

## **The Story of a Palestinian Occupied Land, Awarta; A Comparative Study of the Policies of Racism and Discrimination between Palestine and Native America**

Rasha Shaher Al-Ahmad Amman  
Department of Basic Sciences, Balqa Applied University, As-Salt, Jordan

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**Abstract:** This study aims at a tribalographical reading of a forgotten palestinian village, awarta. It investigates many of the events and non-events in the history of this village and it will discuss the politics of racism and the methods used to colonize and humiliate the Palestinians. In a way, the story of awarta reflects the whole story of palestine since occupation in 1948. It can be said that while no two cases of colonization are exactly alike, there are similarities in the racial policies that are used against the American Indians and the palestinians. This study investigates, through deconstructing the colonial stories and highlighting the stories of repressed groups, a postcolonial and deconstructionist reading which will present a recorded and documented history about one of the palestinian villages that fell under the Israeli occupation since the war of June 1967. Therefore, it is important to come across the postcolonial and tribalographical theories that form the theories of the colonized people.

**Key words:** Awarta, palestine, native american stories, racism, postcolonial, tribalogy, deconstructing narratives, events and non-events, colonial policy, violence, heritage

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Palestine falls under the zionist occupation that deprives the palestinian people of their basic rights on May 15, 1948. As a result, the Israeli government rapes their land; similarly, American Indians are colonized by the white Europeans who settled the so-called New World; America. Therefore, both nations suffer throughout the history from the new government's policies of discrimination and racism that violate the rights of their people. Persecution and humiliation against the indigenous residents take many forms such as murdering them, omitting their identities, exterminating them and stealing their lands.

Palestine and America are the "promised lands" for the colonizers, settler-colonists of European to the new world: America since 1492 and the Israeli occupiers of Palestine since 1967. In both cases settlers occupy the lands, steal the bounties, slaughter the innocent people and enjoy inhuman and racial policies which aim at removing the indigenous residents of their homes. The history which is generally written by the conquerors, represents only the stories of the colonizer. Thus, it marginalizes, belittles and neglects the victims of colonization while glorifying the colonizers who take the lands and commit the genocides.

My research study aims at a tribalographical reading of a forgotten palestinian village, Awarta. I investigate

many of the events and non-events in the history of my village and I will discuss the politics of racism and the methods used to colonize and humiliate the Palestinians. In a way, the story of Awarta reflects the whole story of Palestine since occupation in 1948. It can be said that while no two cases of colonization are exactly alike, there are similarities in the racial policies that are used against the American Indians and the palestinians.

This study investigates, through deconstructing the colonial stories and highlighting the stories of repressed groups, a postcolonial and deconstructionist reading which will present a recorded and documented history about one of the Palestinian villages that fell under the Israeli occupation since the war of June 1967. Therefore, it is important to come across the postcolonial and tribalographical theories that form the theories of the colonized people.

Since, this study peruses a tribalographical analysis, it is important to throw the light upon many new terminologies that are developed by critics who represent the colonized states. Also, my study aims at a comparative study between the racial and colonial policies that are used against native residents of Palestine and America. Therefore, it is important to throw the light upon many theories that are discussed and argued by Natives, Arabs and mainstream critics. In order to investigate the story of creation of my village, Awarta, it is important to tackle many postmodern terms that touch upon this

theme. Professor LeAnne Howe, a Native American (Choctaw) critic, novelist and writer argues the concept of "Tribalography". It is a terminology that means "Native stories are power. They create people. They researcher tribes. America is a tribal creation story, a tribalography" (LeAnne, 2001) professor leanne howe puts an emphasis upon the importance of creating the stories of the indigenous people, she adds: "As numerous Indian tribes, creation stories gave birth to our people and it is with absolute certainty that I tell you now-our stories also created the immigrants who landed on our shores" (LeAnne, 2001).

The creation of the stories of the colonized people and deconstructing facts need collaboration and exerting efforts of the indigenous writers to tackle their stories in depth. Craig S. Womack, an American Indian critic (Muskogee creek), argues the importance of encouraging the Native Indians to legitimate their approaches to the native texts (Womack, 1999). The same critic confirms the need of native writers in order to get rid of the external authority over texts, he says "that Indian resistance can be successful, that Native critical centers are possible, that working from the nation, rather than looking toward the outside is a legitimate way of examining literature" (Womack, 1999).

The colonial debates are racial and depict prejudice, paradox and ambivalence against the colonized countries. Therefore, it is important to convey the stories and experiences of the colonized people that deconstruct the traditional colonial stories. Professors bill ashcroft and pal Ahluwalia the researcher of edward said: the paradox of Identity argue that the colonial discourse demonstrates and points out to the deep ambivalence and duality of the colonial discourse, its practices and the ways it builds and constructs both colonizing and colonized issues and debates (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 1999).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The significance of the postcolonial approach stems from the fact that it reveals and deconstructs the colonial and mainstream stories. Thus, it deconstructs the concepts of power and authority. Lois Tyson, a mainstream author, comments on the colonial and postcolonial texts, she remarks that: "Most postcolonial critics analyze the ways in which a literary text, whatever its themes is colonialist or anti-colonialist that is the ways in which the text reinforces or resists colonialism's oppressive ideology" (Lois, 1999) confirms that: "text can resist colonialist ideology by depicting the misdeeds of the colonizers, the suffering of the colonized or the detrimental effects of colonialism on the colonized" (Lois, 1999).

Because the stories of creation or the tribalography are newly-created stories by authors who belong to the non-western world they present a world literature that examines the cultures and societies across the world. Homi Bhabha, the Indian American and the post-colonial critic argues that.

The world literature might be seen as the study of the ways in which cultures define themselves by "othering" groups whom they demonize or otherwise devalue for that purpose. Or we might analyze world literature by examining the representations of people and events that occur across cultural boundaries (Lois, 1999).

The purpose of my study is to analyze the colonial acts and policies that are used against the Palestinian people and to tackle the issue of the colonization of a Palestinian village; Awarta. This study will present to the world an eyewitness on the crimes, murders and aggression of Israel. It also presents a document about the history of Awarta village. In that way, I deconstruct the story of creation of my village by depicting and examining the historic values and the cultural heritage which are considered significant documents for the next generations. Awarta is my parents and my grand parent's village which enjoys great historic, religious and geographical values; therefore, the importance of this research paper is to provide the world with a documentary record about my own village. This record will depict many historic facts, truths, non-events and stories about Awarta. It is worth mentioning that I belong to the Al Ahmad family, a sub-family of the larger tribe of Al-Abdat which has been living in the village for many centuries. Because my family, like the rest of Awarta families, suffers and becomes a victim under the Israeli occupation, it is important to shed light upon the story of my village. This story witnesses on the tyranny and oppression of the Israeli occupation. It also provides the readers with a document about the neglected and forgotten history of my nice and peaceful village.

Awarta is a small Palestinian village which is located in the southeast of Nablus city in the West Bank. It is surrounded by many villages like Huwara and Beta, Bet Forek, Borien and Aqraba. The land area is around (16106) acres and the village is built on (540) dunams.

The history of the village is rich and it has been inhabited by many civilizations throughout history such as canaanites, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arab Muslims and the ottomans. It fell under the British colonization when the British occupied Palestine in 1916. It has become part of the Palestinian occupied lands in the war of June 1967 when the Israeli forces conquered Awarta and the rest of the West Bank. Since that date, the inhabitants have suffered the Israeli racial policies and acts. Because

of the religious as well as the historic value which the village enjoys, persecution and violence become justified against its residents.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the methods that the colonialists use to violate the rights of the people and the land and to reveal the non-events in my village. Then, it compares them to the non-events, the colonial practices and murders that are committed against the native Americans. Therefore, it is important to throw light upon the history of the American Indians. Native Indians enjoy a long and glorious history which goes back to thousands of years of existence before the migration of the first waves of white European discoverers to the new world in the fifteenth century which dated back to the year 1492. Their history (Native Americans) is distorted and they are depicted as being wild and savage people who have no civilization or tradition. It is noteworthy that, the colonization of the Native Indians goes back to over 500 years while the Israeli occupation of Palestine is 62 years old.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

According to the statistics of the Palestinian central Bureau of Statistics, the village of Awarta had a population of 5,810 inhabitants in 2007. Also, a large number of its residents were evacuated to Jordan, after the war of June 1967 to work and pursue their higher education there. Many of its residents immigrated to Kuwait in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century to work there. There are few people who went to Syria, Egypt, Eastern and Western Europe as well as the United States to work and to pursue their education.

The history of Awarta is not separated from the history of the rest of Palestine whose residents were evacuated and exterminated since "the Nakba" or the Arab War of 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel in the same year. According to a study conducted in 1/4/1945, the population of Nablus vicinity was around 23,250 people including 680 Christians and 210 Samaritans (Jewish Palestinian sect) and in 18/11/1961, there were 45,950 people living in Nablus vicinity; including 627 Christian 212 Samaritan (Ad-Dabbagh, 1996) This points out to the assimilation of the people who represent the different religions and reflects the transnational soul of its residents.

The peasants of Awarta enjoy good reputation the reason that makes them respected by the residents of the surrounding villages. People from these villages exchange goods such as the olive products with them. They also celebrate ceremonies such as the religious feasts with each other. The men are known for their high appreciation

for the rights and issues of women. Therefore, they encourage the mixed marriages and people from the other Palestinian cities and villages mix and get married to them. Susan Power, a Dakota writer, points out to the cultural diversity and the theme of transnationalism among the different Indian native tribes in her novel *The Grass Dancer* (Susan, 1994). Also, she highlights the richness and diversity of the Dakotas social and cultural life. For instance, the novel presents an example of the mixed marriages between the Dakotas and other tribes such as

Pumpkin's tribe in the first story; "Grass Dance".

Susan Power, in her novel (*The Grass Dancer*) points out to some of the cultural activities in the Dakotas life. These activities highly indicate that Native Americans are civilized and enjoy a long history which is neglected and stereotyped and distorted by the white Americans. The grass dance festivals are important because they gather and mix the different Indian tribes in ceremonial festivals. These festivals unify the Dakota lands. In comparison, the annual olive harvest season in Palestine is an opportunity for the different peasants of the various villages to meet and collaborate to crop their olive trees. This phenomenon takes place not only in Awarta but also in most of the Palestinians villages and cities. The people work together, eat and sing the famous songs for the harvest ceremony.

Awarta enjoys a religious and historic value; the reasons that make its residents targets and victims for Israel which has planned at removing them from the village since the occupation of the village in June 1967. The village enjoys a religious importance because it embraces many religious monuments and there are large tombs for religious figures such as Aaron and his sons Ithamar and Eleazar.

In the West of Awarta lies the tomb of Ezra, the scribe. Phineas is believed to be buried at the site alongside his son Abishua-the latter is especially revered by the Samaritans, who believe that he wrote the ancient Torah. The 70 Elders are buried in a cave near Phineas's tomb. And there are the tombs of Yusha (Joshua) ibn Nun and Mufaddal son of Aaron's uncle. These lie in a cave, where also are buried seventy prophets.

These sites are Islamic, according to Ameen Abu Wardeh in his report "Lands of Awarta Town Annexed and its History Falsified" confirms that "Archaeologists have documented that the sites and (al 'Ezizat, al Mafdal and the Seventy-Sheikh) are Islamic ruins" as Nawaf Al-Amer, (the Palestinian researcher) confirms. Many witnesses from Awarta including my father, mother and a few relatives confirm that the Israeli settlers come from the different settlements, attack the peaceful residents and steal the harvest of their olive trees. They aim at

evacuating them from their homes and taking the tombs which they claim that they are Jewish and belong to Israel. Whereas, Palestinians allow free access to the Jewish to these tombs, the Israeli settlers want to take them by force and on the account of the indigenous residents.

Israel uses the same strategies of distorting facts and truths on the rest of the Palestinian towns and cities. For instance, they claim the Al-Aqsa Mosque is built over haikal. So, they exert efforts to destroy it and to omit the Arab and Muslim entity of Jerusalem. They turn the Islamic history and tradition into lies and myths. In addition, they deny the fact that these are Islamic monuments and they claim that Palestine is the land of promise. The new state or Israel is a colonial body that is created by the British colonizers to separate the Arab world into two halves and to manipulate its resources, bounties and to exterminate the indigenous people. Turning the histories of the colonized nations into myths and distorting facts about them are important scholarly themes for American Indians. Professor Leanne Howe argues in her study "The story of America: A Tribalography" about the issues of the Native Indians whose cultures, traditions and stories of existence are portrayed by the scholars (white) as being myths or fiction (LeAnne, 2001).

It is noteworthy that the Palestinian ruins of Awarta suffer negligence like the rest of the ruins of Palestine. Deliberately Israel distorts the historic facts about these ruins. For instance, the tombs of the seventy shiekhs and ElAzerat need more care in light of the fact that the Jewish people claim that these are Jewish sites; therefore, they try to omit the truth about them. Therefore, it is important to keep the cultural heritage of these monuments in order to maintain the history and civilization of the land.

Israeli colonists or settlers, raped the land and persecute its inhabitants in order to carry out their policies which aim at attacking the village and preventing its people from moving to the other Palestinian territories. They also steal the olive harvest each year and they try to remove the Palestinians by fear. They use their guns to kill Palestinians. A non-event which indicates the Palestinian's resistance and struggle to defy the terrorism of Israeli people is the cold murder of many young Palestinians who defend their land using the small stones. For instance, the children, the adults, the young, the old men and women defended their land and resisted the Israeli occupiers in the first Intifada which broke up in 1987 as well as the second Intifada which broke up in 2000 by using stones which they threw on the Israeli armies. Israel, on the other hand, used the worst kinds of destruction weapons against them.

Indian's resistance against the white colonists resembles the ways that Palestinians use to resist Israel inside Awarta and the other Palestinian towns and cities. Native Americans used preliminary kinds of gun to resist the white Americans in the battles that took place in the nineteenth century such as the Battle of Four Lakes in 1855. Moreover, the American Indians suffered and were exterminated from their lands by force and by using illegal policies which were used by the new colonists who migrated from many European states; including Britain, France, Germany and Spain. The United States policymakers and commanders confirmed that their great task and mission is to exterminate completely any native who rejected their commands of being assimilated into the white colonization or being removed from their lands or rebel against the white federal authority (Jaimes, 1992). They also waged many wars like the war of outright extermination by the British against the Indians of Virginia in 1560s (Jaimes, 1992).

The violence and violation of the white Americans and the means they used to remove the indigenous Indians from their lands resemble the aggressive and inhuman acts of Israel that are practiced against the Palestinians. Persecution of Awarta residents has many forms. For instance, a report issued by the International Middle East Media Center on November 20, 2007 by the journalist Ameen Abu Wardeh tackles the current state of the village. He discusses the racial practices of the Israeli Armies which convert the village to an open air jail. For instance while the road takes ten minutes to get to Nablus city, the main street is blocked and the residents are forced to take Huwara road and the checkpoints there double the distance and the hardship of movement among Awarta and the surrounding towns and villages.

The same writer touches upon a crucial issue and problem concerning raping the land, dividing it and seizing a large number of acres of the area of the village. The barbed-wires divide the village and it complicates the life and movement of people. This adds more difficulties to the peasants who need to bring water from the main well inside the village and from the wells in the surrounding villages. Also, the peasants find problems in cropping the olive trees during the olive harvest. A lively example on the suffering of the peaceful villagers is the story of suffering of my maternal grandparents. Their land is cut to two parts and the major part of it was seized by Israel in order to build Itmar settlement on it.

My father and my uncle told me a story that happened to them in July, 1976 which presents a lively witness and indicates the violence and brutality of Israel.

The Israeli forces attacked Awarta to arrest a young peasant whom they suspect of being an active member in the Palestinian Liberation Movement (Fateh). Therefore, they attacked the peaceful homes of the village looking for the man and asked every man to come to the general court in the center of the village (all men were taken by force to that court and their eyes were blinded). Then, the commander asked them to show him their personal documents and identities. A man (a relative of my mother) protested on the policy of dehumanizing the peaceful peasants in this way. Therefore, the commander tore all his documents in front of his face and hit him harshly and told him that because Israel is a democratic state he will not kill him! This non-event could be a reminder of what happens to Buddy and Albertine in "The American Horse". The police officers come to arrest the son and they take him by force without mercy. This non-event happens in a country that claims democracy and respecting humans and their rights.

Assimilation is another important policy which the colonizers white Americans and Israeli, use to omit the identity, roots and culture of occupied people. Marlene Clapp, another American Indian critic and writer, points out to the definition of the term "assimilation" which means "the process by which a culturally distinct group of people is made to resemble and take on the traits of another distinct cultural group".

For instance, the white Americans establish many boarding schools for the American Indians in order to forget their identities and their own culture, native land, habits and customs. They also encourage the Native Indians to leave their reservations and to get married from people who belong to other ethnicities (Jaimes, 1992). Similarly Israel tries to omit the roots of the indigenous Palestinians who live inside the Arab occupied land of 1948 by forcing them to get the Israeli identity.

Israel raped the Palestinian lands by force. Israel decided to agree on establishing the settlement of Itmar at the end of the 1970s when the Israeli high court decided to remove the settlements in the area of Rojeeb (Palestinian village) and transfer the settlers who were living there to the Bilal Mountain lands in Deir al Hatab. Itmar settlement was established by Ma'er Institute students in 1984. The name of the settlement refers to "Eliezer Itmar Benhas" a Jewish religious figure in the Jewish history. Awfully, this is an important event which becomes non-event and neglected.

Similarly, the lands of the Native Indians which are described as wilderness are taken by force by the white Americans. The American policymakers decided in the mid-nineteenth century to exterminate the native people

who refused the colonizers attempts of removing them of their lands, or assimilating with the colonizers societies or coordinating with the federal authority (Jaimes, 1992). The Palestine Monitor issued a report on 16 October, 2010 about an incident in which the Palestinian resident of Awarta Ismael Awwad was attacked by a settler's pigs after they were released from his home in Itmar settlement. The pigs that weigh 200 pounds attacked him while he was harvesting the olive trees in his farm. He tried to prevent the pig's attack on his family which witnessed the attack, but he paid for this and lost both of his legs and received many scars and cuts on different places in his body.

This policy of genocide reflects the racial and the merciless destructive acts and the violation of lands and the rights of people. This event is a simple example on the acts of humiliation that are neglected and marginalized in newspapers or broadcasts. Few people remember them or talk about them. Moreover, these incidents happen everyday in each Palestinian village and city. The colonists target children, women, elderly in their fields, on the checkpoints and inside the cities. The same inhuman and racial policies of genocide find their counterparts inside the tribes of the Native Indians. They suffered the white colonial policies which removed and exterminated them from their lands. The inhabitants were reduced, according to the article "The State of Native America Genocide, Colonization and Resistance" because of the destruction and extermination of the Native Indian population by spreading diseases, bacteria and epidemics (Jaimes, 1992). For instance, Cherokee Nation was removed by force from its homeland to other states like Tennessee (Jaimes, 1992).

The racial acts which target the peaceful residents do not weaken them. On the contrary, the people of Awarta are engaged in business life. They run their shops, schools and free business. For instance, they are famous for the olive products. They make the olive soap and sell it in the other towns and cities. Also, they produce and sell oil and olive of large quantities what brings them a good wealth. Women excel in art of embroidery and their famous cloth making skills. They sew the Palestinian folkloric dress. Palestinians since the times of Canaanites, over than 9,000 year ago have known the dress and men have unembroidered dress in order not to be similar to women in the way they appear or dress (Abdel-Rahman, 1981).

The national folkloric traditional dress is a theme in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer*. Margaret Many Wounds urges her grandson, Harry, on her death bed to liberate their national dress from the national museum in Chicago. The dress represents the entity and identity of Native Americans yet it is stolen by the white Americans

(Susan, 1994). The Indians traditional dress could be compared to the Palestinian Folkloric dress that is used in Awarta and all the Palestinian cities and towns.

The violation of the Palestinian dress becomes a dangerous phenomenon. For instance, in June 19, 1978, The Jerusalem Post newspaper published an issue in which many photos were picked up for Israeli models wearing underwear clothes which were designed by using the Palestinian folkloric embroidery (Abdel-Rahman, 1981) A non-event that has a similarity with the story of Veronica and Betty in Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* in which they use the Indian dress in order to expose and broadcast themselves in a shameful way which distorts the identity of natives (Sherman, 1995)

Awarta pays an expensive cost because of the patriotism of its residents who stand in front of the aggression of the Israeli policies and try to resist them. The villagers there attend many liberation organizations and movements. These movements want to purify the land from the Israeli occupiers and dismiss them. For instance, most of Awarta people are members in the Palestinian liberation organization and the public front for the Liberation of Palestine. They participated in many revolutions against the British colonization during the thirties and the forties of the twentieth century. According to my grandfather, he told us that Awarta peasants provided the warriors from the other Palestinian villages with food and weapon during the big strike in the year 1936. This event touches upon the theme of transnationalism.

At the current times, the Palestinian people resist the violence of Israel by using a simple weapon; the stones. They do not have advanced weapons such as the guns or the phosphorous weapons which Israel used during the last war on Gaza in 2008 in order to exterminate its inhabitants. Similarly, the American Indians who started a strike in Al-Katraz resemble their Palestinian counterparts in the ways they resisted and defied their occupiers. The resistance in Al-Katraz and the persecution of the young strugglers after they ended their strike is a good reminder of the persecution and humiliation of the Palestinians. Palestinians suffer everyday because of their resisting the Israeli occupation forces in Awarta and every Palestinian town and city. Both of the American Indians and Palestinians suffer persecution and racism.

Education is considered an important weapon for the Palestinians. A researcher from Al-Najah National University in Nablus conducted a study in which she examines the socio- historical circumstances in Awarta village. The study tackles the issue of education in the village since the early years of the twentieth century. She mentions that the village had at the early 1920s one

school which attracted the students from the surrounding villages. It was a coeducational school which was built in 1924. In 1965, another school was built till the Palestinian Authority built many schools. However, it is noteworthy that Israel tries to prevent people from establishing schools and it complicates the procedures of building new schools and issuing permits for building them. It wants to spread literacy among people.

The racism in the educational system in America encourages the Native Indians to establish academic institutes. Unlike the boarding schools which were established by the white Americans to assimilate the Native Americans into the mainstream culture, tribal colleges and universities (TCU) are established in order to maintain and preserve the cultural heritage of the natives of America.

Kitty Kelly Epstein indicates that that America's children schools excluded "the Minority People" who include Latin asian, African-American and Native Americans from teaching in the schools despite the fact that there is an increase in the numbers of children who belong to the minorities (as the United States Department of Education indicated in 1999 that they form 40% of the children schools) (Epstein, 2005).

After examining the strategies of racism and discrimination of the colonizers, the readers need to come across an important fact. It is the need to reveal the racial and inhuman acts which are used to murder the people, rape the land and steal the bounties of the indigenous people who pay the cost for the greed and selfishness of the Westerners. Whole nations, like Israel and America, are created on the account of others. Stories (that are believed to be true) which become history, pave the way for the establishment of these states. Therefore, the occupied people shoulder a heavy responsibility of creating their stories or the stories of the creation of their nations in order to remind the world of their existence.

## CONCLUSION

The story of Awarta is a story of a whole nation that is occupied, persecuted, evacuated and tortured. It is the story of parents and grandparents which becomes forgotten. The importance of this study stems from the fact that it documents the history of a colonized village. This document depicts the facts and truths that Israel tries to distort and misrepresent. This document is important for the future generations to come across the hidden and neglected facts, events, non-events and stories which are important to present a witness on the Israeli violent acts and the violation of rights of the Palestinian people. Moreover, this documentary paper portrays the historic as well as the religious values and

significance of the village of Awarta which are neglected or depicted according to the Israeli claims and lies. Moreover, the cultural and historic heritage must be kept since it reflects the identity of the indigenous people.

Native Americans enjoy a sense of self-awareness which urges them to deconstruct the stories of the white colonizers that distort their history. Native American's tribalogographies inspire the writing of the tribalogy of the village; or the story of creation of my homeland. This paper explains the misery of other colonized nations like the Natives of North America. These deconstructed postcolonial stories of both Native Americans and the Palestinians remind the world of the inhumanity of the white European colonizers who repress, persecute and exterminate others.

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