 'Palestine Mission: Journal of Mr. King', *Missionary Herald* XXIII.3 (March 1827), 65-70 (ibid. 65-66).

³³ Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea: A Journal of Travels in the Year 1838, 1841* (New York: Crocker and Brewster, 1841), III:156, 177–80, 267.

³⁴ James Finn, *Byeways in Palestine* (London: James Nisbet, 1877), 229–30.

³⁵ Carl Van de Velde, *Narrative of a Journey through Syria and Palestine in 1851 and 1852* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1854), 309, 350–54.

The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies since January 3, 2024: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2023.2279340> as in other regions and times.³⁶ The 18th and early 19th centuries were marked by the growing power of centrifugal forces and the diminished control of the Ottoman authorities in the Palestinian countryside. This reconstruction is in line with the opinion of the residents of Lajjun, who ‘all agree[d] that their village did not see permanent construction during Turkish rule because the area was controlled by Bedouin tribes in constant conflict with the fellahin’.³⁷ Specifically, the blame might lay on recurrent raids by the Saqr Bedouins of Beisan or the Turkmen tribes that had long encamped near Lajjun, both of which posed an enduring threat to sedentary life in the Jezreel Valley.³⁸

³⁶ Adolf Reifenberg, ‘The struggle between the ‘desert and the sown’, in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Desert Research, May 7–14, 1952*, 378–91. Jerusalem: Israel Research Council, 1953; Anatoly M. Khazanov, and André Wink, eds., *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

³⁷ Kana‘ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 7.

³⁸ Ihsan Al-Nimr, *Ta’rikh Jabal Nablus wa-l-Balqa’* (Damascus and Nablus, 1937–1975), I: 91–2; Abraham Ya‘ari, *Igrot Eretz Israel* (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1943), 425–26; Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 133; H. Jibly, *Turcomans and Jews in north Eretz Israel in the Mandate Period* (MA thesis, The University of Haifa, 2004), 17. For a comparable trend in Palestine’s southern coastal plain, see: Roy Marom and Itamar Taxel, ‘Ḥamāma: The Historical Geography of Settlement Continuity and Change in Majdal ‘Asqalan’s Hinterland, 1270–1750 CE,’ *Journal of Historical Geography* 82 (2023): 1–16.

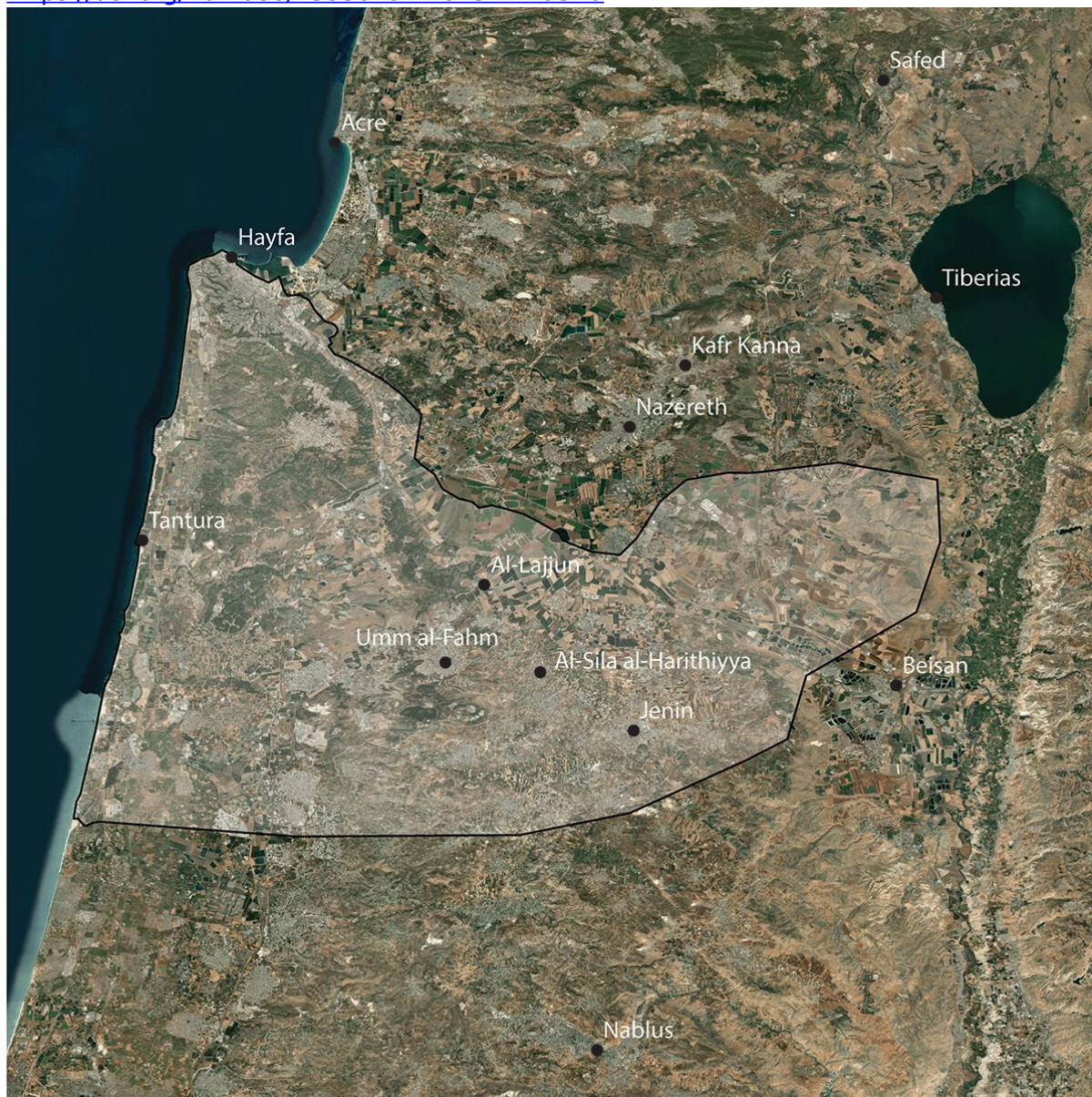


Fig. 3. Territory of the Turabay Emirate.

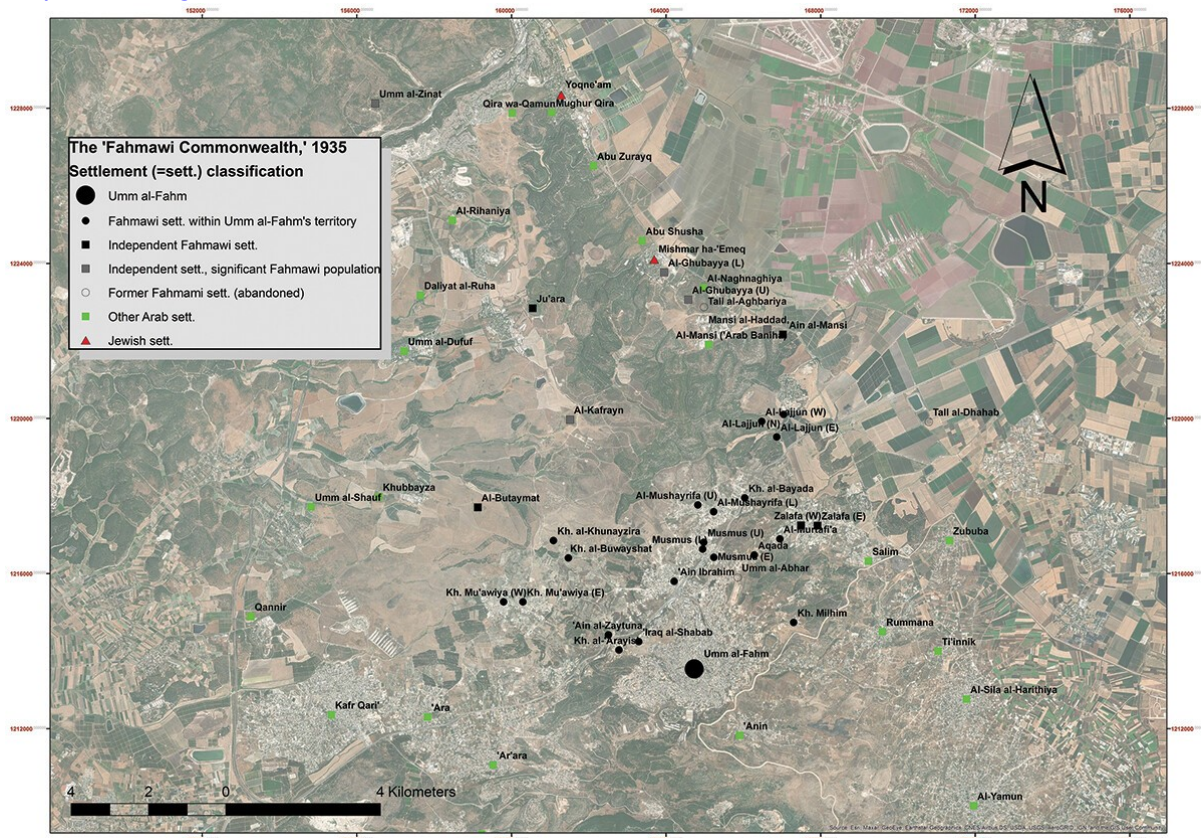


Fig. 4. The “Fahmawi Commonwealth,” 1935 (Map by Roy Marom)

Countryside in Renewal: Umm al-Fahm’s Expansion and Lajjun’s Resettlement

Around the turn of the 20th century, Lajjun was re-inhabited by fellahin from Umm al-Fahm. Some comments, therefore, are in order concerning the social and settlement history of Umm al-Fahm. The village was granted by Baybars in 1265 as a perpetual fief to Damascus's viceroy (*nā'ib al-sulṭāna*) after his conquest of Arsuf and Caesarea.³⁹ In the 16th century, Umm al-Fahm was recorded by the Ottoman authorities as a Muslim village of 23 or 24 households subordinate to Lajjun.⁴⁰

³⁹ ‘Abbas Al-Maqrizi, *Al-Suluk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Muluk* (Beirut, 1996), II:63–5; Denys Pringle, *The Red Tower (al-Burj al-Ahmar): Settlement in the Plain of Sharon at the Time of the Crusaders and Mamluks AD 1099–1516* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1986), 22–4.

⁴⁰ Wolf D. Hütteroth, and Kamal Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan, and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century* (Erlangen: Palm und Enke, 1977), 160; Al-Bakhit and Hmoud, *The Detailed Defrer of Al-Lajjun*, 49; Al-Bakhit and al-Sawariyyah, *Defrer-i Mufassal of Marj Bani ‘Āmir*, 55; Ünal Taşkın, *‘Safad in the Ottoman Administration (1516–1600)* (PhD diss., Fırat University, Elazığ, Turkey, 2010), 203.

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Umm al-Fahm's rise to regional ascendancy began with the migration and settlement of the *khalīlī* Aghbariya, Mahamid, and Jabarin clans from Bayt Jibrin during the late 18th – early 19th centuries.⁴¹ This migration formed part of a significant migration wave from the Jabal al-Khalil (Hebron highlands) to the area of Jenin due to droughts and internal conflict around Hebron and the availability of sparsely populated, fertile lands in the highlands north and west of Jenin.⁴² A fourth clan, the Mahajina, came to Umm al-Fahm from Bilād Şafad (Galilee), completing the village's fundamental partition into four quarters (*ḥārāt/ḥamāyil*), each with their own headmen, guesthouses and allotments in the village's common land (*mushā'*).⁴³ The Khalīlīs brought with them a new, 'bunched settlement pattern', involving a main settlement surrounded by satellite villages, hamlets, and farms for grazing and agriculture next to water sources and ancient ruins.⁴⁴

Egyptian rule of Palestine in the 1830s brought with it a wave of Egyptian immigrants, who were divided between Umm al-Fahm's four quarters; other immigrants settled in Umm al-Fahm and its satellite villages during this time.⁴⁵ During this period, Umm al-Fahm's residents suffered from Bedouin raids until, through cooperation with neighbouring

⁴¹ Kana'ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 7, 12–43; Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 129–31; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 14–9; for these clans in Bayt Jibrin see 'A. 'A. 'Arar, *Qaryat Bayt Jibrin*, Silsilat al-Qura al-Filastiniyya al-Mudammara 20 (Birzeit: Markaz Dirasat wa-Tawthiq al-Mujtama' al-Filastini, 1995), 147–49 and 157–60.

⁴² David Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion: The Arab Village and its Offshoots in Ottoman Palestine* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), 176–81. Another notable Hebronite group that migrated to the area of Ya'bad, south of Umm al-Fahm, is the Kabaha clan. It settled dozens of satellite hamlets in and around Ya'abad, Barta'a and Zibda following Zibda's takeover by the people of Ya'abad during the 1850s Qays-Yaman rivalries. Later, it came into intermittent conflict with Umm al-Fahm's expanding pale of settlement (Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm* I: 144–45).

⁴³ Claude R. Conder, and Horatio H. Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Geography, Hydrography, and Archaeology, Vol. II: Samaria* (London: Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1882), 46. On the *mushā'* as a land-use system, see Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion*, 8–40; Amos Nadan, 'Revisiting the Anti-*mushā'* reforms in the Levant: origins, scale, and outcomes'. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 47.4 (2020): 595–611.

⁴⁴ For an 1853 Jewish account of this process, see Ya'ari, *Igrot Eretz Israel*, 427; David Grossman, 'The Relationship between Settlement Pattern and Resource Utilization: The Case of North-Eastern Samaria', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 6.1 (1981): 19–38; David Grossman, 'The Bunched Settlement Pattern: Western Samaria and the Hebron Mountains', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 6.4 (1981): 491–505; David Grossman, 'Northern Samaria: A Process-Pattern Analysis of Rural Settlement', *Canadian Geographer* 26.2 (1982): 110–27.

⁴⁵ Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 138–39.

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villages, tribes, and perhaps Ottoman authorities, they managed to curtail nomadic

aggression.⁴⁶ However, the village benefited economically from its trade in charcoal and

citron fruit; by 1871, Umm al-Fahm was the region's strongest and most populated village,

with a vast territory encompassing large swaths of Bilad al-Ruha and the Wadi 'Ara region.

The Ottoman census conducted during that time reports 1319 'households' (perhaps residents)

in Umm al-Fahm, comparable only to Ya'bad (with 1150 'households').⁴⁷

Umm al-Fahm had a Christian minority, and local tradition regards them as Umm al-Fahm's original inhabitants before the arrival of the Muslim clans, who allegedly massacred the Christians and took over the village.⁴⁸ European travellers first reported the presence of Christians in 1852.⁴⁹ The Christian families of Umm al-Fahm, specifically, the Haddad and al-Nuwaysir families, owned large tracts of land in Umm al-Fahm as well as watermills at Lajjun.⁵⁰ This shows an early connection between Lajjun and Umm al-Fahm, already in the middle of the 19th century.

⁴⁶ Alia Al-Khatib, *Arab al-Turkman: Sons of Marj Ibn Amir. Part One* (Amman: Dar el-Jaleel, 1987), 23, 29–31; Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 143.

⁴⁷ David Grossman, *Arab Demography and Early Jewish Settlement in Palestine: Distribution and Population Density during the Late Ottoman and British Mandate Period* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2004), 256–57. It might instead reflect the total number of inhabitants: Guérin reports 1800 inhabitants (Victor Guérin, *Description Géographique Historique et Archéologique de la Palestine. Vol. 2: Samarie, pt. 2* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Nationale, 1875), 239, while the Survey of Western Palestine underestimated their number at '500 souls' in 1872; Charles Francis Tyrwhitt-Drake, "Umm el Fahm (1873) Mr Tywhitt Drake's Report," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 5:1 (1873), 28-31; Conder and Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, 46). The Ottoman figures for 1871 are several times larger than the next largest villages in the region: al-Sila al-Harhiya (449), al-Yamun (378), and 'Anin (124).

⁴⁸ Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 128–30; PHRP interviews; other versions replace the Christians with other non-Muslim groups such as Samaritans.

⁴⁹ Edward Robinson, and Eli Smith. *Later Biblical researches in Palestine and in the Adjacent Regions: A journal of travels in the year 1852* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1856), 119; Guérin, *Description Géographique*, 239; Conder and Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, 46; Tyrwhitt-Drake, "Umm el Fahm (1873)," 29–30.

⁵⁰ Robinson and Smith. *Later Biblical researches*, 118; Finn, *Byeways in Palestine*, 229; Van de Velde, *Narrative of a Journey*, 353; Guérin, *Description Géographique*, 233; Conder and Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, 65; Gottlieb Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim; Bericht über die 1903 bis 1905 mit Unterstützung Sr. Majestät des deutschen Kaisers und der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft vom Deutschen Verein zur Erforschung Palästinas veranstalteten Ausgrabungen (Vol. 1)* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908), 185–87.

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In contrast to these recorded oral traditions about Christians in Umm el-Fahm, more recent interviews of the Palestine Rural History Project (PRHP) with members of these families (who left Umm al-Fahm over 50 years ago) relate a different picture of Christian families as an integral part of the broader social fabric of the Christian communities in Nazareth and the Lower Galilee.⁵¹ Rather than being Umm al-Fahm's autochthonous inhabitants, their arrival to the village was late, and they acquired the watermills through investments in trade and real estate.⁵² The entrepreneurial activity of these families contributed to preserving human presence in Lajjun even after the village's abandonment and before the resumption of settlement there by other families from Umm al-Fahm.⁵³

The resettlement of Lajjun during the last quarter of the 19th century was not a singular event detached from the larger transformation in the social and demographic fabric of Palestine⁵⁴ but rather another step in a long process of expansion of the pale of settlement in Marj Ibn 'Amr and Bilad al-Ruha.⁵⁵ The security situation that hampered settlement in the Lajjun area began to change with the Ottoman Tanzimat (1839–1876) and Abdul Hamid II's centralised rule (1876–1908), which boosted Imperial influence over the Empire's internal affairs.⁵⁶ Ottoman authorities restored security in Marj Ibn 'Amr, and largely put a stop to the

⁵¹ About the PRHP, see: Roy Marom, *The Palestinian Rural History Project (PRHP): Mission Statement* (2022): DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.31021.77285.

⁵²cf. Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 130.

⁵³ The al-Nuwaysir family, a scion of the Khulayf clan, claims a Ghassanid ancestry; it emigrated to Nazareth from 'Ajlun in Jordan during the days of Dahr al-'Umar (cf. As'ad Mansur, *Ta'rikh al-Nasira* (Egypt: Al-Hilal, 1924), 223). The Haddad clan also claims Ghassanid ancestry; it arrived in Umm al-Fahm from Lebanon. The transient Christian presence in Umm al-Fahm reflects Tyrwhitt-Drake's derisive impression of these Christians as 'birds of passage, who "squat" wherever and as long as they find it convenient, and then flit "to fresh fields and pastures new"'; Tyrwhitt-Drake, "Umm el Fahm (1873)," 29.

⁵⁴ David Kushnir, ed., *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem and Leiden: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and Brill, 1986); Alexander Scholch, *Palestine in Transformation 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development* (Washington D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1993).

⁵⁵ Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion*, 76–7.

⁵⁶Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872–1908* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 59–70.

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Qays-Yaman feuds and Bedouin raids which ravaged Palestine.⁵⁷ The Ottoman Land Laws (1858–9) enabled merchant families like the Sursocks of Beirut to purchase vast estates (230,000 dunams) and repopulate long-abandoned villages throughout the Marj Ibn ‘Amr with sharecroppers.⁵⁸ On the western margins of the valley, between Yoqne‘am and Lajjun, the centuries-old nomadic Turkman tribes began to settle down in areas like Abu Shusha, Abu Zurayq, al-Ghubayyat and al-Mansi.⁵⁹

By the middle of the 19th century, Umm al-Fahm’s *fellahin* began to found satellite villages along the margins of Marj Ibn ‘Amr and Bilad al-Ruha. This process took place after an internal agreement between the elders of Umm al-Fahm and the Ottoman authorities, who were happy to see the increase in tax revenues.⁶⁰ The clans of Umm al-Fahm absorbed Ottoman Lajjun’s former territory up to the Nahr al-Muqatta‘ (Kishon River), which was registered in their name in the *tapu* registers with Ottoman approval and consent.⁶¹ The expansion of Umm al-Fahm was challenged by residents of the neighbouring village of al-Sila al-Harthiyya (9 km to the southeast), who claimed the territory as their own, and a few skirmishes took place between the parties over Lajjun in the 1870s–1880s, ending in Umm al-Fahm’s favour.⁶² Oral testimonies demonstrate the gradual, accumulative process by which Lajjun was resettled following these events.⁶³ As Hajj Yusuf ‘Abd al-Fattah (b. 1904 in Umm al-Fahm, resident of Lajjun) narrated:

⁵⁷ Miriam Hoexter, ‘The Role of the Qays and Yaman Factions in Local Political Divisions’. *Asian and African Studies* 9 (1973): 249–311.

⁵⁸ Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion*, 74–5; Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 150; Emir Galilee, and Ruth Kark. *Transformation of the Jezreel Valley- Marj Iban ‘Amar in the Late Ottoman Period*. New York: Israel Academic Press, 2017.

⁵⁹ Al-Khatib, *Arab al-Turkman*, 45–61; Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion*, 76–7; J. ‘Arafat, *Min Dhakirat al-Watan: Al-Qura al-Filistiniyya al-Muhajjara fi Qada’ Hayfa* (Nazareth: no publisher, 1990), 78–106; Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 18–33, 136–44; Jibly, ‘Turcomans and Jews in north Eretz Israel’, 13–7, 23–32; Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha*, 23–32, 226–38; Galilee and Kark, *Transformation of the Jezreel Valley*, 175–92.

⁶⁰ Kana‘ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 7–8;; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 14–37; Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha*, 217–18.

⁶¹ cf. Kana‘ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 7.

⁶² Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, I: 152–54; PRHP interviews with residents of al-Sila al-Harthiyya, 2021.

⁶³ Kana‘ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*.

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The people used to go [to Lajjun] during times of agricultural activities (*waqt al-zirā'a*). They began building houses over every cave. They would make temporary dwellings (*baqū yi'zabbū*), construct huts (*'urush*) from wood and dwell temporarily there. In winter, however, they would sleep as I told you – built a place over every cave entrance and dwell in it [the cave] in order to plough and work [the fields] during the winter.⁶⁴ They started to sleep there, little by little, towards the end of Turkey [i.e., Ottoman rule], Lajjun belonged to Umm al-Fahm, and Umm al-Fahm is the foundation. People would go to work [there] and come back to Umm al-Fahm.⁶⁵

Mahmud Mahamid (b. 1909 in Umm al-Fahm, resident of Lajjun) reported on the gradual development of the village:

All of the livelihood (*rizqa*) was in Lajjun. What do they have [at their disposal] in the barren land (*blād al-qaḥṭ*) of Umm al-Fahm? They all moved to Lajjun, and left [Umm al-Fahm] [...] the late Hafsa of the Jabarin was the first to build there...the first to live there [...] Abu Husayn, 'Ali al-Ahmad, was the first to build stables [...] Husayn al-Sa'id and his brother Mahmud, men of old (*qudāma*), used to prepare the ground for the gardens below (*baqū y'ammrū al-basātīn teḥet*) [...] al-Habub, a rich person, the richest one here, built a stone house from cleanly dressed stone, there was no dressed stone house other than it.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ This report fits well with the picture provided by Conder and Kitchner, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, II: 64 ff.; Guérin, *Description Géographique*, 232ff.; Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*. The first two report people 'living' in the ruins, caves, and some of the standing architecture of the Khan, while the latter describes temporary huts in the ruins.

⁶⁵ Kana'ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 7–8.

⁶⁶ Kana'ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 8.

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From Lajjun to Three Lajjuns

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Fahmawis settled in Lajjun on a permanent basis.

This was a new settlement, with different inhabitants and socio-spatial connections than the preceding Ottoman Lajjun. In 1902, Schumacher began his extensive archaeological excavation project at Tall al-Mutasallim in search of biblical Megiddo⁶⁷ and was succeeded in 1925 by the University of Chicago Oriental Institute.⁶⁸ The excavations imparted general, albeit imprecise, knowledge of the ancient history of Megiddo/Lajjun. Mahmud Mahamid (b. 1909) reported on the Chicago excavations:

Lajjun is ancient. There are antiquities at Tall al-Mutassalim. The Americans came and brought a bunch from Egypt. They started excavating in search of antiquities and found many things. This Tall al-Mutassalim is a neighbourhood from the neighbourhoods of Lajjun, next to the Aghbariya neighbourhood, adjacent to a mound where the Mahajna and Aghbariya resided [Lajjun al-Shamaliya]. Many wars took place. There used to say that this mound was a kingdom. I swear in Allah, I do not know its name exactly, but they said there are [the remains] of a ruined city above a ruined city...⁶⁹

These two expeditions employed hundreds of manual labourers and provided additional impetus for permanent settlement at Lajjun, in close proximity to the excavation site: they provided material benefits and employment opportunities,⁷⁰ and supplied building materials in

⁶⁷ Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*.

⁶⁸ Clarence S. Fischer, *The Excavation of Armageddon*. Oriental Institute Communications 4 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929); Eric.H. Cline, *Digging up Armageddon, The Search for the Lost City of Solomon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

⁶⁹ Kana'ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 6.

⁷⁰ Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*, 1–4; Fischer, *The Excavation of Armageddon*, 17–25; Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 121; Cline, *Digging up Armageddon*.

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the form of recovered masonry and architectural elements for the construction of modern

Lajjun.⁷¹ In 1938, some 250 Arab workers were employed on site.⁷²

In contrast to the nuclear village which characterised Ottoman Lajjun, the initial Fahmawi settlement was distinguished by an irregular and apparently random form (Figs. 5–8). This suggests an individual initiative, with the village's agreement, for the early settlement, also reflected in the above testimonies collected by Kana'ina and Mahamid. The improved security conditions in the late Ottoman and British mandate periods allowed for extensive rather than clustered defensive habitation. Schumacher's map of Lajjun (Fig. 5)⁷³ provides prime evidence for the spatial distribution of habitation around Lajjun in the first decade of the 20th century, which was still informal and not yet officially re-established as a 'village'. The map shows scattered buildings north of 'Ain al-Khalil and 'Ain al-Sitt among the ruins (labelled Dorf, 'village', 'Ain es-Sitt), to the west of the ancient mound of Ottoman Lajjun (Dahr al-Dar), which remained uninhabited. Smaller concentrations of huts (*hütten*) were constructed along Wadi al-Lajjun and its subsidiary water canals, mostly in proximity to the watermills. Two houses west of Tahunat al-Nuwaysir ('muēsir') are labelled 'Dar Makhluḥ' and 'Dar al-Amin' after their owners.⁷⁴

This initial settlement pattern coalesced during the next decade, according to clan/quarter affiliation, into three neighbourhood clusters, perhaps after the partition of the *mushā'* among Umm al-Fahm's four quarters in the 1910s.⁷⁵ On Schumacher's 1918 1:50,000 map, produced for the German *Vermessungsabteilung*, we see that the huts along the stream were abandoned and replaced by three 'Lajjuns' (Fig. 6).⁷⁶ These are named individually on

⁷¹ Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*; Fischer, *The Excavation of Armageddon*, 18; Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 336.

⁷² 'michtav iyum le-hoker', *ha-Aretz*, March 15, 1938, 6.

⁷³ Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*.

⁷⁴ Messrischaufnahmen von G. Schumacher, Karte des tell el-mutesellim und von el-leddschön, 1:5000, 1908.

⁷⁵ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 71–2; SHAY report on Lajjun, Hagana Archives, file 105/221, early 1943, p. 1.

⁷⁶ 43. Dschenīn, 1:50,000, hergestellt nach der 'Palestine Exploration Fund' Karte, ergänzt nach Luftbildern der Feldflieger Abteilungen und nach eigenen Messungen. Vermessungs- Abteilung 27 (translation: Produced

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later British Mandatory maps (Figs. 7–8). Schumacher’s 1908 ‘Dorf ‘ain es-Sitt’ now bears the name al-Lajjun al-Shamaliya, home to the Aghbariya and the Mahajna al-Tahta clans (lit. ‘Lower Mahajna’, being geographically lower than the Upper Mahajna). Two new, previously uninhabited, quarters were built a few hundred meters west of it. Al-Lajjun al-Gharbiya is located north of the Wadi es-Sitt (Nahal Qeni), home of the Mahajina al-Fauqa clan (‘Upper Mahajina’). Al-Lajjun al-Sharqiya was south of the wadi and was the residence of the Mahamid and Jabarin clans.⁷⁷ Each ‘Lajjun’ was, in turn, divided into several quarters (*harat*) housing numerous families.⁷⁸

This complex partition is a hallmark of the *Khalīlī* settlement pattern, also evident in other satellite villages established in the lands of Umm al-Fahm such as Mu'awiya, Musmus, Mushayrifa, and Zalafe (to name but a few, and also in Ya‘bad, Barta‘a and Zibda).⁷⁹ The mixing of clans and extensive spread of habitation sites forestalled individual claims of ownership by specific clans in what was, in fact, the common lands of the village.⁸⁰ The broad distribution of settlements also allowed for the more efficient use of available land for grazing and agriculture while also protecting Umm al-Fahm's territory from encroachment by outsiders.

During the British Mandate period, there was a significant migration of residents from Umm al-Fahm to the Lajjuns (Jamil 1998: II), and the village’s population increased more

according to the ‘Palestine Exploration Fund’ map, supplemented by aerial photos of the field aviation departments and by our own measurements. Surveying Department 27), February 15, 1918. On this map, the main settlement is marked at Lajjun al-Sharqiya.

According to Muhammad Mahmud Kiwan Mahamid (b. 1914), Dar al-Amin can be identified with the residence constructed by al-Hajj Ahmad al-Amin, who was one of the first to ‘construct huts (*khishash*) and began to dwell there temporarily...until Lajjun developed’ (Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 68).

⁷⁷ Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 336; Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 121; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 38.

⁷⁸ Umm el Fahm, 1:20,000 Series Sheet 16-21, 1932 (compiled from 1:10,000 scale topo-cadastral survey, 1929–1930); Megiddo, 1:20,000 Series Sheet 16-22, 1932 (compiled from 1:10,000 scale topo-cadastral survey, 1929–1930).

⁷⁹ David Grossman, ‘The Relationship between Settlement Pattern’; David Grossman, ‘The Bunched Settlement Pattern’; David Grossman, ‘Northern Samaria’; cf. W. ‘Amayra, *Dura wa-Quraha 1994* (No Place of Publication, 1994).

⁸⁰ David Grossman, *Expansion and Desertion*.

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than two-fold, from 417 to 857 residents, within a decade (Table 1). Lajjun and the Turkmen

villages to the north of it were new, rapidly growing villages. ‘As long as we resided in

Lajjun, we neglected our houses in Umm al-Fahm’, said one resident. ‘We thought nothing of

them, we gave them to poor people to dwell in. the future was there, in al-Lajjun’.⁸¹

⁸¹ Interview with Ziyad Mahajna in Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 13.

Village	1871/2 (Grossman 2004)	1922 (Barron 1923)	1931 (Mills 1931)	1938 (est.) (vil. stat. 38)	1941 (est.) (CZA A402/174)	1945 (est.) (vil. stat. 45)
Lajjun	-	407	857	4661	4600	5490
Umm al-Fahm	1319	2183(2720)	2443(3152)			
Al-Mansi	40	n/d	467	525	2000	1180
Ein al-Mansi	-	68	73	-	85	90
Lidd al-‘Awadin	-	n/d	451	507	500	640
Al-Ghubayya al-Fauqa	-	41	200	225	225	1130
Al-Ghubayya al-Tahta	-	79			n/d	
Al-Naghnaghiy a	-	n/d	416	468	n/d	
Ti‘innik	39	65	64	74	74	
Zalafa	45	156	198	230	230	340

Table 1. Population counts of Lajjun and neighbouring villages. Figures before 1922 represent the number of households. Combined lines indicate places grouped together.

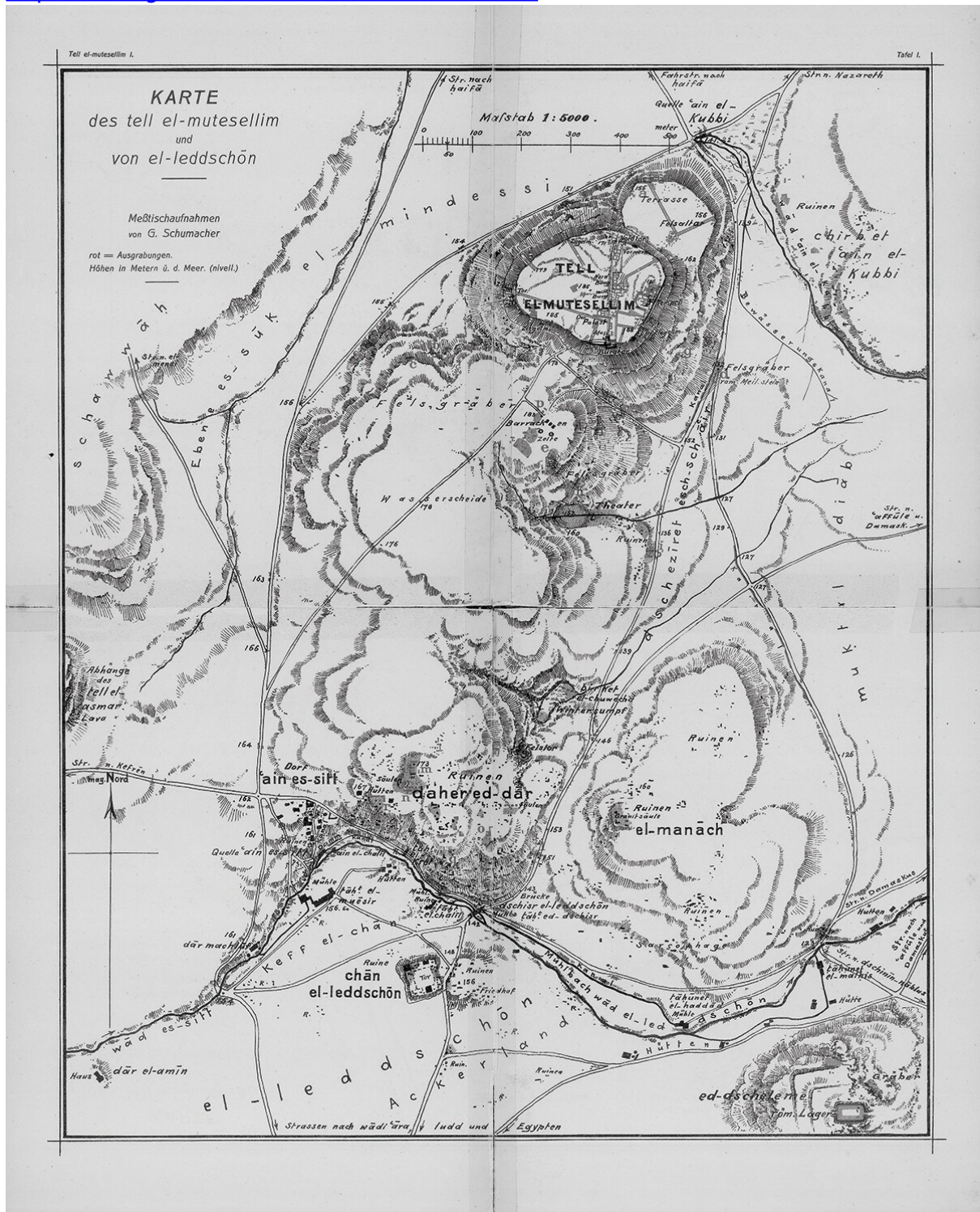


Fig. 5. Schumacher's map of Tell el-Mutesellim and Lajjun (1908). The map shows the main ruins of Ottoman and earlier Lajjun (Daher ed-Dar) and the beginnings of the Fahmawi resettlement (Dorf 'Ain es-Sitt).

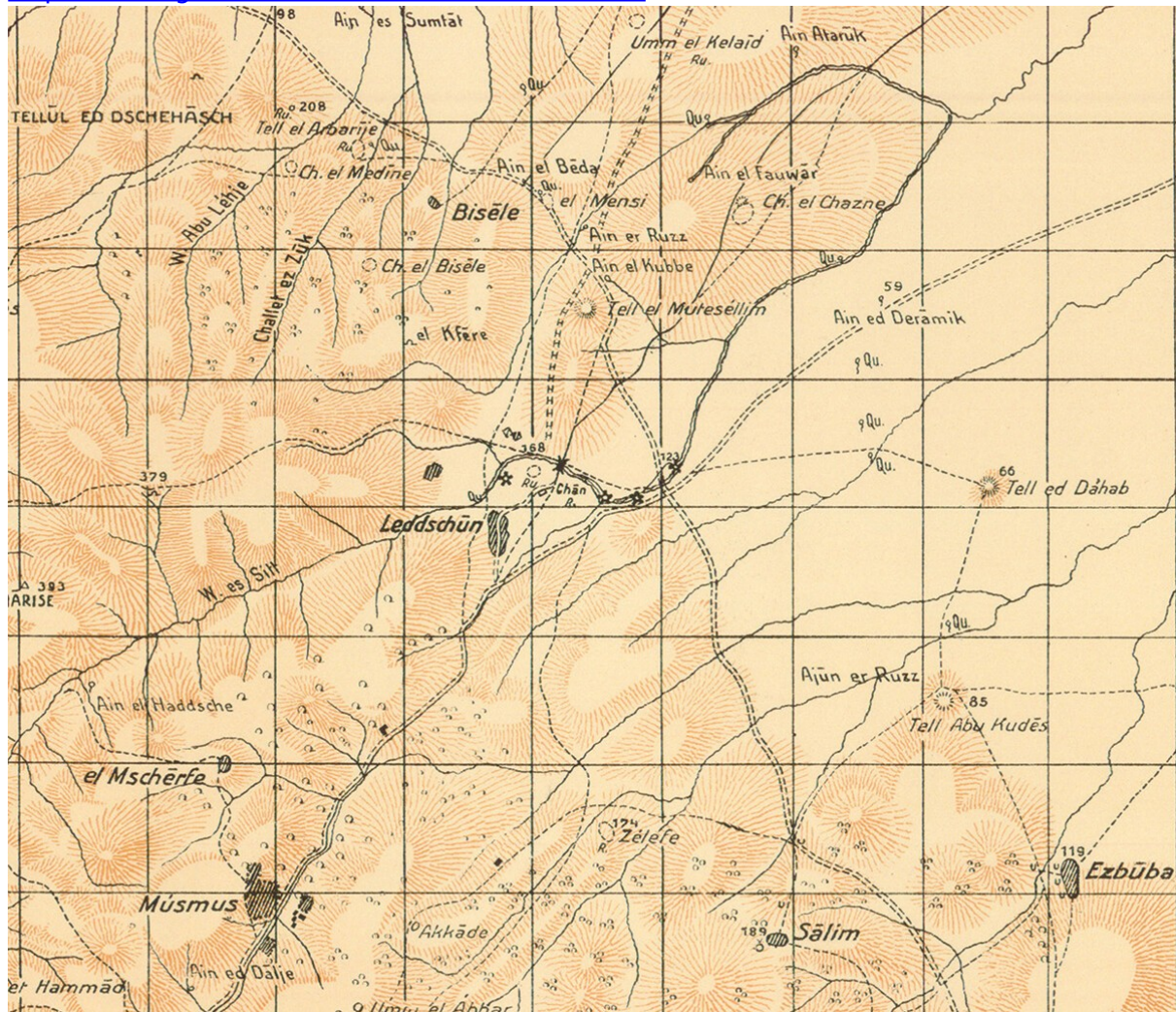


Fig. 6. Lajjun on Schumacher's 1918 map. Note the three 'Lajjuns' (in crosshatching; cf. Fig. 7). Gottlieb Schumacher, 43. *Dschenīn*. Edition. Scale: 1:50,000. Deutschen Verein zur Erforschung Palästinas, 1918.

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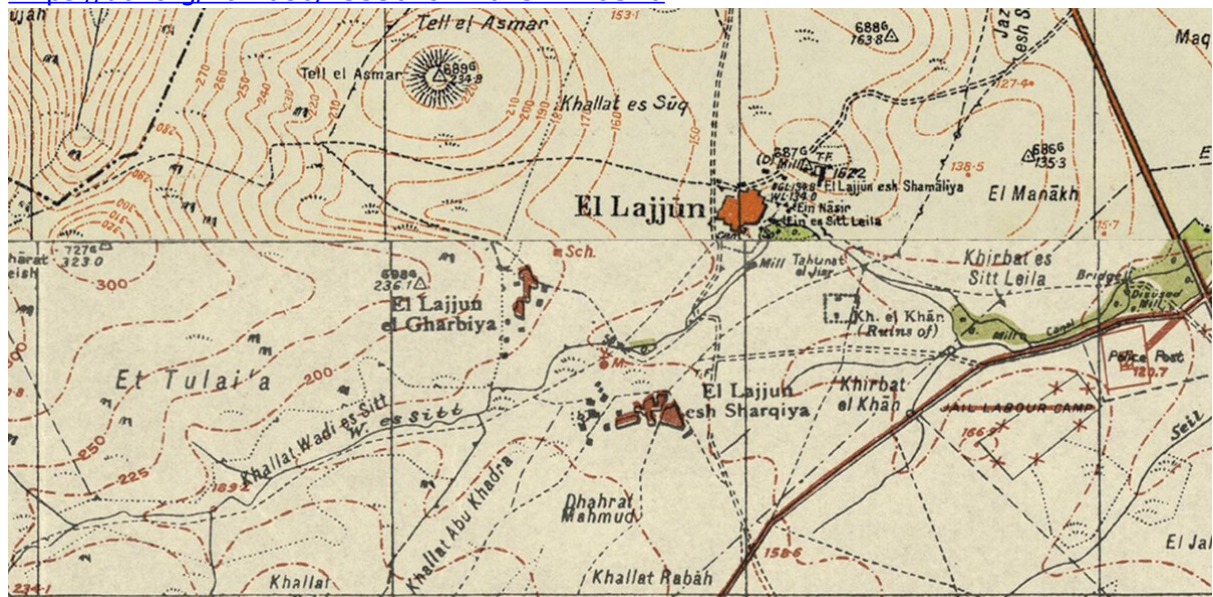
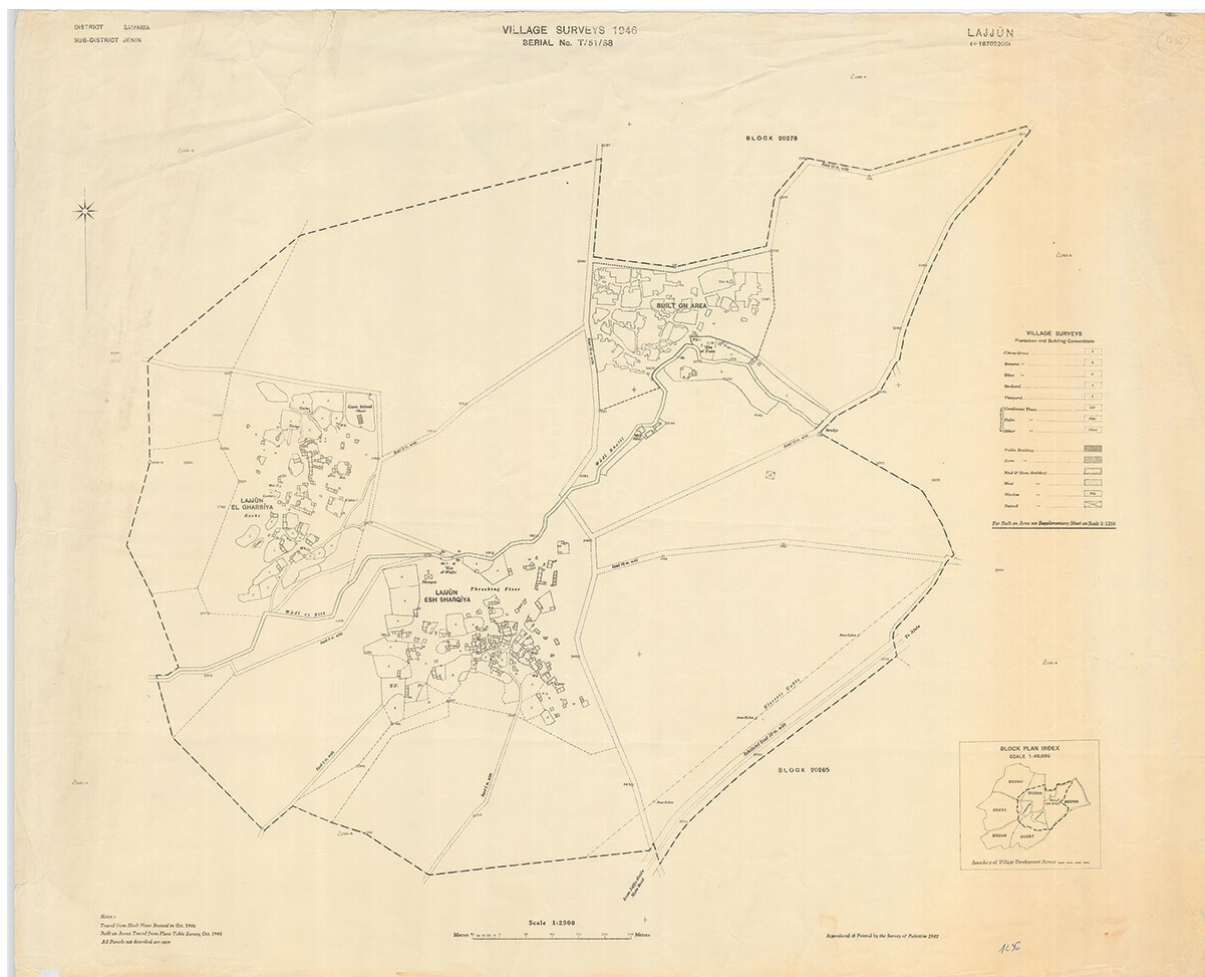


Fig. 7. The three 'Lajjuns', 1942. Maps of Umm al-Fahm and Megiddo, Palestine, Edition.

Scale: 1: 20,000 topo-cadastral, Survey of Palestine, 1942.



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Fig. 8. The three 'Lajjuns' on the Block plans of Lajjun. Block Plans of Oct. 1946. Village

Surveys 1946. Serial No. T/51/88. District Samaria, Sub-District Jenin. Edition. Scale:

1:2,500. Survey of Palestine, 1947.

Lajjun's Diversified Economy

The economy of Ottoman Lajjun was based on agriculture and trade. Ottoman tax records show that in the 16th century, Lajjun's residents grew field crops like wheat, barley, and sesame and also raised cattle (water buffaloes) and goats. They also benefited from trade and the revenues collected from its watermills, market, and caravanserai.⁸² As noted above, seasonal agricultural activities and the operation of some of the watermills continued after the abandonment of Ottoman Lajjun in the second quarter of the 19th century. These two economic sectors continued to dominate the economy of Lajjun until the end of the Ottoman period (1918). The watermills continued to operate until they were gradually taken out of activity by modern motorized flour mills at Lajjun by the 1930s.⁸³ Additionally, and as noted above, the excavations at Tell al-Mutasallim offered a reliable source of income, encouraging settlement at Lajjun.⁸⁴

With the British occupation of Palestine, Lajjun's economy underwent dramatic transformation and diversification by adopting recent technological innovations, infrastructure and services through local and British colonial endeavours. While agriculture remained the backbone of self-sufficiency for the Palestinian fellahin, a growing section of Lajjun's population also worked in the services sector or as labourers in newly established British Army bases. During World War II, the authorities expropriated part of Lajjun's land

⁸² Al-Bakhit and Hmoud, *The Detailed Defrer of Al-Lajjun*, 49; al-Bakhit and al-Sawariyyah, *Defrer-i Mufassal of Marj Bani 'Amir*, 55.

⁸³ Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, II: 118.

⁸⁴ Schumacher, *Tell el-Mutesellim*; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 68–9.

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to establish the British Army's Camp 51 (Fig. 9). The military camp was built on a large plot of land on both sides of the stream east of the village. The camp served as a source of income for residents of the surrounding area in addition to other occupations in government-commissioned public works projects or found employment in Haifa's railways, port, or oil refineries.⁸⁵ This section will deal with the causes and results of the diversification of the local economy and the growth of Lajjun as a services nexus and transportation hub between the Jezreel Valley and the neighbouring hill country.

Agriculture (*zirā'a*) formed the backbone of Lajjun's economy. The traditional *mushā'* system, involving rotating allocation of land plots, precluded the plantation of fruit trees (*ghars*), which were regarded as private property.⁸⁶ The partition of the *mushā'* in the 1910s among the four clans, and the following land settlement and registration in the 1930s opened the door for private land ownership and improvement. The agricultural sector of Lajjun saw the partial mechanisation of labour with the introduction of such tools as combine harvesters and tractors for ploughing.⁸⁷ The 1930s also saw attempts to introduce new crops like maize and cotton, which failed, however, due lack of adequate tools, experience, and markets.⁸⁸ Available statistics do not distinguish between Lajjun and the rest of Umm al-Fahm's settlements, thus precluding a detailed analysis.⁸⁹ We can only say that land use shows the dominance of field crops over plantations and the marginality of citrus cultivation, the main driver of the agricultural sector in Palestine's coastal plain (see Table 2). In 1943,

⁸⁵ Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 121.

⁸⁶ SHAY report on Lajjun, Hagana Archives, file 105/221, early 1943, p. 1; Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, 118; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 41.

⁸⁷ Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 10–11. This phenomenon is also documented in PHRP interviews with former residents of adjacent villages: al-Ghubayyat, al-Mansi, 'Ain al-Mansi and Zir'in (2019–2022). In Jewish settlements in the valley, the use of agricultural machinery became common by the 1940s. Its sources cannot be ascertained: either Jewish and Templar German influence or the active initiative of Arab-Palestinian landlords (who imported flourmill and olive-press technologies, for example).

⁸⁸ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 42–3.

⁸⁹ Government of Palestine. *Village Statistics*, 1938; Government of Palestine. *Village Statistics*, 1945.

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Lajjun's territory was estimated at 38,000 dunams.⁹⁰ World War II ushered an economic boom with the construction of new army bases and an airfield near Lajjun on confiscated village land. The British Army used to purchase agricultural produce at good rates, while local intermediaries and Nabulsi traders like al-Shunnar and al-'Anabtawi marketed the produce in Haifa, Jenin and Nablus.⁹¹

Village	Built up	Non-cultivable ⁹³	Cereal ⁹²	Plantations	Citrus Fruits	Total area
Umm al-Fahm (inc. Lajjun)	128	29052	44023	4222	-	77518
Al-Mansi ⁹⁴	n/d	5076	13557	271	13	18917
Ein al-Mansi	2	239	868	186	-	1295
Lidd						
al-'Awadin	53	57	6896	19	-	7025
Al-Ghubayya						4198
al-Fauqa	n/d	504	3694	-	-	
Al-Ghubayya						3889
al-Tahta	n/d	436	3453	-	-	
Al-Naghnaghiya	n/d	302	3380	58	-	3740
Ti'innik	4	502	21663	360	-	22529
Zalafa	8	1039	2677	65	-	3789

Table 2: Land usage in metric dunams (according to the Village Statistics, 1938).⁹⁵

⁹⁰ SHAY report on Lajjun, Hagana Archives, file 105/221, early 1943, 1.

⁹¹ SHAY report on Lajjun, Hagana Archives, file 105/221, early 1943, 1; Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha*, 219.

⁹² Both taxable and untaxable cereals.

⁹³ Including wadies, roads, lakes and railways.

⁹⁴ Listed under its second name, 'Arab Baniha.

⁹⁵ The Government of Palestine 1938 Village Statistics has been preferred over its successor (1945) for its more detailed treatment of al-Ghubayyat. However, the general trends are the same. The authors consolidated detached land parcels with the home village for statistical reasons, while territorial condominiums have been divided evenly between the relevant villages for tabulation purposes.

Despite the extensive Jewish settlement in Bilad al-Ruha and Marj Ibn 'Amr, no land was sold to Jews in Lajjun or its neighbours before 1948 (cf. Village Statistics 1945; Table 3 below):

Village	Arab	Jewish	Public ⁹⁶	Total
Umm al-Fahm (inc. Lajjun)	68311	-	8931	77242
Al-Mansi	7611	-	5161	12272
Ein al-Mansi	4491	-	7	4498
Lidd al-‘Awadin	13218	-	354	13572
Al-Ghubayya al-Fauqa				
Al-Ghubayya al-Tahta				
Al-Naghnaghiya	11607	-	532	12189
Ti‘innik	4791	-	1836	6697
Zalafa	1285	-	2304	3789

Table 3. Land ownership in metric dunams (according to the Village Statistics, 1945).⁹⁷

Lajjun’s ample agricultural land offered work opportunities for low-wage seasonal workers who came from far and wide to till the lands of the Fahmawis. This is evidenced in numerous oral accounts. For example, one account narrated that ‘they would come to Lajjun from al-‘Arish, from Egypt, to earn a living from it, and also from the Bedouins of al-Sab‘ (the Negev) [...], from ‘Arab al-Saqr of Transjordan, from Syria [... and] spend the entire summer at Lajjun’.⁹⁸ Another added ‘they would [also] come from the mountains of Jerusalem and from al-‘Awja (Yarkon River basin)’ to work in the harvest and graze their

⁹⁶ Government of Palestine. *Village Statistics*, 1945. Including wadies, roads, lakes and railways.

⁹⁷ The authors consolidated detached land parcels with the home village for statistical reasons, while territorial condominiums have been divided evenly between the relevant villages for tabulation purposes.

⁹⁸ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 69.

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animals on the cut grass.⁹⁹ These accounts reflect a wider reality, also attested in nearby ‘Ain al-Mansi, al-Mansi, and Zir‘in, confirmed by interviews Marom conducted with former workers from al-‘Awja’, al-Zawiya (Salfit) and al-Sawiya (Nablus).

In addition to agriculture, Lajjun’s residents made a living from livestock rearing - cattle, sheep, and goats provided meat, milk, leather, and wool, draft animals such as camels, horses, mules and donkeys provided traction and transportation for people and goods, while poultry supplied an inexpensive and readily available source of protein.

We publish here, for the first time, an extract from the Government of Palestine’s Animal Enumeration of 1943 (Table 4).¹⁰⁰ Animal Enumerations were conducted every few years for taxation purposes. However, having only one data set (1943) enables only a synchronous, but not diachronous, analysis of the figures. Nonetheless, the data reveals significant differences and a large degree of variance between the different villages and tribal groups around Lajjun in their livestock-rearing practices.

⁹⁹ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 71.

¹⁰⁰ Government of Palestine. *Estimation & Acquisition of the Olive Oil Crop*.

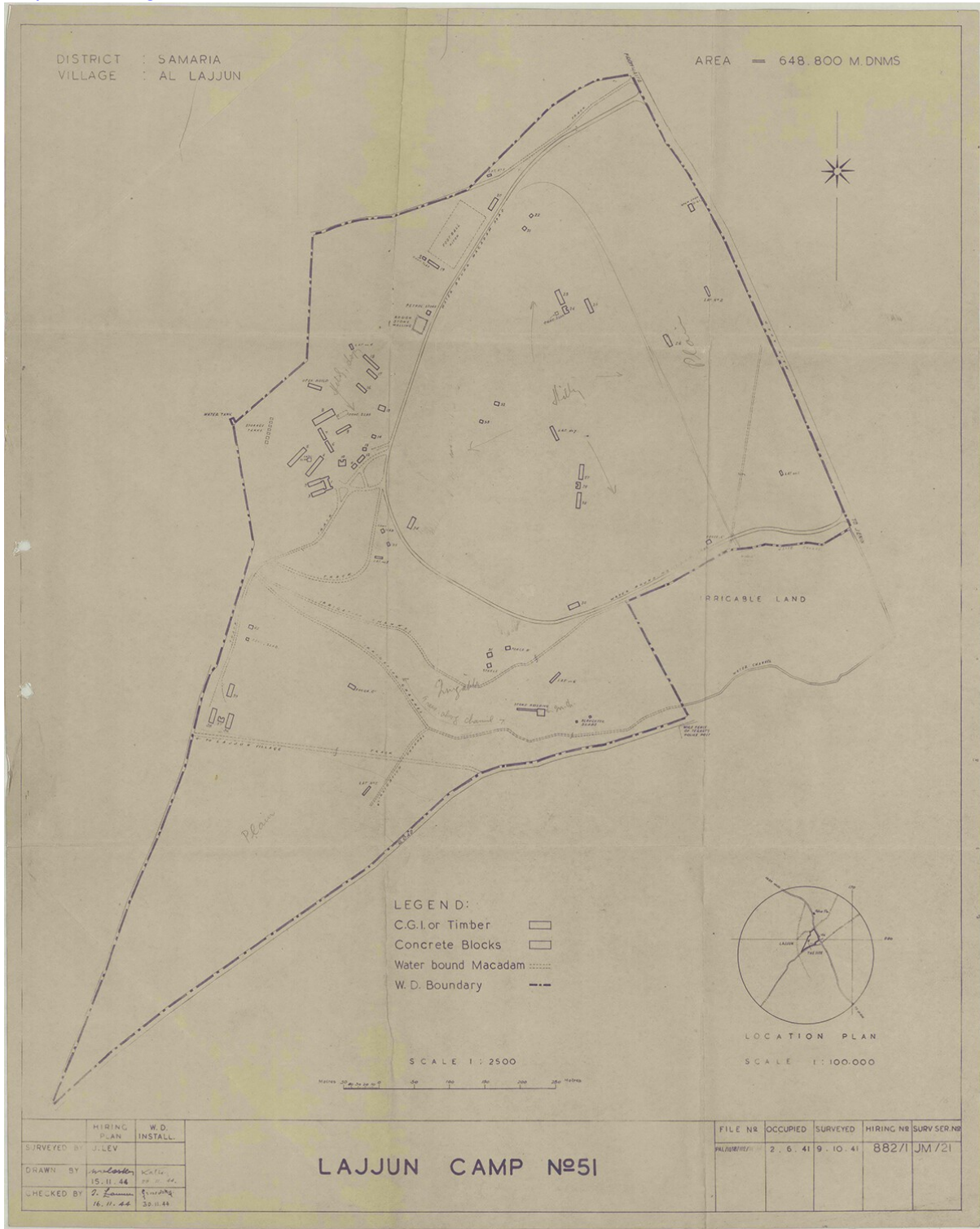


Fig. 9. Lajjun Camp No. 51. Edition Scale 1:2,500, Survey of Palestine, 1944; Israel State Archive, file M-6/5260.

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Village	Cattle	Wa ter bu ffal o	Sheep over 1 year	Goats over 1 year	Camel s	Horse s	Mule s	Donke ys	Fowl s	Pigeon s	Pigs	Total land (du.s) ¹⁰¹
Lajjun	512	-	834	481	13	85	26	167	3822	700	206	77518
Umm al- Fahm	574	-	318	2081	25	94	10	316	5565	1060	-	
Musmus	136	-	50	249	-	17	-	35	950	340	-	
Mushayrif a	166	-	-	335	4	26	1	68	850	200	-	
Mu'awiya	227	-	548	76	-	12	-	50	645	135	-	
Al- Mansi ¹⁰²	1254	-	995	503	54	64	3	307	3298	112	-	12413
'Ein al- Mansi	13	-	-	-	-	2	-	10	270	10	-	1295
Lidd al-'Awadin	480	-	612	125	36	16	-	39	2890	650	-	13529
Al- Ghubayya al-Fauqa	104	-	-	38	-	32	-	23	500	64	-	4198
Al- Ghubayya al-Tahta	140	-	-	10	-	27	-	19	523	116	-	3889
Al- Naghnaghi ya	139	6	1090	369	20	31	-	81	908	29	-	3743

¹⁰¹ After British land estimates for 1941 (Central Zionist Archives, A402/174).

¹⁰² Summarised from the figures given to its different tribes: Bani Gharra, Bani Dhabaya and Bani Sa'idan.

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Ti‘innik	39	-	-	-	4	14	1	20	168	15	-	32263
Zalafa	161	-	10	220	-	23	2	51	590	132	-	3789

Table 4. The number of livestock by kind according to the 1943 animal enumeration.¹⁰³

A strong correlation exists between topography and preference for sheep in low-gradient topography (Lajjun, Mu‘awiya, Lidd al-‘Awadin, Al-Naghnaghiya, ‘Ein al-Mansi) versus preference for goats in high-gradient topography (Umm al-Fahm, Musmus, Mushayrifa, al-Ghubayya al-Fauqa, al-Ghubayya al-Tahta, Zalafa). Cattle was reared in all the region's villages, while water buffaloes (*jammūs*)—a specialised form of cattle—were raised only by the Naghnaghiya in the valley wetlands. In accordance with Islamic culinary taboos, no pigs were raised in the area, except at Lajjun, probably in the service of the adjacent British army base. The most common draft animals were donkeys, followed by horses (presumably workhorses—colloquial [col.] Ara. *kdīsh*) and camels. Lastly came the mules (col. Ara. *bghāl*), whose rearing in Palestine increased during the British Mandate period but had a limited penetration into Palestine’s countryside (Lajjun had the highest number of mules). With regard to poultry, the region’s population showed a marked preference for fowl over pigeons, which require special breeding arrangements and offer only a limited amount of meat and eggs in return.

Lajjun was also a nexus for local trade. In addition to various shops (*dakākīn*) operating in the residential quarters and offering agricultural produce and domestic necessities, an open-air market (*sūq*) was located in the eponymous Khallet al-Suq, between

¹⁰³Government of Palestine. *Estimation & Acquisition*.

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Lajjun al-Gharbiya and Lajjun al-Shamaliya. The Lajjun *sūq* was an animal market of regional importance: ‘they would bring sheep, cattle, horses, and camels. [...] Merchants used to come from Jordan and Syria (because it is closest to Palestine) and put their livestock for sale in Khallet al-Suq. Gypsies (*nawar*) also used to dwell there temporarily’.¹⁰⁴ This was the only market in the Fahmawi villages. Other markets existed at Haifa, ‘Afula, and at the sub-district capitals of Jenin and Nazareth.

Before 1936, the British had established a police station at Lajjun Junction.¹⁰⁵ In 1940, the police post was upgraded into a Tegart Fort (Figs. 7, 10–11).¹⁰⁶ In 1941, following increased troop deployment after the onset of World War II, the British Army established an army base next to the village on its eastern side (Fig. 9). In 1942, the RAF established an airstrip called RAF Station Megiddo (modern Megiddo Airfield). The bases provided employment for many of Lajjun’s residents, and by analogy to other camps, also for workers from farther afield.¹⁰⁷ The number and composition of workers changed frequently. For example, before June 1, 1944, 45 Jewish specialised workers of the *Solel Boneh* company carried out a construction contract at Camp Megiddo. British enrolment lists shows that a month later, in July 1944, 30 specialised Jewish workers and 129 non-specialist Arab workers worked at Camp Megiddo.¹⁰⁸ While Jewish workers specialised in construction, Arab workers, with reduced wages, were tasked with maintenance, catering, and cleaning services.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴PHRPinterview with ‘Abd al-Latif Salih Darawsha, September 28, 2019, conducted by Marom.

¹⁰⁵ *Al-Jami‘a al-Islamiya*, August 31, 1936, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Israel State Archive, files Map-1/4770, Map-1/4772, M-10/4863, Gal-7/16640; on ‘Tegart Forts’ see Yigal Eyal, and Amiram Oren, ‘Tegart Fortresses’—Administration and Security under One Roof: Concept, Policy, and Implementation’, *Cathedra* 104 (2002): 95–126; Gad Kroizer, ‘Back to Station Control’: Planning the ‘Tegart’ Police Fortresses in Palestine’, *Cathedra* 111 (2004): 95–128.

¹⁰⁷ Roy Marom, ‘RAF Ein Shemer: A Forgotten Case of Jewish and Arab Work in a British Army Camp in Palestine During the Second World War’, *War & Society* 39.3 (2020): 189–209.

¹⁰⁸ Central Zionist Archive, S9/1125.

¹⁰⁹ Marom, ‘RAF Ein Shemer’, 194–96.

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Fig. 10. The Lajjun Tegart Fort under construction in June 1940; Israel State Archive, file 58585



Fig. 11. The Lajjun Tegart Fort under construction in June 1940; Israel State Archive, file 58589

Lajjun: A Hub of Utilities

During the British Mandate period, Lajjun rapidly developed as a utilities and services hub, which ordinarily characterised much larger settlements such as towns or cities. These services were the pride and joy of Lajjun's residents, as remembered decades later:

Lajjun was situated on a strategic roads' intersection. We had a marketplace. They used to sell here everything that people needed. There was a bus station that carried passengers to Jenin, Nablus, Haifa, and Jaffa – to all corners of the country. In

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addition to that, Lajjun had a school, an infirmary, a cemetery, and a mosque. Lajjun also had a spring called ‘Ayn al-Hajja [...] They installed a network of water pipes to the neighbourhoods of Lajjun¹¹⁰

The first modern transportation infrastructure to be built in the region was the Ottoman Jezreel Valley railway, connecting Haifa to the Hijazi Railway (1902–1905). A railway station was constructed at al-‘Afula, 11.5 km east of Lajjun and only 5 km east of Umm al-Fahm's valley territory. This facilitated the marketing of Fahmawi agricultural produce to the markets of Haifa, Acre, and Damascus.¹¹¹ During the First World War, the Ottomans extended the railway system, connecting al-‘Afula with Jenin and from there to Nablus, Tulkarm, Jaffa and Jerusalem. In the 1920s, the British renovated the Ottoman military railways, connecting them to the Egyptian network through Lydda, Gaza and al-Qantara. In addition, the British metaled the Haifa–Jenin road, which passed next to Lajjun, and connected it to al-‘Afula by 1924.¹¹² This was followed in the 1930s by the construction of the Lajjun–Hadera road through Wadi ‘Ara.¹¹³ Thus, Lajjun became an important transportation hub on the junction of two of Palestine's main roadways.

The residents of Lajjun took advantage of their location to operate the first public transportation network in the region. Christian merchant Raji al-Nuwaysir, a former watermill owner, operated the first bus service along the Umm al-Fahm–Lajjun–Haifa line. Soon, other residents began purchasing buses. By 1937, Lajjun hosted seven privately-owned buses, at which point the owners joined forces to form the Lajjun Bus Company.¹¹⁴ Public

¹¹⁰ ‘Adnan Mahamid, interviewed by Zochrot in Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 3–4; authors' translation of the original Arabic.

¹¹¹Recep Kürekli, ‘Hicaz Demiryolu'nun Akdeniz'e açılması ile yaşanan sosyo- ekonomik dönüşüm: Hayfa Kazası Örneği’, *Türkçe ve Sosyal Bilimler Eğitimi Bölümü Koleksiyonu* 22 (2010): 246–69.

¹¹² Palestine, north sheet, scale 1 Inch to 3.95 Miles, War Office, 1924.

¹¹³ Compare the maps: Palestine, 1:250,000, Survey of Palestine, 1934, printed with additions July 1938 and Zichron Ya‘akov, 1:100,000, War Office 1940, second edition 1941. See also the files of the Public Works Department: Israel State Archive, files P-3/3059, P-24/241, M-21/4863, M-24/4863.

¹¹⁴ Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 336; Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 44.

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transportation companies mostly operated in cities or towns, so the existence of a bus company in Lajjun was remarkable.¹¹⁵ As the only local bus company in the region, it served the residents of Lajjun, Umm al-Fahm, Rummana, Zalafa, al-Mansi, al-Sila al-Harithiya and Zir'in. The National Bus Company (Ara. Sharikat al-Basat al-Wataniya) also operated from Lajjun.¹¹⁶

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Although the population of Lajjun and its neighbouring villages was composed of peasants (*fellahin*), class differences certainly existed. Wealthy notables (*wujahā'*), like the pot-trader-turned-agriculturalist Hasan Effendi al-Sa'd of Umm al-Fahm (fl. 1910–1933), took upon themselves to represent their clans and pay the taxes due for their part in the *mushā'*.¹¹⁷ In time, Hasan al-Sa'd became the effective owner of a large tract of the Aghbariya *mushā'* at Lajjun. As a reflection of his patronage, Sa'd commissioned the construction of a large mosque at Aghbariya Lajjun/Lajjun al-Shamaliya, in an area formerly known as Dhahr al-Dar or Dar al-Khalil.¹¹⁸ A large dedicatory inscription, dated Sha'ban 1352AH/ November/December 1933, praises 'Hasan al-Sa'd al-Ghubari' for building a prayer house with God's blessing.¹¹⁹ The mosque hosted an *imam* from 'Ar'ara and a *khatīb* from the famous Labadi family of religious preachers, whose families settled in the village.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ The public transportation sector in Mandatory Palestine has not yet been systematically studied. Arab bus companies operated mainly in towns and cities (like the Bamiya Bus Company operating in Gaza and Jaffa [the Palestinian Museum Digital Archive, item 0287.01.0147], and al-Hilal Bus Company operating from Qalqiliya: al-Sus 2021: II, 59), while Jewish firms had undergone mergers into regional corporations like Egged and Dan. According to members of the Nuwaysir family, after the 1948 war, their buses were incorporated into the Egged conglomerate (PHRP interview, February 22, 2022).

¹¹⁶ *Al-Difa'*, November 1, 1939, 4.

¹¹⁷ See receipt dated 29 Kanun Awwal 325 Maliye/11 February 1910 in Kana'ina and Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, document appendix. For his biography, the SHAY (the Hagana's Intelligence Service) report on Lajjun, Hagana Archives, file 105/221, early 1943, pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁸ This name preserves the memory of the ancient Mosque of Ibrahim, which was situated to the south, above Lajjun's main spring (Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*: III: 172).

¹¹⁹ cf. Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha*, 220.

¹²⁰ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 39.

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Hasan al-Sa'd was politically affiliated with the *mu'ārada*/Pro-British camp in Palestinian politics. In repudiation of the political ramifications of the acknowledgement of patronage associated with praying there, the residents of the rival *majlisi*/pro-mufti/anti-British Mahamid clan collected money for the construction of their own mosque, situated between the two other quarters of Lajjun.¹²¹ 'Umar Mahamid extolls the virtues of his grandfather, who utilised the Friday *khutba* to preach *jihād* against the British occupation and spreading political propaganda against 'the land-pimps (*samāsirāt al-arādī*) among the residents of Lajjun who collaborated with the Zionist Movement and English'.¹²² This episode reflects the interplay between local factionalism, national politics, and religious practice so typical of Palestinian life during that period.

An elementary school for Lajjun's children was inaugurated in December 1937,¹²³ as part of a British broader policy to spread literacy in the countryside.¹²⁴ According to Nijma Muhammad Mahamid, 'the school was constructed on the initiative of a teacher from Kafr Qaddum near Nablus. He collected donations. The school was built out of well-dressed stone brought from Tubas by skilled builders from far-away places'. The school offered elementary education up to the fourth grade, and afterwards the students attended school at Umm al-Fahm. However, education was by no means universal: 'during that time, they did not let the girls study, because it was [culturally] forbidden that boys and girls be together in the same room'.¹²⁵ In 1944, there were 83 students and two teachers at the village, with 180 literate residents.¹²⁶ Lajjun's elementary school was one in a chain of schools constructed in

Palestine's countryside under local or governmental auspices during the British Mandate

¹²¹ Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, III:173; Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 122–3.

¹²² Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 39–40.

¹²³ Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, III:173; SHAY report on Lajjun, Hagana Archives, file 105/221, early 1943, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Yoni H. Furas, *Educating Palestine: Teaching and Learning History under the Mandate* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹²⁵ Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 7.

¹²⁶ Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, III:173.

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period. A 'model school' with an agricultural garden was established at al-Mansi for the Turkmen children. Other schools were built at Rummana (also serving Salim) and al-Sila (also serving Ti'innik).¹²⁷

At Lajjun, as well as in other areas of Palestine's lowlands, Malaria was an endemic condition.¹²⁸ The residents of Lajjun suffered heavily from Malaria because of the many springs, rivulets, swamps, and wetlands surrounding the village.¹²⁹ Malaria and other ailments led to a very high infant mortality rate (55% passed away before the age of two years), as evidenced in surviving death records.¹³⁰ Originally, the residents of Lajjun relied on traditional medicine or attended clinics in Jenin or Afula.¹³¹ In 1942/3, the Mandatory Government of Palestine established a three-room infirmary, attended by a physician three days a week, which 'was one-of-a-kind in the countryside during that time'.¹³² The infirmary served a regional clientele from across the Turkmen villages, Marj Ibn 'Amr, Bilad al-Ruha, and Umm al-Fahm's satellite villages. It treated minor ailments and provided a referral for the treatment of more severe conditions, thus contributing to the health of Lajjun's residents.

Another measure of hygiene was the drainage of the wetlands in the valley, close to the British Army camps, as well as general efforts to improve the water supply and protect

¹²⁷ See the relevant Hagana village reports from the 1940s (Hagana Archives, files 105/ 224, 225) and Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*. For Bilad al-Ruha/Ramot Menashe, see the relevant entries in Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin* and Aql, *Bilad el-Ruha*); for Umm al-Fahm's pedagogical history, see Jamil, *Umm al-Fahm*, II, 128–39.

¹²⁸ Sandy Sufian, 'Re-imagining Palestine: Scientific knowledge and malaria control in mandatory Palestine', *Dynamis: Acta Hispanica ad Medicinae Scientiarumque Historiam Illustrandam* 25 (2005): 351–382.

¹²⁹ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 45.

¹³⁰ Of the 111 deaths recorded by the village mukhtar between July 13, 1926, and April 7, 1932, 15 (13.5%) passed away aged a month or less, 20 (18%) passed away aged between one month to one year, and 26 passed away aged between a year and two years (23.42%). Data compiled from the death register published by Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 63–67.

High infant mortality rates have been common in the Palestinian countryside since ancient times. For the Mamluk-early Ottoman period, for example, see Eshed, Toueg and Krispin 2021. For general trends in infant mortality in the first part of the 20th century, see Halevi 1969; for British efforts to reduce it, see Eyal Katvan, and Nira Bartal. 'The Midwives Ordinance of Palestine, 1929: Historical Perspectives and Current Lessons', *Nursing Inquiry* 17.2 (2010): 165–72.

¹³¹ Mahamid, *Al-Lajjun*, 45.

¹³² Kabha and Sirhan, *Bilad al-Ruha*, 123.

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water sources from infection by cholera, which was an endemic problem in Palestine.¹³³ In

1946, residents initiated the construction of a water distribution network in the village.

‘Adnan Mahamid narrated: ‘Lajjun had a spring called ‘Ayn al-Hajja [...] the residents of Lajjun brought a water pump [...] and constructed a water reservoir. They installed a network of water pipes to the neighbourhoods of Lajjun’.¹³⁴ While this was not the only water grid installed in Palestinian villages during the British Mandate period, it was the only one of its kind in the Umm al-Fahm/Lajjun area.

Lajjun was located only a few hundred meters from the Naharayim–Tel Aviv main powerline. In the late 1940s, there were plans to connect the village to the national power grid. According to residents, c. 1946, ‘the British authorities intended to make Lajjun a capital of the region, like Nazareth is today [...], connect Lajjun to the power grid, and open up streets and widen them. The mukhtar invited the British governor to garner his support for this plan. Before the arrival of the British governor the mukhtar brought [flowers] and trees and planted them in many places’.¹³⁵

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¹³³ Eli Schwartz, Dan Bar-El, and Natan Schu. ‘The History of Cholera Epidemics in Israel’, *Harefuah* 144.5 (2005): 363–70, 381; Rosa I.M. El-Eini, *Mandated Landscape: British Imperial Rule in Palestine, 1929–1948* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹³⁴ Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 3–4.

¹³⁵ ‘Adnan Mahamid, interviewed by Zochrot in Bronstein, *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 4; authors’ translation of the original Arabic. Compare to Mahmud Muhammad Mahamid’s testimony (b. 1931 at Lajjun) in Bronstein *Natadhakkar al-Lajjun*, 8. Unfortunately, we could not find mentions of such a visit in contemporary newspaper reports.

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In late 1947, the fabric of rural Palestinian life around Lajjun began to unravel. In tandem with the British withdrawal from Palestine (1948), the hostilities between Jewish-Arab forces intensified. Following the Arab Liberation Army's attack on nearby Mishmar ha-Emeq (April 1948), the Haganah initiated a military operation to take over the Arab villages of Bilad al-Ruha, including Lajjun. Lajjun's residents returned, for the most part, to Umm al-Fahm and others to region of Jenin beyond the boundaries of the State of Israel. Afterwards (1949), a new Jewish settlement, later named Kibbutz Megiddo, was established on Lajjun's location, using some of its abandoned houses and the British camp structures.

Conclusions

The history of modern Lajjun exemplifies the dynamic and vibrant nature of the local Palestinian society during a dramatic period of transformation. Modern Lajjun was another link in a long line of important settlements, military-administrative centres and commercial hubs in the Megiddo area, the *longue durée* product of its advantageous location at the junction of important international roads and near water and fertile land. Once one of Ottoman Palestine's provincial capitals, it was abandoned and fell into ruin by the mid-19th century, only to be re-established as a satellite village of the nearby Umm al-Fahm in the early 20th century. Nonetheless, in a short time, it rose to be Umm al-Fahm's most important dependant, second only to the home village and surpassing it in economic activity. By the late 1940s Lajjun boasted a health clinic, a state elementary school, mosques, a market and a bus company—a combination which no other settlement of comparable size (other than larger towns or cities) in Palestine possessed.

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Through the prism of historical geography and socio-economic history, we sought to explain this makeover by stressing the often ignored or marginalised dialectic between internal and external development factors, such as Ottoman and British colonial policy, the economic challenge and impetus born out of the two World Wars and the economic initiatives of the Yishuv. In his paper, we contextualised the resettlement of Lajjun within the broader historical fabric of the region and the Levant under renewal. We showed it to be the product of Fahmawi initiative and facilitating circumstances, including the reforms of Ottoman land registration settlement, improved control and security (including the suppression of nomadic incursions), the development of villages in the Marj ibn-Amr by capitalist plantation owners (*iqṭā'īn*), the territorial expansion of Umm al-Fahm in Bilad al-Ruha (including its peculiar 'bunched' settlement pattern), and the sedentarisation of Turkman nomads.

In addition, an important role was also played by external initiatives like the Tell al-Mutasalim archaeological excavations (expressing religious interest in the area's Biblical patrimony), the construction of paved roads (Jenin–Haifa; 'Afula–Wadi 'Ara–Hadera), and work opportunities at the Lajjun British Army Camp and Police Station. The former factor seems to deserve specific attention. During the British Mandate (as in the case of Roman Legio), the establishment of a significant army camp next to a small rural civilian settlement precipitated technological development, economic expansion (including the rearing of swine for Christian consumption), and infrastructure modernisation (paved roads, electricity, water supply and sanitation) that contributed to its prosperity.