

**Book Review** of Dorothy Drummond's *Holy Land, Whose Land? Modern Dilemma, Ancient Roots* (Seattle, WA: Educare Press, 2002), *The Arab World Geographer/Le Géographe du monde arabe* 6(2):143-147, 2003.

The initial idea of *Holy Land, Whose Land?* was to write down the author's 40 years of travel experiences in the Holy Land, in order to "retain" and "share" such experiences (p. xv). But apparently, under "the urgency of the Intifadeh and the collapse of the peace process," the book deviated toward the more ambitious enterprise of writing "the story of the Holy Land" and offering it "to anyone who may be contemplating a journey to the Holy Land or who may simply want to understand" its "complicated story" ( p. xvi). The main epistemology of the book consists of presenting selected past historical events in order to explain current ones ( p. xv).

The book is divided into three main parts, plus 100 pages of appendices: glossary, people in the Holy Land, place names, sources (19 Internet Web sites, 12 books, *The New Jerusalem Bible*, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, and *The Koran Interpreted*), and index. Part 1 of the book, "The Present: Turmoil in the Holy Land," runs about 62 pages and provides some details about "the present" of the Holy Land. It begins with a geographic delimiting of the Holy Land as including Palestine and extending to parts of present-day Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. It then gives a brief descriptive analysis of the creation of the State of Israel and the Occupied Territories, the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, and the somehow diverse people of the Holy Land and surrounding countries. It concludes by stressing what it calls "the toughest dilemma of our new century:" The Palestinians have no intention of going away and the Israelis have no intention of leaving Palestine. The author indicates that the Jewish State is the direct and legitimate child of the Holocaust:

Desperate for a place to settle at the end of World War II, Holocaust survivors are languishing dazed and weak in makeshift refugee camps in Europe. Young Jews from the British mandate of Palestine, healthy and bright-eyed, visit the refugees. "Come to the Promised Land, Eretz Israel," they say. "We will help you get there, and you can help us build a new Israel" (p. 7).

First, how can the Holocaust *in Europe* be used as a historical explanation or moral justification for the dispossession, expulsion, and oppression of millions of Palestinians *in Asia* who had nothing to do with the persecution of Jews in Europe and Russia? Second, most Holocaust survivors did not migrate to Israel and were not chased out of their homelands, as noted in the book ("The largest number of Jews in Israel come originally as refugees, uprooted and stateless. They come because they cannot live any longer in the land of their birth" p. 49). According to Calvin Goldscheider's *Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity, and Development*, out of the 3.2 million Zionist settlers who came to Palestine/Israel between 1919 and 1999, about 3 million came after 1948. They also came at a time when they were not only encouraged to stay in their original homelands (the Soviet government had already created what is still officially known as the *Jewish Autonomous Region* on the Soviet border with China) but were also generously compensated by the Germans (well over US\$60 billion for the period between

1953 and 2000) (see CNN.com of 17 July 2000). Third, the claim that the Jews invented Zionism (p. 8 and 187–189) is misleading, as I argued in “The Non-Jewish Origin of Zionism” (*The Arab World Geographer* 5(1)). The same could be said of the author’s assertion that Israel’s Arab citizens “have full democratic rights” but “tend to perceive themselves as second-class citizens” (p. 52). Israel has no written constitution but has fundamental laws of legal discrimination between Jews and non-Jews, as embodied in the Law of Return. Fourth, the dilemma at the conclusion of Part 1 seems to be an ahistorical, inside-the-box approach, which is typical of the tourist, the summer seminarian, and the journalist, all of whom overlook the core question of who is taking the land away from whom.

Part 2 of the book, “The Past as Prologue: From Abraham to Arafat,” runs about 136 pages and attempts to root the current tensions in the Holy Land in the ancient past, rather than in the nonstop dispossession of the Palestinians. It retells the biblical story as a fast-food history (going back to Flavius Josephus, who first handed out such a tradition to his Roman saviors), which the Zionists have appropriated and taken for granted. In Part 2 the Crusaders’ “architecture and engineering” are appreciated, whereas the Crusaders’ cruelty (massacres of Jews in Europe, massacres of more than 60 000 people in Jerusalem, and the looting of Christian Constantinople) is omitted ( p. 171). Also in Part 2 there is a remarkable apple-and-orange comparison between Sharon (a Russian settler) and Arafat (a native Palestinian). But the backbone of Part 2 is the Zionist claim that contemporary Jews are a “Semitic” people who were deported from their homeland by the Romans and are now returning under the Law of “Return.” There is no historical evidence that contemporary Jews are “Semitic” (whether we define “Semitic” as a racial or a language grouping), and there is no historical evidence that Palestinian Jews were ever mass deported from Palestine by the Romans. Indeed, there is mounting evidence that contemporary Jews are of Slavo-Turkic ancestry (see Arthur Koestler’s *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and its Heritage* as well as Paul Wexler’s three books: *The Ashkenazic Jews: A Slavo-Turkic People in Search of a Jewish Identity*; *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews*; *Two-tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian Dialect*). In any case, the Israelis have no right whatsoever to dispossess the Palestinians.

Part 3 of the book, “Today: In the Vortex,” runs less than 20 pages, all of which could have been easily incorporated within Part 1. It talks briefly about the collapse of the Oslo Accords, which the author likes to put within the context of 9/11 and the “wider conflict” between Islam and the West. It blames the Intifada on “Arafat’s refusal” to accept Barak’s offer (at Camp David in 2000) of “90 percent of the West Bank” ( p. 222). The author reiterates the concluding dilemma of Part 1 and ends by noting that her account of the Holy Land “can never be concluded” ( p. 226).

On a more substantive level, the author raises the central question in the Arab–Zionist conflict (*Holy Land, Whose Land?*) but abstains from answering it: “The story of the Holy Land that follows is not intended to answer the question posed in the title of this book” (p. xix). Such abstention may indicate that the author (a former president of the National Council for Geographic Education) considers Palestine a no-man’s-land Holy

Land or that she is fearful of providing the more common sense answer: Palestine belongs to the Palestinians. We all know that faith in Zionism and fear of the Zionists have made taboo any criticism of Israel in the United States. I still remember that when I returned from the November 1999 National Council for Geographic Education conference in Boston (where I made a brief presentation about teaching the geography of the Arab World in the United States), my department's chairperson came to my office in the early morning of the first working day after the conference to inform me that he had received "more than one telephone call" from people who had attended the conference and who had complained that the presentation "was anti-American and anti-Jewish."

Criticism of Zionism and Israel could also be sensitive for the author, who acknowledges that her interest in the Holy Land began when she first met Daniel Hillel (an Israeli agronomist) and read Thomas Cahill, Bernard Lewis, Thomas Friedman, and Fouad Ajami. Furthermore, the two congressmen (Paul Simon and Lee Hamilton) who provided blurbs for the book are among the top recipients of pro-Israel Political Action Committee (PAC) donations. Senator Simon is considered by the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) a long-time supporter of Israel, with a 100-percent pro-Israel voting record.

Finally, there are some corrections that the author, the peer reviewers, and the publisher must have inadvertently missed. The following are just examples. Concerning the historical geography of Islam and the question of "Allah" as a "local" god (p. 161), I would like to point out that in Islam, "Allah" (also Ellah/Ella/El) is the original Arabic name of the One True and Universal "God" (a word derived much later from Old High German *got* [god]). Variations of the name "Allah" are part of many Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and other names, such as IshmaEl/IsmaEl, GabriEl/JibreEl, MichaEl/MeekaeEl, IsraEl/IsraeEl, and AbdElla. "Allah" is still the name used for "God" to this day by original native Christians and Jews of the Middle East.

The Quran considers Islam to be the original monotheism (of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus) from which Judaism and Christianity have deviated: The Jews reject Jesus and the Christians worship Jesus, whereas Muslims adopt a middle position of admiration, not rejection or worship of Jesus. To stress monotheism, the Quran called on the Christians and the Jews: "Say: 'O People of the Book! Come To common terms As between us and you: That we worship None but Allah [God]; That we associate No partners with Him; That we erect not, From among ourselves, Lords and patrons Other than Allah [God]'" (Quran 3:64, *The Holy Quran: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, Al-Madinah, Saudi Arabia: Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran, 1413 AH). The Quran also considers Mecca (also Becca) the first *Beit Allah*, the first house built for worship of the One God (Quran 3:96). The various Quranic verses mentioned on page 212 (Quran 2:97–98, Quran 5:78, and Quran 9:30) address only those among Jews and Christians who have deviated from the central tenets of monotheism (the Unity God), not all Jews or all Christians. As for Quran 9:5, the reference is not to the Jews and the Christians, as is claimed on page 212. The reference is specifically to the *Mushrikûn* (polytheists) of Mohammed's own Arab tribe, who banned Muslim peaceful

preaching in Mecca, sent Meccan Muslims into exile in Ethiopia and Medina, confiscated Muslims' property, and later broke the Hudaibyah peace treaty by killing Muslims.

As for Muslims' views of the almost organic connection between the State of Israel and the U.S. government, they are often inspired by Quran 60:8-9: "God forbids you not, With regard to those who Fight you not for (your) Faith Nor drive you out Of your homes, From dealing kindly and justly With them: For God loveth Those who are just. God only forbids you, With regard to those who Fight you for (your) Faith, And drive you out Of your homes, and support (Others) in driving you out, from turning to them (For friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (In these circumstances), That do wrong." The injunction is that Muslims be kind to all people who do not persecute them or drive them out of their homes.

Concerning Mohammed's parents (p. 161), Islamic sources (such as Mohammed Ibn Ishaq's *Es-Seerah En-Nebewiyah*) tell us that Mohammed's father, Abdullah, died before Mohammed's birth (or "when he is two" as in the book), while Mohammed's mother, Aminah, died when Mohammed was six years old (not "when he is ten" as in the book). The first revealed word of Quran is *Iqra*, which is translated as "Recite!" (sometimes "Read!" or "Rehearse!" or "Proclaim!"), but never "Write!" as asserted on page 162. Also the short-lived political union between Egypt and Syria took place between 1958 and 1961, not "in the 1970s," as asserted on page 184. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led to the emergence of Hezbollah, not the other way around, as on page 58. Jordan's King Hussein cracked down brutally on Palestinian militants and ousted Arafat's PLO headquarters in 1970, not in 1980, as on page 182 (*Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2003*). Last but not least, the statement that Saddam "continues to maintain an arsenal of nuclear and chemical weapons" (p. 183) needs at least to be referenced, as we now know that President Bush used such unsubstantiated claims in order to justify the invasion and destruction of Iraq.

Overall, I think the author made an important effort to write her own personal *story* of involvement with the Holy Land in the form of a Holy Land travel book. But writing the history of the Holy Land and unpacking the geopolitics of the Arab-Zionist conflict requires more than a Holy Land travel book. One might have hoped that the author's tour of Zionist-occupied Palestine would imitate Charles Dickens' tour of slavery-infested America in 1842. Dickens turned his pen against slavery and, to the surprise of the upholders of slavery in America, became an abolitionist in his travel book *American Notes* (whose reading made British Queen Victoria weep).

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