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LANDSCAPING PALESTINE: REFLECTIONS OF ENCLOSURE IN A HISTORICAL MIRROR

This article examines the origins of the walled and fragmented Palestinian landscape by situating it within a context of recurrent encounters between dominant groups with territorial ambitions and less powerful subalterns focusing on the interplay of power and territorial space. The argument is that the Palestinian landscape is part of a long-standing narrative in which groups coveting territory transform the economy, demography, and culture of territorial space through the time-honored practice of enclosure. Enclosure is the exercise of force upon space by groups with territorial ambitions resulting in the remaking of landscapes. Mobilizing the institutional power of property law and the material power of the built environment, these groups reorder land ownership, use, and circulation on the landscape in an effort to consolidate systems of control over subalterns and reorganize socioeconomic life and demography in a place. This article argues that the project of state building launched by Zionists in Israel or Palestine is fundamentally an exercise of power on space similar to the making of enclosure landscapes from the past, notably, the enclosure landscape of early modern England. By exploring the contours of this pattern, this article seeks to uncover a more general meaning in the landscape of Palestine today.