Making the Old City: Life Projects and State Heritage in Rhodes and Acre

Evan Taylor

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2

Part of the Archaeological Anthropology Commons, Human Geography Commons, Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Recommended Citation

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
MAKING THE OLD CITY:
LIFE PROJECTS AND STATE HERITAGE IN RHODES AND ACRE

A Dissertation Presented

by

EVAN P. TAYLOR

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2022

Anthropology
MAKING THE OLD CITY:
LIFE PROJECTS AND STATE HERITAGE IN RHODES AND ACRE

A Dissertation Presented

By

EVAN P. TAYLOR

Approved as to style and content by:

____________________________________
Elizabeth Chilton, Chair

____________________________________
Krista Harper, Member

____________________________________
Michael Sugerman, Member

____________________________________
Toby Applegate, Member

____________________________________
Julie Hemment, Department Head
Department of Anthropology
DEDICATION

For the people of Rhodes and Acre, past and present.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a joy to acknowledge the people and organizations that supported me in the journey of graduate school and dissertation research. I’d like to first thank friends and interlocutors in Rhodes and Acre, most of whom are given pseudonyms in this work, for generously sharing your time and space with me. This project evolved substantially during my time with you. Our conversations guided it in a direction that I hope is meaningful to the work you are doing. I especially thank Nzar Khoury, Eytan George Hurwitz, and Heidi Widler for their hospitality and for helping me to see the meanings of home in these places. It was always a privilege to discuss this project and learn about life in Acre from fellow anthropologist Taiseer Khatib.

I could not have completed the research for this dissertation without funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Government of Alberta, the Fondation Québec Philanthrope (with ICOMOS Canada), the Culture and Heritage in European Societies and Spaces program (NSF IIA-1261172), the UMass Amherst Department of Anthropology, and the UMass Amherst Graduate School.

I am grateful to Elizabeth Chilton, my advisor, for her mentorship, support, and encouragement throughout my graduate studies. Thank you for your always thoughtful guidance through grant proposals and chapter drafts over the years. I always left our meetings with the sense of focus that I needed to write this dissertation. I am deeply thankful to my committee members who I have learned so much from and who helped shape my cross-subfield approach to anthropology. Thank you, Michael Sugerman, for introducing me to Acre and for supporting my work in community archaeology and archaeological ethnography while I developed the idea for this dissertation research. To
Krista Harper, thank you for encouraging me to apply for CHESS, where I developed my research in Rhodes, and for your guidance in research methods, data analysis, and writing. I am grateful to Toby Applegate, who helped me think through relations between heritage, migration, and displacement, and for enthusiastically supporting this research.

Thank you to faculty members at UMass Amherst for the engaging classes and conversations that helped me move this project forward: Sonya Atalay, Whitney Battle-Baptiste, Matthew Hill, Jane Anderson, Jackie Urla, Eric Johnson, Jonathan Rosa, Jen Sandler, Bob Paynter, Ellen Pader, Aviva Ben-Ur, and Susan Shapiro. Special thanks to Julie Hemment, who supervised my CHESS cohort and offered valuable guidance in the initial stages of research design. My field research in Acre was made so much richer thanks to semesters of language instruction from Nahla Khalil and Ofir Zussman at UMass Amherst, Marian Sleibi at Bethlehem University, and numerous student tutors in the Five College Center for World Languages. Thank you to discussants who read early renditions of parts of this dissertation as conference papers and offered useful feedback: Giacomo Loperfido, Sue Hyatt, Chip Colwell, and Laurie Wilkie. I am thankful to my undergraduate mentors Jasmin Habib, Robert MacDonald, and Robert Park for assuring me early on that it was okay, even good, to pursue research interests that crossed anthropological subfields.

I thank Ann Killebrew and Michal Artzy for their leadership on the Tel Akko Total Archaeology Project, where I spent several summers helping to coordinate community archaeology and research about the impacts of UNESCO World Heritage designation on Acre. Thanks also to project faculty and associates Melissa Rosenzweig, Amani Abu Hmid, Nick Pumphrey, Amanda Pumphrey, Tammi Schneider, Lori Anne
Ferrell, Gary Gilbert, Martha Risser, Jane Skinner, Sandra Scham, Reema Pangarkar, Rachel Ben-Dov, Dana DePietro, Shelley-Anne Peleg, and Ornit Schnecke for sharing your insights and helping me to get a grasp of the politics of archaeology on the ground.

I am so thankful to fellow graduate students at UMass for the encouragement, for the conversations on the bus, for the friendships, and for the community: Marc Lorenc, Erica Kowsz, Lauren Woodard, Justin Helepololei, Eric Griffith, Ying Li, Cary Speck, Sarah Mathena-Allen, Heidi Bauer-Clapp, Berra Topçu, Dana Conzo, Rebecca Bartusewich, Jill Bierly, Julie Woods, Anthony Martin, Eleanor Finley, Brittni Howard, Brie Adams, Cary Speck, Adam Zimmer, Cecilia Vasquez, Christa Burdick, Castriela Hernández-Reyes, Victoria Bochniak, Ryan Rybka, Danielle Raad, Ana Smith-Aguilar, and Cat Tebaldi. I also thank the Department of Anthropology staff, past and present, for guiding me through various hurdles, passing along information, processing reimbursements, ordering keys, and being a relentlessly supportive presence in Machmer Hall. Thank you, Shelley Silva, Grace Rock, Debbie Averill, Beverly Morrison, and Danielle Sedelow. Without you, there is no Department of Anthropology.

Thanks to my family—Ron, Barb, Lauren, Dan, and Rosie—for your love and support as my interests evolved from a childhood obsession with ancient Egypt. Elena Sesma, you have been by my side at all stages of this project. I was warmly welcomed into your family during this time and am so grateful for their encouragement. I could not ask for a more supportive partner. You joined me in Acre and Rhodes, you were there for moments of frustration and excitement, and you patiently supported me through the long writing process. Thank you for everything.
ABSTRACT

MAKING THE OLD CITY:
LIFE PROJECTS AND STATE HERITAGE IN RHODES AND ACRE

MAY 2022

EVAN P. TAYLOR, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Elizabeth Chilton

The “old city,” a widely recognizable category of urban space, has long been a locus of development projects, state monitoring, and mass tourism, while also being home to resident communities. This dissertation explores the intersections of community life and state-driven heritage projects in the Old Town of Rhodes, in the Greek Dodecanese, and the Old City of Acre (‘Akka), a Palestinian community in northern Israel/Palestine. Both old cities are UNESCO World Heritage sites and subjects of intense state-supported tourism development. However, their resident populations and their built environments, which coalesced mainly under Crusader and Ottoman rule, challenge the authorized heritage discourse of both Greek and Israeli states in that they reflect a specifically other-than-national heritage.

I examine how residents develop life projects—work aimed at making a good life for self and community—in the wake of state heritage projects—work aimed at crafting citizens and places as subjects—in these two old cities. I adopt the lens of archaeological ethnography to account for the lived experiences of my interlocutors in relation to the old cities and their ongoing material formation. Residents of both places similarly experience
state heritage as a process of alienation, but different histories of state intervention, tourism, and residents’ own memories of displacement and dispossession have led them to work against and beyond state heritage in distinct ways. Through interviews, participant observation, and photographic surface survey, I examine how residents are engaging with tourism and preservation while reclaiming the terms of heritage from the state. Old Town Rhodians are vastly outnumbered by tourists during parts of the year, and while many work in conventional tourism jobs, they maintain their own ways of relating to the Old Town out of view of state monitors and outside developers. The Old City of Acre remains a residential quarter, home to a Palestinian community that took shape during and following the 1948 war. Acre residents engage in tourism and heritage work with specific intentions of maintaining the Old City as a livable home space, and carry out deliberate, everyday acts of care for the Old City. I argue that residents’ practices in both old cities embody relations to past and to place that evade conventional heritage frameworks and contribute to an alternative and decolonized theorization of the heritage concept that accommodates concerns of livability, local sovereignty, and redress.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions and Context</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldsite Context</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case I: Rhodes (Greece)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case II: Acre (Israel/Palestine)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase I Research</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II Research</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Roadmap</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. HOW CITIES BECOME OLD: HISTORICAL CONTEXT FROM THE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRUSADES TO MASS TOURISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards a History of Heritage</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodes</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crusader Foundations of Rhodes</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottoman Configurations of Rhodes Town</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Occupation and Crusader Nostalgia</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodes after Unification with Greece</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crusader and Ottoman Foundations of the Old City</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acre Under the British Mandate and the Beginnings of Heritage Management</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948 and Beyond: Nakba and the Forging of New Relations</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting an Anthropological Perspective on the Formation of Old Cities</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF OLD CITIES .................. 76
   Archaeological Ethnography of Heritage .................................. 77
   The Archaeology of Heritage .............................................. 79
   The Materiality of State Heritage ........................................ 84
   The Ethnography of Heritage .............................................. 86
   Life Projects and State Heritage ........................................ 87
   Noticing Local and State Approaches to Heritage .................... 91
   Tracking the Emergence of Old Cities .................................. 93

4. HERITAGE, LOSS, AND HOPE IN THE OLD TOWN OF RHODES ........ 96
   State Heritage and the Ethos of Control in Rhodes .................... 98
   Control-by-Closure and the Creation of Emptiness .................... 102
   Filling the Void: The Medieval/Greek Time-Space ..................... 109
   Life Projects in Old Town: Working With, Around, and Against State Heritage ................................................................. 115
   “We’ll Always Have Tourism” .............................................. 118
   The Materiality of Livelihoods and Loss ............................... 122
   After Alienation: Heritage, Standardization, and New Life Projects 137
   Preservation as Decay ........................................................ 142

5. RECLAIMING HERITAGE: PALESTINIAN LIFE PROJECTS IN THE OLD CITY OF ACRE ....................................................... 145
   Locating State Heritage in Acre ........................................... 147
   Reclaiming Heritage: Maintaining Shared Livability in the Old City 152
      Bassem: Making a Living at Home ....................................... 153
      Surface Survey: Adorning the Old City ............................... 158
      Samia: Relocalizing Heritage Tourism ................................ 165
      Surface Survey: Bread and Belonging ................................ 170
      Ahmad: Conserving as Care ............................................. 179
      Surface Survey: Shoring Up the Old City ............................ 185
      Rania: Taking Back Tourism ........................................... 190
      Surface Survey: Static Loci ............................................. 193
   Resisting and Reclaiming Heritage in Acre ................................ 196
### 6. FROM PRESERVATION TO CARE: SEEING HERITAGE IN DIFFERENT PLACES

- Pathways to Community Control ................................................................. 206
  - Claiming Their “Commodity” ......................................................................... 206
  - Tending to Trauma .......................................................................................... 210
  - Expanding Capacity .......................................................................................... 215
  - (Trans)Forming the Site ................................................................................... 219
  - Re-Narrating the Old City ............................................................................... 221
- Heritage as Relating; Relating as Care ............................................................ 226

### 7. CONCLUSION................................................................................................... 228

- Heritage Under and Beyond Commodification ............................................... 228
- Methodological Innovation ............................................................................... 230
- Further Research ............................................................................................... 232
- Concluding Thoughts ......................................................................................... 234

### BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................. 237
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1. Locked and empty houses in la Judería, the former Jewish quarter. Two photos depict dedication plaques (written in Hebrew, Italian, and Ladino) mounted in the early twentieth century to commemorate local philanthropists. (Photographs by author)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. Locked doorways to empty houses and shop stalls in Old Town showing material decay resulting from depopulation. (Photographs by author)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3. Restaurant menu in the Jewish Martyrs Square advertising “Greek” delicacies. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4. Souvenir store on Sokratous street selling bottles of ouzo imaginatively shaped as the classical period Colossus of Rhodes. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5. House exteriors in the Old Town of Rhodes representing local aesthetics and practices of neighborliness. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6. The overgrown and shuttered entrance to the former Old Town Theatre complex. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7. Remains of former tourist businesses in historic buildings abound throughout Old Town. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8. Example of resident whitewashing around entryways and bases of walls in Old Town Rhodes. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1. Map of thirty study loci distributed throughout the Old City of Acre. (Compiled by author using QGIS)</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2. Wedding decorations wound around railing (al-1 in figure 5.1), left undisturbed for two weeks. Representative photos (clockwise) from February 15, February 17, February 19, and February 28, 2018. (Photographs by author)</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3. Framed image of a seated woman, splattered with paint but separated from adjacent trash and suspended on a stone wall for three days (al-8 in figure 5.1), February 4, 2018. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4. Framed needlepoint image of the Dome of the Rock propped against a disused well, (al-19 in figure 5.1), February 12, 2018. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5. Cat consuming bread moments after being deposited by Old City resident, March 2016. (Photograph by author)</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6. Bread tied in plastic bag and hung on a railing (al-1 in figure 5.1), intended for pickup by fishermen. Representative photos (clockwise) from February 19, March 1, March 4, 2018. (Photos by author) .......................................................... 173

5.7. Bread (khubz ‘arabi) floats in the water among fishing boats at the port of ‘Akka (al-27 in figure 5.1), intended for consumption by fish, February 16, 2018. (Photograph by author) .......................................................... 175

5.8. Bread, left separate from household trash at a neighborhood pickup site (al-19 in figure 5.1), deposited loose on a ledge for consumption by cats, January 31, 2018. (Photograph by author) .......................................................... 176

5.9. A laughing dove (Spilopelia senegalensis) and morsels of bread deposited on a ledge (al-10 in figure 5.1) intended for consumption by birds, January 30, 2018. (Photograph by author) .......................................................... 178

5.10. Resident interventions in shoring up state property. Above, tenants have filled the arched windows of a state-owned property with cinder blocks to prop up a weak roof. The roof and triple archways nonetheless collapsed in 2018. Below, a shop keeper has patched gaps around a municipal manhole cover that had become tripping hazards. (Photographs by author) .......................................................... 189

5.11. On the left, installing lights and air conditioning units is facilitated by hiding utility hoses in a sacrificial concrete layer on the stone wall. These crevices are later sealed and painted over. On the right, an exterior lift is installed adjacent to an upper-level apartment’s stairwell. (Photographs by author) .......................................................... 189

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Questions and Context

The dominant paradigm of cultural heritage, as codified by transnational organizations, governments, and professional organizations, centers preservation as the principal means of enabling practices and places to persist as sites of cultural significance and meaning. In this dissertation, I argue that preservation should be seen as one of many ethics and practices that constitute heritage work. Historically, a unifying quality of state heritage projects has been the dismantling of community intimacies in places deemed significant to national identity. Multiple case studies have demonstrated the ways that heritage work is often interwoven with gentrification, mass tourism, and nationalist claims-making, resulting in concealment and erasure of local communities’ relations to place (see Abu El-Haj 1998; Herzfeld 2010; Berliner 2012). Researchers are beginning to consider how communities act upon the transformation of their homes into official “heritage sites,” enacting alternative ways of harnessing cultural heritage to animate non-alienating futures (e.g. Herzfeld 2016; Hammami and Uzer 2018). Here, I offer an anthropological perspective on the intersections of local residents’ life projects (projects aimed at making a good life for self and community) with state heritage projects (projects aimed at crafting citizens and places as subjects) in “old cities.” In the process, I examine how residents approach and re-work concepts of heritage in maintaining, recovering, and losing relations to old cities, offering alternative visions for old cities that dominant notions of heritage seldom capture. I argue for an anthropology of heritage that takes
seriously the lived relationships among people, place, and time, and complicates assumptions about the value of the discourse of “saving the past for the future” that pervades state heritage work and in our own discipline.

Globalization has drawn processes of heritage and commodification closely together, and while this development is acknowledged in anthropological literature, its consequences are underexamined. Local practices of care and the relationships among communities and their material surroundings are often at odds with standardized forms of professional conservation, tourist expectations, and state-sanctioned heritage narratives. Acknowledging that heritage can be practiced at multiple scales, from individuals to multi-national organizations, still depends on assumptions of what heritage is and is not. This research explores how residents of two old cities work with and around concepts of heritage in their relations to place and understandings of their pasts. Beyond asking how people do or perform heritage at local scales, this dissertation examines how people reclaim and remake heritage in the wake of state projects.

Grounded in a moment of global economic and political uncertainty, I focus on two main questions: (1) How do residents relate to cultural heritage work configured under conditions of intense commodification, and (2) under these conditions, how do residents of “old cities” renegotiate their relationship to place and to pasts through and beyond heritage work? Through two urban case studies, this research advances anthropological theories of commodification, cultural heritage, and materiality by examining how local residents unwillingly caught up in state heritage projects engage with, re-appropriate, and refuse concepts of heritage towards their own political and economic goals.
This research draws on fieldwork at two sites in nation-states well known from the literature on heritage and nationalism: the historic walled cities of Rhodes, in Greece’s Dodecanese islands, and Acre (‘Akka in Arabic and Akko in Hebrew)\(^1\), on the Mediterranean coast in the far north of Israel. Both cities were historically excluded from the state’s national gaze due to their specifically other-than-national Crusader and Ottoman-era urban landscapes. However, they are now UNESCO World Heritage sites, and their urban centers are objects of major state-sanctioned tourism development projects fueled by private investment. Anthropological field research in Rhodes and Acre, using ethnographic and archaeological methods, makes for a rich comparison in the context of these research questions. The cities share parallel histories of Crusader, Ottoman, and European administration followed by incorporation into nation-states in the late 1940s, and contemporary administrations are following similar patterns of structuring tourism development around the cities’ Crusader and Ottoman monumental legacies. The cities bear the hallmarks of “old cities” that tourism marketers worldwide crave—fortifications, stone streets and buildings, and towering public monuments. They are also home to marginalized communities in these nation-states, with Rhodes having a significant, but shrinking, population of Rhodian Turks in its Old Town\(^2\), and the Old City of Acre populated almost entirely by Palestinian citizens of Israel. The two cases

---

\(^1\) In this dissertation, I use the names “Old City of Acre” and “Akka” interchangeably to refer to the walled city, as these are the names most often used in academic research and by residents of Acre’s walled city. The name “Akko” is more often used in Hebrew to refer to the larger municipality of which the Old City is a part, a so-called “mixed city” of Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

\(^2\) I use “Old Town” to refer to the walled quarter of Rhodes, and “Old City” to refer to the walled quarter of Acre. Not only does this help to distinguish the two; these are residents’ preferred English translations for the walled quarters of each city. I use the uncapsitalized phrase “old cities” when referring to the general category of historic urban areas, and also when referring collectively to the Old Town of Rhodes and Old City of Acre.
embody the unpredictability of state heritage projects that reach to the margins of accepted national historical discourse.

Despite some similarities, distinct historical and contemporary policies have contributed to very different experiences, both worrisome, for local populations. The old cities of Rhodes and Acre were subjected to tourism development at different times and subjected to different treatments by their various state overseers—Italian, Greek, British, or Israeli. As I explore in chapter 2, the Old Town of Rhodes was subjected to intensive tourism development under Italian rule, much earlier than the Old City of Acre. At present, this has left Rhodes in an advanced stage of heritagization—an abundance of museums and tourist amenities in tidily conserved Crusader structures with few remaining residents—that foreshadows Acre’s fate if tourism development persists as a project led primarily by non-residents. In investigating how residents engage with changes brought about by state heritage work in Rhodes and Acre, I aim to understand residents’ ways of relating to and making meaning of the old cities. Under an austerity-driven Greek government working to Hellenize the Crusader-Ottoman-Italianate city, whose population has been dramatically transformed due to regional geopolitical eruptions over the last century, the Old Town of Rhodes has become a mournful place to many residents that nonetheless promises them economic and social opportunity. Acre, home to descendants of displaced Palestinians under threat of renewed displacement due to the influx of Israeli tourism developers, has become a staging ground for popular sovereignty and for reclaiming the grounds for heritage and tourism. Attending also to the materiality of these cities, I argue that the Old Town of Rhodes and the Old City of Acre are not blank canvasses for state and resident projects, but participate in constraining and
creating possibilities for sustained community therein. In the chapters that follow, I examine how residents encounter concepts of “heritage” promoted by the state and celebrated by international bodies, non-governmental organizations, tourists, developers, and even some community activists. Guided by old city residents and workers, I follow how people engage meaningfully with concepts of heritage, whether as refusal, selective participation, appropriation, or transformation.

My focus on local communities’ responses to state heritage projects in the old cities of Rhodes and Acre is not based on an assumption that local communities are inherently better equipped to tend to heritage and create just futures. For example, “local” stewardship of heritage in settler-colonial contexts has often meant that settler communities control access to beings, places, and objects that Indigenous peoples who may no longer be “local” hold as central to their heritage (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Nicholas 2022). An anthropology of heritage ought to attend to historical and contemporary experiences of dispossession and marginalization in the interest of producing knowledge that advances social justice. This informed my choice to do work with local communities in Rhodes and Acre. Also important in elaborating an anthropology of heritage is unpacking ordinary people’s encounters with heritage, a concept that, on one hand, state authorities have deemed central to the future of these two places, and on the other hand also resonates with residents’ senses of history, memory, and belonging. An anthropology of heritage seeks to understand how people work with, organize around, and complicate notions of heritage. In this dissertation, I argue that local communities in Rhodes and Acre are already doing a lot of work that might be called heritage, but that is not recognized as such by the state. By not seeing residents’ daily
activities as heritage—as future-looking acts of care for community and place that draw on the past—the state can claim that the heritage of these places is threatened lest the state take on the role of heritage steward. Residents do not object to every aspect of state heritage projects in Rhodes and Acre, but they demonstrate that heritage could encompass a much broader range of activities, values, and aspirations than those envisioned by the state.

**Conceptual Framework**

In the following chapters, I critically examine the lived experiences of the cultural and economic reconfiguration of heritage practice. I build on literatures from cultural anthropology, critical heritage studies, and archaeology and seek to contribute to contemporary understandings of changing forms of value, cultural governance, and social justice in heritage practice. One challenge with proposing a definition of heritage in an ethnographic study is that heritage is conceptualized differently by the various actors who engage with the things and practices that make up the old cities of Rhodes and Acre. While I am personally interested in uses of heritage that promote social justice and equity, I am keenly aware in the wake of this research that the concept of heritage, for state professionals and developers especially, exists as “things” or “sites” bearing historical and aesthetic value as defined by the nation-state. This concept of heritage, as I explore, is central both to its nationalization and commodification. To describe and propose alternative forms of heritage work, it is useful to briefly examine how scholars of heritage make sense of heritage as a concept and a process—something that at once
encompasses historical relations to things, places, and practices from the grassroots, but that is also closely associated with statecraft and capitalist extraction.

Since the emergence of heritage studies as an interdisciplinary field in the 1980s, scholars have examined how concepts of heritage are invoked to make sense of contemporary social, political, and economic projects. Part of this undertaking has involved crafting a theory of heritage that encompasses its wide-ranging uses and abuses. This work has shared an acknowledgement that heritage, while referencing the past, is something that addresses the circumstances of the present (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Lowenthal 1985, 1996). Critical heritage scholar Laurajane Smith (2006) coined the phrase “authorized heritage discourse” (AHD) to capture the dominant use of heritage as an inherent quality of objects and places tied to time depth, aesthetic value, and monumentality. Smith argues that the AHD obfuscates competing uses of heritage by dissenting and subaltern groups, and advances a more inclusive theory of heritage as a process of meaning-making that depends on acts of remembrance to make sense of the present (Smith 2006, 44). Others joined Smith in proposing definitions of heritage permissive of its emancipatory implications, recognizing heritage as something other than a natural characteristic of inherited things and places from the past (Chilton and Mason 2010; Chilton 2019). Scholars including Battiste and Henderson (2000, 65-72), Byrne (2009), Harrison (2013, 14), and Lafrenz Samuels (2015, 5) emphasize the importance of relationality, theorizing heritage as an assemblage of historical and aspirational relations among people, objects, places, and practices, focusing on how it may be wielded in a framework of social justice. In this dissertation, I embrace a definition of heritage as
relational practices among people and things (i.e., objects, ideas, activities, and places) that give meaning to the present and assemble the future by way of reference to the past.

Heritage is also commonly invoked as an alienable resource when states or individuals extract things, places, or intangible traditions as objects of exchange, often obscuring pre-existing relations. This pattern is well-illustrated by the UNESCO World Heritage program, whereby the designation of places as World Heritage sites based on “outstanding universal value” is often usurped by private developers for the promotion of mass tourism (Brumann and Berliner 2016). As the commodification of heritage expands, the “heritagization” (here used to describe the commodification of places in the name of cultural heritage promotion or protection) of formerly marginal spaces presents challenges to the way that culture is represented to, and more importantly engaged with, by foreign visitors and local residents. The promise of economic development through cultural tourism has stimulated the promulgation of state-supported heritage projects worldwide, now seen as an important source of economic growth (Benhamou 2014).

Lowenthal (1985, 384-387) anticipated this growth in his account of preservation as a modernist impulse that will be justified according to prevailing anxieties of the day. He describes a late twentieth century fear of cultural amnesia and a desire to build collective identities. The places that preservationists created as a response to these anxieties stimulated a whole industry in which people are now willing to spend extraordinary sums of money to inhabit or gain proximity to old places.

From this economic reconfiguration of the value of heritage arises an urgent need to understand how the social uses of heritage are transformed. Michael Herzfeld (2010) draws attention to the politics of “merenes” in urban historic preservation. Historic
preservation’s apparent lack of importance—its “mereness”—in wider political discourse renders its entanglement with statecraft invisible. He calls for a fine-grained ethnographic examination of the “mere” acts of the powerful (Herzfeld 2015, 20), which I take up here in documenting how subjectivity and inequality are produced in commodified heritage spaces—subjectivities that are otherwise cloaked by official preoccupations with development, growth, and representation. Lowenthal (1985, 410) also predicted that if heritage was to become a permanent organizing concept for people’s relationship to the past, it would always be chimerical; he called for constant mindfulness about local relations being obscured by shifting logics behind preservationist fixity. Indeed, transnational cultural institutions such as the UNESCO World Heritage program and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) have routed particular authorized heritage practices and ethics to all parts of the globe. As such, it is important to think about how seemingly local moments of friction among people, state, and market are linked globally (Heller 2011). Thus, this research adopts a comparative approach to track the particular and generalizable relationships among state-supported heritage projects and local residents across these two sites. Part of understanding the particularities of these relationships requires examining historical uses of the “heritage” concept in these regions. For Israel/Palestine and Greece, research suggests that state heritage was a predominantly nationalist project until fairly recently (see for example, Abu El-Haj 1998, 2001; Baram and Rowan 2004; Ben-Yehuda 1995; Hallote and Joffe 2002; Hamilakis 2007; Mazover 2008; Silberman 1989; Yalouri 2001). With reference to works on heritage and nationalism in Israel/Palestine and Greece (e.g. Abu El-Haj 2001;
Hamilakis 2007), the research presented here explores how changing notions of value in cultural heritage work influence residents’ relations to the nation-state.

From the mid-1980s, critical attention was directed towards Israeli archaeologists and heritage management professionals for their complicity in Israeli nationalism and the concomitant silencing of the Palestinian past (see Ben-Yehuda 1995; Glock 1994; Silberman 1989; Trigger 1984). Most notably, anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj (1998, 2001) explored the relationship between archaeological practice and Israeli nationalism and statecraft, illustrating through archival and ethnographic research how science is employed as a site for producing an ethno-national cartography of the state. Beyond using narratives about the biblical *Eretz Israel* (“Land of Israel”) to sustain nationalist ideology, archaeology provided a means for the largely secular Jewish-Israeli population to realize a territorial connection. State archaeologists elected not to explore—and in some cases destroyed—sites or strata deemed irrelevant to Jewish-Israeli historiography.

Yannis Hamilakis (2007) has traced the cultural deployment of archaeology in Greek national imagination from the early years of independence to the more recent push for repatriating the Parthenon marbles. He points out that, like Israel, Greece has depended on its ancient past in making claims of exceptionalism at a global scale (see also Doumanis [1997]). He speaks of Greek engagement with the ancient past as a form of “banal nationalism,” characterized by childhood museum visits, walking past ancient monuments on daily commutes, and viewing ancient dramas performed in restored amphitheatres. He regards such practices as “embodied rituals of daily life that produce and reproduce sensory national memories” (Hamilakis 2007, 18). In order to accomplish
this, the state had to erase traces of Greece’s centuries of Ottoman history (Koumaridis 2006; Herzfeld in Byrne 2011).

Coinciding with this moment of intense critique of nationalist archaeology in the early 2000s, some scholars have recently argued that emergent commercial interests in heritage have replaced former national projects that dominated in the twentieth century, especially in the case of Israel (Baram and Rowan 2004; Baram 2007; Killebrew 2010). In the 1990s, amidst a wave of immigration from countries of the former Soviet Union, the Israel Antiquities Authority took on hundreds of workers as part of a state relief program (Kletter 2006, 148). Sites excavated and conserved during this period, including the Hospitaller Compound in Acre, were selected primarily for potential tourism development rather than relevance to national historical interests. Baram and Rowan (2004) have argued that globalization and the expansion of capitalism have brought about a transition from nationalism to commercialization in the domain of Israeli archaeology. They contend that close observation of heritage sites once considered nationalistic, such as Masada, reveals that most visitors are not Israeli, and that the marketing of such sites is directed mainly toward foreign audiences. According to these scholars, the major concern for heritage professionals must be refocused on the problem of heritage becoming an economic resource for the state (Baram and Rowan 2004, 13).

The commodification of archaeology in Greece has been tightly bound with nationalist heritage projects since at least the 1950s, when the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) set up foreign offices to create and market a universally recognizable image of Greece—an articulation of symbols ranging from sites of classical antiquity to souvlaki to Zorba the Greek (Touloupa 2010, 11). This campaign, the legacy
of which is still palpable in almost any tourist zone adjacent to an archaeological site in Greece, drew on specific national symbols, such as the Acropolis, to create a consumable experience with a market value. More recently, Giannitsioti, Touloupa, and Poulios (2018, 59) have argued that in the wake of the Greek financial crisis, heritage and tourism work has been picked up by non-state actors. They define a shift from an “authorized heritage discourse” (Smith 2006) to a crisis discourse driven by local communities and startups critical of an anachronistic and incompetent state. However, in both the Greek and Israeli cases, little attention has been paid to the persistence of national imagination and state interests in the process of heritage commodification, whether driven by state officials or non-state developers. Rather than accepting the notion of transition (in a quasi-evolutionary sense) from nationalism to commercialism (Baram and Rowan 2004), this research considers how national formations of heritage described most extensively by Abu El-Haj (2001) and Hamilakis (2007) persist in commodifying projects.

In the early stages of my field research, I visited multiple national museums in Jerusalem and Athens to get a sense of how the old cities of Acre and Rhodes might figure into state representations of national history. On display at the Israel Museum in West Jerusalem, several Crusader-era artifacts and architectural fragments are labelled as being from Acre. The city is also mentioned once in the archaeology wing’s extensive text tracing the history of “the Land” in explaining that the Crusaders retained Acre and the coastal plain after the Ayyubid conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 CE. While Acre figured prominently in Mediterranean geopolitics for centuries after Crusader rule (for example, see Philipp 2002), it does not figure in the museum’s archaeological display of the Muslim Near East. In Athens, the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens picks
up temporally where the National Archaeological Museum ends, with the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire in the third century CE. There is no mention of Rhodes throughout the museum except at a computer terminal where visitors can explore Byzantine and medieval sites throughout Greece. While apparently marginal in national representations of Israel and Greece, Acre and Rhodes are well-visited historical sites and are featured prominently in guidebooks and tourism promotional materials.

Herzfeld (2004) and De Cesari (2014) have drawn attention to the complicated relationship between commodification and nationalism in their work on the professionalization of heritage practice since the late twentieth century, accounting for the growing role of transnational actors, such as tourists and UNESCO, in defining the value of heritage and elaborating its ambiguous relationship to local and national identities. In terms of scale, the state projects in Acre and Rhodes might be understood as projects of alignment with liberal European values. Herzfeld (2004) directs our attention to the impact of global ideologies in national practices in associating the Greek state’s preservation of historical remains from periods not directly tied to national trajectories with liberal policies tolerant of difference, a tactic associated with what he calls the “global hierarchy of value.” Positioning themselves as stewards of places with recognizably European histories, but also with noticeable material traces of entanglements with the Ottoman Empire and the wider Eastern Mediterranean region, the Israeli and Greek states gesture towards a multicultural sensibility. This is also reflected in both sites’ nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status. While UNESCO positions itself as a global proponent of liberal multiculturalism, its inventory of World Heritage
sites tends to reify essentialized categories of cultural classification, thus serving classical logics of the nation-state (De Cesari 2014).

In order to analyze the intersecting grounds of state heritage projects and local practices, I use Blaser’s (2004) premise of “life projects.” Life projects capture the “complex, substantive, power-laden, and sometimes contradictory features” (Blaser 2004, 26) of marginalized peoples’ encounters with state and market. Blaser contends that “life projects are embedded in local histories; they encompass visions of the world and the future that are distinct from those embodied by projects promoted by the state and markets.” I view residents of Acre and Rhodes constructing life projects in various ways. In Acre, Old City residents are converting unused household space into guesthouses to maintain property rights, seeking trainings and mentoring others in archaeology and conservation to ensure local voice in state heritage projects, and training as tour guides to retain narrative and economic control over touristic encounters with their city. This is less a case of harnessing neoliberal personhood by becoming entrepreneurs as it is a collective insistence on a right to place by critically engaging with state and market logics different from their own. While the state sanctions the production of “World Heritage” for purposes of commodification, residents act to maintain their own modes and rhythms of heritage. The politics of crisis in Rhodes and the historical factors contributing to a Greek majority in Old Town have led to forms of life projects founded on familial persistence and rejection of interventions by a state in crisis. Couched in a sense of pessimism about development, Old Town residents live according to an ethos of getting by, with expectations that younger generations will find better ways to live. Thinking beyond local community responses to state heritage projects as either participation or resistance, I aim
to center residents’ nuanced actions aimed at reclaiming relations to their cities amidst processes of alienation.

**Fieldsite Context**

**Case I: Rhodes (Greece)**

Drawing heavily on western European classical scholarship, nineteenth century nationalists used the Classical period (510-323 BCE)—corresponding to the times between the rise of Athenian democracy and the death of Alexander the Great in which writers, philosophers, dramaturges, and mathematicians produced works thought to be central to the emergence of “western civilization”—to gain support and recognition from Western nations in their plight against Ottoman rule. Nationalists also used Classical imagery to stimulate pride among the mostly rural population of Greeks spread across the lands of modern Greece and western Turkey. These populations were largely indifferent to antiquity, their cosmology structured mainly through Orthodox Christianity (Hamilakis 2007, 65). Once Greece won its war of independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1823 with the backing of philhellenic European powers, the following decades were characterized by a process of “de-Ottomanization,” made possible in large part by the archaeological recovery of classical Greek landscapes (Koumaridis 2006). Athens, formerly a small mixed Turkish and Greek country town surrounded by classical monuments repurposed as mosques (Babinger 1986), was cleared of most of its Islamic structures and the new capital was planned in accordance with neo-classical design.

Rhodes, too, was subject to de-Ottomanization, but not to the same degree as most Greek cities. The island remained part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912, when it was captured by Italy in its quest to create a territorial empire. When the United Nations
transferred control of Rhodes and the other islands of the Dodecanese to Greece after World War II, the state did not demolish standing structures as witnessed earlier in other Greek cities, but rather adopted a policy of non-intervention towards Islamic and Turkish buildings that remained in effect until the early 2000s (Stefanis and Theoulakis 2016, 1416). Whereas elsewhere cities were reconfigured to represent a specifically Greek history reliant on the tripartite scheme embraced by the state—Classical, medieval Byzantine, and modern neo-Classical (Hamilakis 2007, 116-117)—the urban landscape of Rhodes today uniquely embodies the complex and diverse histories of much of Greece, encompassing Classical, Byzantine, Crusader, Ottoman, and colonial periods. However, with few recognizably “Greek” remains in Rhodes Town, the places that are designated worthy of intervention, preservation, and commodification are primarily of Christian Crusader origin. This has resulted in the slow deterioration of Ottoman-era structures throughout Old Town, until very recent European Union-sponsored interventions whose effect is yet to be seen.

The historical majority urban Muslim community in Rhodes dwindled in the latter half of the twentieth century due to emigration brought on by the closure of Turkish schools in the 1970s, restrictive citizenship laws, and social tensions exacerbated by the Cyprus conflict, leaving a Greek majority in Old Town (Doumanis 1997, 200; Kaurinkoski 2012). While the Greek state does not collect population data based on religious affiliation, researchers estimate a Muslim community numbering about 5,000 people persists in the Dodecanese (Kaurinkoski 2012, 54), with roughly 2,500-3,000 on Rhodes (Georgalidou, Kaili, and Celtek 2010; Kimourtzis et al. 2017). While almost three times larger in area, Old Town Rhodes hosts a shrinking resident population about
as numerous as Acre, and mostly elderly. Houses that were empty when Rhodes came under Greek governance in 1947 were appropriated by the state, which under today’s austerity measures is incapable of maintaining them as habitable spaces when tenants die or move away.

The Old Town boasts the headquarters of the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese as well as several municipality offices. Prior to the sovereign debt crisis, the Greek Archaeological Service and Rhodes Municipality held a contract for restoration and interpretation projects in Old Town. While cooperation continues, this formal partnership has expired (4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities 2014, 3). Designated a World Heritage site in 1988, the Old Town has a longer history of mass tourism than Acre, dating to the Italian occupation in the first half of the twentieth century, and is now a major port for Mediterranean cruise ships. Old Town is less a destination for most tourists, but rather one possible stop among many on the island. For tourist attention, it competes with the acropolis of Lindos and the island’s numerous beaches. Even though most tourists stay in large coastal resort hotels, the volume of tourists on the island during high season is large enough that Old Town streets will fill with people, many of them also cruise ship travelers, who may only be spending a couple of hours visiting for a meal or to shop for souvenirs. With Old Town commerce and governance driven primarily by non-residents without historical ties to that space, the shrinking resident population has little control over its management and future. Resident alienation in Old Town Rhodes is happening along multiple axes: ongoing state (re-)appropriation of living space, the conversion of Old Town spaces into tourism ventures, and generational abandonment. While commodification drives resident alienation, long-term residents also participate in
this mass tourism economy. As I explore in chapter 4, residents engage with the state
heritage project as a means of maintaining the possibility of life in Old Town while
recognizing it as a source of constraint on community vitality.

**Case II: Acre (Israel/Palestine)**

The ancient past holds a privileged position in Israeli national imagination. Before
the creation of the state of Israel, western European biblical geographers and
archaeologists who located their own heritage in *Hellas* and Palestine sought to map
Palestine’s physical geography and landscape by scientific means (Abu El-Haj 2001, 25).
The primary temporal scope of their research was the late Bronze Age through early
Roman periods (ca. 1550 BCE-135 CE), roughly corresponding to the times and peoples
related in the biblical narrative and until the end of the Jewish-Roman wars. These
scholars worked to disseminate this knowledge to their own national publics, but also had
a profound impact on the Zionist national movement. Archaeologists from the Jewish
Palestine Exploration Society (JPES), founded in 1914 and modeled on the British-based
Palestine Exploration Fund, began excavating sites specifically linked to Israelite/Jewish
history, and organizing public events in Jewish communities worldwide to disseminate
information about Jewish history in Palestine (Abu El-Haj 2001, 46-47). With political
intent, local national movements adopted European techniques of producing
cartographies of ancestral belonging (for examples see Dietler 1994; Kohl 1998; Sommer
2008), a tradition that can be recognized in mainstream Israeli heritage professions well
into the twentieth century (Abu El-Haj 2001; Ben-Yehuda 1995; Hallote and Joffe 2002;
Acre, however, does not bear the monumental signatures of the national past, as is better witnessed in Jerusalem. Like many others in the eastern Mediterranean (including Rhodes; see Sampson [1984] for a description of its earliest human history), the diverse history of this city reaches back at least to the early Bronze Age (Raban 1985; Artzy and Beeri 2010). However, its monumentality and visuality, those characteristics so valued in European preservationist thought and central to the AHD, are rooted in the Crusader and Ottoman periods.

While the state does not record population demographics by neighborhood, residents estimate that the Old City of Acre is currently home to some 4,000 to 7,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel, mostly Muslim with a Christian minority. In recent decades, many wealthier Palestinian families have moved into the mixed Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli neighborhoods of the so-called “New City” that neighbor the Old City (Peleg 2008, 3). This pattern has left the Old City economically depressed with little political representation. Property in the Old City is mostly owned (~85%) by the Israeli Land Administration, which seized abandoned houses after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War and leases housing to those who sought refuge from the surrounding region and their descendants. These mostly residential properties are rented out as public housing by Amidar, the National Housing Company. The Muslim waqf (endowment) and local Christian churches own about 10% of the remaining land, and roughly 5% (likely more at the time of writing) is privately owned (Conservation Department of the Israeli Antiquities Authority 2000). While residents, who are mostly protected tenants, may purchase their houses from the Israeli Land Administration, most do not have the financial means to do so. Interviewees reported to me that often wealthy investors from
outside the community offer lump sum payments to tenants to relinquish property rights, making those houses available on the private real estate market for tourism development. Further, tenants who make unauthorized modifications to their housing risk fines or eviction (Schechla 2001, 23), though in my field research no research participants reported knowing of eviction cases stemming solely from unauthorized renovations.

Tourism has been at the center of economic development projects in Acre since the late British Mandate period (Winter 1944a), and the Israeli government institutionalized this project in 1967 with the creation of the Old Acre Development Company (OADC), a subsidiary of the Ministry of Tourism. The OADC co-ordinates with Amidar and the Israel Land Administration to determine the use of any state-owned property, acting primarily according to its mandate of tourism development (Harari n.d.). The OADC operates all major historical tourist attractions in the Old City, including the Knights Hospitaller Compound and the Templar Tunnel—both Crusader-era archaeological sites—and the Hammam al-Basha, and Ottoman-era bathhouse now configured as a multimedia presentation.

In 2001, the Old City was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the first in Israel alongside the desert fortress of Masada, but without local consultation in post-inscription planning (Killebrew et al. 2017, 379-380). In the wake of the UNESCO inscription, tourism development has accelerated and cultural heritage bureaucracy has expanded in the Old City. In addition to the OADC offices, the Western Galilee headquarters of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), the International Conservation Center (IAA), and the Akko Economic Company (municipality of Akko) all monitor and stimulate the transformation and use of the city’s historic urban center as a major tourist
attraction with particular dedication to harnessing the material remains of the city’s Crusader and Ottoman past. While state-supported tourism development projects threaten resident alienation, residents have a long tradition of tourism-related work that insists on maintaining the Old City as a livable space. The smaller scale of tourism in Acre, as compared to Rhodes, also means that residents can carry out work that is less dependent on expedient sales. Tourism in the Old City is less tied to beach-going, and there is significantly less cruise ship tourism here. Fast-paced bus tours do make hurried stops in the Old City, but for the most part tourists visit the Old City with the intent of spending several hours or staying overnight. Domestic tourism also plays a much more significant role in the Old City of Acre. On Saturdays, Israelis from around the country flock to the Old City, where shops and restaurants stay open through Shabbat (the Sabbath).

Residents’ tourism work is accompanied by community organizing through churches and mosques, community associations, youth groups, and legal advocacy groups geared towards fostering pride in place and maintaining familial and economic relations to the Old City among Palestinians whose families no longer reside there. Further, residents are selectively appropriating heritage projects that were formerly in the domain of the state—such as architectural conservation and touristic interpretation—to control and mitigate the alienating effects of commodification.

**Research Design**

This dissertation project is an archaeological ethnography. Hamilakis (2011, 399) defines archaeological ethnography as a “transcultural space for multiple encounters, conversations, and interventions, involving researchers from various disciplines and
diverse publics, and centered around materiality and temporality.” In the following chapters, I analyze data gathered by combining conventional ethnographic methods of participant observation and interview with archaeological methods of survey and stratigraphic analysis. In doing so, I aim to document the material and discursive shaping of both old cities in social, political, and economic contexts.

Research for this dissertation was completed in two phases between 2016 and 2018. Phase I of data collection was undertaken in the context of the Culture and Heritage in European Societies and Spaces program in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The data collected in this phase was primarily ethnographic, but it was during this time that I began experimenting with archaeological survey and photographic methods to enhance my ability to more deeply understand engagement with the material that makes up these two cities. I tracked their material formation historically and in real-time, in relation to the people who inhabit, visit, and work there. While working on data analysis for this first phase, I made the choice to revisit the Old City of Acre for a second research phase: an extended period of archaeological survey and focused documentation of resident life histories. The methodological substance of these two research phases is described below.

**Phase I Research**

I completed Phase I research, collecting data relevant to this project’s first research question, between January and June 2016. During that period, I documented how the old cities of Acre and Rhodes are materially and ideologically produced by heritage professionals, tourists, and local residents. This involved tracking tourist
perceptions of historical narratives presented to them, and the changing roles of residents and heritage professionals in the expansion of the local heritage tourism economy. I employed data collection methods of participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with 57 people, and textual analysis.

Phase I participant observation included attendance at professional meetings and major tourist events and attractions in both Acre and Rhodes to document narratives selected for presentation and the tourist experience at these places. I constructed my research schedule to coincide with major events (e.g., conservation workshops in Acre, the Rhodes Medieval Festival) to track how current issues and public debate around heritage, politics, and value arose in these collective spaces (see Dominguez 1989 for this structuring of participant observation). In Acre, for example, I attended bi-weekly conservation workshops over a period of two months at the International Conservation Center. This gave me the opportunity to document the motivations and preservationist values shared by a range of heritage professionals in the field of architectural conservation, while also learning over time how empathy for the precarious economic status of local residents affected their work. In all cases detailed field notes were taken and triangulated with collected textual/visual data and interview data.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with residents and heritage professionals to gain insight about the history of heritage and tourism development, their own engagements with heritage work, and their assessment of the state heritage project and the future of the old city. I also conducted unstructured photo-based interviews with international tourists to elicit levels of familiarity with and reactions to particular places and landscapes in and around the historic urban centers of Acre and Rhodes. Willson and
McIntosh (2010) have illustrated that tourists are often more willing to engage in conversational dialogue rather than structured interviews, and that using a hand-held photo album containing scenes of the urban heritage landscape can help to direct that dialogue and prompt richer responses from participants. When I conceived of this research project I intended address the transnational mediation of heritage narratives by way of international tourists, but I have mostly used tourist interviews to further understand the local effects of state and resident interventions in Acre and Rhodes. This decision was guided by my resident interlocutors who identified my research questions about the effects of state heritage projects on local populations as most urgent and relevant to their own interests.

In both old cities, I monitored everyday resident practices of navigating urban spaces undergoing transformation as state heritage sites, recording observations through detailed fieldnotes, photographs, and annotated maps on routine walks. This practice served as a way to monitor how people engage with the materiality of these spaces. Carabelli (2014) argues that critical observational walking can serve as a useful ethnographic method for exploring the extent to which dominant cultural narratives most legible to outsiders resonate locally in daily life. Importantly, informal participant observation led me to consider the ongoing formation of old cities both by heritage professionals and residents. Observing residents’ use of surfaces in the public spaces helped me to think about their relations to the old cities as constitutive of ongoing site formation processes, which influenced my methodological structuring of Phase II discussed below.
Phase II Research

In Phase II research, undertaken between January and March 2018, I focused on the impact of state-supported heritage projects on local residents in Acre. I documented residents’ creative and critical engagements with the state project of developing the Old City as a World Heritage site and tourist attraction, and their work to maintain the Old City as a livable place for themselves. Phase II research examined resident projects solely in the Old City of Acre, which remains a primarily residential space with extensive resident engagement in the heritage tourism economy. As noted above, Old Town Rhodes’s waning population highlights the urgency of residents’ strategic projects in Acre. Intent on documenting local relations to the Old City, I combined ethnographic and archaeological methods to capture narrated, lived, and material dimensions of human-place relationships.

One focus of this research phase was participant observation and semi-structured life history interviews with six key resident interlocutors in Acre who were identified from Phase I data analysis and expressed interest in continued research. Another focus of this research phase was systematizing the photo-archaeological surface survey of the Old City that I conceived of in analyzing Phase I participant observation and photographic data.

I employed participant observation in the form of weeklong walk-alongs with six key interlocutors who live in or have family roots in the Old City, and whose primary work revolves around tourism and/or heritage professions in the Old City. I invited these individuals to participate in this research phase as collectively they embody a broad spectrum of engagement with the state project. During my time with these participants, I
sought to document how they navigate the Old City as workers in the heritage and tourism industries on a daily basis. This included living with an individual who is converting part of his residence into a guesthouse, apprenticing with a local stonemason at his workshop, observing daily work-life for shopkeepers, and participating in tourism activities led by a resident guide. Observing these activities offered insight about how residents of Acre relate to each other, their city, and the state in the context of the heritage project. I generated detailed fieldnotes, photographs, and mapped routes which, in addition to interview data and Phase I participant observation data, serve to illustrate the diversity of individual encounters and engagements with dominant social and political structures (see for example Lavie 1990). In addition to accompanying these individuals I formally interviewed each of them. These interviews captured life histories, their relationship to the Old City and the state heritage project, and their concerns about and aspirations for their city. In chapter 6, I develop ethnographic portraits of these individuals.

Throughout Phase II, I undertook a daily photographic surface survey of the Old City, building on basic archaeological methods and principles to document the material traces of contemporary life projects and the state heritage project, including acts of care, destruction, and alienation. By combining surface survey (Harrison 2011) and photographic documentation (Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos, and Ifantidis 2009; Hamilakis 2011; Ifantidis 2013; Hamilakis and Ifantidis 2015), I tracked the formation of the Old City as a place of life, tourism, and state heritage in real-time. This method is described in detail in chapter 3, where I explore life projects and state heritage as entangled with ongoing site formation processes.
**Data Analysis**

Data collected for this research included detailed observational field notes, audio recordings, interviews, photographs, annotated maps, scanned archival material, and tourist literature. During fieldwork, I entered data into a qualitative data analysis software platform (MAXQDA) for post-fieldwork thematic coding. In the field, I undertook preliminary data analysis by way of weekly research reflections and regularly writing analytic memos documenting emergent themes and patterns. Subsequent data analysis included inductive and deductive coding of field notes, interview transcripts, and photographs.

Inductive data analysis involved paying close attention to repetitions and local categories, and constant comparison between data from both sites (Ryan and Bernard 2003; Charmaz 2006). I also used a deductive code system, based on themes and processes related to the research questions including commodification, representing the city, local heritage values, tourist activity, and resisting state projects. Combining these coding techniques in MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software platform, I was able to interrogate the relations between my original research questions, my own assumptions, and my collected data. I triangulated Phase II data pertaining to the particular experiences of residents in Acre’s Old City with generalizations from Phase I data analysis in order to identify areas of consensus and contradiction in the ways that local communities and professionals working under state-supported heritage projects imagine and actively construct the future of contested urban spaces.
Photographic data was coded using Tropy, an image analysis software platform. All photographs were coded inductively based on interventions—ephemeral and durable—made to the surfaces of the old cities in the recent past (estimated as the last 50 years). Photos that were taken as part of the Phase II surface survey of the Old City of Acre were also coded with a locus number to track changes over the duration of the two-month survey. Codes were subsequently analyzed to identify patterns and repetitions in surface interventions, as well as surface interventions that tracked with observations made from interviews and participant observation.

**Dissertation Roadmap**

This dissertation is structured through seven chapters, including this introduction. In chapter 2, I offer necessary historical and geographical context for the subsequent chapters. I briefly summarize the Crusader and Ottoman histories of both field sites, during which the bulk of their urban composition was finalized. I then transition to a more focused historical account of each city in the twentieth and twenty first centuries under colonial (for Rhodes, Italian, and for Acre, British), then national (for Rhodes, Greek, and for Acre, Israeli) rule, when their status as “old cities” took shape and affected the way they were inhabited and governed. In chapter 3, I synthesize the literature of archaeological ethnography and the politics of heritage that inspired my methodological approach to this research project. I argue that combining the archaeological method of surface survey with ethnographic interviews and extended periods of participant observation offers unique insights into the material and discursive constitution of “old cities” as cultural objects subject to political and commercial claims-making. In chapters
In chapter 4 and 5, I lay out the case studies of Old Town Rhodes and the Old City of Acre. I use the conventional archaeological concepts of surface survey and stratigraphy to examine the micro-strata visible on the surfaces of Old Town Rhodes and the Old City of Acre. Drawing on fieldnotes and semi-structured interviews with residents and heritage professionals, I describe how local and state actors make decisions about the uses of space in these cities, and their aspirations for the cities. I develop ethnographic portraits of residents in Rhodes and Acre that suggest diverse expectations of the state heritage projects and strategies for making a living within and beyond it. With an eye toward critical interventions in the study and practice of heritage in the era of late capitalism, in chapter 6 I articulate my archaeological and ethnographic analyses to propose alternative frameworks for heritage practice. These frameworks are grounded in observed local practices of care that allow people to live well in Acre (and to an extent in Rhodes), but which escape the narrow definition of heritage that circulates locally. Though seldom recognized as heritage work, numerous local practices draw on relations between past and present, people and place, and advance redress for historic injustice and reclaim local sovereignty. Lastly, in chapter 7, I conclude by summarizing my argument that the production of “old cities” under globally standardized heritage practices is the production of vulnerability to displacement and the erosion of community. I also argue that local practices of care are practices of heritage, which at once embody a radical alternative to state heritage projects and a more expansive and flexible theorization of heritage. I conclude by evaluating the contributions this research makes towards understanding the possibilities for heritage beyond commodification, archaeological ethnographic methodology, and theories of the politics of the past.
CHAPTER 2

HOW CITIES BECOME OLD: HISTORICAL CONTEXT FROM THE CRUSADES TO MASS TOURISM

Towards a History of Heritage

In order to address the research questions set forth in this dissertation, I begin with a historical sketch of the old cities of Rhodes and Acre. I offer background on these areas’ histories and their material formations, the stuff that local residents and heritage professionals work with as they navigate the old cities on a daily basis. I map out significant developments in local history that shaped—and continue to shape—people’s relationships to these cities. Information in this chapter is drawn primarily from historical accounts and archival sources. My aim is to weave the stories of people’s relationships to place into a chronological framework as a basis for understanding contemporary frictions brought about by state-driven commodification. By exploring relations that people have created and re-created for centuries to live well with the material remains of the past, this chapter offers context to later discuss ways of living in and with old places beyond those offered by the state and market. It also helps us to see how state heritage policy altered, re-created, or severed people’s relations to place in the more recent past.

In the process, this project contributes to historical understanding of “heritage,” and its development as a concept. Lowenthal (1985) has carefully delineated the development of the heritage concept in western thought. Harvey (2001) has argued for the expansion of a history of heritage that allows critical heritage scholars to delineate particular and generalizable aspects of the modern heritage concept in their given
research context. In these traditions, I seek to delineate the particular routes that Acre and Rhodes took to becoming places of heritage, from above and from below. Rather than drawing a sharp contrast between “true history” and “false heritage” (Harvey 2001, 326), my goal is to describe how people in these two cities made sense of the “old places” they inhabited before they were labelled as places of heritage under legislative frameworks in the twentieth century.

It should be noted that the following historical summaries are based on sources that tend to foreground major social, political, and economic developments centered on elite male figures, leaving an important part of society largely invisible over the past several centuries. In some parts of the world, historians and historical archaeologists have worked to read against the archival grain to illuminate the daily life and contributions made by the majority population—namely women, children, the working class, and members of marginalized religious, ethnic, or racialized groups. Some important historical work has been done in this area for the medieval and post-medieval eastern Mediterranean (see as examples Baram and Carroll 2002; Coureas 2019; Edgington and Lambert 2002; Hamilton 1978; Hathaway 2013; Nicholson 1997), but still usually in the context of the lives and social networks of nobility rather than the development of place and community life. Much more work is yet to be done in constructing a history of the majority in this place and span of time. For now, this must be read as a partial history of human-place relations in Rhodes and Acre.
Rhodes

Rhodes, the city, sits at the northern tip of the island bearing the same name, near the southern end of the Dodecanese island chain. The component twelve islands of the Dodecanese have changed through history since the term was first used to describe twelve islands in the Cyclades during the Byzantine Period. The name shifted to the region of the southeastern Aegean Sea after the Ottoman conquest of 1522, when it was used to identify twelve islands where local Greek inhabitants were granted particular privileges related to taxation, not including the more populated islands of Kos and Rhodes. It was not until the Italian acquisition of Kastelorizo from France in 1921 that the formation recognized as the Dodecanese by today’s Greek government took shape (Kolodny 1974, 229). In the first half of the twentieth century Italy controlled well over twelve islands in the southeastern Aegean, but mainland Greek newspapers referred to the Italian-occupied islands (and agitated for their cessation to Greece) using the name “Dodecanese” (translating to “the twelve islands”). The Italian administration later appropriated the term and selected twelve islands as bearers of the name, while singling out Rhodes as its administrative center using the name “Rhodes and the Dodecanese.”

The emergence of an urban center at the current site of Rhodes town can be traced to the 408 BCE unification of the three classical-era city-states of the island: Ialyssos, Kamyros, and Lindos. At this point, according to the classical writer Diodorus, the new united city took the name of the island and many residents of the three former cities congregated therein (Constantakopoulou 2005, 12). Urban settlement at Rhodes town persisted through the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods, though little of material

3 The other twelve islands include: Patmos, Lipsi, Leros, Kalimnos, Kos, Astipalaia, Nisiros, Symi, Tilos, Chalki, Karpathos, and Kasos (and occasionally Kastelorizo).
significance remained from these times after the Hospitaller conquest and reconstruction of the city, from which point we may trace the bulk of what is today known as “Old Town.”

**Crusader Foundations of Rhodes**

After the Crusader orders were defeated at Acre in 1291, the Hospitallers and Templars found refuge on Cyprus. In 1306, the Hospitallers launched a three-year siege on Rhodes, then loosely controlled by Turkish pirates and a Genoese governor on behalf of the Byzantine emperor. With papal sanction, the Hospitallers took Rhodes in 1309 and annexed several nearby islands (Nicholson 2001, 46-47). For the first time the Knights Hospitaller controlled a full territorial unit on which to develop a sustaining economy—Rhodes and its neighboring islands—and built their own political capital, Rhodes town. Thus, the Hospitaller order, officially the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, became known as the Knights of Rhodes. The population of Rhodes town was mixed throughout the 213 years of the Knights’ rule. Members of the Hospitaller order lived primarily in the Collachium, a fortress constructed at the highest point in the town that also included the Grand Master’s Palace, while the local Greek-speaking Orthodox population lived in the fortified city, maintaining many of their Byzantine-era churches. A Romaniote Jewish community is known to have lived in the easternmost part of the walled city during the period of the Knights’ rule. Members of this community were subjected to either forced conversion or expulsion in 1502 (Kollias 2013, 28-30). Knowledge of this

---

2 Romaniote Jews trace their ancestry to the Jews who settled in Greek-speaking lands in antiquity, distinct from Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities of Europe and the Mediterranean region. Romaniote communities mainly existed in Greece and Cyprus prior to the Second World War.
as a place of Jewish community nonetheless persisted and this same area became the
town’s Jewish quarter during the period of Ottoman rule. Other ethnic minorities that
lived in Rhodes under Hospitaller rule included Latin artisans, Syrians, Armenians,
Greeks from other lands, and Muslim and Christian war captives and slaves (Kasdagli,
Katsioti, and Michaelidou 2007, 36).

For the first century of Hospitaller rule, the Knights focused on reinforcing
existing Byzantine fortifications around the city and constructing the Collachium for
members of the Order. Today, the Collachium is home to most state-managed tourist sites
due to its evocation of Hospitaller monumentality. Defensive bastions and a double wall
on the land side were added early in the fifteenth century as gunpowder was introduced to
warfare and tensions with the neighboring Ottoman Empire grew (Nossov 2010, 8-9).
Written accounts from the period note that much of the manual labor required for the
construction of the fortifications was done by Muslim slaves owned by the Hospitaller
Order (Kollias 2013, 156). Local sandstone and lime mortars were the main building
materials used in these construction projects. Particular to Rhodes, and perhaps adapted
from the pre-Hospitaller period, is the pebble street paving used throughout the town and
in other villages in the Dodecanese. Most Hospitaller-era materials and buildings were
preserved, if frequently repurposed, by succeeding Ottoman, Italian, and Greek
governments.

Hospitaller Rhodes was besieged twice by Ottoman naval forces, unsuccessfully
at first in 1480 by Mehmet Fatih. Records from council meetings of the Hospitaller order
after the 1480 siege show a sustained preoccupation with Ottoman expansionism and the
threat of a second attack (Brummett 1993, 519). This was in spite of a generally favorable
treaty made in 1492 with Mehmet Fatih’s successor, Bayezid II, in which the Ottoman empire would pay the Hospitallers 40,000 ducats annually in exchange for taking custody of Djem, the sultan’s brother and rival (Vatin 2004, 149). While the Grand Masters maintained in rhetoric that the Christian sovereigns of Europe ought to unite to retake the former lands of the Byzantine Empire from the Ottoman dynasty, in practice they focused on maintaining peace and open trade with their Ottoman neighbors for fear of attack (Vatin 2004, 154). This is overlooked in today’s popular representations of the period, which emphasize Hospitaller-Ottoman hostility. The Rhodian council acted on their anxieties by reinforcing the city’s fortifications and other fortresses on the island. They also set up an enlistment booth in the city’s central square to draft Greek residents into the city’s defensive forces, which until then were dominated by crusading soldiers of western European origin (Brummett 1993, 525).

From the political perspective of the Ottoman Empire, Hospitaller Rhodes was a permanent threat to shipping and communications between Istanbul and the ports of southern Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt. In its war with Venice between 1499 and 1502 the Ottoman Empire gained control of numerous ports on mainland Greece, and by 1522 the new sultan, Suleyman the Magnificent, had made the conquest of Rhodes a priority (Soucek 2004, 220-223). In May 1522, Suleyman began a five-month siege of Rhodes town with an estimated 200 ships and tens of thousands of soldiers. Rhodes, on the other hand, was defended by about 16,000 soldiers, a third of whom were Latin knights and the remainders mercenaries and Rhodian Greeks (Vatin 2000, 111). Nonetheless, Hospitaller records suggest a breakdown in relations between the Latin knights and Rhodian Greeks, with several Hospitaller records suggesting that the Greeks were not fully committed to
the defense of Rhodes against the Ottoman flotilla (Vatin 2000, 112). Ultimately, the
Knights of Rhodes were defeated and given ten days to evacuate the island with as many
of their material possessions as they could gather. Rhodians were given the option to
leave without consequence over a period of three years, but those who stayed would be
exempted from taxes for five years and were promised not to face mandatory military
service or conversion to Islam. The Knights Hospitaller evacuated the island on January
1, 1523, bringing with them their archives, but the majority of Rhodian Greeks remained
and became Ottoman subjects. The Hospitallers re-established their headquarters in
Viterbo, a town north of Rome, for four years, before being granted the island of Malta
by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1530 (Vatin 2000, 113-114).

**Ottoman Configurations of Rhodes Town**

With Rhodes under Ottoman rule, the empire’s central government saw little need
to further develop the massively fortified town. Formerly the capital of a sovereign state,
the town was reduced in status to a minor stopping port for eastern Mediterranean
merchants, second to busier mainland Aegean ports. Rhodes town became the
administrative center of the Sanjak of Rhodes, a second-tier province that also
encompassed several neighboring islands. In 1577, there were 20,000 inhabitants on the
island of Rhodes, about 15,000 of whom were Rhodian Greeks and the remainder Jews
and Turks (Maglio 2011, 3). The Ottoman Empire offered refuge to Jews who were
expelled from Spain in 1492, leading to the development of major Sephardic
communities in cities like Rhodes, Salonica, and Izmir. It is clear that the majority of the
Jewish population in Ottoman Rhodes was of Iberian origin. There is little clear evidence
of the fate of the Romaniote Jews from the Hospitaller period who were forcibly converted to Christianity or expelled in 1502. It is possible that some returned or abandoned Christianity and integrated with the Iberian Jews whom the Sultan settled on the island with Judaism being a legal and recognized religion of the Ottoman Empire. It is worth noting that the Judeo-Spanish speaking Sephardic community that developed during the Ottoman period inhabited the same quarter, which became known as la Judería, as the Romaniote Jewish community of the Hospitaller occupation, suggesting a century-long perpetuation of cultural memory in place. Christians—mainly Orthodox Greeks but also a small number of Armenians and Catholics—were permitted to conduct business within the walled city but could no longer reside there. During this time, many Greeks moved to smaller villages on Rhodes and neighboring islands, while some settled on the outskirts of the city in areas that would become full-fledged suburbs. Lindos developed during this time as the island’s second port city, and was populated predominantly by Rhodian Greeks.

In general, the Ottoman administration made ample use of the existing medieval structures and did little to change the layout of the walled city, other than its demographic composition. Several mosques were constructed throughout the walled city, but otherwise, existing buildings were adapted to new functions. The former Grand Master’s Palace served as a prison, the former hospital served as a barracks, the former inns of the tongues of the Hospitaller Order were repurposed as residences, and Anatolian-style balconies were built onto the facades of existing buildings throughout the walled city (Maglio 2011, 4-7). The central market street, which formerly crossed the city on a north-south axis, was moved to a longer east-west axis street, culminating at the
Suleimaniyyeh mosque at its western extremity. Today’s main tourist market persists along this road, now named Sokratous Street (Maglio 2011, 9). Side streets branching off of the market street led to other institutions important to social life in the Ottoman city, including the *Yeni Hammam* (bathhouse), religious schools, and neighbourhood mosques, most of which remained functioning and central to community life until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Maglio (2011, 10) suggests that neighborhood identities likely developed around smaller mosques distributed throughout the walled city, as was common in other Ottoman cities.

The central Ottoman government’s *Tanzimat* (organizational reforms) of the mid-nineteenth century brought about significant changes in Rhodes. In the walled city, residents probably experienced this most directly through the opening of new European schools, namely the Catholic *École des Frères* and the French Jewish *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. The *École des Frères*, established in 1889, enrolled Greek Orthodox, Muslim, and Jewish students alike. The *Alliance*, funded by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, opened in 1904 and offered secular Jewish education as an alternative to the historic and renowned rabbinic schools of la Judería. Both schools were free, and the language and culture of instruction was French (Shachar 2013, 25).

Under the *millet* system that the Tanzimat reforms formalized, the central government afforded the empire’s ethno-religious minorities limited autonomy in matters of education, law, and cultural practices, which also encouraged segregation of said communities and discouraged mobility. With the reforms of the late nineteenth century, these communities came into more regular contact through institutions such as the foreign schools. While previously many of the city’s Greeks and Jews spoke some Turkish, and
many of the Turks spoke some Greek, the foreign schools offered the younger generation a common language that also opened doors for work in international commerce—French. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the city’s Jewish population was especially impacted by the introduction of French education and the universal values it espoused. Shachar (2013, 33) notes that Jews eagerly embraced French universalism as a model of cosmopolitan civic life, and members of this community soon became leaders in the city’s most successful manufacturing, finance, and mercantile enterprises. The trading economy on Rhodes, however, remained relatively depressed, and numerous Jews left in the 1910s and 20s for trading opportunities in Egypt, Rhodesia, and central Africa, sending remittances to families back home on the island.

Throughout the Ottoman period, Rhodes served as a regional port for the domestic exchange of fruit and sponges from the Dodecanese for grain from the Anatolian mainland and Egypt. European merchants also used the port to source sponges from Rhodes and other islands of the south Aegean. The sponge market boomed in the late nineteenth century as demand grew tremendously in Europe and the United States for the extremely durable and multi-purpose sea organisms. Greeks, who dominated in sponging, maintained a strong connection to the walled city of Rhodes due to the centrality of sponges in the port’s international trade. Many of the Greeks who settled in the walled city in the mid-twentieth century trace their roots to sponging communities on neighboring islands. The market of Rhodes, broadly conceived as the city’s shops, banks,

---

4 Kalafatas (2003) offers an in-depth account of sponge diving in the Dodecanese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He also traces the pull of sponge diving in the Bahamas and off the west coast of Florida that led to the formation of a Greek Dodecanese diaspora that thrives today in places like Tarpon Springs, Florida and Nassau, the Bahamas.
and trading houses, was a site of daily inter-communal relationship building, in which people of all confessions interacted regularly in the late Ottoman period (Guidi 2017).

**Italian Occupation and Crusader Nostalgia**

In 1912, Rhodes and the Dodecanese were unexpectedly seized from the Ottoman Empire by the Italian navy. Italy launched an aggressive invasion of Libya in September of 1911, a young nation-state desperately seeking a colonial foothold in Africa. Italy had anticipated an expeditious campaign, but Ottoman forces organized a guerilla campaign with the Arab population that amounted to a bloody year-long war. By the spring of 1912 the Italian command had grown impatient with Ottoman support for Libyan guerilla forces and sent a naval fleet to bombard Ottoman Beirut, which afterwards set sail for the Dardanelles. Anxious about the economic and political ramifications of a blockaded Bosphorous, the Entente powers of Europe warned Italy to ease off, which it did. But en route southwards, the Italian fleet stopped and established a sea blockade of Rhodes on the pretext of stopping Libya-bound Ottoman reinforcements (Shachar 2013, 51). Italian troops disembarked on a beach southeast of Rhodes Town on May 4, and after skirmishes with the Ottoman garrison the defense forces retreated south, leaving Rhodes Town under Italian occupation (Shachar 2013, 52). The whole island and rest of the Dodecanese would also soon fall to the Italians. In the 1912 Treaty of Ouchy, the Italians agreed to return the Dodecanese to the Ottoman Empire in exchange for the Ottoman withdrawal from Libya, but over the course of several years Italy held its grip on the Dodecanese, partly by paying part of the Ottoman Empire’s massive foreign debt. Even before the signing of the treaty, the New York Times was reporting that the Italians intended to hold onto the islands to establish a Mediterranean resort and archaeological center. On
officially joining the Entente powers in 1915, previous treaties with the Ottoman government became void and in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey renounced all claims to the islands (Shachar 2013, 55). The Italian government, by this time under the fascist rule of Benito Mussolini, formally annexed the Dodecanese as a possession in 1924, and transitioned governance of the islands from a military command to civil administration (Karatzas 2019, 34).

The years immediately following the First World War were of tremendous consequence for the economic status of Old Town residents. During this time, the Italian administration built a new political and economic center west of the city walls surrounding the Neohori (New Town), a Greek neighborhood built during the Ottoman period. Without privileging any of the city’s three major ethnic populations in policy, Italian urban planning ultimately favored Greeks who were now neighbors to their new governors and their central market and banks (Shachar 2013, 82). Many wealthy Jewish and Turkish families relocated to the new neighborhoods for proximity to commercial centers. Shachar (2013, 88), who interviewed many Rhodians who lived during this period, argues that leaving the walled town was also a way of signaling secularness, youth, and modernity in the new political order. Even for those who continued to live in the walled city, the newly constructed Italian neighborhood to the northwest became a leisure space where on weekends Greeks, Jews, Turks, and Italians intermingled along the Mandraki quay, drawn by the neatly manicured boulevard, bandstand, and cafes. Knowledge of Italian, now a lingua franca instructed in all of the island’s schools and adopted by most professionals, grew and facilitated communication between groups to a greater extent than Turkish, Greek, or French ever did (Shachar 2013, 97).
The growing new city (Rodì Nuovo) contrasted starkly with the place where most Rhodians still lived, the Old Town. For many younger Rhodians educated in the French École des Frères or Alliance Israélite Universelle, ideas of modernity, the nation-state, and citizenship were familiar and attractive, and the Italian-constructed new city offered proximity, if not full participation, in these ideals. This was still a colonial space, and neither Greeks nor Turks nor Jews were automatically granted Italian citizenship. While all non-Italians were subject to the same second-class status, for the first time in centuries Greeks, Turks, and Jews were effectively equal in legal status as occupied peoples: *popolazione dodecanesina* (Kolodny 1974, 231). Many Greeks celebrated this status given that they were a numeric majority on the island, giving their community an edge over the smaller, but formerly privileged, Turkish and Jewish communities of the walled town. With ethnic residency patterns no longer legislated, some Greeks also took up residence in the Old Town during the period of Italian occupation.

The Italians viewed the architectural legacy of the Knights Hospitaller as a bridge to the earlier Roman period, and the administration constructed a tripartite chronology that established Italian rule as a legitimate culmination of Latin rule on the island after interruptive periods of Byzantine and Ottoman occupation. The Italian regime created a Department of Monuments and Excavations that oversaw the restoration of the walled city as a medieval Crusader landscape (Doumanis 1997, 43; Karatzas 2019, 35). Among the regime’s first interventions was the creation of a green buffer zone of gardens between the walled city and the new city, intended to facilitate its preservation. The

---

5 The French government, not the Italian, was first to make serious architectural interventions in the walled city by purchasing the former Inn of the Tongue of France in 1912, which was used as a residence during the Ottoman period, restoring it to its medieval appearance and installing in it a French consulate.
former Hospital of the Knights of St. John, used in the early twentieth century as a barracks, was converted into the still existing Rhodes archaeological museum, and the city walls were extensively restored (Karatzas 2019, 35-38).

The Italian regime prioritized tourism as a development project on the island. With the goal of making Rhodes a major stop on European holiday-makers’ Mediterranean tours, the Italians undertook expansive archaeological excavations and reconstructions at classical sites and encouraged the development of a tourist economy in the walled city (Shachar 2013, 107). Emphasizing Rhodes’s classical and Crusader pasts served both tourism and the self-image the Italian regime aimed to cultivate as a returning people. Archaeologists on the island today lament the lack of scientific publications left by the Italians’ romantic but expedient works, along with the liberties taken in their so-called restoration projects (Kasdagli, Katsioti, and Michaelidou 2007, 37).

Just as the Turkish and Jewish residents of the walled city were spending more time in the new European-style neighborhoods, northern and central European tourists began making their entry into the walled city. While some local residents took up jobs in the emerging service industries, the more lucrative positions in tourism planning and management went to Italian settlers (Shachar 2013, 137). As such, Italian reforms both displaced and failed to replace the trading and artisan-centered economy of the walled city that sustained generations of Jews, Turks, and Greeks. This created an absence still palpable in the numerous empty storefronts and workshop spaces in the walled city.

Larger geopolitical forces also worked to push and pull people into and out of relations with the walled city of Rhodes during the period of the Italian occupation.
While Rhodes and the rest of the Dodecanese fell subject to the nascent Italian colonial project in the 1910s and 20s, the neighboring Greek and Turkish nation-states waged war over their own expansionist ambitions. Between 1919 and 1922, and amidst the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, Greece fought the Turkish National Movement for the establishment of a Greater Greece encompassing territories home to historically Greek communities along the western shores of Anatolia. The Ankara-based Turkish National Movement, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (later Ataturk), fought to assert its sovereignty and maintain territorial contiguity over the whole of Anatolia. Following the war, the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 compounded strains on Old Town life. The treaty stipulated population transfers between Greece and the new Turkish Republic, leading to the displacement of more than a million people. As Italian subjects, neither the Greeks nor Turks of Rhodes were directly affected, but relations between the two communities suffered. More than half of the Turkish population left Rhodes between the censuses of 1922 and 1932, descending from 12,207 to 5,954 (Kolodny 1974, 232). However, the overall population of the island increased steadily throughout the Italian period as Greeks from smaller Dodecanese islands sought opportunities on Rhodes and Italian settlers arrived from the economically depressed regions of northeastern and southern Italy (Kolodny 1974, F18).

The Italian occupation undertook numerous public works that had lasting impacts on people’s relationships to the walled city. These projects notably included reconstructing the Hospitaller-era Palace of the Grand Master, creating a working port adjoining the walled city, and connecting houses in the walled city to the new waterworks completed in 1939. These works were principally undertaken to prepare the walled city
for its new function as a tourist attraction. Lacking space within the walled city, the Italians built an upscale hotel and casino to house the expected influx of tourists, the *Grande Albergo delle Rose* (Grand Hotel of the Roses), which still operates today. Italian urban planning largely ignored traditional distinctions between urban quarters that corresponded to ethnic privileges. The Turkish and Jewish artisanal bazaars of the walled city were supplanted by the New Market and commercial boulevards of *Rodi Nuovo*, which were oriented to a developing export and import market. The urban Greek population grew owing to the collapse of the sponge fishing industry on surrounding islands and, to a lesser extent, appropriation of Greek and Turkish farmlands for Italian settlers, experimental farms, and reforestation projects (Kolodny 1974, 231). Secular Italian schools drew students from all communities, leaving the local religious schools and French foreign schools of the walled city with lower enrollments and forcing them to adapt to new curricular requirements. Ottoman-sanctioned communitarian tribunals were also quickly disbanded upon the establishment of Italian administration, drawing all Rhodians to the same Italian courts to resolve legal disputes (Kolodny 1974, 232).

Mario Lago, the first and long-time governor of the civil administration in the Dodecanese was remembered by Rhodians for preferring to focus on local development and permitting the continuation of limited local rule (Doumanis 1997, 55). His successor, however, was remembered for bringing Rome-based fascist rule to the Dodecanese. Cesare Maria De Vecchi, Mussolini’s former Education Minister, replaced Lago in 1936. His Italianization projects, which included the closure of Greek-language secondary schools, had the unintended effect of stimulating underground Greek nationalism among the local population, which had effects lasting well after the end of Italian rule.
De Vecchi took restoration of the walled city to new levels by ordering the complete reconstruction of the Grand Master’s Palace as his official residence and the seat of King Vittorio Emanuele III in Rhodes. The site of the Palace had lain mostly in ruins since its destruction in a mid-nineteenth century gunpowder explosion, and its ground floor was being used as a prison. After a short period of research on the foundations and on travellers’ descriptions of the building, the project architect, Vittorio Mestorino, set out on an imaginative and grandiose reconstruction based largely on De Vecchi’s personal demands (Karatzas 2019, 39). Indeed, all but the ground floor were planned based on Mestorino’s imagination. He integrated a Roman Catholic chapel into the compound, added to the palace floors Hellenistic and Roman mosaics recovered from the neighboring island of Kos, and furnished the rooms with imported and antique furniture from Italy. In the words of Elias Kollias (2013, 74), former Ephor of Byzantine Antiquities of the Dodecanese:

Though the Italian “restoration” of the palace may not have respected the history of the area and was motivated more by the megalomania of the Italian Fascist Governor C.M. de Vecchi than a desire for scientific accuracy, it is nevertheless impressive and, to a degree, attractive.

While the reconstruction of the Grand Master’s Palace probably had little effect on the everyday life of most Rhodians, the project created a new monumental object—a neo-Crusader castle—to dominate Old Town’s landscape, towering above any Ottoman-era domed roof or minaret. Other Italian projects had more direct impacts on the everyday spaces of Old Town life and commerce. These involved dismantling Ottoman-period additions to the façades of medieval buildings, the clearance of several Ottoman-period buildings in Old Town and immediately outside of its walls, and the restoration of the inns of the “Tongues” of the Order of St. John along the Street of the Knights in the
Collachium. Steadily, the walled city took on a uniformly medieval aesthetic dually intended both to honor the Knights, who the Italians viewed as their Latin ancestors, and to attract European tourists. The Italians did not intervene in the use of mosques, Orthodox churches, or synagogues in the walled town, but neither were they acknowledged or tended to as elements of the city’s history. Responsibility for maintaining these spaces remained in the hands of Old Town’s diverse religious communities.

The Second World War was a period of enormous rupture for life and materiality in the walled city. As an ally of Nazi Germany, Italy adopted the anti-Jewish Nuremberg race laws in September 1938. The first effect of this was felt in the walled city with the immediate replacement of Judeo-Spanish street names in la Judería with Italian street names (Hasson 2012, 18). Shortly thereafter, Jews were banned from purchasing property, signing contracts, or working in certain professions (Shachar 2013, 164). By the end of the year, De Vecchi ordered the removal of the Jewish cemetery from just outside the city walls to a new location a mile south, where it exists today under care of the Jewish Community of Rhodes (Hasson 2012, 50). In September 1943, Italy abandoned Germany and sought British assistance in protecting the Dodecanese from German aggression, but German forces succeeded in capturing Rhodes within weeks.

Under Nazi occupation, all communities of Rhodes were subject to restrictions on movement, commerce, and political organizing, but the most traumatic fate was reserved for the city’s Jewish population. Allied forces intensified aerial attacks on German installations in April 1944, including the deep-sea harbour and depots adjacent to la Judería. Jews were thus the majority among the civilian casualties of the British bombing
campaign (Shachar 2013, 213). The resulting destruction is still visible in this northeastern quadrant of the walled city as wide empty plazas, crumbling buildings, and open craters, some of which have since been investigated and interpreted as Classical-era archaeological sites. In July 1944, all Jews on Rhodes were ordered to gather at the German Command Center, in the former Italian Air Force Command, where they were told that they would be relocated to another island (Shachar 2013, 216). They were held there for three days. During that time the Turkish consul on Rhodes, Selahattin Ülkümen, secured Turkish papers for 43 Jews who had lived in Turkey or were spouses of Turkish citizens, sparing them from deportation. The remaining Jewish population, along with the Jews of neighboring Kos, were subsequently deported by way of Haidari camp, outside of Athens, to concentration camps in continental Europe. Their deportation happened less than three months before the end of German occupation, and was the last from Greece to the concentration camps of continental Europe (Hasson 2012, 48).

Of the nearly 2000 Jews living on Rhodes before the deportation, 151 survived. After the liberation of Auschwitz, almost all surviving Rhodian Jews were sent to Italy, as officially, they had been Italian subjects at the outbreak of the war (Shachar 2013, 116). From there the majority of survivors eventually migrated to Rhodian Jewish communities in Los Angeles, Seattle, Buenos Aires, and Israel. A quarter of Old Town was left absent of its centuries-old resident community, and largely in ruin. Today, the Jewish Rhodes Historical Foundation, based in Los Angeles, and Jewish Community of Rhodes, based in the Old Town of Rhodes, maintain a museum in the walled city attached to the restored Kahal Shalom synagogue, the only surviving synagogue of four that were in use before the Allied bombings and deportation.
After the war, the United Nations turned the Dodecanese over to temporary British administration, which lasted from 1945 to 1947. While Rhodian Greeks had supported Allied campaigns in the Dodecanese, most resented British rule, which was largely geared towards caretaking rather than democratic governance. Doumanis (1997, 195) observed that Greeks who lived during this period viewed the British as “cold” and as impeding their aspirations to unification with Greece. The British did little in terms of material intervention in the walled town during this period. In his *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, Lawrence Durrell, then serving as a communications officer in the British military occupation of Rhodes and tasked with establishing local newspapers, paints a picture of the Old Town as a sleepy neighborhood populated by Rhodian Turks, a few remaining Italians, and Greeks, some of whom had come from neighboring towns and islands. As a stipulation of the 1947 Treaty of Peace between Italy and the Allied powers, Britain ceded control of the Dodecanese to Greece.

**Rhodes after Unification with Greece**

At the time of the union, Greece was in the midst of a civil war. As such, the reunification so long anticipated by Greek nationalists on Rhodes was unharmonious. Rhodians later recalled the first two years under Greek military rule as unpleasant and heavy-handed. By the early 1950s, the Greek state began investing Italian reparation funds in the Dodecanese, and tourism once again stimulated growth of the local economy (Doumanis 2016, 169). Rhodes was unique in the 1950s among the Greek islands for having its own airport, multiple resort hotels, a pristinely and imaginatively reconstructed Old Town, and highly developed infrastructure, a legacy of Italy’s ambitions of creating
an elite eastern Mediterranean resort destination. In the first two decades under Greek administration the population of most islands in the Dodecanese collapsed, while the population of Rhodes swelled.

The Greek population of the Old Town grew considerably in these early years with families from the island’s interior and from other islands. These families settled in the numerous empty houses resulting from the destruction of the Jewish community and the emigration of numerous Turkish families to the Republic of Turkey. Properties that were empty at the time of transfer to the Greek state became state property, and are now the responsibility of the Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities of the Dodecanese. The Greek Archaeological Service is still landlord to numerous tenants in the walled city. Restoration efforts were initiated on some residential properties in the 1980s, but in 2004 the Office for the Conservation of the Old Town of Rhodes was dissolved and this work has been indefinitely halted (Georgalli and Psarri 2010, 64). The walled city of Rhodes was inscribed as a single protected antiquities site by the Greek state in 1959. The state adopted the same boundaries as the Italian zona monumentale, and also adopted the Italian inventory of antiquities sites in the walled city as a basis for ongoing research and tourism development (Karatzas 2019, 42). An ephorate, a local office of the state archaeological service, was established by the military administration in 1947, and prioritized rehabilitation projects for structures damaged during the war, and also for Byzantine churches throughout the walled city. With the spectacular medieval structures of the walled city having been restored or reconstructed by the Italians, the Greek Archaeological Service focused its work on Byzantine churches which were seen as embodying the continuity of Greek civilization in the city (Karatzas 2019, 44). Many of
these churches had been converted to mosques under Ottoman rule. As such much of this work involved dismantling Islamic architectural additions in order to uncover Christian motifs preserved underneath layers of plaster. In general, Greek publications on the history of Rhodes in the 1950s and 1960s cast Hospitaller, Ottoman, and Italian rule in a negative light, while heralding the classical and Byzantine heritage of Rhodes as the seeds of its Greek character (Karatzas 2019, 46).

While the state worked to recover, construct, and highlight the walled city’s Greek character, the city’s medieval Hospitaller architecture and history was undoubtedly the most important aspect for western European tourists coming to the island. Thus, the walled city’s status as a protected antiquity site was reaffirmed several times, culminating in 1988 when the World Heritage Committee designated the Medieval City of Rhodes a UNESCO World Heritage site along with four other sites nominated by the Greek state. The Committee approved of the designation on condition that the Greek state agree to proceed with architectural conservation in accordance with the Venice Charter and the Toledo International Charter for the conservation of historic towns and urban places (UNESCO 1988, 3). In its evaluation of Old Town Rhodes, the International Committee on Monuments and Sites roundly disproved of the Italian restoration projects which were “inspired by an outlook condemned by the Charter of Venice” (ICOMOS 1988, 3). These concerns left the Greek state in a position of balancing its clear interest in tourism development (which included for a time the rebuilding of the colossus of Rhodes), and international pressure to adopt a stance of conservation based on an aesthetic of historical

---

6 These charters have also been influential in the governance of the Old City of Acre, discussed in chapter 5.
authenticity. Meanwhile, the role of the resident population in the future of Old Town is absent in the nomination and evaluation documents.

Old Town today is managed by multiple state bodies. The municipality of Rhodes oversees the provisioning of local services and operates tourist information services in Old Town, while the Greek Archaeological Service is responsible for the maintenance and conservation of all historic structures in Old Town (4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities 2014). The Greek debt crisis has left the Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities severely understaffed and underfunded, amounting to the indefinite closure of multiple sites in the walled city, including Byzantine churches and several parts of the medieval fortifications. I examine the local experience of this contemporary situation in chapter 4.

**Acre**

**Crusader and Ottoman Foundations of the Old City**

Historically, Acre is most often referenced as the political, economic, and military center of the Second Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. Most academic and popular books about the city center this historical period, and Crusader Acre has recently been featured in popular television documentaries and the video game, *Assassin’s Creed*. Acre was a minor Crusader port after the First Crusade (1095-1099), when western European armies took control of much of Palestine, including their ultimate object of desire: Jerusalem. The Holy Land was later wrested from Crusader rule by Ayyūbid forces led by Saladin in 1187. Crusader armies succeeded at retaking parts of the lost territories, including Acre in 1191, in the Third Crusade, but failed to retake Jerusalem. During this era of the “Second Kingdom,” Acre developed as one of the major cities of the eastern Mediterranean,
serving as the principal connecting point between the Crusader project in the Holy Land and continental Europe.

From Acre, the city’s rulers, noble families, and churches controlled expanses of land throughout the Western Galilee, which in turn supported a growing urban population (Khamisy 2016). The dominant Hospitaller and Templar Military Orders oversaw the reconstruction of Acre’s walls and the construction and fortification of the suburb of Montmusard. The Hospitaller and Templar Orders both constructed their main quarters within the city walls, which themselves were fortified (Jacoby 2005, 84; Piana 2016, 453). The remains of the Hospitaller quarter today comprise the main archaeological attraction in the Old City, along with a Crusader-period tunnel stretching from the city center to the foundations of the Templar fortress. Compared to the Hospitaller quarter, little of the Templar quarter likely remains, even underneath Ottoman-era construction.

Located in what is now the south-west corner of the Old City, the area sustained severe damage by British naval bombardment in the nineteenth century during the Egyptian-Ottoman War. Since the First Crusade of 1098, the merchant cities of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa offered considerable economic support to the Crusader armies and subsequently to the military orders that developed locally, namely the Hospitallers and the Templars. As such, they were granted the privilege of establishing their own autonomous quarters in Acre, each of which included consuls, inns, warehouses, markets, and churches (Stern 2016, 521). The multi-ethnic population further included German-speakers associated with the Teutonic Order, English speakers in the Montmusard suburb, and local Jews and Eastern Christians native to city or who were drawn to its rapid growth (Jacoby 2005, 84). Indigenous Muslim merchants from surrounding towns and villages are known to
have been present in Acre’s markets, and Acre’s European Christian population adopted Islamic styles and customs in art and fashion (Jacoby 2005, 98). Archaeologist Edna Stern calls the ceramic assemblage from the Crusader period in Acre a “Mediterranean mix” comparable to other twelfth and thirteenth century assemblages studied in major Mediterranean ports such as Marseilles, Paphos, Venice, Genoa, and Alexandria (Stern 2016, 534). The high volume and diversity of imported ceramics present in Acre during the Crusader period suggests that the city was a hub of international trade which likely included significant exports of local goods, notably sugar, to the western Mediterranean. While ceramic diversity cannot be assumed to be a precise measure of cultural diversity in Crusader Acre, it does conform to the historical evidence that Acre was a multicultural city during the period of the Second Kingdom.

Contemporary accounts from the Crusader period suggest that Acre was a crowded city that had not been planned for the enormous population that it would eventually host. Pilgrims and travelers arriving in the city described the port as polluted and the streets as unclean and overcrowded (Jacoby 2005, 82-83). Analysis of parasites from latrines in Acre show that the city’s population dealt with worms and infections introduced from Europe and tied to poor sanitation and the consumption of undercooked meat common to most cities in medieval Europe (Mitchell 2016, 601-603). Twice a year, before Easter and in late summer, Acre’s population swelled as ship convoys from Europe arrived carrying thousands of pilgrims and merchants. Much as in today’s Old City tourism economy, this was a time of hyperactivity in the city’s markets, with pilgrims buying souvenirs, changing money, and hiring interpreters, guides, and guards for tours to Jerusalem (Jacoby 2005, 94).
The most important legacy of the Crusader period for Acre today is the archaeological and architectural remains of its monumental structures. These provided the foundations for the subsequently constructed Ottoman city and the basis for contemporary tourism in the Old City today. The primary building material used in both the Crusader and Ottoman periods was a soft sandstone known locally in both Arabic and Hebrew as kurkar, from lithified sand dunes found along the Levantine coast of the Mediterranean. The main Crusader city was larger in area than the Ottoman city, with its walls being constructed in the area now known as the “New City.” Further, the residential and industrial Montmusard suburb was added beyond the city walls in the post-1191 period, possibly extending nearly a kilometer into today’s New City (Jacoby 2005, 99). However, little is visible today of the Crusader remains beyond the Ottoman fortifications, and as such tourism development around Crusader history is confined to the Ottoman walled city.

Crusader Acre, the last Frankish bastion in Palestine, was conquered in May 1291 by Mamluke forces. Seeking to prevent the reestablishment of a Crusader stronghold on the Levantine coast, the Mamlukes destroyed most of the city. After the conquest, Acre lay mostly in ruins until the eighteenth century, except for a small fishing settlement that persisted along the shore (Philipp 2001, 1). Accounts and drawings by European travelers in these intervening years depict a city of destroyed and decaying monumental structures. But by the eighteenth century, a combined European demand for cotton and loosening economic centrality in the Ottoman Empire provided the conditions for the reconstruction of the city by Zahir al-Umar, a Bedouin merchant who had risen to become ruler of the Galilee (Philipp 2001, 7).
Confronting the problem of rising sea levels since the thirteenth century, Zahir al-‘Umar’s engineers built a new city on top of the Crusader town, using the Crusader ruins as foundations and stilts for newer construction. Indeed, while Haifa’s protected bay, about 20 kilometers south of Acre, would have been more useful for commerce, Zahir al-‘Umar chose Acre as his base in order to use the plentiful debris to his advantage in building a city quickly (Philipp 2001, 25). The first levels and basements of several Crusader structures, as well as many roads, were filled with sand and destruction debris to create a relatively flat city rising well above sea level. In using Crusader structures as foundations, the Ottoman city preserved the outlines of many Crusader buildings and most roads.

If building Acre as a capital was a compromise that its Crusader rulers made on accepting the unlikelihood of their return to Jerusalem, the reconstruction of Acre during the eighteenth century under Ottoman rule was an intentional and successful attempt at consolidating economic and political control over much of Greater Syria by way of centralizing the export of cash crops in a single port city. Between 1744 and 1746, Zaher al-‘Umar, who by then had risen as Governor of Sidon, was recognized locally as ruler of Acre after taking much of the Galilee by military force or negotiation. Acre was, at the time, a small commercial port used mainly by French merchants, with Khan el-Franj (“the inn of the Franks”) being the oldest of the city’s four caravanserais. By controlling both Acre and the Galilee, Zahir al-‘Umar gained a monopoly over the production and export of cotton, raising funds for new construction projects and encouraging immigration into the city (Philipp 2001, 36-38).
The Old City of today owes its shape mainly to the architects of Zahir al-‘Umar, ruling between 1742 and 1775, and Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar, ruling between 1775 and 1804. Most of the city’s mosques and churches were built (or restored) during the reign of Zahir al-‘Umar. However, the city’s largest religious structure was built and named for his successor, the Mosque of al-Jazzar. Both rulers erected commercial structures and public utilities. Of the city’s caravanserais and commercial spaces, Zahir al-‘Umar oversaw construction of Khan esh-Shuna and Khan esh-Shawarda, and Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar built Khan el-Umdan and a covered market behind his mosque, now a privately managed tourist market branded as “the Turkish Bazaar.” Al-Jazzar also constructed a large public bath that was converted into a multimedia tourist attraction in 2003.

Little information exists about the resident population of the city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Based on French diplomatic and travelers’ records, Philipp (2001, 23) estimates that Acre was a predominantly Christian city throughout the eighteenth century, a time when Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox were drawn to the coast due to the rise in maritime trade. As trade decreased in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with France steadily increasing cotton imports from the United States (Philipp 2001, 119), the Christian merchant population dwindled and Acre became a predominantly Muslim town. There also existed a considerable Jewish community during the reign of al-Jazzar, supported and protected by his Syrian Jewish vizier, Haim Farhi (Philipp 2001, 24).

Zahir al-‘Umar and Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar’s city was smaller than Crusader Acre. The outer neighborhoods of the Crusader city were mined for construction material, notably for Zahir al-‘Umar’s meter thick city wall, which unlike the Crusader
fortifications included a sea wall intended for defense against pirates (Philipp 2001, 26-27). In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte’s army besieged the city in the general’s quest to control Egypt and Greater Syria. While al-Jazzar successfully defended the city with the assistance of British naval reinforcements, he subsequently ordered the land walls rebuilt and massively reinforced with a moat to defend against modern artillery. His successor, Suleiman Pasha added massive earthworks as an outer layer to the city walls, which today are partly incorporated into a Muslim cemetery on the eastern side of the city. After a century as a semi-autonomous city and seat of a much larger realm, Acre fell to an Egyptian naval siege in 1832. By that time, Beirut had overtaken Acre as the major trading port on the Levantine coast and no major building projects would be undertaken in the city other than substantial repairs to the walls sustained during the 1832 siege (Philipp 2001, 131; Rustum 1926a, 1926b).

A few developments between the short-lived Egyptian occupation (1832-1840) and the beginning of the British Mandate (1917) had lasting effects on the Old City. In November 1840 a British, Austrian, and Ottoman naval fleet bombarded the city in an attempt to return the Syrian coast to Ottoman rule. During the attack a British cannonball struck the city’s main powder magazine, its explosion killing up to 2000 people in the city and leaving a lagoon that today serves as a popular fishing spot for residents (Rowbotham 1952, 575). Another late-Ottoman development in the Old City was the imprisonment and exile in Acre of Bahá’u’lláh, founder of the Bahá’í faith. Long suspected of arousing anti-government sentiment, the Ottoman government had exiled him to various cities across the empire before finally imprisoning him in Acre, by then a quiet provincial town being used by the Ottoman imperial government as a penal colony,
in 1868 (Cole 1998, 34). After a short term in Acre’s fortress prison (now an Israeli military museum focused on Zionist militants imprisoned there by the British), he was granted limited freedom of movement in and around the city, and during this time built the spiritual movement that now numbers more than seven million adherents. While the Bahá’í left a profound imprint on the Old City and region, Bahá’u’lláh himself described the Old City in a letter to the Persian monarch as “the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water” (Bahá’u’lláh 2002, 133). In the twentieth century, and continuing today, the international Baha’i community has worked to preserve sites associated with the life of Bahá’u’lláh, including his prison cell and the house in the Old City where he lived in his early years under house arrest.

Bahá’u’lláh’s time in Acre coincided with the early years of the western Galilean plantation economy that was centered in Acre and its surrounding lands. The Ottoman Empire’s Tanzimat reforms led in 1858 to the commodification of state lands previously administered under a program of cultivation-based ownership. The majority of land around Acre fell into the ownership of a few landed elite, many of whom converted multi-family courtyard houses in the walled city into tiled-roof mansions using wealth extracted from the nascent plantation economy. Through these land purchases, former cultivators (fellahin) became landless serfs and plantation laborers, leading to the creation of numerous villages in the second half of the nineteenth century in Acre’s hinterland and throughout Palestine (Allweil 2016, 49). Yael Allweil (2016, 65) observes that while

---

7 Bahá’u’lláh’s tomb and several Bahá’í gardens are located on the city outskirts and the tomb of the Báb, who Bahá’u’lláh claimed predicted his arrival as a prophet of God, is in nearby Haifa. Collectively these sites were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008.
numerous nineteenth century Orientalist observers viewed the vernacular architecture of these peasant villages as a continuous holdover from biblical times, they were a direct result of Ottoman modernization policy that sought to alienate laborers from their land in alignment with global capitalist practices. The material traces of this period also resonate with today’s tourism economy. Two of the late nineteenth century mansions of Acre’s landed elite have been converted into a luxury hotel, and another was purchased by the Israel Antiquities Authority for use as the now-closed International Conservation Center. Many of the city’s contemporary Palestinian residents, in turn, descend from the laborers who inhabited surrounding villages and sustained Acre’s plantation economy.

**Acre Under the British Mandate and the Beginnings of Heritage Management**

The unending rearticulation of meanings and memories to the materiality of Acre suggests that its residents and rulers have long worked to make the place they have inherited useful and meaningful—what today might be termed heritage work. After Acre came under British rule in 1918, this relationship between past and present formally became a major site of colonial governance.

Acre was occupied during the First World War by the British 13th Cavalry Brigade, comprised of regiments from India. On September 13, 1918, the Brigade captured a small Ottoman garrison of 150 soldiers while they attempted to flee along one of the city’s beaches (Allenby 1918, 15188). Officers of the British regiments reported Acre, which they claim had been looted by the Ottoman garrison, as

[…奸 a pretty place enough from outside, with the battlemented walls shining in the middle of the groves of orange trees and the sparkling blue sea beyond, but the
town itself is dirty and evil-smelling, with dark, dirty, and narrow streets after the usual Oriental pattern. (Q.L. 1919, 238)

The coastal plain north of Acre grew substantially in population during the Mandate with Acre and, increasingly, Haifa serving as commercial and administrative hubs for vast cereal crops and plantations of olives, oranges, bananas, and other fruit trees (Abbasi 2019, 83-84). This was a continuation of the late Ottoman plantation economy. Much of this land was owned by ‘Akkawi (the Arabic demonym for Acre’s residents) families, contributing to the elite’s wealth through the maintenance of a feudal land ownership system (Abbasi 2019, 90). Goods destined to the southern port cities of Lebanon from the coastal plain and from elsewhere in Palestine were typically shipped from Acre, while exports to Europe shipped from Haifa (Abbasi 2019, 95).

Outside the walls of Acre, the British government established an experimental farm, military base, and military officers’ neighborhood, laying the ground for what would become known as the “New City.” Arthur Spinney, a British contractor and supplier opened a soft drink factory in this area that employed workers from the walled city. Similarly, the Nur Match factory was opened by the Weizman brothers from Latvia (Abbasi 2019, 93), and employed local Palestinian Arab workers while also attracting Jewish immigrants to the city. As Haifa grew as the dominant city of the north, many Acre residents found work in the neighboring city’s port, rail yards, petroleum refinery, and factories (Rubin 1974, 12). British planners breached Acre’s land wall in two places to connect roads to the nascent New City, allowing for greater motor vehicle traffic in and out of the walled city and more direct connections between the city and the wider region (Rubin 1974, 13). Khan esh-Shawarda, located near the original Ottoman Land Gate and traditionally a stopping place for camel caravans and horse carts, gradually
became a center for automotive repair and vehicle storage, a use it retained until state tourism development interventions in 2010 converted it into a pedestrianized café and restaurant plaza.

The British maintained Acre’s citadel, originally the palace of al-Jazzar, as a prison, and built a police barracks immediately to the north of the prison on the north side of the land wall. The prison became a central symbol of British oppression in both Arab and Jewish national movements, as Arab and Jewish militants alike were imprisoned, and some executed, there.

Acre’s few Jewish families that remained from the late Ottoman period began to settle outside the walled city in the 1920s. However, almost all Jews left the city by 1930 following the Arab uprisings of 1929, sparked by clashes between Arabs and Jews over access to the Western Wall in Jerusalem (Jewish Daily Bulletin 1929, 1). The Arab national movement, led largely by landed elites and the Mufti of Jerusalem, was well represented in Acre along with the other majority-Arab cities in Palestine. It was not hegemonic, however, as the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) also had strong representation among the city’s residents by the 1930s. Founded by eastern European Jews in 1923 as a break-away from the Zionist project, the PCP advocated for equality between Arabs and Jews and cooperated in its early years with the left-wing of the Arab National Movement (Budeiri 1979, 9). Soon it attracted a large Arab membership, and as official policy struggled against British imperialism, Zionism, and the clerical and feudal leadership of the Arab National Movement (Budeiri 1979, 40). The party split into Jewish and Arab national factions in 1943, largely due to disparate positions on enlistment in the British army following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union during the Second World
War. The pre-1943 PCP and the post-1943 Arab National Communist Movement both agitated against the Arab elite for selling land to the Jewish Agency, which included lands to the north of Acre that would become the Jewish city of Nahariyya, and to the south that would become the industrial center of northern Palestine. The strong anti-alienation program established by the communist parties during the British Mandate period had lasting consequences for local attitudes towards the Israeli appropriation of so-called “abandoned properties” after 1948 (Rubin 1974, 43-45).

British planning interventions had minimal impacts on resident relations to urban space during the Mandate period, but initiated a program of tourism-oriented planning that was later adopted and expanded under Israeli administration. Social and economic life in the walled city developed with little official meddling by the British. Neighborhoods retained their traditional names, although the British did implement a system of numbered houses and blocks that facilitated taxation and mail delivery, a system that some residents still use to refer to certain housing blocks and streets (Shoval 2013, 616-617).

After two decades of non-intervention, in the early 1940s the Public Works Department of the Mandate government commissioned a comprehensive survey and report of recommendations for Acre as part of a post-war reconstruction era that the government aimed to undertake throughout Palestine. The report was authored by senior architect Percy Winter, and was published in 1944. Percy’s “Acre Report” set forth a vision for intensive rezoning and tourism promotion that was never realized under British administration, but proved highly influential to Israeli officials after 1948. The report provides insight into British perceptions of the city, which cites overcrowding, “slum
areas,” and improper disposal of sewage as impediments to tourism development. The
raison d’être of the report is laid out in its introductory paragraphs:

The position, as set out in the memorandum, is that the existing conditions in the Old Town are appalling, that Acre is one of the finest architectural and archaeological monuments of Palestine, that it can claim special treatment in any reconstruction programme, and that some expenditure must be incurred in advance of the post-war reconstruction era. (Winter 1944, 1)

The report reveals an official stance anticipating renewal and development following the waning months of the Second World War. Winter’s use of the terms “Old Town” and “New Town” throughout the report also makes clear that officials were thinking of the walled city as a place apart from the new neighborhood to the north. He also makes explicit what he considered to be challenges in reconciling established ways of living in the walled city with the expectations of the report’s commissioners:

Those delegated to make a Survey such as this and to submit solutions to problems are at the outset confronted with a complex of questions to which, in the absence of guidance by like experience in Palestine or any authoritative definition of relative standards, there is no apparent answer. For instance, what constitutes overcrowding in a medieval town? What is a slum in a community that is neither truly urban yet is not rural? What determines whether a particular dwelling is insanitary when the whole town is insanitary? What is meant by the ‘need for open spaces’ in a walled-in town that can afford to let large unbuilt-areas lie waste and conduct agricultural pursuits within its walls? (Winter 1944, 3)

Winter’s foremost concern in the report was overcrowding and the short supply of rooms in the walled town. He proposed a mix of building additions to the walled city’s current housing blocks (a practice considered sensible by many residents today, but almost unthinkable under modern Israeli conservation standards) and new housing construction in “New Town.” The report discourages the government from undertaking demolitions in “Old Town” due to the aesthetic value imparted by the crowded stone structures. Winter uses the term “cleaning” for his recommended approach to resolving
slum conditions in parts of the walled city, which would involve aesthetic restoration of existing structures and either paving unpaved courts or converting them to gardens. After making his general recommendations, which involve several intrusive and top-down interventions in the walled city’s living spaces, Winter curiously inserts an observation that seems to reflect an empathetic stance towards Acre’s residents that he cannot reconcile with his assignment. In this passage, he appears to make a case for re-thinking the reconstruction of the city in terms based on how people actually inhabit it:

In investigating such a problem it is important “to think in terms of living”. The architect is often pre-occupied with form effects and building; the housing reformer with number of dwellings, standards of accommodation, finance; the town planner with canons of correct numerical and spatial relationship between the various elements which compose a town. Each tends to underrate or neglect the human factor. The prime consideration should be how people in fact live and not housing standards alone. So often in dealing with human affairs one finds that what people ought to like is not always the same as what they do like. (Winter 1944, 26)

In awkward tension with this expression of human-centered planning are the numerous detailed recommendations that Winter makes for all state property in the walled city. Generally, he argues that state domains have been mismanaged, allowed to fall into ruin, and are in need of rezoning. Throughout the Mandate period, local residents and businesses leased state properties for purposes including housing, a sweets factory, a welfare center, a café, and stables. The report’s vision for Acre was an urban complex of historic stone dwellings with new stone houses built in the undeveloped northern part of the walled city (where a hostel now stands), gardens interspersed throughout the city, and increased tourism and representation of the city’s Crusader history. On the latter, he specifically recommends installing an eye clinic under the auspices of the Order of St. John so as to “return” the formerly military, now charitable, order to the city. He also
recommended excavating areas in and around the Central Prison to reveal sections of the Hospitaller Compound.

Where the Winter Report envisioned the walled city as an “Old Town” destined to be a manicured tourist attraction, another publication from the same period in time uses a different tone for describing the city. Na‘im Makhouly, a Palestinian Christian who worked at Acre as the Inspector of Antiquities for the Northern District of Palestine, wrote a guidebook to the city in 1941 intending to attract tourists based on its then current conditions. The guidebook was revised in 1946 to include an overview of the city’s Crusader history written by fellow archaeologist Cedric Johns, but the bulk of the content relates to the architectural legacy of the Ottoman period. Makhouly makes a less absolute distinction than Winter’s “Old Town” and “New Town,” just once acknowledging that the city is divided into “the old town and the modern quarter” (Makhouly and Johns 1946, 64) but otherwise simply referring to the walled city as “Acre.” Throughout, Makhouly emphasizes the mixedness of Ottoman and Crusader layers, pointing out specific places where Ottoman reconstruction clearly re-integrated Crusader masonry. In his description of the buildings in the walled city he signals their contemporary uses, demonstrating how the city’s residents have adapted the historic spaces of the city to their current needs. In describing features such as the land and sea gates, the Mosque of Al-Jazzar, and the Citadel, he also draws attention to the government school, the welfare center, the waqf offices, and the prison’s garden where a few Crusader artifacts were on display. In certain places Makhouly directs readers to seek permission from a property overseer to view obscure Crusader remains, such as the sheikh at the Sufi Shaziliya Zawiya or superintendent at the prison. He also directs travelers to the various churches
and mosques of Acre’s diverse communities. Not since Makhouly has a more comprehensive and descriptive guidebook been written about the city. Nonetheless, Irving (2019, 66) rightly remarks that this guidebook ought to be viewed as a hybrid local-colonial project. Makhouly’s local and intimate knowledge of the city’s past and present is revealed only to the extent expected and allowed by the Mandate Department of Antiquities.

Archival sources and government publications from the British Mandate reveal a city with a steadily growing population owing to migration from surrounding rural areas to the city. In the 1946 census, the last taken before the 1948 War, Acre’s civilian population consisted of 13,560 people, including 10,930 Muslims, 2,490 Christians, and 50 Jews. Throughout the Ottoman period, Acre was a city dependent on the agricultural lands in its surroundings for its export economy, and as its status as a commercial port waned with Haifa’s growth, former farm laborers sought new opportunities in the city itself through its burgeoning manufacturing sector and Mandate government jobs. Winter’s report characterizes these individuals as “migrants,” but their connections to Acre were likely well-established through generations of feudal labor arrangements with the walled city’s landed elite. Most who moved into the walled city were probably familiar with the social and economic dynamics of life there, and from available sources it is possible to glean that a sense of civic and, increasingly, Arab nationalist pride existed among the city’s population. Acre was a city that the regional population leaned towards amidst economic transformations and increasing anxiety towards Zionist colonization and British control. Indeed, as Great Britain signaled its intentions to terminate the Mandate,
the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine recommended that Palestine be partitioned into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, with Acre located in the Arab state.

1948 and Beyond: Nakba and the Forging of New Relations

On May 14, 1948, the day that the British Mandate expired, Zionist leaders gathered in Tel Aviv to sign Israel’s declaration of independence. The following day, neighboring Arab states sent armies into Palestine, where a power vacuum had been left with the Arab Palestinian rejection of partition. In the war that ensued, Israeli militias secured rapid successive victories over the Arab armies and Palestinian cities. Throughout the country, Palestinians were forcibly displaced from neighborhoods or whole cities. Others chose to flee, a decision that was difficult and complicated, influenced by the Arab High Command’s directives to escape areas of fighting and the spread of news of massacres elsewhere in the county. These events and the loss of historic Palestine are remembered by Palestinians as al-Nakba, the catastrophe. Official details of these events have only recently come under historical scrutiny as archives have begun to open, and oral history is providing important insight into the lived experience of displacement and its aftermaths (Abu-Lughod and Sa’di 2007). Most refugees left with the expectation of return at the conclusion of hostilities, and the right of return has been at the center of Palestinian national struggle (Khalidi 1992).

Anticipating armed conflict, Acre’s political leaders (who happened to oppose the Arab High Committee led by the mufti of Jerusalem) organized a defense force beginning in 1947 that numbered roughly 450-500 men (Abbasi 2010, 9). Haifa and several neighboring villages had come under military control of the Haganah, one of the major
Zionist paramilitary organizations of the Mandate period, in late April 1948, before the formal end of the British Mandate. Thousands of Arabs from Haifa and the surrounding region sought refuge in Acre’s walled city, feeling confident that Acre would not be subject to attack as it lay within the boundaries of the intended Arab state. The Haganah severed supply routes and blocked the road between Haifa and Acre, leading to siege conditions in the city that caused a heightened sense of anxiety among the displaced and local residents alike (Abbasi 2010, 14). On April 27, the Haganah blew up the water channel that provisioned the city, possibly contributing to an outbreak of typhoid fever among the nearly 50,000 people sheltering within the walls (Abbasi 2010, 15). Between May 13 and 14, the Carmeli Brigade took control of the Western Galilee, in some cases evacuting and destroying entire villages, severing Acre’s routes to its northern villages and to Lebanon. The Haganah’s Plan Dalet foresaw territorial contiguity between the Bay of Haifa and the border with Lebanon, and the removal of the Arab population from the Western Galilee. The plan was only partly successful as not all Palestinian Arabs left the country, with many congregating in Acre or other villages. In a matter of days, Acre became a mosaic community of refugees from al-Sumayriyyah, al-Manshiyya, al-Zib, al-Bassa, and others. Some stayed, but in the ensuing days most, including many of Acre’s permanent residents, fled, ending up mainly in Lebanon but also in Syria and the Jordanian controlled West Bank. In the final stages of the campaign, the Carmeli Brigade took control of Tel el-Fukhar (also called Tel Napoleon or Tel Akko) on the outskirts of Acre, from which it began a steady assault on the city. On the evening of May 16, Haganah forces launched an invasion. On the evening of May 17, the Haganah sent a prisoner into the walled city to convey a letter to Acre’s notables, threatening total
destruction in the absence of their surrender within a half hour. A Catholic priest and two citizens emerged holding a white flag, and after a short period of negotiations signaled their readiness to sign a surrender agreement (Abbasi 2010, 21-24).

By the end of the tumult, the city’s population was transformed and reduced to about 3,000 people. Long-term residents of Acre were in the minority, with almost all of the city’s elites having left earlier in the hostilities, and the remaining majority being internally displaced persons from the surrounding villages and Haifa. Boys and men suspected of participating in the city’s defense were detained in the former British prison. Like other communities in the new State of Israel, the city’s Arab population was governed by martial law until 1966, within living memory of much of the city’s adult population.

In interviews for this dissertation, I asked interlocutors to comment on their family’s history in Acre. Their responses are consistent with historical accounts of the immediate post-1948 years. Some traced their family roots to Acre since before 1948, others came from villages during the hostilities, and others still arrived in the months and years immediately following, seeking family connections and housing in the largely emptied walled city. Narratives of al-Nakba in Acre encapsulate at once a rupture in human-environmental relations and the re-creation of relationships in the wake of colonial dispossession.

In the decades following 1948, several developments are worth considering in contextualizing human-place relations in the walled city. After the Israeli conquest of the city, the government decided to settle some of the thousands of Jewish immigrants landing at the port of Haifa in Acre’s emptied residences. In the wake of this expedient
decision, the government decided to formally designate Acre as a “development town” for experimenting with Arab-Jewish intergroup relations (Rubin 1974, 16). Most of the immigrants that were settled in the walled city were Arabic-speaking North African and Iraqi Jews. While relations were at times tense, both Palestinians and Jews faced similar struggles of finding work and adapting to life under new governance. The vast majority of houses in the walled city were appropriated by the state’s housing authority through the enactment of the 1950 Law of Absentee Property. The law nullified ownership of any property deemed “abandoned” between November 29, 1947, and May 19, 1948, and ceded ownership of these properties to the State of Israel (Schechla 2001, 21). Thus, the majority of Acre’s residents—who did not reside there before 1948—were made tenants of the state housing authority, a status that most in the walled city maintain today. The state’s designation of property as “abandoned” was an early method of expressing its now long-standing opposition to the Palestinian right of return by creating new “facts on the ground,” a policy crafted by Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben Gurion.

In the first decade under Israeli rule, the state began construction of new housing in and beyond the Mandate-era quarters with the intent of settling more Jewish immigrants there and relocating many of those who had initially been placed in the walled city. By the early 1960s, most Jewish families in the walled city were relocated to the newly constructed housing blocks in the “New City.” The walled city and Mandate neighborhood of the New City remained the centers of business and workshops, while heavy industry developed along the shores of the Bay of Haifa. The late anthropologist Morton Rubin (1974) found that during the 1960s and 1970s, the city’s diverse population intermingled and visitors were impressed with the sense of vitality in the city.
Intergroup relations during this time were supported by successive Labor-led municipal government coalitions, occasionally including representatives from the Old City, even as they oversaw the gradual segregation of Jews and Palestinians by neighborhood. Rubin notes that social and economic life in the city during the early decades under Israeli rule were characterized by a series of improvisations geared towards survival and subsistence (Rubin 1974, 22-25). Palestinian residents of Acre, however, were heavily monitored by the military and had limited mobility rights until 1951, causing many to permanently lose property rights to agricultural lands outside of the city (Tostrick 2000, 174).

The state affirmed its stance towards the walled city as a distinct sector that could be developed and marketed for tourist consumption in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1964, the Old City was declared a protected Antiquity Site, thus formalizing restrictions around modifications to any structures in the quarter (Yalkut HaPirsunim 1091 1964, 1372). In 1967, the Old Acre Development Company (OADC) was established as a subsidiary of the Ministry of Tourism. The OADC was established with the express goal of coordinating with property owners (mainly other state agencies such as the National Housing Company) to transform the Old City into an international tourist destination. The municipal government and OADC both worked to emphasize the Crusader history of the walled city to tourists and in official emblems of the city. The municipal crest integrates symbolism of the ancient Phoenician, Crusader, and modern Israeli city, while omitting representations of the city’s Arab history (Tostrick 2000, 175). For a period in the 1970s, the municipal and national governments supported the relocation of Palestinian residents from the Old City to a new housing project outside of Acre, adjoining the nearby village of Makr. Several families left the Old City during this time.
to take up special housing loans in Makr (Tostrick 2000, 184). Today many still make
daily commutes from Makr to the Old City for school and business purposes, and some
have relocated back to the Old City.

The OADC’s activity through the 1960s and 1970s focused mainly on converting
existing properties in the Old City into paid-access tourist attractions. The Hammam al-
Basha (Turkish bath) was converted into a municipal museum, and accessible portions of
the Hospitaller compound at the Citadel were opened for tourists. In the early 1990s, the
Old Acre Development Company commissioned a massive restoration and development
plan that led to the excavation of the courtyard of the former prison that revealed
extensive remnants of the Hospitaller compound (Fuhrmann-Naaman and Kislev 2010).
The project led to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) creating an expanded and more
permanent presence in the Old City. The Conservation Department of the IAA was
established in 1988, and the Hospitaller compound project became a field training site for
a generation of new conservation professionals in Israel (Fuhrmann-Naaman and Kislev
2010). The national government also signaled its desire to incorporate Acre into the
Zionist imaginary of the State of Israel, transferring much of the Old City’s citadel to the
Ministry of Defense, which in 1991 converted the former prison (which had operated for
a time as a hospital) to a museum of the Zionist underground militia prisoners that had
been held there under British rule. The museum remains under the control of the Ministry
of Defense to this day.

Riding a wave of enthusiasm around the excavation and conservation of the
Crusader layer in Acre’s walled city, and critical international attention drawn towards
Israel in the wake of the Oslo Accords signed in 1993 and 1995, Israel nominated Acre—
a place of both historical and contemporary multiculturalism—as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The designation was approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2001, and Acre and the fortress of Masada became Israel’s two first World Heritage Sites (Conservation Department of the Israeli Antiquities Authority 2000). While the UNESCO designation has brought a general sense of pride among residents and heritage professionals alike, it has also led to numerous misunderstandings about its meanings. Residents expected that the designation would be accompanied by a cash infusion into the city, and express frustration that they have not received any material benefit from the designation (Killebrew et al. 2017, 383). Of central significance to this research is that the designation brought the Old City into the heritage “fold,” prompting residents and professionals alike to ask questions and make claim claims about what constitutes heritage in the Old City. I explore these projects in chapter 5.

**Adopting an Anthropological Perspective on the Formation of Old Cities**

This chapter has laid out a historical framework of the material and political formations of the old cities of Acre and Rhodes. While aspects of these histories are selected and represented in state authorized heritage media (e.g., site interpretation, guidebooks, textbooks), other aspects are omitted entirely. There is a well-developed critique of official history as the silencing of the past (Trouillot 1995), and it is apparent in these cities. In official representations, the histories of Acre and Rhodes focus on the construction of monumental architecture, of the rise and fall of the Crusaders, and (tokenistic) historical multiculturalism. A more careful reading of the production of Acre and Rhodes is a history of the overlapping imperial and state technologies that we now
recognize as colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism—technologies that not only created these cities but also their inhabitants’ precarious positions. In the following chapters, I adopt an anthropological framework to illustrate how these formation processes enable and limit peoples’ lives in both old cities today. In thinking about how local communities and state actors work with the materiality of these places, I demonstrate how old cities animate contemporary projects of state craft, control of local populations, the transnational circulation of authorized national heritage, and on a more hopeful note, the creative energies and resistant capacities of marginalized communities.
CHAPTER 3

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF OLD CITIES

Having established the historical context for the formation of the old cities of Rhodes and Acre, in this chapter I explain my framework for observing the continuing formation processes at work in Rhodes and Acre. Specifically, I explore what “heritage” means and does in the present, and how residents who inhabit “old places” engage with formations of heritage in their daily lives. I offer a perspective grounded in theories of site formation, tracking the evolution of a place as its relations with people shift according to changing notions of value in local and global contexts. Examining the uppermost strata of old cities—their surfaces—sheds light on important questions related to the contemporary world, especially about the ways that people today relate to places of extended human habitation and use.

In locating the site of this research at the uppermost spatio-temporal strata of Rhodes and Acre, I bridge archaeological and ethnographic methodologies. People live and work at this level, and thus need to be seen as part of it. At the same time, the materiality of the old cities directly affects their lives and is intimately caught up in state governance through conservation and tourism projects. Until fairly recently, using ethnographic methods in archaeology was associated with the practice of ethnoarchaeology. Popularized by the New Archaeologists in the 1970s, ethnoarchaeology aims to generate hypotheses about human behavior in the past based on analogy with present-day observations (see Stiles 1977). In this case I draw on Hamilakis’s (2011) conceptualization of archaeological ethnography as a multi-temporal and reflexive examination of materiality. In contrast with ethnoarchaeology’s focus on
creating analogies for a richer understanding of the past, archaeological ethnography focuses on exploring how material traces of the past animate the world today. Observing the dynamic materiality of “old places” can shed important light on articulations of value—cultural and economic—at different scales amidst the rapid commodification of these spaces worldwide (Swyngedouw and Kaïka 2003, 10-12). Critical heritage scholars have taken up the cultural economics of “past-ness,” but primarily through an ethnographic lens. I embrace the use of ethnography in observing ways that people use and think about the past in making a living, but I do so by way of parallel observations of the materiality of places. Rather than adopt a strictly archaeological or ethnographic methodology, I chose to frame this research as an archaeological ethnography, insisting on the dialogical correlation of how people shape their surroundings and how their surroundings shape them. Centering both in analyzing the ways that people make lives in old places provides insights to communities already doing this work, and critiques the hegemonic practices of conservation, heritage management, and state governance of places.

**Archaeological Ethnography of Heritage**

Examining state heritage in historic urban centers requires attention both to materiality and to lived experience. Unlike archaeological sites or museums, historic urban centers typically host resident communities that live their lives in relation to their “historical” surroundings. I originally conceived of this project primarily as an ethnographic one, in which I would track people’s experiences with the rapid

---

8 An exception is Högb erg (2012) who adopts an archaeological perspective in examining the staging of Gamla Uppsala in Sweden in the context of a culture of consumerism.
transformation of their home cities into heritage tourist attractions through interviews and participant observation. As I began my field research, I soon turned my attention towards the materiality of the cities themselves, noting how residents, heritage professionals, and tourists made use of the spaces on a daily basis. These observations generally encompassed mundane actions that never came up in interviews, nor were they openly discussed in settings where I was a participant observer. I first became interested in tracking types of mortar used in the masonry of buildings in Acre after attending workshops offered to foreign students by the Israel Antiquities Authority. I started paying close attention to resident’s adherence to state guidelines for conservation of their living quarters and places of business after noting that one resident who had followed the guidelines was now experiencing daily showers of lime mortar dust throughout their house. This was something that others, who either plastered over the stone masonry or used cement mortar—known to be destructive in the long-term to sandstone construction—did not experience, and the experience of the one resident led to distrust of state heritage authorities.

I started to see that in order to track the effects of heritage projects, I would also need to observe the material frameworks that supported life but that were also sites of political contest. Brabec and Chilton (2015) have suggested an ecological approach to cultural heritage, centering the spatial formation and matrix of tangible and intangible heritage that supports community resilience. I would also argue that an ecological approach allows for a more robust understanding of the circuits of power employed by state heritage professionals that comingle and contest existing community matrices of heritage practices. While both the Israeli and Greek states call the historic urban centers
of Acre and Rhodes “old,” they are of course very much modern—materially and
demographically forged by imperial, capitalist, and nationalistic forces, where people pay
exorbitant amounts of money to travel from other parts of the world simply to be present
and capture a few photographs of their stone architecture.

In the following sections, I engage with archaeological and ethnographic
approaches to the study of heritage, commodification, and livelihoods that animated the
methodological framework for this research.

**The Archaeology of Heritage**

Central to my investigation of the commodification of the old cities of Acre and
Rhodes is the need to situate commodification as one among many processes on the
temporal plane of site formation. As an archaeologist, I am interested in the overlapping
factors that lead to the making and unmaking of worlds across time and space, and to the
ways that human decisions are materially registered in those worlds. H. Martin Wobst
(1978, 303) describes the archaeological record not as a reflection of human behavior, but
as the products and precedents of human behavior. It is precisely in this framework that I
analyze the material transformation of Acre and Rhodes as they become places of state
heritage geared towards tourist consumption. If the commodification of heritage
transforms places and practices into consumable products and creates distance between
where intimacy once existed between people and those products, there should be a
material signature. Conversely, local actions aimed at maintaining and reclaiming space
should also have traceable material signatures.
The growing field of contemporary archaeology (also known as the archaeology of the contemporary, discussed below) seeks to map out contemporary cultural and political formations through the material world. While ostensibly in tension with the etymological meaning of archaeology (the study of ancient things), scholars in this field justify their being archaeologists by arguing against the imposition of artificial horizons between what counts as the past and what counts as the present. In this light, contemporary archaeology might be seen as the study of the past in the making—or tracking the material traces of the present.

Harrison (2011) outlines a research trajectory for archaeologists to consider the material regimentation of contemporary socio-cultural processes. He uses the concept of “surface assemblage” to describe a hypothetical site for archaeological research on the contemporary landscape. Surface assemblages are constantly made and remade in conjunction with everyday practice and monitoring them reveals much of what is inaccessible in conventional archaeological practice that relies on sites that have been formed and abandoned. Privileging surface survey “eschews [archaeological] obsession with stratigraphic depth for an emphasis on the present and its surfaces” (Harrison 2011, 153) through acknowledgment that surfaces are not static or final “layers,” but rather works in process. The archaeological component of this research might best be defined as a surface survey of the old cities of Acre and Rhodes, in which I track their ongoing formation at the hands of residents and state heritage professionals. Before delving further into works in the field of contemporary archaeology that inform this approach, it is worth briefly examining the scope, history, and potentiality of contemporary archaeology.
In their opening editorial for the *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology*, Harrison et al. (2014) envision the field as a space for considering the full range of contemporary material-cultural entanglements by archaeologists and scholars from allied fields concerned with materiality. While many contemporary archaeologists acknowledge the politics of heritage—the uneven terrain of making pasts in the present—this is generally peripheral to their projects, which aim to provide archaeological perspectives on other contemporary processes. Perhaps the most celebrated of works to stem from this nascent field is Jason De León’s (2015) *The Land of Open Graves*, in which he surveys and analyzes material remains of human migration across the U.S.-Mexico border in the Sonoran desert of Arizona to understand the impacts of U.S. immigration policy. Other topics broached by contemporary archaeologists consider practices of place-making by home/houseless individuals (Zimmerman, Singleton, and Welch 2010; Kiddey 2017), the effects of climate change and disasters on cultural landscapes (Dawdy 2006; Pétursdóttir 2017), and the material afterlives of conflict (Crossland 2011).

There is a long tradition of archaeologists doing research that centers contemporary groups’ relations to material culture and the past, but who did not label themselves as “contemporary archaeologists.” Indigenous and activist archaeologies have pushed back against the idea of archaeological “discovery” in cases where sites and landscapes never stopped being known and meaningful to descendant and local communities. Research projects in this tradition have contributed significantly to archaeological thought by reconceptualizing notions of stewardship based on the knowledge of indigenous and descendant communities (Smith, Morgan, and Van Der Meer 2003; Atalay 2010), the historical contexts of survivance for colonized groups
(Silliman 2014), and the active formation of landscapes of inequality through the articulation of the contemporary and historical taphonomic processes (Shackel 2001b). Community-based archaeologies that center concerns and aspirations of contemporary communities are also deeply concerned with formations of the present (Agbe-Davies 2010; Atalay 2012; La Roche and Blakey 1997; McDavid 2004; Sesma 2022; Two Bears 2022). It is a fairly recent phenomenon for archaeologists to define themselves as contemporary archaeologists, but it is important for those who do to recognize the deeper foundations laid by archaeologists who have centered contemporary relations to the material world throughout their scholarship. A distinction between the activist tradition in archaeology and the more recent “contemporary archaeology” can be traced through intellectual genealogies. Contemporary archaeologists working strictly or mainly on materially-mediated processes in the contemporary world often identify roots in earlier explanatory works such as William Rathje’s (1992) Garbage project, or Gould and Schiffer's (1981) edited volume *Modern Material Culture: The Archaeology of Us*. There is significant value in foregrounding the contemporary in archaeological research, but not at the expense of recognizing the multi-temporal qualities of place and activist prospects of the critical archaeologies that laid foundations for contemporary archaeology. Place is always experienced in the present but is always subject to long standing formation processes. Relatedly, archaeologists ought to engage in projects of interest and importance to audiences other than archaeologists alone.

Battle-Baptiste (2011), for example, demonstrates that archaeologists have a stake in the maintenance or deconstruction of stereotypes and oppressions structured around race and gender. Archaeological interpretation in the U.S. long interpreted racialized
people—women especially—as invisible or passive actors in the American landscape. She argues that archaeologists must be cognizant and active in engaging with contemporary processes of inequality regardless of the temporal focus of their research. In her Black Feminist framework, Battle-Baptiste shows how choosing to see the layered complexities of African-descent peoples’ lives in the past serves as a corrective and emancipatory project with profound consequences for living communities. In an example from the eastern Mediterranean region, Ziadeh-Seely (2007) imagines a Palestinian archaeology that chooses to see the histories of people who live in the region today without falling into the trappings of nationalist agendas. Biblical and Syro-Palestinian archaeologies practiced in the southern Levant have traditionally served the interests of western scholars, nationalist movements, and tourism projects, but have ignored the materiality of post-biblical histories including the material traces of the ancestors of contemporary Palestinians. While historical archaeology is an underdeveloped field throughout the Mediterranean basin, there are important calls from local scholars for critically examining the remains of this period for understanding local experiences of empire, displacement, kinship, resistance, and place-making. Research on these topics challenges the maintenance of regional nationalisms and settler-colonialism, and is critical to building an honest, inclusive, and politically-engaged archaeology for the twenty-first century.

It is in this trajectory of contemporary archaeology, growing from social justice-minded archaeology, that I situate this research project. I draw on the field of contemporary archaeology to examine the materiality of the politics of heritage as it unfolds. State and corporate appropriation en masse of “old places” as resources for
economic development can be observed worldwide and is, in part, constitutive of the
temporality of late capitalism where the past is readily commodified. Archaeological
methods such as surface survey and photography are valuable means for capturing data
about the taphonomic processes involved in making places into heritage sites. In
constructing a surface survey of old cities, I track ongoing site formation as a process of
entanglement with local histories and the emergence of standardized state heritage
practices.

**The Materiality of State Heritage**

State heritage might usefully be understood as the name for increasingly
standardized knowledges and technologies meant to extract value from the past that, in
the age of global capitalism, have been co-opted by nation-states and their markets.
Casella (2016) proposes thinking of an archaeological place as a knot in the entangled
threads, or trajectories, of people, commodities, technologies, and knowledge, all of
which are constantly in motion. At certain moments, these threads converge in a knot but
also continue onwards, as in the threads of a basket, to produce new convergences in the
larger meshwork that she conceptualizes as globalization (Casella 2016, 139-140). Under
conditions of global capitalism, threads that generate value are mobilized faster and run
into each other at greater frequencies, producing knots that look more and more alike.
This is how heritage under global capitalism becomes a recognizable set of things and
practices, an assemblage that is a combined representation of deep time, monumentality,
national significance, and aesthetic and affective value. Twentieth century charters on
heritage protection promoted global standards for managing heritage that ultimately
reflected and enabled state agendas for heritage as a site of nation-building and as a resource for economic development (Labadi 2010; Meskell 2013; De Cesari 2014). However, it is clear that local and Indigenous people living in and around places newly associated with state heritage have their own ways of relating to past and place with wholly different characteristics than those that underpin state heritage.

Shannon Lee Dawdy’s (2016) Patina offers an archaeological framework for analyzing the contemporary formation of sites by the folding of people, things, knowledges, and technologies in post-Katrina New Orleans. Dawdy argues that the patina accrued on the surfaces of old buildings and antiques in New Orleans critiques the commodification of culture and bonds people, things, and place. Patina, the look of agedness, is an index for what Dawdy calls the social stratigraphy of New Orleans. Social stratigraphy encompasses the accumulated layers of inherited materials and practices that constitute the lived present of a specific place, or “accumulated habitus” (Dawdy 2016, 46). In her case study, she tracks patina and its association with the social stratigraphy of the city, finding that patina works to connect residents, even newcomers, collectively to distant pasts and gathers them in a non-linear space-time. While the commodification of New Orleans’s French Quarter by preservationists and private developers sparks fears of Disneyfication among local residents, Dawdy finds that a lively local veneration of patina (even faked patina) offers an effective challenge to wholesale alienation through its totemic properties. In this way, the deep sense of pastness is desirable and valued by both tourists and residents in different, but not always conflicting ways. Patina means something else to tourists than it does to residents, but as its presence is important to both, the preservation of dirt has emerged as an important shared practice that seems to
challenge the global standards of heritage protection. This is one example of tracking ways that the material qualities of a city affect its people during times of social and economic transformation. Specifically, Dawdy’s study of patina draws attention to a material property of place that is overlooked by state heritage managers that offers residents a sense of place and belonging.

Caitlin DeSilvey (2017) offers another challenge to state heritage practice by foregrounding the generative possibilities of non-interference in the trajectories of old things and places. Central to her research is disrupting the assumption that preserving the material traces of the past is a good thing to do, an assumption that comes without much serious consideration as to what good old things and places might actually do in the future. In her book, Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving, she articulates an argument for caring for old things and places as they are affected and transformed by cultural and ecological forces rather than assuming that they ought to be conserved and allowing them to accumulate as a backdrop to modernity. In her observations, she finds that allowing things to decay opens up possibilities for people to forge new and meaningful relations with the material world that are limited by standard heritage practices grounded in the preservation paradigm. Far from advocating abandonment, DeSilvey contends that heritage professionals should explore emergent practices of care and accompaniment of old things and places, of which preservation is but one possible option.

The Ethnography of Heritage

In this section I present the framework I used for understanding and observing the actions of residents and heritage professionals in Rhodes and Acre. As an archaeological
ethnography, ethnographic description in this case reveals the personal and communal histories and aspirations that accompany the making of old cities. Ethnographic data provides necessary context for analyzing the ongoing material constitution of the city, and archaeological data provides necessary context for analyzing relationality and the politics of heritage. Below, I elaborate upon anthropological approaches to life projects and state heritage projects, and how these have influenced my own approach to noticing relations between the two.

**Life Projects and State Heritage**

No two participants in this research followed the same paths towards making a living in the old cities of Acre and Rhodes. As such, I find the concept of “life projects” useful for describing the range of strategies people employ that can’t easily be distilled into a set of best practices for livability in old places. The idea of life projects has been taken up by numerous anthropologists working to describe people’s agency in crafting good lives on their own terms, beyond the logics of state and market. Economic anthropologists Susana Narotzky and Niko Besnier (2014) discuss life projects in the context of reclaiming “the economy.” The economy is the collective work of making life possible, which is not necessarily or even mostly about financial markets. Borrowing from theories of feminist, political, moral, and ecological economies, they aim to draw attention to the strategies that ordinary people use to create value to sustain life across generations. They are especially interested in ways that ordinary people create livelihood in times and places where conditions of crisis are unexceptional and where structures of power concentrate wealth among a minority of people. For these people, interpersonal
dependencies, reciprocal relationships, and local-scale processes of valuation are much more important than market systems in the perpetuation of life. Mario Blaser uses the concept of “life project” to capture the “complex, substantive, power-laden, and sometimes contradictory features” of Indigenous and marginalized peoples encounters with state and market. He contends that “life projects are embedded in local histories; they encompass visions of the world and the future that are distinct from those embodied by projects promoted by the state and markets” (Blaser 2004, 27). Residents of the old cities of Acre and Rhodes work as innkeepers, restaurateurs, shop keepers, archaeologists, and tour guides, but in creative articulations to the heritage economy that are incommensurate with the logics of progress and development that motivate non-resident heritage professionals or of historical authenticity that motivate tourists. Their life projects are sites of relationality between themselves and the old cities and between past, present, and future, but seldom get called out as “heritage” in everyday conversation.

State heritage practices constitute another site of spatio-temporal relations-making. The historic quarters of Acre and Rhodes are both officially designated as heritage sites by the Israeli and Greek governments, and also by the UNESCO World Heritage program. Such designations are accompanied by protections against material modifications to the landscapes and expectations of management according to international norms. Globally, state—and supra-state—recognition of heritage value is accompanied with certain common processes of economic valuation. Economist Françoise Benhamou (2014) identifies four primary economic attributes of state-recognized heritage (patrimoine). First, state heritage is constituted by unique goods,
traces of the past that are distinctive from the contemporary environment yet typical of a bygone era or cultural category. Secondly, state heritage consists of public goods, regardless of the ownership status of the space that encapsulates that heritage. The public goods of state heritage may be imparted by the aesthetic of a private building’s façade viewed from a distance or by closer engagement with a place such as a monument or archaeological site. Third, state heritage generates externalities, which include the growth of national prestige on the world stage and capital gains accrued by communities attached to a place of heritage. Lastly, state heritage creates shared property rights by implementing protection schemes that assure public and transgenerational access to heritage. Recognizing the goods that accompany state heritage projects raises questions about their relationship with political and social processes. Some critical heritage scholars are skeptical about the scale of “good” that commodified heritage, in fact, produces (Silberman 2007; Baillie, Chatzoglou, and Taha 2010). Are the local externalities associated with state heritage (e.g., income generated from heritage attractions) sufficient to outweigh the loss of local controls? What kinds of local and global conditions make way for state recognition (or appropriation) of heritage? How does state heritage work—encompassing conservation, excavation, representation, and the appropriation of local spaces, narratives, and traditions—affect people who live around these places? What are the implications of framing places and practices as “unique” for local communities who know them intimately? How might efforts to generate national prestige through heritage projects obscure or whitewash state violence?

Anthropologists have taken up some of these questions. In Michael Herzfeld’s (1991) work on Crete, he traced the emergence and adoption of a state-driven historical
imaginary among residents and heritage professionals alike. He observed a distinction between social time—the passage of time marked by rhythm of relational events throughout the lifecourse—and monumental time—the state narrative of history marked by the passage of events registered in the materiality of a place. Residents of Rethymnos trafficked between these temporal trajectories as the materiality of their living and working space became an object of state heritage—an authorized representation of place and time. In later work, Herzfeld (2004, 31) ties these distinctions to a global hierarchy of value, in which he considers state and elite control of heritage—be it through historic urban spaces or artisanal trades—a practice of keeping up with global standards of worthiness and modernity. Within the global hierarchy of value, non-elites can be trained to function and serve in state projects under the pretence of keeping local traditions alive.

By situating a place in monumental time and creating a sense of historical authenticity, state heritage projects put local residents in the difficult situation of choosing between participating in something that is ostensibly about delivering “goods” or maintaining the rhythms of social time and the freedoms from state control engendered therein. Similarly, I am interested in understanding ordinary people’s work to make meaningful lives amidst extraordinary pressures to conform to an economic model—the state heritage regime—premised on the delivery of various “goods.” There is a need to understand both the constraints and the possibilities that commodification creates for those inhabiting places designated as “heritage sites.” Indeed, in a capitalist system where authenticity is primarily adjudicated by consumers, what possibilities remain for local understandings of heritage to persist as relational practices that connect people, places, knowledge, and things across temporal frames (see Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014)? As Baillie,
Chatzoglou, and Taha (2010) point out, while scholars may vilify the commodification of heritage, we also need to think seriously about its social effects and how people make sense of it.

**Noticing Local and State Approaches to Heritage**

Anthropologists conducting research in cities and neighborhoods encounter unique challenges of scale and representation. Cities, by definition, have large and concentrated populations that share in the experience of a spatialized urban identity. Doing ethnography in cities requires researchers to think carefully about the appropriateness of traditional ethnographic methods for documenting and representing patterns that hold at the scale of urban populations. In my case, I sought to develop ethnographic portraits of residents working and living in the midst of state heritage projects through interviews, walk-alongs, and regular visits. But I also wanted the ability to position them in complicated urban networks themselves composed of multiple self-defined communities that did not represent any kind of unified front for or against the development of heritage tourism in Acre or Rhodes. My aim was to develop a representative—if partial—sense of the range of ways that residents relate to the spaces of the old cities of Acre and Rhodes under shifting conditions.

In order to develop that sense of larger communal relations to the old cities, I employed strategies of observational walking in my daily field research routine. Walking has long been a feature of urban ethnography, notably in Jane Jacobs’s (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, primarily as an observed practice through which cultural dynamics of urban life unfold. More recently, social scientists have begun to
discuss walking as a methodological practice and its usefulness for observing or accessing emic understandings of mobility in and relationships to the city (Pink et al. 2010). Routine walking, for sociologist Giulia Carabelli (2014), is a way of accounting for the unexceptional, mundane, or normal aspects of space-use in urban ethnography, which tend to be overlooked in interviews or participation in special events. In her research on post-war reconstruction of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, walking was a way of practicing reflexivity. For Carabelli, routine walking made her think about her positionality in the field, built social relationships, and illuminated that nothing much was happening in most parts of the city, and this nothingness reflected residents’ normalization of a post-war moment that would only appear remarkable to an outsider.

Reflecting on my own routine walks in the old cities of Acre and Rhodes helped me to see patterns of resident-city relationality, my main research concern, but also helped residents to see my own changing relationship to them and to the city. Prior to my fieldwork in Acre, some people in the Old City knew me from previous short-term research visits, but it took time to build trust as a neighbor/researcher/friend/in-the-know ajnabi (foreigner). I was new to Old Town Rhodes on my arrival, so spending time out was critical for me and my interlocutors to make sense of each other. Stopping to take notes over a coffee, graduating from a smiling stranger to reliable conversationalist during slow market days, and being open to neighbors’ hospitality gave me paths to seeing residents’ changing relationships to urban space through processes of commodification and also to thinking together about ways of working against alienation.

I tracked ways that residents use the city in local projects as a site of resistance to state projects, and this required a certain focus in my use of ethnographic methods. Some
residents understood the re-claiming heritage work in Acre as a way of constructing a diffuse network of Palestinian sovereignties in historic Palestine, while others viewed it in a localized sense as a means of maintaining community life amidst the unending pressures of development. Residents’ heritage work in Rhodes was oriented less against the state as it was towards preserving the city as a livable space amidst the intrusion of private developers whose entrance to the Old Town was facilitated by what residents saw as an ineffective state. These resident projects were geared towards the maintenance or creation of non-state local sovereignties, an area of major interest in contemporary anthropological research and of political importance that has only just begun to examine the significance of heritage work (De Cesari 2010; Herzfeld 2016; A. Bishara 2017). For Herzfeld (2015), making visible the “inchoate intimacies of power” is one of anthropology’s most valuable contributions to politically engaged research. I approached interviews and participant observation as openings to understanding residents’ sense of agency in changing the distribution of power in their cities. In my analysis of transcripts and field notes, I also sought out barriers erected by heritage professionals and tourists that contributed to resident alienation or that made their agencies invisible to those in positions of power.

**Tracking the Emergence of Old Cities**

In the past decade, archaeological ethnography has emerged as an exploratory space aimed at investigating multi-temporality in the material world (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009; Hamilakis 2011). Archaeological ethnography examines the coexistences of multiple temporalities and materialities in space by drawing on the
methods and theories of archaeology and cultural anthropology. Archaeological ethnography seeks to explain how the temporal indexicality of matter shifts over time. It centers the durational properties of matter and locally contextualized perceptions of time. This is a departure from conventional perspectives from archaeology and heritage studies that tend to assume the existences of pasts and presents, and while interested in their relations to each other view each as distinct moments. The foundational questions of archaeological ethnography might be summarized as: How can some things and places at once be known as new, old, still, and becoming, and how do these materially registered temporalities resonate in their particular social contexts?

By keeping these questions in mind in an investigation of changing relations to “old cities” under state heritage regimes, I needed to traverse multiple logics of heritage, preservation, use, abandonment, and value in my everyday interactions on a person-to-person basis. I did not assume that a cohesive community view existed (it doesn’t), but certain patterns did emerge across the constituencies I defined as heritage professionals and local residents. In the following two chapters I present my principal research data, first in Rhodes and then in Acre, which I analyze for patterns of relationality that constitute state and local heritage. Then, in chapter 6, I adopt a comparative approach to these analyses and propose working responses to my research questions, in which both people and place have roles to play in pinpointing the effects of “heritage work” and the future of residents’ relations to the cities. Rizvi (2019) argues that opening up to material pluralities—undisciplining archaeologists’ relationship to pastness and things—is a step towards the decolonization of archaeology. However, she notes, it remains but a step unless being open to material plurality is moved into social justice practice. As such, I
extend my findings to a re-imagining of heritage work that is being undertaken as much by activists and community leaders as by academics.
CHAPTER 4

HERITAGE, LOSS, AND HOPE IN THE OLD TOWN OF RHODES

This chapter examines how the making of Old Town Rhodes as a place of heritage—an assemblage of nationally protected monuments and, collectively, a UNESCO World Heritage site—has marked the city and those who call it home. Old Town, as outlined in chapter 2, has been continuously inhabited, and as such has undergone continuous formation and decomposition, since before the Hospitaller period. It is a medley of selectively museumified monuments, commercial streets, and emptied and emptying residential quarters. The crumbling buildings that dominate Old Town, originating of different times and peoples, index a heterogenous temporality and cultural identity that makes the state’s task of making this place at all legible as “Greek” both complex and dubious. Surveying the diverse surfaces of Old Town is a good place to start this discussion of shifting relations between people and place, and the kinds of life projects that these relations are caught up with.

Entering from the west end of Old Town at d’Amboise Gate, named for a fifteenth century Hospitaller Grand Master, and turning onto the Italian-designed Street of the Knights (Odos Ippoton), you find yourself walking through a manicured cityscape of pebble-paved streets and restored and reconstructed bare-stone Hospitaller structures. Housed in some of these structures are state-run museums, and every structure is marked with a bronze plaque describing its ostensible origin under medieval Hospitaller rule, concealing histories of imaginative Italian reconstruction. Taking a right at the end of the Street of the Knights onto Appelou, the pavement changes abruptly to flatstones—a late twentieth century update that’s easier on tourists’ tired feet. Most buildings in this area
are also of medieval vintage, but are plastered and painted white and yellow. Layering plaster and other external ornamentation onto existing structures was common practice under Ottoman rule, allowing Turkish and Jewish residents to economically adapt their environment according to prevailing architectural tastes shared across communities of the south Aegean (Özcan 1995, 34; Maglio 2011, 5). Beyond Appelou and Socratou streets’ souvenir shops selling Colossus-shaped bottles of ouzo and handbags embroidered with the Greek flag, you find yourself in the eastern end of Old Town at Plateia Evreion Martyron—Jewish Martyrs Square. In the middle of the square, once the heart of la Judería (the Jewish Quarter’s name in Judeo-Spanish) and Jewish life in Rhodes, is a monument dedicated to the memory of the more than 1600 Jews of Rhodes and Kos murdered in Nazi concentration camps, sheltered under a canopy of trees. The buildings forming the edges of the square now host a handful of restaurants with near-identical menus catering to tourist appetites for souvlaki, gyros, and other “traditional” Greek dishes. Stepping into the backstreets of la Judería, the roads become pebbles once again, but potholed and kicked loose in large patches, maintained to a much lesser degree than the tourist-trafficked Street of the Knights. The Hospitaller-era buildings in la Judería are neither neatly restored nor freshly plastered and painted. They are mostly empty, locked, and in varying states of decay. Turning back to head west through the southern residential quarters of Old Town, you follow the minimally maintained loose pebble streets into the former Turkish quarter. Many of the buildings here also sit empty and locked, including several Ottoman-era mosques. Several houses have been restored as short-term vacation rentals or seasonal homes for western European expatriates. Perhaps half of the homes
are inhabited by local Greeks, distinguishable by repeating features such as flowers potted in tin cans or a stack of plastic chairs outside the front door.

What follows is an archaeological ethnography of life under a state heritage regime in the Old Town of Rhodes. Control, development, loss, and lingering resident claims to space are processes that co-form Old Town in the present. I explore these themes in this chapter in two parts. First, I examine how Greek state actors conceptualize “heritage” and how this informs their management of Old Town spaces. I consider the history of both Italian and Greek approaches to heritage management in Old Town via the surfaces of the city, documentary records, and ethnographic observation. Second, I explore resident experiences of this state heritage project through their own narratives and interventions in Old Town spaces. I pursue the question of life projects by engaging with residents’ and local workers’ relations to Old Town spaces, how they form these spaces as places to live in and with, and how the state heritage project constrains prospects for livability. A generational shift is occurring in Old Town whereby the younger members of Greek families that settled in Old Town in the second half of twentieth century no longer see this as a place to at once live and make a living.

State Heritage and the Ethos of Control in Rhodes

Few branches of the Greek government intervene as deeply into Rhodians’ relationships of emplacement as the Greek Archaeological Service, a collection of offices under the General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, that specialize in the management of sites according to regional and temporal specialization. I was brought into a conversation about the Archaeological Service in the first days of my field research
after introducing myself as an archaeologist to a local shop owner. The elderly man immediately perceived me as having an “in” with the Ephorate—the regional office of the Service—and thought I was the right person to unload some of their pressing concerns upon. In the mid-2010s, a Rhodian-American investor won a bid to develop a golf resort on a piece of state land along the beach at Afandou, on the eastern shore of the island. The Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund—created in the wake of the sovereign debt crisis to oversee privatization of state properties—sanctioned the winning bid, but the Archaeological Service thwarted development by promptly declaring the property an archaeological site (Tsakas 2017). The shop owner used this story to explain his frustrations about renovating his own property. While he wished to build an addition to his home in the countryside for family visiting from the United States, he was worried that if he so much as uncovered an ancient coin the Archaeological Service would put a halt to his project. If he didn’t report a find, a worker might tattle and he would face punishing consequences. Expressing similar concerns, an Old Town resident explained that while clearing some vegetation from the gate to her courtyard, she came across painted fresco that resembled those found in the Byzantine churches of Old Town. She feared that word might get out about her discovery. She had heard rumors of the Archaeological Service taking possession of properties where residents made remarkable finds such as this and were evicted. She halted her vine trimming and re-concealed the fresco. Such were the anxieties reported over and over when the Archaeological Service came up in conversation, from feeling held back in using or making changes to land and historic properties, to contempt for an agency limiting economic opportunity in the face of financial crisis. Here is the starting point for one of my arguments in this chapter, that
state heritage projects centered on control—whatever the intention of that control is—undermine local communities’ sense of belonging and ability to make a living in situ.

Residents’ apprehensions about antiquities law and the swaths of buildings in Old Town marked with bronze plaques proclaiming their status as state archaeological sites might suggest an army of archaeologists and bureaucrats working to oversee Old Town structures, but this is far from the case. In an effort to create a slimmer public service amidst the sovereign debt crisis, the Greek government consolidated multiple individual regional offices—or Ephoreies—into single regional offices. For Rhodes and its neighboring islands, the former regional Ephoreies that were organized according to temporal specialization were regrouped into a single downsized geographically oriented office in 2014: the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese (EAD). The Greek state inherited the Ephorate offices on the Street of the Knights from the Italian archaeological service, inclusive of its colonial-period library, archives, and collections. Housed in an Italian-reconstructed Hospitaller Inn, the small staff monitors monuments, archaeological areas, and museums throughout the Dodecanese. Staff of the EAD do not grant interviews due to strict rules “from Athens” meant to guard sensitive information about finds. But they generously allowed me to visit to learn general information about organizational priorities and relations with developers and the local community.

While operating on a shoestring budget with a skeleton staff working reduced five-hour days, the EAD nonetheless gives the appearance of an efficient and bold organization. Foremost, staff note that the preservation of heritage precedes all other responsibilities, such as research and education. They make no apologies that their prerogative is maintaining control of antiquities in the region, readily acknowledging that
this has translated to the closure of numerous monuments and sites in Old Town for nearly a decade since the onset of the debt crisis. Given that the Archaeological Service’s budget no longer provides salaries for guards to monitor the numerous stand-alone sites throughout Old Town—from Byzantine churches to Hospitaller and Ottoman defense structures and public buildings—the chosen alternative for controlling the integrity of these sites is to lock their doors. As the budget permits, staff of the EAD also oversee salvage excavations, conservation works, and public outreach activities, and always under an ethos of protection and control. At times, this conflicts with the state’s need to build a commercial tax base under the pressure of foreign creditors, but the ethos of protection and control is built into the Greek Archaeological Service’s genealogy.

The government formed the service in 1833, an initiative to formalize the protection of antiquities in the young nation state (Hamilakis 2007, 36). In part, this was in response to the deterritorialization of antiquities by foreign archaeologists and collectors. It was also aimed at stamping out residual attitudes the people of Greece maintained towards antiquities as “objects of daily life and often of metaphysical power and meaning” (Hamilakis 2007, 84). The Service and the laws that governed its actions created a technology of sovereignty—a way of codifying antiquities as national, as the property of the Greek state, and as markers of Greek place. While the antiquities that EAD staff encounter in Old Town are seldom those of classical origin for which the Service was first created, they maintain as sacrosanct the notion of antiquities as shared national property and their role as guardians of that property. Staff at the EAD enjoyed conducting research and sharing their findings with colleagues, but this was a minute part of day-to-day operations. Most research and publication undertaken by EAD staff is
uncompensated and essentially after-hours work, pursued as passion rather than employment. In times of austerity, the work of the EAD can be described foremost as control by closure and surveillance.

**Control-by-Closure and the Creation of Emptiness**

Control by closure has had significant social consequences in Old Town. Hundreds of houses and shops were left vacant after the devastating deportation of Rhodian Jews by the occupying Nazis in 1944, the Allied bombing of Old Town during the Second World War, and wartime emigration of Rhodian Turks. These properties were directly appropriated by the state and placed in the custodianship of the Archaeological Service after the Dodecanese was incorporated into Greece in 1947. People who took up residence in these buildings over the following years became, and still are, tenants of the Archaeological Service, paying a small monthly sum based on square meterage (Kasdagli 2010, 56-57). Many of those buildings, however, were never reoccupied due to their structural condition, and use of these ruined properties is legally complicated. Land in Old Town is governed under conflicting policies created over the years under Italian and Greek rule. On one hand, residents—or prospective residents—are technically permitted to rebuild or retrofit buildings according to drawings of individual properties rendered by architects during the Italian period. On the other hand, a municipal regulatory plan adopted in 1961 zoned multiple housing blocks as future (as yet unrealized) plazas and excavation sites (Georgalli and Psarri 2010). In the absence of a master plan, numerous Old Town families have given up on maintaining or expanding their presence there. State heritage professionals are not fond of having swaths of empty properties in their domain.
They would prefer a robust group of specialists that could work with tenants and merchants—both current and prospective—to put these places back into use according to their historical functions while being closely monitored. Austerity measures, however, has made such a project almost unthinkable (Kasdagli 2010, 2017).

La Judería is the most depopulated quarter of Old Town. After falling under German occupation in 1943, the British air force launched aerial attacks against German military installations, spilling over into la Judería and causing widespread destruction still apparent today. In July of 1944, all of the Jewish community that remained on Rhodes was deported to concentration camps in eastern Europe, leaving la Judería completely emptied. Following liberation of the camps, survivors, who were officially Italian citizens, were not relocated to Rhodes—no longer Italian territory—but rather to the Italian mainland. From there most left for burgeoning communities in the United States, South Africa, or Israel, creating Rodesli (Rhodian Jewish) diasporic communities that persist today. While some Greeks later took up residence in the emptied buildings of la Judería, many, especially those damaged by British bombardment, were never re-occupied (figure 4.1).
The EAD has attempted to reach out to Holocaust survivors and relatives of Rhodian Jews murdered in Nazi concentration camps who legally maintain the deed to those properties. I was told, however, that few have expressed interest in pursuing claims to these largely ruined properties, the reconstruction of which would be too costly and legally complicated for most. The question of property restitution is further complicated by Rhodian Jews’ historical status as Italian subjects, meaning that restitution claims would likely have to be made through the Italian government. Some Greeks from neighboring islands took up residence in the homes of la Judería in the mid-twentieth century—often as squatters-turned-tenants—but for the past several decades the EAD has restricted further development of properties and adopted a stance of non-intrusive custodianship in the quarter.
The EAD also controls the Ottoman-era mosques, madrassas, almshouse, and *hammam* (bathhouse) of Old Town. All but the almshouse, which had been converted into a modern Greek art museum, were closed long before the sovereign debt crisis. For centuries, until the 1930s when the Italians reconstructed the Grand Master’s Palace, the minarets of Old Town’s nine mosques and domes of the Yeni Hammam dominated the city skyline. Under the pretext of renovation, the mosques were closed and transferred to the Archaeological Service in the mid-1970s, coinciding with other Greek nationalist projects during the Cyprus conflict (Kaymakçı and Özgün 2015, 60). Some public buildings of the Ottoman period, including the Recep Pasha Mosque, were dismantled, ostensibly for conservation purposes, and are yet to be fully reassembled. Only the Ibrahim Pasha Mosque, situated in less tourist-oriented east end of Old Town, remains in use for Friday prayer, mainly serving recent migrants from South Asia and North and Northeastern Africa.

In additional to monumental Ottoman structures, the emptiness of properties formerly belonging to Rhodian Turks adds to this emergent aesthetic of absence. Several dozens of these houses and shop stalls sit locked, empty, and in varying states of decay and are a defining feature of Old Town’s landscape (figure 4.2). In the wake of the 1974 Cyprus conflict, Rhodian Turks interpreted the Greek government’s decision to close Turkish-language schools and most of the city’s mosques as a signal that as long as they lived in Greece, they would be second-class citizens. The majority of Rhodian Turks immigrated to Turkey during this time (Kaymakçı and Özgün 2015). Many retained their properties in anticipation of returning someday, but few have done so. Their windows are
often shattered and doors closed with heavy padlocks, irreversibly corroded over the decades so that no key would be able to unlock them today.

Figure 4.2. Locked doorways to empty houses and shop stalls in Old Town showing material decay resulting from depopulation. (Photographs by author)

Still dozens of other houses and former shop buildings throughout Old Town similarly sit empty and locked after former Greek tenants have died or moved away. The residents of Old Town today are mostly Greeks who made homes in empty properties in the 1950s. They are now aging, and most of the children who were raised in these families have little interest in staying in the cramped, dark quarters of Old Town when spacious modern housing is plentiful outside of Old Town’s walls. This has left Old Town with a resident population of perhaps 3000 people (there is no official count) while often accommodating over 10,000 tourists when three or four cruise ships are in port. Adding to the historical episodes of depopulation discussed above, Old Town’s population continues to shrink. Prospective residents can approach the EAD to inquire
about leasing historic buildings, either commercial or residential, but in doing so they must agree to meet specific standards of preservation and monitoring. A growing number are successfully engaging in negotiations for commercial properties as the state seeks to increase its commercial tax base, but not on the residential front. On the other hand, crumbling houses, many of which have sat unmaintained for decades, are unattractive to most seeking housing on Rhodes. And those opening businesses are almost always individuals from outside of Old Town, not long-time residents. Sophia, an Old Town resident and tour guide, explained to me that for most locals, it would be an impossible financial burden to open a small shop in the back streets of Old Town. Taking on the cost of rehabilitating a medieval or Ottoman-era building in a neighborhood with a shrinking resident population and a thin stream of tourists would be impractical. A long-empty shopfront sits below her rented Old Town apartment in an Ottoman-era building across from a row of empty houses. Alluding to this expanse of decaying buildings, she struggled to imagine what it would take to make a go of opening a business or purchasing a residence on a street of dwindling social life such as this.

C. Nadia Serematakis (2019, 73) views place as a separate space from which one can address another—it is “a prerequisite for witnessing, witnessing others and being witnessed by others.” La Judería and the empty houses and public buildings of Rhodian Turks present striking examples of the material consequences of extreme nationalism—German and Greek—entangled with the economic pressures of mass tourism. The result is a loss of place, where the absence of people and the fading of their material markers of belonging is leading to a loss of recognizability. The capacity to signify to others—Greeks and foreign visitors—that these are/were places of deep historical belonging for
Rhodian Jews and Turks is now highly consolidated into specific spaces—a private Jewish museum, the imprints of mezuza on doorways of la Judería, a handful of dedication plaques, and tourist maps that name mosques that are otherwise shuttered and unsigned.

In asserting control over monuments, sites, and historic properties in Old Town, the Archaeological Service can claim to be engaging in a form of stewardship. But without funds or a cooperative and consenting local constituency, stewardship creates absences, forcing upon buildings rules that sever people’s relations to them. EAD staff acknowledge the Archaeological Service’s inflexibility as an institution, and bemoan how this inflexibility contributes to the expansion of empty spaces, which in turn gives way to the decay of buildings that are supposedly being protected under control-by-closure. But given the choice between control that leads to emptiness or relinquishing control, the consequences of which are unknown and unprecedented in the framework of Greek antiquities law, the preservationist paradigm has thus far been steadily upheld by EAD staff. Staff share an ideal vision of preservation-centered development, whereby Old Town is rezoned in accordance with historically relevant residential and commercial quarters, where staff, residents, and business owners could refer to a single Master Plan to coordinate development, and where development projects would support further archaeological research and documentation. Budgetary conditions for this vision are presently non-existent and staff see no path towards such a situation.

The professionalization of heritage work as control in Rhodes sets up an official understanding of historic buildings as both culturally valuable and always under threat of loss. Control means that some buildings, especially those clearly evincing Hospitaller
monumentality, can be maintained and preserved as markers of an other-than-Ottoman historical identity. It also means that other buildings, such as mosques, can be closed in the name of preservation, and less-than-majestic looking houses can be left to decay and eventually empty out. Tourist eyes are trained away from the material remains of impoverished residents and until recently lively communities of Rhodian Jews and Turks, and towards medieval Christian monuments that can be palatably accessioned to the domain of Greek cultural heritage. Residents, on the other hand, question how a building can be culturally valuable if it is inaccessible or unrecognizable to those for whom it is ostensibly being protected? At an organizational level, the Archaeological Service is not designed to engage in community-based approaches to heritage work that might de-emphasize the preservationist paradigm. Because it is not designed to see residents’ vision of a habitable Old Town, it can carry out a program of control-by-closure as, in its view, an ethical practice. By emptying Old Town of the worlds that it has contained over the past 500 years, state heritage work makes room for the creation of a new time-space geared to tourist consumption—one that is specifically medieval and Greek.

**Filling the Void: The Medieval/Greek Time-Space**

In considering how this void is being filled, namely by forming Old Town as a site of state heritage and global mass tourism, it is useful to examine how its surfaces are semiotically transformed in the production of a medieval/Greek time-space. As outlined in chapter 2, the bulk of conservation and reconstruction work that created a coherent medieval aesthetic in Old Town was not undertaken under Greek governance, but rather under the Italian regime of the first half of the twentieth century and especially under the
governorship of Cesare Maria De Vecchi from 1936 to 1941. As such, the heritage infrastructure of the Italians, largely resulting from the materialization of an imagined medieval aesthetic to suit the fantasies of the archipelago’s megalomaniac fascist governor, erupts everyday into the life of Old Town residents, workers, visitors, and heritage professionals alike. When Italy took control of Rhodes in 1912, its cityscape was dominated by minarets and the dome of its grand bathhouse. By 1947, the year that the Dodecanese was incorporated into Greece, the city’s skyline was overtaken by the Grand Master’s Palace, newly rebuilt at the highest point in Old Town.

The Italian restorations in Old Town make up a considerable component of the EAD’s protective mandate. Its staff at once appreciate the complete infrastructure that they inherited—museums, offices, collections—but acknowledge the awkwardness in their mandate to preserve the whimsical productions of the archipelago’s former colonizers. Through years of austerity, the Archaeological Project has kept open and maintained the “medieval” Christian landmarks that are the products of expansive and imaginative Italian reconstruction and restoration efforts. Featuring these landmarks has also involved downplaying their association with a fascist regime and incorporating them into Greek national space for ideological and economic purposes.

The Italian restorations—in particular the Grand Master’s Palace, the Street of the Knights, and the Rhodes Archaeological Museum—are the primary tourist attractions in Old Town. Other Italian features, including the commercial Ippokratous square, postcard-featured fountains, and infrastructure ranging from streetlights to roads also erupt into everyday life for residents, workers, and visitors. These are of distinctly non-Greek origin, wrapped up instead in the Italian regime’s self-perception as inheritor of the
Crusader legacy and their desire to create an elite resort. Absent the narrators of that story today, the state and tourism workers are now tasked with re-indexing Italian-configured places as components of Greek national space. Tactics for accomplishing this vary: topping buildings with Greek flags, draping storefronts with t-shirts and handbags bearing Classical Greek imagery (the Colossus features prominently here), or converting old *cafoneia* into souvlaki restaurants. Italian spaces are rebranded with symbols familiar to tourists as Greek.

This blending of “medieval” and “Greek” aesthetics come together as a chronotope, a particular configuration of time and space that makes Old Town serve specific political and economic functions for the state and tourism proponents. Bakhtin (1981, 84) describes the chronotope as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” where “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole.” The medieval/Greek time-space works to provide a sense of “when and where” to tourists, the intended audience of this chronotope, or at least to keep them from wondering too long about the traces of non-medieval and non-Greek life that they may stumble upon from time to time. From small family-run “medieval” hotels to an annual medieval festival, Old Town Rhodes is shaped as a time-space for tourists seeking a Greek beach vacation with a side of romantic ruins. I should emphasize at this point that it is not a time-space that any resident or worker that I encountered embraced on anything but an opportunistic level. For my resident interlocutors, the medieval/Greek time-space was a moderately useful resource for making a living in Old Town, but they also had reservations about the way that the time-space was deployed and managed by the state and market.
Little of the materiality of Old Town, other than its restored Byzantine churches, obviously indexes what tourists would recognize as “Greek.” Tourists I interviewed seldom compared Rhodes to other places in Greece, but were rather more likely to draw comparisons with Istanbul, other UNESCO “old cities” like Dubrovnik, or even to the fictional places depicted in the television series adaptation of Game of Thrones. Old Town’s tourist-facing commercial sector goes to lengths to use Greek branding practices co-form Old Town as Greek space alongside the state’s practice of closing off non-Greek spaces. Old Town merchants are constructing a stratum of material Greekness at the intersection of nationalism and commodification—one in which symbols of Greekness are woven into the “medieval” landscape. In some of the spaces of Old Town with the least obvious connection to Greek national history and culture, such as the Jewish Martyr’s square in la Judería, restaurants advertise “Greek specialties” while blaring the melody from Zorba the Greek, and souvenir stores sell “Greece”-branded t-shirts and handbags (figure 4.3). The same concentration of multi-sensory national branding exists at the northern end of Sokratous Street, buttressed by the Mosque of Suleiman, the Muslim library, and the Muslim almshouse. Throughout Old Town, souvenir stores do the work of branding Old Town by displaying “traditional Greek” products, replica statuettes of classical deities, and Colossus-shaped bottles of ouzo (figure 4.4).
Figure 4.3. Restaurant menu in the Jewish Martyrs Square advertising “Greek” delicacies. (Photograph by author)
Infilling the voids of Old Town Rhodes with a consumable medieval/Greek time-space creates a memory block. Relations that local residents had to closed, crumbling, or commodified places are severed or damaged, and visitors and newcomers have no sense of what happened here or who knew this place as home not so long ago. “What happens when a culture loses its mnemo-techniques?” asks Seremetakis (2019, 75) of the Greek government’s practice of materially erasing traumatic local memories. She argues that a former place of belonging subjected to this kind of commodification becomes no place at all—it loses its witnesses and becomes unwitnessable. In the following section, I examine how a selection of Old Town residents and workers cope with this gradual loss of place and selectively engage with the assembled medieval/Greek time-space of Old Town.
Life Projects in Old Town: Working With, Around, and Against State Heritage

Until now I have argued that official heritage work in Old Town Rhodes has been a project of material and narrative shape-shifting aimed at making Rhodes legibly heritable as Greek. To do this, the Greek state draws heavily on work done during the period of Italian occupation, work that involved intense material interventions, including full-scale reconstruction of historic buildings signaling the return of Christian European rule after centuries of Ottoman occupation. Greek managers and the commercial sector in Old Town have cooperated in reinscribing these Italian interventions as Greek through conventional practices such as flagging and the installation of imagery and content recalling the Classical past and “traditional” Greek culture.

Residents and workers of Old Town have a troubled relationship with these projects. I have already explored how these official heritage projects generate a marketable resource, a medieval/Greek time-space, something that local people can and do use to make a living. The Italian restoration of Old Town is foundational to their livelihood—the raison d’être of Rhodes being one of the most visited tourist destinations in the eastern Mediterranean. With a keen sensitivity to the tourist appetite for the old and majestic, residents appreciatively recall the Italians’ gift to them, a largely reconstructed “medieval” city that is the bread and butter of a new generation of Greeks, Rhodes-born and immigrant, that began to settle in Old Town in the second half of the twentieth century. At the same time, this state heritage project erases profoundly violent histories of place—of genocide, displacement, ethnic and racial discrimination, and economic oppression—that local residents continue to grapple with. In the following section, I follow the experiences of residents and local workers as they engage with the heritage
tourism industry, illuminating the (in)congruities of the state heritage project and local life projects in Old Town Rhodes.

Residential buildings in Old Town stand in contrast to the medievalization and Hellenization that characterizes the stone surfaces of surrounding buildings that are intended to attract the eyes of tourists. Most residential buildings in Old Town are at least partly of medieval construction, and retain the architectural modifications and styles that inhabitants added to them through the Ottoman and Italian periods. Examples of these include wooden projecting windows (*mashrabiyya*), pairs of plaster neoclassical columns at entryways, or built-in Italian postal boxes. In contrast to the Italians’ stripping of exterior plaster from buildings that they made into museums and scenic streetscapes to expose bare stone and carved elements, most occupied houses are plastered and washed in a coat of yellow, ochre, blue, or white paint. Whereas vegetation is typically cleared from the stone walls of state and commercial sites, residents encourage the growth of creeping vines, surround their properties with plants potted in recycled containers, and even grow fruit trees in whatever patch of soil they may manage to expose in this densely built and paved area. Some residents leave chairs in front of their houses for neighbors to rest, gossip, or play a game of backgammon (figure 4.5).
This contrast in aesthetic embodies a contrasting way of being in Old Town. This is an aesthetic of home-making and neighborliness cultivated over decades of renewed community building in Old Town after the rupture of the Second World War, and signals the modicum of control residents maintain over small parcels of Old Town. It is also a withering aesthetic. As the resident population shrinks, some of these homes are being redeveloped as guesthouses for tourists or seasonal homes for wealthy expats, something which almost always means that their surfaces are stripped to the bare-stone medieval aesthetic prominent in state-managed buildings and Italian-created streetscapes. These buildings are caught up in residents’ projects of sustaining life and community in Old Town. Resident life and community sound like things that would be integral to any place called a “town”, and yet nationalism, racism, and economic oppression—all caught up in Italian and Greek state heritage practices—have made them increasingly hard to come by.
“We’ll Always Have Tourism”

Working in Old Town is easy, people told me, because of earlier Italian interventions creating a monumental time-space that pulls at tourist desires. Irina immigrated to Greece from Russia in the 1990s. After struggling for several months to find work in Athens, she decided to go to Rhodes for the summer where she had heard about kitchen jobs in hotels and restaurants. Initially considering it a temporary move, she quickly honed her skills in Greek and English working in restaurants, and married a Greek man while pursuing a master’s degree in French at the University of the Aegean.

Nowadays Irina manages a small hotel in Old Town that her in-laws opened in the 1970s. She also works part-time at a multimedia attraction centered on Rhodian history that her friend opened recently. Her husband’s family immigrated to Rhodes from the neighboring island of Karpathos in the mid-1970s, and bought a piece of property in Old Town with the aim of establishing both a family home and a business. Her in-laws built the hotel in the courtyard of a larger complex of mixed Hospitaller and Ottoman buildings, not far from the highest part of Old Town that at the time was seeing an exodus of Rhodian Turks in the wake of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. A painted sign depicting the city’s stone walls and a rose invites guests into the property’s courtyard, which itself is filled with trees and bushy plants potted in recycled plastic containers. Other than its name and its location, the hotel bears little in terms of the medieval/Greek aesthetic that draws tourists to Old Town. Irina explains that the Italians made it easy for people like her family to open small businesses in the latter half of the twentieth century, because the work of creating an attraction was accomplished and tourist infrastructure was already in
place. She describes Rhodes as unique in Greece for the massive investment the Italians made in tourist infrastructure that continues to support the economy of which they are a part: “You know, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Italian government, they renovated all of these buildings, in Old Town, in Mandraki harbor, and all over the island. It’s something that you can’t find anywhere in Greece.”

She explained that her in-laws came to Rhodes because of the established tourism industry that supplied apparently endless jobs. In contrast, there was no work on Karpathos—the fishing and sponging industries had withered and tourists had not yet stumbled upon the more remote islands of the south Aegean. Rhodes was familiar to Karpathiotes and to other islanders of the former Italian Dodecanese as the economic center of the region, and many had friends and relatives who had moved there earlier. She explained:

They came here because there was a very big tourism industry. [...] We’ll always have tourism. Maybe a little less some years, maybe a little bit more. But we’ll still have it. Every year. It’s easy to find a job here, not like other places in Greece. Because for the summer season, there are always opportunities to find something in tourism.

Irina articulates an oft-repeated sentiment about ample opportunity for work in Rhodes, and especially in Old Town, that doesn’t resonate with dominant narratives of a collapsed national economy. Employment on Rhodes is dependent to a far lesser extent on the public service and allied sectors than in other parts of Greece. She specifically suggests that Rhodes’s unique configuration of Greek cultural heritage can reliably draw tourists regardless of their primary interests:

Greece has this huge heritage. And on Rhodes, you know, you have from the ancient times the Acropolis in Lindos, and medieval castles all over around the island. [...] Many tourists don’t bother going anywhere else in Greece because
Rhodes combines everything. Beaches, mountains, heritage, culture, sightseeing. Everything. And I noticed that the people, when they arrive to Rhodes, they prefer to stay in the Old Town because it’s something different. It’s something that they cannot find anywhere else.

Irina never claimed a personal attachment to Greece’s “huge heritage,” but rather spoke of it as an endlessly exploitable resource. Sophia, an Old Town resident introduced earlier in this chapter, shares Irina’s feelings about the abundance of work in Rhodes, even when economic conditions are troubled elsewhere in Greece. In the 1980s, after marrying a man from the island, Sophia moved to Rhodes from Athens where she had apprenticed as a silversmith, and ever since has worked in tourism. For years she was a jewelry salesperson in Ippokratous Square, a busy plaza in Old Town near the cruise ship port that was once the commercial intersection between the Jewish and Turkish quarters and is now home to multi-storied restaurants that aggressively compete for every tourist that crosses through. “I always had to keep my eyes up,” Sophia explained, “it’s a beautiful square but watching those restaurant men, the barkers, go after the tourists and each other was so upsetting. I couldn’t stand it.” Now she accompanies tour groups on excursions as a representative for mass tourism agencies. The work is steady, but exploitative and low-paying since the higher-paying agencies are based in France or Germany and, though they pretend otherwise, only hire local Greeks on an as-needed basis:

The way my work goes is I get a phone call on Sunday evening with some person on the other line telling me some story very pleasantly, ‘Oh hello, Sophia, how are you? We have a group this week and we could really use your help. We have a person who can speak French, but she is pregnant and can't work.’ And while they are very nice to me in getting me to work, I make less than 50 euros in a day and I get no benefits.
“We’ll always have tourism,” Irina, Sophia, and others recounted, invoking the monumental and infrastructural legacy of Italian colonialism. But while acknowledging the good fortune of having a steady trickle of income in the midst of a sovereign debt crisis, working in tourism was never described to me as a source of great personal or economic satisfaction. Old Town Rhodians respect tourism work, but frame it as work that provides just enough stability for it to be a better option than anything else. Tourism work provides, but only just enough.

On one of my meetings with Sophia, she described to me a predicament that she and many Rhodians have raising their children. Non-Rhodian Greeks, she explained, jokingly refer to Rhodians as tsambikoi. Historically, Orthodox Rhodian couples journeyed to pray at the monastery of Panagia Tsambika (the Virgin Mary of Tsambika) on a mountaintop on the eastern shore of Rhodes, which was believed to have the miraculous effect of helping couples to conceive. Children born in the wake of a journey to the monastery would be named Tsambikos, if a boy, or Tsambika, if a girl. Over the years, this has resulted in Tsambikos/a being a name that is passed on generationally on the island, resulting in the plural nickname “tsambikoi” being adopted for Rhodians. More than a marker of origin, though, the term “tsambikoi” refers to a stereotypical Rhodian who is money-focused, insular, and comfortable in a disconcerting world.

Sophia describes her daughters as being socialized as tsambikes, blaming herself in part. She explains that they were raised in a family setting where work came relatively easily, enough so that the daughters could get a good education, learn multiple languages, and have a chance at pursuing more numerous opportunities than their parents. Indeed, they are both university-educated, and while they dislike tourism work, the island’s main
source of employment, they are uninterested in parting with the familiarity of Rhodes. They take odd jobs, enough to support themselves, talk about finding a more fulfilling career, but dislike the idea of pursuing it elsewhere in Greece or further afield. Sophia is concerned that her pursuit of a good life for her family in Rhodes modeled tourism work as too convenient—as good enough.

The durable monumentality of Old Town and a preponderance of odd jobs animates concerns about the quality of life for the younger generation of Rhodians. Neither my interlocutors nor their children felt much attachment to the histories that were ostensibly important enough for UNESCO to declare their home a World Heritage Site. They take on the jobs of marketing this time-space to tourists because a century of state heritage work has forged the streets and public spaces outside their homes into a place more desirable to western European sun-seekers than to themselves. It is not, however, a total transformation. Residents and local workers leave their mark in the commodified spaces of Old Town, and maintain a distinctive local aesthetic in their private spaces. Examining how residents mark the surfaces of Old Town helps to understand how residents navigate its commodification—maintaining a sense of home despite the production of state heritage.

The Materiality of Livelihoods and Loss

Tourism has a long history on Rhodes. When Italy took control of the Dodecanese during the Italo-Turkish war, it did so under the pretense of restoring the European character of the islands and developing them as centers of leisure for Italian and other European elites (Fuller 2007; Maglio 2014; Shachar 2013). The Italian photographic
archives betray an emphasis on tourism development on Rhodes, with a focus on the construction of transportation infrastructure, a luxury hotel (the Grande Albergo delle Rose), the Kalithea springs resort, monumental public buildings, and of course, the restoration of Old Town as a medieval Crusader quarter. While Old Town’s status as a tourist attraction was firmly established during the Italian occupation, it underwent a transformation in the 1960s to 1990s as developers rushed to build high-capacity hotels and resorts along the coast south of Old Town. These years on Rhodes coincided with a generation of western European baby boomers seeking affordable beach vacations, prior to the advent of cheap flights to more distant world destinations. The growing tourist population in the high season put pressure on Old Town entrepreneurs to offer “cultural experiences” for tourists who were mainly drawn to the island’s beaches. Traces of these years of mass tourism under Greek statehood are registered throughout the surfaces of Old Town. Behind the now closed hammam rests an expansive plaza and outdoor theater that in 1971 began hosting performances of Greek folk dancing on a nightly basis throughout the summer. Today, the theater’s gates are chained shut and the space is largely overgrown (figure 4.6). Beyond the main commercial streets, closed tourist shops, guesthouses, and restaurants, all small family operations, abound (figure 4.7). The specter of these former tourist spaces looms large in the minds of current business owners who do not envision their operations as attractive to a younger generation. These residues of life projects taken up by a generation of mid-twentieth century newcomers to Old Town haunt shopkeepers and small-scale restaurateurs, who see themselves someday soon aging out of working life and leaving behind ever more empty space.
Figure 4.6. The overgrown and shuttered entrance to the former Old Town Theatre complex. (Photograph by author)
Figure 4.7. Remains of former tourist businesses in historic buildings abound throughout Old Town. (Photograph by author)
The layering of the material residues of tourism work on the surfaces of Hospitaller, Ottoman, and Italian monuments expands the story of tourism told by contemporary residents. The touristic layer of this stratigraphy is apparent in the smooth surfaces of stones quarried for the ground-up reconstruction of Hospitaller monuments such as the Grand Master’s Palace and the inns of various chivalric “tongues” on the Street of the Knights. The formation of this layer, which I examined in chapter 2, was part of the Italian movement to mark and celebrate the reclamation of European rule over the island. The touristic layer grows thicker with decaying tourist signage and spaces from the heyday of resort tourism from the 1960s to 1990s. More recently deposited on the surfaces of Old Town are informational signs bearing the UNESCO logo, a *terminus post quem* signaling the development of touristic interpretation since Old Town’s inscription on the World Heritage list in 1988. The further addition of contemporary storefronts and souvenir displays deploying imagery of knights and Greekness in the emergent medieval/Greek time-space shows how the commercial sector draws together the creation of Hospitaller space with nationalist symbolism sought out by tourists and eagerly provided by most vendors.

The state and local actors produced this layer to put the foundational Italian/Hospitaller surface to economic use according to specific shifts in local, national, and transnational conditions. Reframed as a consumable product in the neoliberal framework of World Heritage and destination marketing, Old Town’s makers and consumers inevitably move on. And when the people behind these projects move on, their material traces remain and persist as an Old Town that is still and always undergoing formation. This layering constitutes the patina left behind from nearly a
century of work making Old Town into a consumable tourist space and reshaping it according to changing tourist demands, alignment with the World Heritage program, the statist thrust to reframe other-than-national pasts within a national heritage discourse.

The materiality of this trajectory that began under Italian rule—reconstruction/restoration, use, abandonment—makes apparent the extractive quality of commodified heritage. Old Town Rhodes lays bare a century of commodification in the name of heritage tourism. This is a process of ruination, in contrast to the rhetoric of development advocates promising heritage preservation through tourism. Homes, courtyards, shops, and public buildings were retrofitted in the first half of the twentieth century as part of the medievalization of Old Town. Later, they would be made into guesthouses, restaurants, and souvenir stores, overlayed with tourist signage, their interiors gutted and retrofitted for tourists. Years later, this secondary layer of material begins to accrue signs of decay, and is eventually overlain with padlocks and overgrowth.

While the people who live and work in Old Town sometimes express sadness about the ever-expanding emptiness of Old Town, they see it as part of their own trajectory as well. In the abandoned structures of Old Town, Irina sees her family’s hotel once she and her husband have saved enough to retire and her in-laws have passed away. Sophia expected that she would have to move from her home in the near future as her aging landlord looked to do away with the property—something that came to fruition as I wrote this dissertation.

Georgios, a life-long resident of Old Town, spoke at length about anticipating the abandonment of the two shops that he has owned throughout his adult life, one just a few doors down from his lifelong home and birthplace. His father was Rhodian and his
mother came to Rhodes from nearby Tilos in the later years of Italian rule. He has worked since the age of six, when he helped his father at the Italian-built fish market on Mandraki harbor in the early 1960s. Nowadays he sells jewelry that he and his aging father craft from one of his shops on a back street, and he rents another shop space to a fashion retailer on Sokratou street, the main tourist drag. “It’s not a good life,” he told me, “Maybe it’s nice to come for two or three weeks. But it’s no place to live.” Georgios works seven days a week year-round. His business model is built around tourists that wander off the beaten path, and those out for a stroll when the shops on Sokratou are closed. He works and he sleeps, often keeping his shop open until ten or eleven o’clock at night. In the summer he moves into the loft above the shop, meaning that he almost never leaves. He is atypical so far as most Old Town shopkeepers go in that he doesn’t use pressure tactics to make sales. He is dismissive of what he calls a “tour bus mentality” that assumes that everybody wants the same thing and that they just need to be told what that is. He is sociable but spends most of his day sitting quietly on a stool, waiting for friends to stop in, for a passerby to ask a question, or for a customer to express interest in his inventory.

Even with this hands-off approach, he is tired of working with tourists: “Can you imagine? Every day, saying ‘Hello, how are you? Where are you from?’ All day long. Every day.” He sighed and was quiet for a moment after saying this. Georgios is of the opinion that the Greek authorities have gotten tourism wrong on Rhodes, and reaches back to the Italian vision of tourism as a model of what could have been. Though he was not alive during the Italian occupation, he explains that the Italians were careful about creating spaces where tourists could enjoy themselves while allowing residents to pursue
meaningful livelihoods. “Dictators are dictators,” he remarked acknowledging the
regime’s fascist leadership, “but the Italians were good to us.” He explained that in his
youth, before the state adopted a strategy of mass tourism for economic development, the
only touristic part of Old Town was Sokratou Street, which even then still had numerous
market stalls selling produce, meat, and household goods to local residents. The only
businesses on Sokratou that still exist from his childhood are a Turkish coffee shop and a
Greek coffee roaster, which have managed to strike a balance between local and tourist
interests. For him, the state has made Old Town into a fantasy world that is simply
another attraction for tourists staying at the large beach resorts. Increasingly, he says,
people spend an afternoon shopping for souvenirs in Old Town, maybe stay for dinner in
the evening, and spend the rest of their holiday at one of the beach resorts beyond Old
Town’s walls. He does not see Old Town as a place where residents could feasibly live
and make a living, seeing his exhausting work-life as the exception rather than the rule.
Most Old Town residents, he explains, scrape by on government pensions and odd jobs
while living in undermaintained state-owned housing. Most workers who hold steady
jobs in Old Town live outside its walls—making too great an income to rent state housing
and too little to purchase property there that would need extensive renovation.

The dissolution of social life in Old Town is felt sensorially and ecologically.
Georgios recalls a time when the geography of Rhodes could be smelled, heard, and felt.
When Sokratou was a real market street, he remembers smelling the seasons through the
fruits and vegetables overflowing from vendor stalls. He recalls the smell of sea life
emanating from the fish market on leaving Old Town from its northern gates. He misses
the sound of donkeys’ steps on the cobbled streets, and grew melancholic reminiscing
about travelling from Rhodes to Lindos as a child, passing by waterfalls and through forests (likely planted by the Italian regime) that either no longer exist or are no longer accessible because of the massive resort developments on the eastern shore of the island.

The sensory-scape of his childhood has been largely displaced by the noise of automobile traffic, suffocating crowds of tourists, and stores filled with innate mass-produced souvenirs. But not completely. In subtle ways, Georgios nurtures his relations to his environment—making Old Town materially his in spite of how the state and market forces would have it.

I approached him one evening after noticing him carry a bucket of paint into his shop. On the pebble street and along the base of the nearby buildings were freshly painted white stripes. Georgios explained that when he opened the door to the shop early that morning a Rhodian whip snake, feared for its aggressive disposition but appreciated in Old Town as critical pest control, slithered out over his feet. Georgios turned to a long-practiced method of deterrence frowned upon by state heritage professionals for disrupting the bare stone medieval aesthetic (see figure 4.8). Whitewashing entryways is a widespread practice among Old Town residents for deterring insects, and, I learned from Georgios, some believe it to also ward off snakes. Painting the street and the bases of adjacent walls white late in the evening allowed him to make what he understood to be a necessary intervention in livability while evading the possible surveillance of a passing state employee. He found it obnoxious that residents had to worry about such things, but also told me that inspectors typically don’t bother investigating acts such as this unless they see it unfolding. In the same breath, he swatted a mosquito against his arm.

“Draculas!” he shouted as to describe the mosquito and the Archaeological Service as the
same, “It’s hard living here. I sit here all day, they don’t. I know what I need to do to live.” In the mundane act of painting bright white stripes along the pebbled street and bare stone walls, he reclaimed spatial control and re-established an ecological relationship rooted in local knowledge.

Figure 4.8. Example of resident whitewashing around entryways and bases of walls in Old Town Rhodes. (Photograph by author)
Georgios attends to specific elements of his environment to allow for a modicum of comfort and to maintain his ability to work and provide financially for his family. He insists that he could never be genuinely happy in this line of work, and dreams of being able to retire to Tilos, his mother’s island. He is intensely proud of his eldest son, who was pursuing a degree in dentistry in England, and explained that he would be happy if he never returned to Rhodes. His younger son works at a clothing boutique on Sokratou, and Georgios is deeply anxious about what he perceives as a lack of ambition to do anything else with his life, echoing Sophia’s dismay about bringing up a generation of tsambikoi. The best hope for Rhodes, he said jokingly, would be for a bomb to detonate somewhere nearby, to drive tourists away for a year or two, and for folks to understand how dissatisfied they were with their work (this has in some way happened with the COVID-19 pandemic, but its potentially transformative impact on the Rhodian economy is yet to be seen). Rhodians would have the chance to take stock of the local economy, to scale tourism down to more manageable levels, and people would learn ways to support themselves that didn’t rely entirely on tourist dollars. Part of this, he says, would be about re-imagining Old Town’s place in the island’s tourism economy.

Georgios says that people visit Old Town to experience history, but he didn’t know how that was possible anymore, with Old Town overwhelmed by shops and restaurants and so many historical sites closed by the Archaeological Service in response to austerity measures. Old Town has been made into a single point on a touristic landscape among many other points. Because of this, workers in Old Town focus on making expedient sales of commodities grounded in what tourists imagine Rhodes, and more broadly, Greece, to be in the absence of their understanding Rhodes’s unique
history and culture. This gives way to the making of the medieval/Greek time-space, which Georgios believes to be an erasure of history. Old Town, for him, is a place steeped in lived history that is threatened by the Archaeological Service’s closure of sites (he specifies the numerous small Byzantine churches throughout Old Town) and by tourists’ fascination with Hospitaller monumentality. He eagerly pointed out hidden bits of Byzantine fresco on the exterior of a closed church up the street, and repeatedly insisted to me, whom he knew as an archaeologist, that there was a hidden Orthodox history in Old Town that he wished was better represented, and more importantly, accessible to its Greek residents. He vividly recalled the now-closed Byzantine churches serving as neighborhood shrines where he would pause on walks through Old Town as a child. When I stood up to leave his shop one evening, the bells of the Catholic church on the other side of the city wall began to toll nine o’clock. In another indication of his relational experience of Old Town history, he stopped me, closed his eyes, and exclaimed after a brief pause, “Italian bells. That’s the most beautiful sound in the world.”

Residents connect with histories in Old Town through memorial and sensorial pathways, even if their ancestors do not hail from Rhodes—as is the case for most Old Town residents. These pathways are not reflected in Old Town’s UNESCO inscription or the Archaeological Service’s conservation plans guided by the ethos of control. Many residents appreciate the economic value of medieval—or medievalesque—monumentality and the easily marketable symbols of the Greek nation-state reproduced throughout Old Town, but find their own sense of belonging and place in less ostentatious pockets that anchor them even as they openly speculate about the time when they will no longer be able to make a life there. On occasion, an older woman dressed in
black sat across the pebble street from Georgios’s shop on her doorstep. She and Georgios seldom said anything to each other, but they sat with the same relaxed posture on their quiet street. Their attention was aimed at the bend in the road where walkers entered and faded from view, and together their eyes followed the odd passing tourist. This was a habit rehearsed through years of repetition. Early in my fieldwork Georgios caught me glancing across the road at the seated woman, and he spoke up, “Her name is Demetria. I’ve seen her almost every day of my life.” We greeted each other. That evening, he described resident life in Old Town as being on a finite trajectory. As he spoke about feeling lost and overwhelmed by the growth of cruise ship tourism, he frequently glanced and nodded towards Demetria across the street as a way of suggesting that at stake are not only small businesses and individual livelihoods, but cherished old relations like those between him and his neighbor.

Sophia described this process one day while we spoke in her kitchen. I asked her why she chooses to live in Old Town, and she explained that she was “obsessed with all of this, with the stones.” It would be easy to associate this statement with the kind of preservationist romanticism I had heard repeatedly from heritage professionals, seeing inherent value in old stone buildings simply because they are old. As she continued, though, she described Old Town as a kind of vessel that contained worlds, where, thanks to its stone architecture and the historical placement of populations within Old Town, people could feel a part of a vast transnational network or a safe, intimate community depending on the circumstances. She pointed out the window to the intersection of streets in front of her rented house. Three mismatched wooden chairs were lined up against a defunct Ottoman fountain, facing another house. In front of the house was a wooden table
holding two potted plants. Two stools were placed underneath the table, next to which was another wooden chair upon which a light blue jacket had been draped. Every morning, a group of old men sat in the chairs, catching each other up on the news. “It’s a very unique thing,” said Sophia, “Years ago, maybe not. But you don’t see it anymore, certainly not outside of Old Town. Those men, they speak Greek with a bit of an Italian rhythm. They used to work on the boats, then their wives died, their children moved away. They watch the news on TV, but other than that nothing outside of the walls is of much interest to them. This is their world. They pay no attention at all to the [touristic] nonsense happening around them.”

Sophia’s obsession “with all of this, with the stones” is an obsession with Old Town’s capacity to hold worlds, past and present. With that obsession comes intense frustration and sadness about the ongoing loss of some of these worlds. She avoids walking through la Judería out of respect for those killed in the Holocaust and the survivors who never returned. She reviles the government’s treatment of Rhodian Turks and described contemporary Greek nationalism as embarrassing. “Look around,” she said alluding to the ambient material traces of Rhodes’s multi-ethnic past, “how can kids only learn Greek history in a place like this?” She is not hopeful about the future of Old Town. She sees tourism slipping out of local hands with every cruise ship that docked and every lease signed away to an outside investor. At the time of writing, Sophia has had to move to a smaller apartment in Old Town after her former landlord sold the property she was living in to a boutique hotel developer. The three-story late-Ottoman block, probably dating to the late nineteenth century, is now a guesthouse promising to visitors “the feeling that they are living in a castle,” echoing the rhetoric of medieval-centric tourism
developers. With the addition of some wrought-iron furnishings and this narrative reworking of the house, a home that was made a home by its resident’s relations to neighbors, histories, and its stones, is commoditized into a tourist product.

In the small courtyard behind her home, Sophia pieced together fragments of architectural stone churned up by her landlord’s unending renovations of the shop below her apartment. The stones encircled her various garden plants and she stacked them in various configurations to add dimension to the courtyard. Other Old Town residents similarly use found stones and historical objects as plant stands, garden borders, or ornaments. Sophia treaded through Old Town with an awareness of specific pasts and an interest in keeping the people, the stuff, and the space of Old Town connected in meaningful and creative ways. In images of the guesthouse that was once her home, her garden is replaced by a gravel bed, and her curated collection of Old Town stones is entirely absent.

There is no singular moment of alienation for residents of Old Town. Rather it is a protracted sensation of loss that eventually culminates in the inability to make a life in the place they long knew as home. Outsiders are quick to point out that few residents of Old Town have roots there preceding the Second World War, and development plans that push them out of the cramped and cavernous homes of Old Town are to their benefit. Residents reject this normalization of their and their ancestors’ displacement. They do so by tending to their relations to fellow residents and the place itself, both of which destabilize state and market logics of medievalization and development. They take time to listen to and remark upon the familiar sound of Italian bells, they sit outside their homes with neighbors, they nurture their gardens squeezed into any patch of exposed
soil, and maintain their streets and houses in a shared local aesthetic that calls to fellow residents that they are still here.

**After Alienation: Heritage, Standardization, and New Life Projects**

Khaled came to Greece from Egypt in 2010 and had lived in Rhodes for two years when I interviewed him. He echoed Irina and Sophia’s sentiments about Rhodes as a place where there will always be tourism, but from his more recent arrival in Rhodes he provides a glimpse of the future of Old Town from a different vantage point. He is in his 30s, and works as a greeter at a bakery in Old Town. Working every day of the week from spring through fall, he stands on the bakery’s front steps advertising to passersby the option of coming in for a coffee and some baked goods. He enjoys working in Rhodes, and especially Old Town which he describes as more beautiful and more peaceful than “wild” Athens where he lived previously. Old Town, for Khaled, is an exceptionally good place to work because of what it—Old Town—promises to tourists that local workers need only facilitate access to: pleasant weather, proximity to beaches, a slow pace of life, and very old buildings. Despite the island’s distinctive history, Khaled argues that Rhodes endures as an attractive holiday place not because of this uniqueness, but because it embodies what tourists want from a Greek holiday:

Why do people come to Rhodes? No, that’s not the right question. Why do people visit Greece? Greece is a beautiful country. It’s like heaven for tourists. You find good weather all year. You find beaches everywhere. You find good service from the local people. And we welcome them, because we survive by giving this to tourists.

In his view, economic success is a given if you can find your niche in the Old Town tourism industry, which he characterizes as the steadfast guarantor of life on the
island—“the heart of Rodos.” He thinks of himself working in tandem with the historic city. He knows particular histories associated with particular buildings. He accurately calls the medieval-esque Street of the Knights and Grand Master’s Palace “Italian” and points to buildings surrounding the bakery as “Turkish.” But knowing these histories bore little weight in how he understood his place in Old Town and how he could make a life there. This was to articulate the *oldness*—not particular histories—of Old Town to tourists, which was constitutive of what they desired in *Greekness*. He attributes the need to quickly flatten Old Town as “old” and “Greek” to the influx of cruise ships in recent years. Tourists who have just one or two ports-of-call in Greece, he argues, have neither interest nor patience for the nuances of local histories that are deeply meaningful to local old-timers like Georgios or Sophia. He offered the script he uses throughout the day when ships are in port to illustrate how effective simple invitations to Greekness are for workers in tourism: “Good morning, how are you today? I’m fine. We have here a Greek bakery for coffee. ‘Oh, a bakery?’ they say, ‘I will try the Greek bakery.’ It’s easy. And people will come for you again all day long. It’s very easy.”

While long-established residents selectively cooperate with the emergent medieval/Greek time-space in Old Town to achieve specific economic gains—Irina’s medieval-named family guesthouse or Sophia’s reluctant work chaperoning day-trippers, for example—they recall a time when tourism work itself was constitutive of a good life—whether as creative outlet or as a way of living socially and hospitably. As tourists arrive in greater numbers while spending less time in one place, Khaled’s embrace of Old Town’s quick commodification as “old” and “Greek” stands in dramatic contrast with Georgios’s despair about mass tourism work in Old Town today. Khaled’s is a newer
kind of life project in Old Town enabled by and reliant upon the alienation of long-term residents from their surroundings and the displacement of their life projects. This is work that cooperates with the public spectacles that animate the medieval/Greek time-space: souvlaki stands in the Jewish quarter, Greek flags atop Italian-built simulacra of Hospitaller monuments, Colossus-shaped ouzo bottles, and replica Crusader armor and swords that spill out of tourist shops. Assembled, these mundane signals of what constitute Old Town’s past and present forge a notion of heritage that excludes most of those who actually inhabited Old Town over the past five hundred years, namely Rhodian Muslims and Jews, and flouts the social history of contemporary Rhodian Greek residents who made their homes there more recently in favor of readily commodified nationalist monumentality.

Khaled’s livelihood depends on the formation of a standardized notion of what Old Town is—a medieval/Greek time-space that individuals can harness and profit from. Just as Italian and Greek heritage professionals facilitated the material formation of this time-space, civil society initiatives operate to socialize local Rhodians into this time-space, that is, to acquaint them with Old Town not as a residential quarter, but as a commodity. One such project that brings together the material and narrative components of a medieval/Greek time-space for residents and tourists alike is the annual Medieval Rose Festival. The volunteer organizers, none of who hail from Old Town, articulate three areas that they aim to promote: education, culture, and cultural tourism (Medieval Rose Cultural Association 2021). The festival is the largest secular annual event in Old Town. Examining the event’s structure, its organizers objectives, and its participants’ engagement sheds light on ways that changing relationships between people and a place
drive the transformation of Old Town from a place to live, made possible by tourism, into a place of tourism at the expense of local life.

Signature festival events repeated annually include a daily parade of reenactors through Old Town, a medieval feast, musical performances, and a nightly reenactment of the Hospitaller resistance to the Ottoman siege of Rhodes in 1522. In 2016, the festival was structured around a narrative of Hospitaller-Ottoman rivalry, with costumed reenactors wandering the grounds in the moat between Old Town’s double wall, engaging in swordfights, and ending with the nighttime siege reenactment. The Knights Hospitaller are clearly framed as protagonists of this story. In Greek Rhodian historiography, their defeat in 1522 marked the end of medieval Christian rule that is celebrated by festival organizers and participants. Those participants are primarily Rhodians, though not Old Town residents. None of my friends in Old Town expressed interest in attending the event. While the nightly procession through Old Town is geared primarily towards foreign tourists, the festival grounds in the Old Town moat was attended mostly by local Rhodians. Children wearing t-shirts painted with the Hospitaller cross battled each other with wooden swords and took turns being led around the moat on horseback. Young adults gathered on hay bales near the medieval tavern drinking beer out of earthenware mugs. Parents examined medieval-themed art exhibits prepared by students from the city’s schools in the Bastion of St. George, a normally shuttered monument opened specially for these evenings by the Archaeological Service.

Festival participants demonstrated a clear sense of comfort and embrace of the medievalization of Old Town. The festival offers an opportunity for Rhodians to engage in a carnivalesque take on medieval European chivalric life and to claim it, emerging as
heirs to the tradition. This is a significant departure from conventional framings of Greek cultural heritage, which typically envision a line of cultural and ethnic inheritance from classical antiquity through the Byzantine empire, suppressed under Ottoman rule, and fully resuscitated in the modern state of Greece (Hamilakis 2007, 55). While “Byzantine” is often used as a synonym for the medieval period elsewhere in Greece, the Hospitaller occupation of the Dodecanese was a distinct political and cultural episode in which the region was severed from Byzantine governance. Derogating this time, its Greek, Jewish, Armenian, and Syrian residents were ruled by a western European chivalric order that governed the Dodecanese for two centuries as an autonomous polity (Kasdagli, Katsioti, and Michaelidou 2007). Local volunteers and participants at the Medieval Rose festival are specifically participating in reenactments—if fantasized—of Hospitaller chivalric culture and history; not of Greek life under Hospitaller rule.

The local embrace of a medieval Hospitaller aesthetic should not be surprising. The tripartite heritage regime (classical/Byzantine/modern) pervasive in Greek state projects was not structured to describe a full and complex history of Greek life, but rather to suppress and displace memory of life under Ottoman rule. Celebrating Hospitaller rule on Rhodes offers a specifically other-than-Ottoman historic identity to Old Town. By foregrounding Old Town’s Hospitaller past, Old Town can be “old” without being Ottoman. It is integral to the ongoing formation of a locally focused heritage discourse and tourism economy that folks like Khaled extract from and depend on. This medieval/Greek tourism economy is sanctioned by the state (see the opening of monuments by the Archaeological Service for the Medieval Rose festival that are normally locked in the name of “control”) and is opportunistic for non-residents of Old
Town who have little tethering to life there in the era of displacements and resettlement in the mid-twentieth century or before. Reenacting the Hospitaller past allows Rhodians to explicitly frame Old Town as a European space, building on the work of Italian and Greek state actors to construct and preserve Hospitaller monumentality. Indeed, organizers leverage the festival as an opportunity for forging cultural connections to Europe, which intentional or not, gives Rhodians a way to frame their very Ottoman-looking Old Town as a location of deep-rooted Europeanness.

**Preservation as Decay**

DeSilvey (2017, 184-185) argues that fragmentation and decay can be more conducive to heritage professionals’ goals of cultural perpetuation and renewal than standard methods of preservation. To this I would add that preservation at times leads to what heritage professionals ostensibly fear about decay—cultural loss and alienation. The surfaces of structures in the Old Town are subject to variable treatments by the state and by residents.

Surveying the surfaces of Old Town shows that professional conservation in Old Town is a practice associated with monumentality and, in turn, commodifiability. The most prominent and most visited features in Old Town, namely the Archaeological Museum, the Street of the Knights, and the Grandmaster’s Palace, receive regular inspections and maintenance from the Archaeological Service. Other monuments have received some attention since the early 2000s, largely owing to European Union (EU) funding awarded with the stipulation for projects that would help to develop “modern culture” in line with European multicultural values (European Commission 2000, 72).
According to the most recent Periodic Report issued to the World Heritage Centre, seventy percent of the funding for the Archaeological Service’s work in Rhodes came from multilateral sources (mainly the EU) and just thirty percent from the Greek government (4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities 2014). EU-sponsored conservation projects (which include the town wall, moat, and some Ottoman-era mosques) and earlier works undertaken by the Italians (mainly on medieval structures) and the Greek Ephorate (mainly on ecclesiastical structures) represent a minority of the structures in Old Town. They leave behind the majority of Old Town, which consists of residential quarters of mixed Hospitaller and Ottoman construction that are either tended to by resident care practices or, if empty, become subject to non-human transformative processes that would be conventionally termed “decay.”

An archaeological-ethnographic analysis shows the material impact of leaving a building, and what it does to prospects for future life in Old Town. Vines envelop the structure, floors may collapse, windows shatter, and padlocks securing entryways morph into corroded masses. As buildings empty out, residents are left without neighbors, with fragmented social networks, and with fewer services to support their livelihood in Old Town. Residents are not solely at fault for the expansion of emptiness in Old Town. Since the Italians laid claim to Rhodes as a legacy of their Crusader ancestors, Old Town has become increasingly objectified as a tourist commodity. Its resident population is now heavily alienated from most of its space, which is either inaccessible due to disrepair or due to its reorientation towards tourists. This results from official attempts at controlling the city’s materiality—foregrounding Hospitaller and Orthodox architecture—so that it indexes a particular temporality—both medieval European and
timelessly Greek. This an unsustainable formation, in which a massive tourist economy is tethered to a precarious stratum of Old Town that is being constructed/conserved at the expense of local aesthetics and ethics of care. Expansive emptiness—material and social decay—is what tells us this important story that could press people into action if they took notice. But emptiness is not as exciting as fantastic imagery of knights and castles. Old Town Rhodes is not medieval, nor Ottoman, nor Greek. It is a convergence of effects where the past is a constant interloper in contemporary life. Its materiality and its people are manifestations of the Italian colonial project, of wars, genocide, and displacements, of nationalism, and of the commodification of heritage. What would a heritage practice look like that honored its residents and owned up to these histories?
CHAPTER 5
RECLAIMING HERITAGE: PALESTINIAN LIFE PROJECTS IN THE OLD CITY OF ACRE

Less than 500 miles southeast of Rhodes on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the Old City of Acre sits on a peninsula at the northern tip of the Bay of Acre in the State of Israel. Surrounded by stone walls built by the city’s eighteenth and nineteenth century rulers, its Palestinian residents know ‘Akka as a place materially distinct from the surrounding area. When many of the Palestinian towns and villages in Acre’s hinterland were destroyed in 1948, the Old City became a refuge—a place for the internally displaced, then and now.

My research in the Old City of Acre and the Old Town of Rhodes is comparative. In both contexts, I ask: What practices coalesce to constitute heritage for the state and for residents, and how do these differ? What impacts do practices not recognized as heritage by “experts” have on the continued formation of these cities? I asked residents to share their stories about living in an old place that is being subjected to visions of development that were not of their making. I walked the cities every day, monitoring subtle changes in their ongoing formation. I attended events that residents, conservation professionals, and tourism developers organized around their own respective understandings of heritage. Using a parallel methodology in Rhodes and Acre, I aimed to track the specific local experiences of a diffuse and universalizing project—heritage-centered tourism development. I aimed to track how contemporary local residents make lives in these places, because and in spite of state heritage projects.
In chapter 6, I examine the relations among practices in these cities. For now, I treat Acre as a case study apart, and I let my interlocutors guide my writing by focusing on matters that they drew out in our interactions. This is a way of foregrounding diverse experiences of engagement with heritage regimes in Rhodes and Acre, experiences that beckon a re-thinking, or perhaps un-thinking, of what heritage was, is, and could be.

I was familiar with Acre when I began this research project in 2016. Over the preceding three summers, I participated in an archaeological project centered on the variously named Tel Akko/Tel Napoleon/Tel el-Fukhar, a stratified mound located near the eastern edge of the “new city” which was the urban center from at least the early Bronze Age until the Hellenistic period, at which point the center was moved to the area of what is now called the “old city.” This early navigation between “new,” “old,” and “older” cities was very much a part of my early questioning of the spatio-temporalities of Acre—of any so-called “old place” for that matter. I participated in several conventional aspects of the archaeological project, deepening my knowledge of excavation and survey methods, archaeological photography, artifact processing, data collection and curation, and the sociality of large, collaborative excavation projects common in the Mediterranean region. But the reason that I was invited to the project was to develop research components that centered contemporary heritage concerns, part of the project directors’ commitments to including local participants in the research process and recognizing their various stakes in studies of their city.

During this time, we learned how residents think about their city’s UNESCO World Heritage status and how we, as guests in the city, might refine inclusive approaches to archaeology. We found that residents felt a sense of alienation from state
development projects, seldom being consulted and never being involved in plans for the city. Residents also creatively refashion the meaning and utility of World Heritage, viewing the influx of tourists as a global audience for expressing their opposition to gentrification, or inviting international tourists to learn about aspects of family histories erased from official representations of Acre’s history (Killebrew et al. 2017, 377-385).

These perspectives were helpful to the larger archaeological project, but they also drew me closer to the politics of the past in the Old City. The relationships that I developed with residents and workers during that time grew, and these friends pushed me to think how research involving their experiences in the Old City might be useful in realizing their hopes for this place. They showed me how to see nuances beyond oft-repeated claims about heritage, conservation, and tourism. Their frequent and encouraging questioning of my interests in the Old City shaped the questions that I would ask of state and local heritage projects in both Acre and Rhodes.

**Locating State Heritage in Acre**

“‘Akka was always a tourist town. We’re a seaside town. Growing up we all fished—for fish of course—but mainly for tourists.” In saying this, Bassem, an ‘Akkawi friend who I will return to below, acknowledges that there is a long history of tourism in the Old City of Acre that precedes the contemporary moment, extending to the British Mandate’s economic development efforts. Some self-proclaimed heritage professionals—ranging from state officials to tourism developers—point to this history in justifying the ongoing development of heritage tourism in the Old City. The current context of mass tourism, however, is distinguished by an intensification of government intervention and
acquisition of properties by outsiders, primarily non-resident Jewish-Israelis. This intensification can be traced to the 1990s when a government employment scheme for new immigrants, mostly from the former Soviet Union, put hundreds to work excavating vast areas of Crusader Acre beneath the inhabited Ottoman-era city. These excavations uncovered and produced the sites that most tourists visit today. They also provided the impetus for the Old Acre Development Company, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the Acre Municipality to nominate the Old City for UNESCO World Heritage status and make it into an open-air museum and laboratory for conservation and tourism development. World Heritage nomination required the expansion of state presence in the Old City, leading to the creation of a conservation center, municipal tourism development offices, several new state-managed tourist attractions, and pilot initiatives for the architectural conservation of residential quarters.

The Israel Antiquities Authority, the Ministry of Tourism (through the Old Acre Development Company, its semi-autonomous subsidiary), the municipal government, and newcomer entrepreneurs are the principal conduits of state heritage work in the Old City. These groups share in a preservation-centric heritage paradigm, even if their approaches to preservation are many, and a vision of the Old City as a boutique tourist destination. During my field research, members of these groups came together for occasional evening tours of the Old City or for discussions related to preservation and tourism. But specific motivations and objectives vary for each of these constituencies. There are individuals within these groups who have close relations to Old City residents and workers, who take time to listen to their concerns, and look for partnership in the local population. This is common in many kinds of state organizations, but these benevolent individuals’ agency is
circumscribed by official policy. Several employees of state heritage organizations acknowledge this, and some have left their positions in these organizations owing to frustration with their roles as policy-enforcers, going on to collaborate on projects led by residents and local workers.

Others have explored how state heritage in Acre operates as a convergence of constituencies, ambitions, and perceptions of success and failure (Fuhrmann Naaman, Nitzan-Shiftan, and Kallus 2018; Davis 2019). The Old Acre Development Company’s primary (stated) goal is to grow tourism in the Old City. It coordinates closely with the Israel Land Administration to oversee public-private ventures that see state-owned historic stone houses and structures repurposed and made into tourist attractions and amenities. It also operates several historical and archaeological tourist attractions in the Old City. The municipality has its own economic development branch with an office in the Old City. The staff of this branch work with resident and non-resident entrepreneurs, offering guidance and, at times, financial assistance for creating tourism-oriented businesses. The Israel Antiquities Authority has its regional headquarters in the Old City and formerly operated a conservation education center there as well. Its inspectors monitor interventions that residents and business owners make to historical structures and have the power to decide whether said interventions conform or contravene with antiquities law. The staff of these organizations dominated the field of state heritage for decades.

The State of Israel constructs heritage through active conservation projects, antiquities legislation, direct financial investment in tourism development, entrepreneurial assistance programs, and rhetorical claims about Acre’s past. I also count
among state heritage projects individuals’ work that bolsters state agendas. Indeed, the neoliberal tactic of shifting public work to the individual in the market is quickly becoming the hallmark of state heritage work in Acre. That heritage is not being constructed by a government does not mean that it is not constructed in a statist framework. Beginning in 2007, the Israel Land Administration (now the Israel Land Authority) began publishing tenders for the sale of uninhabited properties of Palestinian refugees in Acre and other communities in the state of Israel that had been administered under the 1950 Law of Absentee Property (Adalah 2009). This process was formally authorized under the 2009 Israeli land reform, which created a process for the privatization of broad segments of public lands. While on one hand allowing current residents to purchase their leased homes at a preferential rate, the process also created an entry for non-resident developers to purchase uninhabited properties and to buy current residents out of their property rights. The liquidation of Palestinian absentee property on the private market also effectively erases—in Israeli domestic law—the pathway for Palestinian refugees to reclaim said property in any future framework of their, or their heirs’, return (S. Bishara 2009). Within the last ten years, a wave of non-resident self-proclaimed entrepreneurs have taken to purchasing or leasing homes and commercial spaces in the Old City and converting them into tourism ventures. In this model, houses become vacation rentals and market stalls become art galleries and boutique restaurants. This influx of outside developers is having a dramatic impact on Palestinian property tenure and occupancy.

One of these developers, who has purchased over a dozen houses in the Old City, explained to me that he has no responsibility to current or former Old City residents; he
was simply partaking in transactions in an open market that could be pursued by anybody. As long as houses were available for sale and tourists continued to book his remodeled luxury apartments, he would continue to buy houses. I asked if he had any qualms about purchasing properties that, in all likelihood, would never again be used as homes for Palestinian families. He insisted that he had no qualms, that it was an open market, and that he created jobs for residents in the Old City. Many of my resident interlocutors are quick to point out that the commodification of the Old City’s homes does not open the market of Old City homes to anybody. Most residents do not own their homes but live as protected tenants. While some have made lucrative deals to give up their tenancy, most residents cannot sell their homes. Once tenancy is relinquished and the house is sold to a developer, generally followed by extensive remodeling, the value of these properties increases dramatically, pushing them ever further from reach of Acre’s Palestinian community. While some developers may see themselves as merely engaging in business transactions, they are engaging with a model of dispossession by commodification designed and facilitated by the state.

State heritage projects in Acre can be described as a form of colonial commodification. They are colonial in the sense that the power to affect massive changes in the home space of thousands of Palestinians is distributed almost entirely among the Jewish-Israeli non-resident “experts” introduced above. However benevolent some state professionals view themselves and however positive their relations with local residents, there is currently no space within state heritage projects for residents to substantively and collectively participate in decisions that affect their very ability to exist in this space. As a consequence of transforming homes into vacation rentals that produce capital for outside
investors, long-term residents are displaced and the community as a whole loses control over its space. Some reflective non-resident professionals and entrepreneurs acknowledge a power imbalance, but do not describe it in colonial terms. Rather, they point to the nationalistic configuration of Israeli society that authorizes Jewish Israeli citizens to engage in any and all aspects of Israel’s economy. In emphasizing the motivations behind their actions through a national sensibility without reflecting on their outcomes, they lay bare what Palestinian and critical Israeli scholars of Zionism identify as its dual identity—nationalist in motivation and colonial in act (Pappé 2008, 612; see also Masalha 2014; Yiftachel 2002). As a national movement, Zionists have pursued the emancipatory ideal of Jewish self-determination, opposing British rule over Palestine and the oppression of Jews around the world. Pursuing this ideal, however, has involved (past and present) colonial acts to secure maximal control over territory and demographic dominance in historic Palestine.

Reclaiming Heritage: Maintaining Shared Livability in the Old City

Heritage, and practices like conservation and tourism through which heritage is consumed and constructed, are not solely the domain of the state in Acre. Heritage is a site of commoditization and coloniality where facts undergirding these projects are constructed (Abu El-Haj 2001; De Loney 2019; Herzfeld 2010). However, heritage itself is not necessarily a commodifying and colonizing project. Heritage in Acre is also a site of local resistance, reclamation, and relation-making. Residents of Acre who live and work in the Old City engage with the field of heritage on their own terms. In this section I follow resident practices of relating to the Old City and how these relations are made
with and through the materiality of the Old City. Following these relations and practices reveals a local formation of heritage amenable to a different present and future than that envisioned by the state. Collectively, these diverse practices reclaim heritage from the Israeli state’s semiotic work around the concept, rendering heritage instead as maintenance of a home place—broadly understood as a place of belonging for ‘Akka residents and their extended kin—and as a place that will continue to be a home for the descendants of those who know it as home today. For Palestinian citizens of Israel, reclaiming the terms of heritage practice is a practice in power—a means of forging popular sovereignty in local spaces (Bishara 2017).

Here, I engage both ethnographic explorations of lives and life histories in the Old City and archaeological explorations of their material traces. Together, they reveal the relational practices that constitute residents’ reclamation of heritage. Including data from contemporary archaeological surface survey broadens the scope of heritage as enacted by residents during interviews and participant observation, but also illuminates a material counterpoint to the dominant logic of conservation that assumes a lack of care for place in the absence of experts. The surface survey of the city shows deeply care-full treatment of the Old City by residents.

**Bassem: Making a Living at Home**

Bassem was born and raised in the Old City. His home takes up the top two floors of a four-story stone structure built during the period of Ottoman-rule. The building appears to be sunken into a slope, with the semi-subterranean first floor accessible from one side of the structure, and Bassem’s upper floors accessible by a set of stairs from the
opposite side. The slope, out of which the building’s first floor emerges, is made up of the remains of earlier Crusader buildings. Having lived his entire life perched atop this accumulation of historical architecture, Bassem is keenly aware of the layers of human intervention in the Old City that produced his surroundings. His bookcase is stacked with historical, geographical, and literary volumes related to the city’s past that he and his late parents—both political and cultural leaders in the Old City—collected over several decades. He does not, however, talk about Acre’s monumental history as grounds for his attachment to the Old City and his pride of being a resident.

His parents were from a village in the central Galilee. His father, a Communist Party activist, fled his village in 1948, first towards the south, but after an encounter with Zionist militias made his way to Acre where he held a key to a house that his sister and her husband had lived in before the outbreak of violence. Bassem’s mother soon joined him there, and this is the house where Bassem still lives. From that house his father pursued a life-long political career in the Municipality as a representative of the Communist Party, becoming known as the Mayor of the Old City, and his mother established the Old City’s first kindergarten, nursery, and women’s union. Bassem remains involved in Party organizing but bemoans the lack of interest most residents today have in party politics. He worked in computer engineering for almost twenty years from the family’s Old City house, witnessing and experiencing the pressures of living in an Ottoman-era stone building amidst state-supported gentrification.

After his mother’s passing, he received multiple offers from outside developers to acquire the property rights to the family house, which he then held as a protected tenant. Some of these offers could have been extraordinarily lucrative, had he accepted. He
explained, however, that his priority was to honor his parents’ intentions of creating a lasting community in the Old City. They witnessed numerous residents leave under the Makr resettlement program (see chapter 2) and advocated tirelessly to keep the Old City as a homeplace for its residents. Like his parents, Bassem is motivated by a refusal of repeated displacement and dispossession—by an ethical relationship to the Nakba.

In 2012 Bassem sold his car, took out a loan, and used these funds to purchase his house from the state housing authority. He now counts himself among a small, but growing, group of Old City residents that own the buildings they and their families have called home since the aftermath of their displacement in 1948. While needing a way to repay his debts, he found his work as a computer engineer lonesome, so opted to open his home as a guesthouse. In doing so, he explains that he is demonstrating to other residents how one can make a living in the place one lives. This matters in a place like the Old City where outside investors regard the post-1948 arrival of most residents’ families as a facile justification to occupy more and more space there. To this thinking, Bassem asserts that the connections residents built with each other and to the Old City in the wake of 1948 created as strong a community as one could imagine anywhere.

The origins of the Old City’s current Palestinian population are widespread. Such was the chaotic fallout of the Nakba that virtually every family in the Old City includes individuals who trace their ancestry to two or more villages that were besieged, depopulated, and/or destroyed in or after 1948. If anything, the shared history of the Old City’s residents, like Palestinians in many other places, is one of rebuilding lives after displacement. Bassem’s practices of emplacement in the Old City consist of a set of relations that bind him to his parents’ nascent village, to Acre, to the past, and to the
future. His work operating his home as a guesthouse, which I frame here as a form of heritage work, is propelled by an ethical relationship to his parents’ displacement and to the relations that they built in the Old City.

He once invited me to accompany him on a visit to his parents’ village, where he would spend summers with relatives as a child in the relative serenity of the Galilee hills. Standing on the roof of his cousin’s house, where in his childhood he and his siblings would watch films projected onto a screen at the open-air cinema down the hill, he explained that he was sure that he would one day return to the village and leave Acre behind. Now, he explains that remaining in ‘Akka feels more important, for as traumatic as his parents’ displacement was, they devoted their lives to making a new home for a new generation of Palestinians in the Old City. His commitment to the Old City is borne of both local adoration and the belief that all of the country (al-balad, the term used by many Palestinian citizens of Israel to describe the entirety of historic Palestine) is a place of Palestinian belonging. Home, in this sense, may be enacted at specific sites of attachment but sensed across a broader familial and familiar geography.

Bassem’s (guest)house bears little resemblance to the boutique hotels and short-term rental units that abound in the Old City. Four rooms are available for guest accommodation, which in the past served as his father’s office, a children’s playroom, and two bedrooms. These have been retrofitted to include private bathrooms and new floors and furnishings. Bassem has been careful, though, to retain the sense of the house he has spent most of his life in. The house’s central corridor bears family photos, an old cuckoo clock, and older family furnishings. On shelves are trinkets that his father brought home from conferences that he attended as a regional delegate of the Communist Party. A
small nameplate bearing his father’s name is still nailed above the house’s doorbell. His parents’ inclusive stance on belonging in the country is subtly registered in the wrought iron star, crescent moon, and cross set into a series of exterior windows. The kitchen, especially, remains his late mother’s kitchen in furnishings and configuration. Her portrait, impressed on an ornamental copper and tin plate, hangs above the table where Bassem often joins guests in conversation about Acre, politics, and history.

Occasionally, he engages in projects to revert aspects of the house to its appearance in his childhood. During one of my visits, he was chipping away the conglomerate floor tile installed in the kitchen in the 1970s to reveal the marble that he remembered being there once. Working on this prompted him to pull up some old family photos on his laptop, which he showed me over the course of about an hour. When I asked if he considered having some of the photos printed and framed, he quickly responded that he was searching for a way to have them printed on ceramic tile so that he could integrate them more permanently into the fabric of the house. That he would go to such lengths to register his adoration for family and for the Old City in the house is not surprising. During my fieldwork, Bassem also installed a bookshelf that he had custom-built in the shape of the name عکّا (‘Akka). He repeatedly expressed his frustrations with the designer he had worked with from the Municipality’s entrepreneurial assistance office in retrofitting the bedrooms for the guesthouse. The designer, having tourist appeal at front of mind, had all of the house’s window and door frames painted blue. “When I see what she did to the house, I see the colors of Greece,” he explained. Bassem spoke with glee about the paint now beginning to peal, meaning that he could soon strip it and repaint the house with the yellow, red, and green hues so vibrant in the childhood photos.
of the house. Bassem and other residents share in a distinctly ‘Akkawi aesthetic that foregrounds people’s adoration for the city while honoring their histories within it.

**Surface Survey: Adorning the Old City**

Residents’ relations to Acre aren’t limited to their place of residence or work. They are diffuse, marked throughout the Old City, sometimes durably and sometimes ephemeral. To account for these more subtle markings of relationality, I developed an archaeological approach for this research that brings together the concepts of surface survey and the temporalities of things. This took the form of a diachronic photographic survey centered on thirty pre-selected study loci. The goal of the survey was to document people’s interventions in the surfaces of the Old City—the quotidian, the unique, the ephemeral, and the durable—as they happened in real-time throughout the Old City. The thirty bounded public spaces were dispersed throughout the Old City (figure 5.1), roughly evenly distributed, and representing a range of uses and meanings that I gleaned over my repeated visits for fieldwork. I assigned each of the thirty study loci a number to facilitate subsequent comparative analysis. A locus was defined as an identifiable place of cultural activity bounded enough to allow for focused photographic documentation of material interventions at a hyper-local scale on a once per day basis. The loci were spread across the public places of everyday life: market streets, residential courtyards, alleyways, thoroughfares, sea overlooks, along city walls, and adjacent to religious structures. I made every attempt to capture the same one to five photographic frames per locus each day. At times the replication of photo frames was complicated by visual obstructions such as parked cars or skipped to minimize intrusion and protect the privacy of individuals.
using the spaces. Old City residents are already subject to an expansive network of state and private surveillance systems, and I took their concerns seriously in prioritizing their privacy over a possibly more substantial dataset. All loci were publicly accessible, but where adjacent to residential structures I explained the project and obtained consent from residents.

![Map of thirty study loci distributed throughout the Old City of Acre. (Compiled by author using QGIS)](image)

The study period for the photographic surface survey was forty days, from late January to mid-March 2018. Each day’s photographs document the material traces of relations that people enact with each other and with other-than-human constituents of the Old City: fish, cats, birds, and stones, especially. The observed day-to-day additions and
removals of material resulting from social relations index life projects related to identity, responsibility, belonging, refusal, and resistance. While most surface interventions could be overlooked as the mundane traces of everyday life, I argue that it is precisely through the materialization of day-to-day relationality that the logic of state heritage management practices in ‘Akka, grounded in monumentality and temporal periodization, fall apart. It is in this day-to-day relationality at the surface that residents’ sense of belonging and responsibility to the city runs deep, and where an ethical reclaiming of heritage begins.

A common material intervention in several survey loci was the addition and removal of decorative images and objects to the exterior surfaces of buildings. If state conservation policy in the Old City is structured largely around removing surface materials post-dating the Ottoman period (post-1918), residents’ short- and long-term addition of framed images, found objects, and wedding decorations to exterior surfaces constitutes a forcefully resistant aesthetic convention.

While the temporary display of wedding decorations around the day of a wedding is expected and generally unremarkable in Palestinian space, in ‘Akka they may be left mounted for multiple weeks. In one locus, wedding decorations remained wound around a 20-meter railing for fully two weeks along a heavily trafficked stairway and thoroughfare. The railing is used heavily daily by preschool aged children making their way to and from their nearby nursery, by Old City commuters and visitors parking in the lot at the base of the staircase, by the elderly residents of two adjacent housing blocks, and by churchgoers to Saturday and Sunday masses at the Greek Catholic church located at the top of the stairs. The caretaker at the church to which the railing is adjoined swept and tidied the area around the church entrance every day, but the decorations remained
(figure 5.2). In another locus just off the main market street, wedding streamers wound around a pergola leading to an alleyway were left mounted the duration of the survey, reminding all passersby that this is a lived-in space.

Figure 5.2. Wedding decorations wound around railing (al-1 in figure 5.1), left undisturbed for two weeks. Representative photos (clockwise) from February 15, February 17, February 19, and February 28, 2018. (Photographs by author)

In another category, playful visual decor was periodically mounted publicly in the study loci for brief periods of time. In a section of street in a residential area, a framed print of Spider-Man was hung high on a stone wall overlooking a small public square on the second day of the survey and remained for twenty-three days. The square is a popular soccer venue for neighborhood children in the evenings, and being watched over by Spider-Man undoubtedly offered added excitement. Elsewhere, at a municipal trash pickup site, somebody hung a painting of a seated woman on the stone wall above the
trash bins (figure 5.3). Half covered in paint splatter, the painting itself was likely intended for trash collection, but nonetheless somebody gave it a last breath of life by carefully hanging it for the amusement of passersby. It was left hanging three full days, surviving two trash pickups, only being taken away after it fell to the ground and shattered on the fourth day. Other kinds of found objects were regularly mounted for brief periods in the study loci, including a frayed wicker basket tied to a water pipe for three days, artificial flowers tied to window bars for thirteen days, and a highly decorated broken clock mounted outside a barber shop for seventeen days. These examples represent a practice of dynamic, spontaneous, and ephemeral adornment of Old City surfaces—one that refuses a fixed aesthetic and is insistent on playful and continuous renewal.

Figure 5.3. Framed image of a seated woman, splattered with paint but separated from adjacent trash and suspended on a stone wall for three days (al-8 in figure 5.1), February 4, 2018. (Photograph by author)
A last category of adornment that emerged in the surface survey was the display of images of the Dome of the Rock, located on Jerusalem’s Haram ash-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary), the holiest place for Muslims in historic Palestine and known in Jewish tradition as the Temple Mount. Fischer (2016) argues that images of the Dome of the Rock—not just the Dome of the Rock itself—constitute a site of memory in Palestinian national imagination, tying individuals across population groups—refugees outside of historic Palestine, Palestinian citizens of Israel, the internally displaced, and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—together through the image of a historically and culturally important structure in Jerusalem, the city that Palestinians recognize as their capital. In a small square surrounded by a dress shop, a carpenter’s shop, a café, and a newly opened tourist information center, a framed needlepoint image of the Dome of the Rock appeared for a single day atop a disused public fountain (figure 5.4). In the same square, a compact disc case with a Dome of the Rock album cover was propped against the exterior of a shop window for the duration of the survey. In the street locus discussed above, a framed image of the Dome of the Rock replaced Spider-Man on the final day of the study survey. In a place where outward expressions of Palestinian nationalism are uncommon—displaying the Palestinian flag, for example, is not illegal in Israel but is sometimes policed as amounting to public disturbance (Breiner and Hasson 2018)—displaying images of the Dome of the Rock is a way of demonstrating both religiosity and national belonging to fellow residents.
These forms of adornment indicate a profoundly contemporary relationship to the city, where celebratory, household, and religious-nationalistic decorative elements add value to the historic Ottoman-era stone structures. Whether they are left for days, weeks, or months, these adornments are strands of connection between residents and the city—specifically rejecting the aesthetic of tidy and bare stone walls that is couched in official talk of “historical authenticity.” Yaqoub, a lifelong resident of ‘Akka and tour guide in the Old City remarked to me:

I am happy for what’s going on in my city in terms of development and tourism… bringing this heritage and this history to a different level. But there are things that are disturbing—who will design it? Who benefits, and at what cost to the environment? When I say the environment, it’s not only sea walls, it’s our culture. [Our culture] that gives the color, the taste, the flavor to the historical ruins in this unique city.
In these remarks he positions a sensed relationship between people and the Old City as being at stake in development in the name of heritage. His question (“who will design it?”) renders this relationship at risk of loss in a state heritage project, but potentially nurtured in a context where heritage is understood precisely as these forms of relationality.

Others spoke about “feeling heartbroken” when leaving the Old City, that “‘Akka is everything,” and that it is a place “where I can feel like myself.” These are accounts of a city that sustains its people by allowing them to care for it and guide it into the future. For residents, engaging with the materiality of the city infuses it with life so that the city can in turn sustain its people.

**Samia: Relocalizing Heritage Tourism**

Ephemeral adornments lay bare residents’ ongoing, creative, and ever-developing relationship to the Old City that exists despite official efforts to stabilize the surfaces of the Old City according to their Crusader or Ottoman origin. But residents are also registering their attachments to the city in more durable forms, integrating the whimsy of ‘Akkawi aesthetics with their pursuit of livelihood at home. There is a long tradition of residents operating tourist-facing businesses in the Old City, dating to the revival of post-Mandate tourism in the early 1960s. “Fishing for tourists,” as my friend put it, is a signature economic pursuit here. There is a growing critique of mass tourism among residents, particularly around the influx of outside developers creating the conditions for it. But small group tours, independent day-trippers, and occasional overnight visitors staying at places like Bassem’s guesthouse are generally viewed as manageable and
welcome sources of income. Almost all resident families have some connection to this form of tourism, from running juice carts and snack stands, to permanent market vendors, to souvenir shopkeepers, to restauranteurs.

Samia grew up in ‘Akka, and she has devoted much of her adult life to improving social and economic conditions among residents. Unlike many, her family’s pre-1948 roots are in ‘Akka. Her grandfather owned a mill outside of the city walls, and he and his family maintained two houses, one in the Old City and one in the Mandate-era “New City.” In 1948, all but her grandfather fled for safety in Lebanon, while her grandfather stayed back in the Old City. Against improbable odds her grandmother and father, then an unmarried minor, were able to return under an extremely limited and unevenly applied family reunification program that Israel instituted in 1949 under international pressure as part of its efforts to gain United Nations recognition (El-Ahmed and Abu-Zahra 2016).

The family later bought back their old home in the New City from a Jewish family that had settled there. Samia and her siblings spent their nights at that home, and their days in the Old City, either at school, exploring its alleyways, or with friends and relatives. Her father owned and ran a restaurant overlooking the sea, and she spent much of her youth there lending a helping hand. Today, she has her own restaurant in the space adjoining her father’s old restaurant where he ran a small souvenir store.

Samia didn’t intend to continue the family business when she finished high school. She earned degrees in sociology and worked for several years as a social worker in Acre. Her decision to pursue that career was driven by her experience growing up in the streets of the Old City, where she saw a need to create and improve mutual support structures for women and to advocate for youth. This was challenging work and it took a
toll on her mental health. Ultimately, after being denied support from the municipality to expand one of her community-based programs, she decided to leave social work. Her choice to open a restaurant in her father’s old souvenir shop, she explains, was therapeutic. She named the restaurant after her father, which opened the year after his death, and from there she prepares hummus and dishes unique to the kitchens of Acre and the region.

It was clear that opening a restaurant in the Old City would be a tourist venture, but Samia wanted it to be a creative outlet for her passions and a space for her community—women especially. In surveying the Old City’s restaurants, she felt that there were no places where local women could gather for coffee, socialize, and work. During my research she employed one assistant part-time, and numerous women were on-call to help with small tasks. Samia has numerous local regulars who stop in for breakfast on their way to work, or who sip coffee over the course of an hour or two in the middle of the afternoon. She cultivates an environment that is hers, nodding to the therapeutic nature of this endeavor, but also where people can feel connected to Acre, rather than feeling they are in any other hummus restaurant in the country. The walls are covered in a mix of prints depicting historical scenes in Acre, photos of figures that she admires, and landscape photography from around the world. A portrait of her father hangs behind the counter. On the restaurant’s ceiling she has hand-painted the ninety-nine names of God in Islamic tradition. On the tables she has printed out inspirational phrases in English and Arabic along with abstract designs. Samia registers her individual, familial, and cultural identity in place through these aesthetic treatments. Her local
customers appreciate these deeply personal but relatable aesthetic choices, some noting that paying a visit here feels more like visiting a friend than just going out for food.

Samia joins others engaged in the tourism industry, like Bassem, in asserting that Acre is a place of belonging, first, and a place of tourism second. Their work aims to articulate tourist desires for old and beautiful things with those very specific old and beautiful things that residents value, so that they might leave with an understanding of the Old City as more than another scenic stop on a regional travel itinerary:

I dream big. I dream that this will be a meeting place. I want people to see this as [being of] a different culture, and to meet us. The food here is not food, it’s culture. In Barcelona, you see flamenco and it’s not just dance, it’s culture. There’s just too many years that have gone into these things. So I want to make this a meeting place, and I want it to open minds [about our culture].

Serving food, like Bassem’s hosting of guests, becomes a matter of cultural and political education, of illustrating the distinct experiences of Palestinians living in Acre. It is important to notice that residents engage in these practices in meaningful ways that disrupt standard commodified forms of hospitality that the heritage industry has produced. Neither Samia nor Bassem do this work primarily to generate profit. Rather, their primary goal is to strategically engage in tourism work to maintain their (and their community’s) deep relations to the city. They know that if they do not do this work on their own terms, somebody else will do it on theirs.

During my fieldwork, state heritage professionals at times spoke about Old City foodways as a kind of intangible heritage that should be “promoted” and “developed.” One individual alluded to Samia directly in explaining that there should be more restaurants like hers that showcase the foods of Acre’s home kitchens. When I asked these professionals why they thought there should be more representation of so-called
“intangible heritage” in Acre, the shared answer was simply that it was currently underrepresented, and repeating an anxiety about the Old City’s “tangible heritage,” that it was at-risk of being lost if there wasn’t some kind of organized effort to preserve it. In other words, to be a good heritage site, professionals must work to preserve enough heritage—both tangible and intangible. Samia, like other residents, is skeptical of these kinds of state claims. She argues that the work the state does, or encourages developers to do, in selecting what to preserve and develop, gets in the way of resident initiatives:

You can’t build culture, and that’s what they [state authorities] are trying to do here. They want people [developers] to buy, buy, buy. But what happens in the end? What’s the project? There are local people doing small things, like me. But we don’t know what’s really going on. Maybe after ten years we’ll know what’s going on here. What’s important for me is that Acre won’t be like Jaffa. That Acre stays Acre, with all of its people.

The concern “that Acre won’t be like Jaffa,” was repeated in almost every interview I conducted with residents of the Old City since starting ethnographic research there in 2014. Residents know the Old City of Jaffa’s trajectory from being a major center of Palestinian life, to being rezoned as an artists’ colony, and finally becoming a fully commoditized tourist stop with streets of art galleries and restaurants but barely any remaining Palestinian residents. Residents’ fears of Acre becoming like Jaffa are directly related to professionals’ tendencies to decouple the materiality of the Old City—what they call its tangible heritage—from the practices that residents engage in to make meaningful lives—what they call its intangible heritage. Samia and others insist that for residents these two things are deeply connected. The materiality of the Old City is special because of the ways people carry out their lives within it. And the ways people carry out their lives are special because of the place they inhabit.
Surface Survey: Bread and Belonging

By far the most repeated surface intervention recorded during the surface survey of the Old City was the deposition and collection of bread. It is a practice caught up in the friction between heritage professionals and residents, where heritage professionals view the practice as untidy and detrimental to creating a pleasing aesthetic. One afternoon while walking with an acquaintance from the Israel Antiquities Authority to her car, we spotted an elderly woman step out of her house, cross the street, and proceed to empty a garbage bag full of stale bread rolls onto the stone paving. My acquaintance winced, put her hand to her forehead, and uttered that people here just don’t care for their city. As she drove away, I watched the neighborhood cats gather to feast on the scattered bread (see figure 5.5). The circulation of bread in ‘Akka, and in other Palestinian places (see Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2015, 322-323; 2020), is understood variously as a practice of care, reciprocity, and religious ethics. Discarding bread as trash is widely considered *haram* (forbidden by Islamic law), but the circulation of old bread in ‘Akka, by Muslims and Christians alike, is telling in the ways that it sustains relations to the Old City as a community of human and other-than-human constituents. Unlike most other kinds of material that are left out in public spaces, bread is left in hopes that it might still provide for other living beings that share the urban space.
The most common form of bread circulated in the city is known simply as khubz or khubz ʿarabi—translated as “bread” or “Arabic bread”—akin to what is widely known as pita bread in the United States. Crusty bread rolls and sliced bread also showed up occasionally in the survey. The survey of Old City surfaces indicated at least four re-occurring types of deposition and removal of bread. In one instance, bread was tied and sealed in plastic bags and either hung from a hand railing or deposited atop an electrical utilities box or on a ledge (figure 5.6). The bags usually contained two or three whole pieces of bread—those left over after having obtained fresh bread from one of the several bakeries or mini-markets in the Old City. When fully sealed in this way, the bagged bread was in every case removed by the time of the following day’s round of photographs. My interlocutors explained that bread tied up in this way was intended to be picked up by
fishermen for use as bait. Indeed, at one of the study loci situated atop the sea wall at the south end of the Old City I regularly observed fishermen using bread from plastic bags both as surface bait—tossed onto the water to attract fish to the area—and hook bait. Beyond the small commercial fishery that operates out of the Old City marina, line-and-hook fishing is a practice of cultural importance for residents. Interlocutors described fishing variously as a hobby and as a practice of belonging in ‘Akka, one of the few remaining places where Palestinians can maintain their historical connection with the Mediterranean Sea.
Related to depositing bread in sealed bags for fishermen, the survey recorded bread floating in the sea at the port and alongside the lagoon at the southwestern tip of the Old City (al-10 and al-27 on figure 5.1). In these cases, bread rolls or *khubz* were tossed onto the water’s surface whole or in large pieces. In the port locus, bread never remained in place longer than a day—it was either promptly consumed by fish or swept out to sea.
(figure 5.7). This is a source of both entertainment and surprise to diners in ‘Akka’s seaside restaurants, as fish devour in seconds the leftover bread that waiters toss into the water while clearing tables. In the lagoon, water levels regularly recede for several days, leaving just small pools in the bedrock foundations of the Crusader-era Templar fortress. Bread tossed into this area occasionally remained for up to three days at a time before being swept into the sea or consumed by fish. The latter result was the stated intention when asked of local residents. At certain times of year when the water depth remains stable and shallow, the lagoon is a spawning area and bread deposition here is understood as a way of nurturing young fish in the calm and protected waters. Some residents see a problem in the year-round deposition of bread in the lagoon, especially when water levels are low and the accumulation of bread contributes to excessive algae growth. My interlocutors explained to me that depositing bread in the water is something that matters deeply to people in their relationship to fish and the sea, and in their efforts not to discard bread as trash. Acknowledging the occasional over-accumulation of bread in the lagoon, they point first to the intentions of care underpinning people’s decision to leave bread there.
Another way that residents circulate bread is by leaving it, often loosely contained in plastic bags or cardboard flats, on elevated surfaces in the Old City. The bread in this case is either whole or torn into large chunks and is expected to be consumed by the many cats that inhabit the city’s streets, courtyards, and rooftops (figure 5.8). Residents generally do not keep cats as pets but instead view them as fellow inhabitants of the Old City. They are not understood so much as stray, but rather as neighbors. In the same sentence, residents will complain about cats finding their way into houses and stairwells while acknowledging their value as pest control and their presence as a signature feature of life in ‘Akka. Of the many small nuisances that people speak of in describing life in the stone houses of the Old City, I have never heard anyone complain of rodents. This neighborly attitude is expressed in the deposition of bread on electric boxes, atop gas
enclosures, and on ledges. At municipal trash pick-up sites where household waste is collected on a near-daily basis, bread will often be left undisturbed if deposited on a nearby ledge, and will only be swept away by trash collectors if untouched by cats for more than a few days. Bread was left on surfaces for cats in almost half of the thirty study loci, and was frequently observed in other parts of the Old City that were not documented as part of this survey. The survey also revealed a strong correlation between deposition of bread and uptake by cats, with cats appearing in most photos where bread is present on an elevated surface. Leaving bread out for cats is one of a number of acts of care that residents showed for their feline neighbors. Residents also deposit bags full of fish and chicken scraps from the previous night’s dinner on out-of-the-way surfaces that are devoured within minutes.

Figure 5.8. Bread, left separate from household trash at a neighborhood pickup site (al-19 in figure 5.1), deposited loose on a ledge for consumption by cats, January 31, 2018. (Photograph by author)
Lastly, bread was sometimes torn into morsels and left on elevated surfaces or inserted into gaps in walls left by fallen stones or eroded mortar. Neighborhood cats were occasionally observed eating these smaller pieces of bread, but the intention behind this type of deposition is for consumption by the pigeons, doves, swallows, and ducks that wander and flutter about the Old City’s alleyways and courtyards (figure 5.9). Like cats, birds are also understood to be constituent of ‘Akka. Bird sounds—the fluffing of feathers on a windowsill, chirping while perched on a power line, or cooing in an untrafficked alleyway—is a distinctive auditory quality of the Old City that sets it apart from the New City, and becomes entangled in residents’ descriptions of what makes ‘Akka special for them. In one street, known as “the alley of the swallows,” hundreds of these birds roost overnight on overhead power lines. Residents will point out the spectacular aerial maneuvers that the swallows perform over the Old City at dusk—a sight that many have admired since childhood. Though rare today, interviewees described pigeon (hamam) as a staple meat in ‘Akka several decades prior, where residents baited pigeons with bread on the roofs of Old City houses.
Figure 5.9. A laughing dove (Spilopelia senegalensis) and morsels of bread deposited on a ledge (al-10 in figure 5.1) intended for consumption by birds, January 30, 2018. (Photograph by author)

Paired with ethnographic observations, images of bread on Old City surfaces offer insights into local ethics of relationality and care among residents of the Old City. The circulation of bread in the Old City across species reflects an important practice of belonging to the city alongside avian, feline, and aquatic companions. Not all bread deposited on the city’s surfaces is taken up by fishermen, fish, cats, or birds. Garbage collectors will sweep it up after being left for several days. Bread is caught up in a gifting relationship among ‘Akka’s residents and its other-than-human constituents without a guarantee of receipt (see also Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2020 for discussion of bread circulation in non-coastal Palestinian cities). In interviews, state heritage professionals, unprompted, described bread in the streets as trash, and as a primary challenge to showcasing their imagined “authentic” Acre. It is not understood as such by local
residents. Recirculating bread is a principle of care for the wellbeing of all the city’s inhabitants and is a signature gesture of being in community in this place.

**Ahmad: Conserving as Care**

It should be clear that residents engage in a diverse set of relational practices that sustain the Old City as a home place that, in Acre, falls outside the purview of professional heritage work. In the classical framework of Mary Douglas, Bassem and Samia’s treatments to their properties, as well as ephemeral adornments and bread depositions, become matter out of place in the view of heritage professionals—“[…] that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained” (Douglas 1966, 55). They are viewed as interferences, or even threats, in the preservation of Acre’s Ottoman and Crusader heritage. They become a source of deep anxiety for professionals, who view these practices as detrimental to good heritage work. Further, if residents are engaging in these practices, it suggests to professionals that residents do not care about the structural integrity of the historic structures they inhabit and work out of. One conservation professional in the IAA explained it to me this way:

> The people, most of the people that live in most of the buildings here see their buildings as run-down shacks and that’s how they feel. We see, professional eyes or tourists, what we see is beautiful buildings. They, having to deal with part of their building falling down, and having to adapt them to modern [pause] they see them as run-down shacks. That’s a very generalized idea, but that’s how they view their buildings. So a lot of the work that needs to be done here is to raise their awareness to the importance of the buildings that they themselves live in. And then we can start to talk to them about, ‘Okay, so now you understand your building is important, let’s try and see how to work on it so it’ll still exist.’

This characterization of resident attitudes towards the Old City positions most as seeing Old City buildings as obstacles to living a good life. While this expert qualifies this as a
generalization, it is undergirded by an assumption—which drives heritage work in Acre—that residents do not appreciate the importance of the place in which they live. This allows the expert to make claim that residents’ efforts to keep their homes habitable (“modern,” in this take) inhibits the goal of conservation, which is to keep—or make—them “beautiful.” This logic does not originate locally, but rather is part of a transnational discourse of what constitutes heritage (things judged upon monumentality, age, and aesthetic) and what about that needs preserving (Smith 2006, 11).

Of course, residents revere the Old City. This is not a reverence based on the existence of a particular style of architecture that sometimes gets hidden under patches of concrete repairs or behind lines of drying laundry. Residents revere the city walls and stone buildings that constitute the bulk of the Old City because it is felt to be a place of socio-cultural distinction and safety. This is the place where families came and found refuge and rebuilt lives. This is the place where people, even those who resettled elsewhere in the years after 1948, come back to shop in its market, to worship in its mosques and churches, to socialize in its coffeeshops, and to spend leisure time with their families. Residents do have a different relationship with stone buildings than heritage professionals working for the municipality, the Israel Antiquities Authority, or the Old Acre Development Company. They relate to the stones of the Old City as bearers of memory, as signals of identity, and as buttresses against domination.

Ahmad is a stonemason, conservator, and sculptor. Born in the Old City, his father’s family came from a Galilean village that was depopulated and destroyed after 1948, and his mother’s family was from Acre. As the family grew, his parents decided to leave their small home when Ahmad was six years old, and moved to a larger house in
the New City. Nonetheless, he has spent most days of his life in the Old City and still knows it as home. He explains:

Ever since I was a kid, I was in love with Acre. Acre. Ever since I was born here. Because you know, you are attached and you are in love with the city or village where you’re from, and it doesn’t matter where. For me, it’s a special place. It’s my hometown, it means everything for me. As identity. As culture. As everything. It feels like a stab to the heart when I ride my bike out of those city walls.

Through his young adulthood, he worked in building renovations and developed a curiosity around stonework. He was struck that so little seemed to be known about the specific sandstone architecture of the Old City. As a protected site, the Old Acre Development Company and the Municipality consulted with conservators from the Israel Antiquities Authority, but these individuals were often trained internationally, typically in Italy, and were more knowledgeable about Jerusalem, Caesarea, and other focal sites of heritage tourism in the country. The IAA’s International Conservation Center was established in the Old City in the mid-2000s with a broad mission to provide technical training and research opportunities to practitioners in Israel and from abroad. It was there that Ahmad completed a practical course in conservation, gaining knowledge of standards in the field, and started working on stone conservation projects throughout the country.

He wanted to practice in Acre, though, and craved to know more about the particular qualities of the city’s kurkar (local sandstone) construction and its builders’ thought processes. He also saw an urgency for developing local knowledge about the conservation of stone buildings given that methods of shoring of Old City structures introduced under British and Israeli rule are now resulting in accelerated deterioration of those structures. He wanted to do research:

Forever, I had a really hard time, I couldn’t find any stone carver to learn from and share my passion for arches and walls and architectural elements. And I
wanted to become a stone carver because it’s unique work, done by people making stone that has no image and making something out of it. We’re talking about a lack of craftsmen in the last hundred years in Acre, ever since other construction technologies took over… concrete and other construction methods, so there’s no stone carvers or stone masons left to learn from. So I made it by myself. I learned by myself, in each conservation project I was involved in, getting to know more about construction methods here, knowing more about the stones, knowing more about the mortars. Since forever our country here has been very rich with different cultures who brought different scientific views to construction, and that got lost.

And so, in 2017 he established his own workshop, where he practices manual stone carving, experiments with mortar preparations, and offers short courses for school groups and tourists and multi-day courses for amateur stone workers. While grateful for the connections he made through the Israel Antiquities Authority and its conservation center in Acre, he saw a total disjuncture between their mandate and the needs of the local community. He felt that the conservation center made minimal effort to engage the local community, focusing rather on training professionals from other parts of the country and treating the Old City as a kind of laboratory.

He also saw some of the technical conservation methods advocated for by the IAA, which embraces a notion of universal best practices, as inappropriate and ineffective in the local context of Acre. For the IAA, what was most important was to understand the generalizable fact that kurkar deteriorates when assembled using concrete mortar, and to advance a generalizable solution, to encourage residents and developers to use lime mortar, rather than concrete, in restoring and conserving Old City structures. For Ahmad, the most important thing is to understand what was best for the building in the eyes of its original builder, because this is what allowed it to stand for 200 or more years. This requires giving a building individualized attention, and for the conserver to develop
a relationship to that building. Ahmad uses conservation to understand the city, and shows fellow residents how to use close observation to learn from past architects, engineers, and stoneworkers to recuperate and reclaim local knowledge about how to care for it. His instruction is not prescriptive, but inquisitive. Before showing his numerous local proteges how to go about conserving a stone wall, he spends time with them inspecting any traces of original mortars, thinking about how these have held up to the elements, and comparing stones held together with original mortars to those help up by more recently replaced mortars, whether lime or concrete.

Lime mortar is known as a sacrificial element in stone masonry. It is intended to weather and degrade over time, requiring periodic repointing (removal and replacement). But not all lime mortars are equally effective. Consistently, Ahmad finds the commercially available lime used by the Old Acre Development Company, the IAA, and the state housing authority inferior to the original mortars used by the city’s builders. He showed me the numerous kinds of original mortars in the walls of his workshop, some of which I had assumed was concrete. He explained that these were made from lime fired at lower temperatures than the commercially available products used today, leaving impurities that ultimately strengthen the mortar, and were mixed with local earth and charcoal. He demonstrated their qualities by spraying water on a patch of old charcoal-blended mortar and onto a patch of commercial lime mortar blended with sand temper, a standard mix used by the IAA and others, that I had applied while working with him earlier in the week. After ten minutes, the charcoal mortar was dry to the touch, while the sand-blended mortar remained damp. “This room floods in the winter,” he explained, “see how they knew what to do?”
He saw how colonial governance tried to replace traditional methods of care for buildings, pointing to the abundant use of concrete by British and early Israeli administrations. Unlike softer lime mortars, concrete binds itself to kurkar, and when it fractures, it carries fractures through to the stone. If used in abundance, it also diminishes kurkar’s ability to breathe, trapping moisture and salts from the sea breeze in the stone. The result of this process is apparent all along Acre’s seawalls which the British reinforced with concrete mortar. There, the kurkar blocks have eroded to half their original volume while the concrete mortar projects outwards as a reminder of the block’s original dimensions. Removing concrete also poses major problems, because to remove it requires the mason to remove up to two centimeters of the stone that it is adhered to. As we walked the Old City, he would point out other interventions that have harmed the structural integrity of certain buildings. Iron hooks jut out from the exterior of the building housing his workshop where electric cables were suspended before the 1990s. In some parts of the Old City, the municipality still uses these hooks to hold up utility cables. These pegs expand and contract at different rates than the surrounding stone and over time cause fractures. We pass another building that has recently been redeveloped as a vacation rental, where the developer used commercial lime preparation without adding any temper. The result is clean, striking white lines separating the kurkar blocks, but as Ahmad runs his finger along it crumbles to dust.

He explains that he once worked a job for an interior designer in an Old City building who similarly wanted the clean, white aesthetic of commercial lime mortars. He quit the job out of concern for his health given the fine dust generated from working with the material and was sure that the project would ultimately fail as the mortar would
endlessly shed dust on the interior and its occupants. “This is not conservation,” he explained of most developers’ projects in the Old City, “This is damage. This is interference.”

Ahmad’s work shows that the maintenance of the Old City’s stone structures is very much a part of residents’ heritage concerns. Despite state professionals’ claims that residents lack appreciation for the city’s stone buildings, Ahmad has a following among residents keen to learn methods of preservation through his approach based on focused local research. On days that I spent with Ahmad, a group of five or so boys would come by as soon as school let out to practice stone carving and mortar work. He has older apprentices, too, some of whom work in construction and others who are pursuing college certificates in conservation. In addition to the paid workshops that he hosts for tourists, school groups, and visiting students, he hosts workshops for Old City social clubs free of charge. Where residents shrug at the mention of the IAA conservation office in the Old City in response to their prescriptive approach to conservation, they praise Ahmad for meeting them at their level.

**Surface Survey: Shoring Up the Old City**

A key challenge that Ahmad faces, along with many residents who wish to undertake conservation projects that ensure the long-term stability of their structures, is the financial cost of acquiring and using suitable building materials. A bag of concrete costs about one tenth of the cost of lime mortar at a hardware store, and about a fifth the cost of concrete-lime mortar preparations that many developers use. State narratives, circulated by the Old Acre Development Company, the Akko municipality, and the Israel
Antiquities Authority, position conservation as a central concern for (a) the ability to successfully develop the city as a tourist attraction, and (b) the preservation of historic authenticity in representing the Old City’s Crusader and Ottoman past. Conservation is also framed as an urgent intervention amidst a crisis of “illegal construction,” inappropriate building maintenance, and apparent disrespect for the Old City’s historic architecture. And yet, the state provides no assistance for residents to maintain the structures they inhabit in ways that will ensure their long-term viability.

Here, I focus on what I call the “shored up” structures of the Old City, ones that state narratives frame as maltreated. By “shored up” I mean buildings and surfaces that are supported or reinforced by improvised or hasty means to extend their usability and stability. The following discussion is based on a walking survey that preceded the systematic surface survey, so these examples do not correspond to specific loci. I documented residents’ improvised mortar work, structural reinforcements, and building additions that were ultimately done in efforts to secure their structures and improve the quality of life within them. I use the phrase “shored up” to frame the quality of surfaces and structures in the way they were described to me by resident interlocutors. These resident interventions seldom, if ever, adhere to the mechanical or aesthetic standards set by a local expert like Ahmad or by state professionals from the Conservation Department of the Antiquities Authority. Residents would prefer to use materials that are more appropriate to kurkar construction but shore up their city nonetheless in the absence of robust programmatic solutions to support more comprehensive stabilizations or improvements.
Some of the shoring up work that I observed was directly connected to neglect by the municipality or the state housing authority. Such instances included patching eroded gaps around manhole covers in the stone streets to prevent people from tripping or filling weakened arched windows of state-owned houses with cinderblocks (figure 5.10). Structural collapse is not unusual in the Old City. Bassem has a balcony with a sea view that is the envy of the wealthiest developers. The balcony, however, is the result of a partial structural collapse that occurred in his childhood. Bassem’s father tried repeatedly to convince the state housing authority to repair cracks in the house’s sea-facing rooms, which were battered every winter by briny sea winds. After part of the outside-facing wall tumbled, his father was left with no choice but to dismantle what remained of the two front rooms, leaving behind the present balcony. Two collapses in 2018 occurred in state-owned structures (Akkanet 2018a, 2018b). The mansion pictured in figure 5.10 faces into a khan (caravanserai) and is subdivided into units housing multiple families. The upper floor was not inhabited at the time of collapse, reportedly because its former residents were aware of problems regarding its structural integrity. Years ago, they filled its outside facing windows with cinderblocks in hopes of reinforcing the wall, but this proved insufficient in the long-term. The lower floor of the structure is still inhabited by a family. A few months later, the wall of a building that now houses a seaside restaurant collapsed into a public street. The collapse caused panic due to the numerous gas cannisters and electrical lines in and around the restaurant, and because another restaurant was housed on the second floor above the collapse. Nobody was physically harmed in the collapse, but the collapse into a major thoroughfare caused widespread alarm about the possibility of future collapses of state-owned (and state-neglected) buildings.
Other examples of shoring up served to make historic structures more habitable for their residents (figure 5.11). Mounting electrical units, such as lights or air conditioning units, on stone walls is a notoriously difficult process of routing hoses between stones and through mortar without compromising structural stability. In my observations, I saw a technique that avoided these complications by creating a sacrificial layer of plaster or concrete to cover the stone wall and embedding the utility hoses in layer. The sacrificial layer can be drilled into, removed, and replaced while minimizing damage to the stone walls. Shoring up structures for livability also means installing lifts on building exteriors for residents with reduced mobility. Most houses in the Old City have steps leading up to living quarters that overlook a central courtyard. While officially illegal without obtaining permission from the conservation committee of the IAA, more and more multi-generational residences are installing these on the exteriors of their buildings to allow for elderly family members to stay in place.

Shoring up often involves the use of materials and techniques that can only support buildings in the short-term. Of course, applying concrete to kurkar is known to damage it after several years. However, it is often the only compound that residents can afford to do critical structural repairs. Residents also see the abundance of concrete used by the state during the Mandate and early Israeli periods throughout the Old City, and that it was during that time that knowledge of traditional mortar preparations was lost. Any wanderer in the commercial centers of Haifa or Tel Aviv will also see that concrete was the construction material par excellence of the early Israeli state. Doing what they can with the resources they have at hand, they note that they are certainly not the only party to blame for the degradation of kurkar structures. Indeed, since the years of the
British Mandate, concrete has figured prominently in both Palestinian and Zionist imaginaries for the power it offers to create, repair, and escape domination (Ben Zeev 2019; Rubaii 2016). For Palestinians in Acre, concrete’s detrimental qualities come second to the possibilities it breeds to remain in place, at least for a while longer. The prevalence of concrete throughout the Old City must be understood in this context.

Figure 5.10. Resident interventions in shoring up state property. Above, tenants have filled the arched windows of a state-owned property with cinder blocks to prop up a weak roof. The roof and triple archways nonetheless collapsed in 2018. Below, a shop keeper has patched gaps around a municipal manhole cover that had become tripping hazards. (Photographs by author)

Figure 5.11. On the left, installing lights and air conditioning units is facilitated by hiding utility hoses in a sacrificial concrete layer on the stone wall. These crevices are later sealed and painted over. On the right, an exterior lift is installed adjacent to an upper-level apartment’s stairwell. (Photographs by author)
Rania: Taking Back Tourism

With tourism being the main source of income in the Old City, living and working there requires learning to live with the ebb and flow of tourists. Tourism is more or less predictable according to seasons and holidays but can abruptly collapse at any time as a result of regional armed conflict. While conducting fieldwork in 2014, tourism in Acre and throughout the region collapsed as Israel launched an offensive on Gaza. Tourists fled in the first days of the conflict, and soon international airlines halted flights to Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. Suddenly, in mid-summer, I was the lone international visitor in restaurants, shops, and hostels. Acre experienced much more prolonged tourism slumps during the Second Intifada and after the terrorist attacks of September 11. Memories of these times, as well as periodic episodes of conflict since, make folks weary long-term investments in developing formal business ventures. Rather, they have learned important strategies for engaging in tourism work, namely flexibility and adaptability.

For more than ten years, rarely missing a day, Rania\(^9\) has sold juice and souvenirs in a courtyard outside of her house. During holidays and on busy Saturdays, she also sends one of her sons out in the streets to operate a snack cart. There are dozens of small enterprises like hers throughout the Old City that shape shift throughout the year according to the family’s financial need and tourist demand. As with Rania, they are generally run by a more senior member of a Palestinian family, someone who has witnessed the ups and downs of tourism and is rooted in the political struggle of staying in place in the Old City. Women tend to lead these businesses, though not as a rule. Some

---

\(^9\) Rania is a composite figure of two individuals with similar experiences who consented to participating in this research but did not wish to be audio-recorded or identified by name.
do this work to supplement household income, while others are widows and sometimes the primary financial support for the family’s younger generations.

Rania spoke frequently about the need to work every day for fear of something happening that would cause tourism to collapse. Her adult sons worked in manual labor and construction and her daughter took courses in interior design, occasionally picking up a job in this field. Her husband passed away several years ago, leaving Rania to ensure the wellbeing of the family. When a potential customer walks by, she listens for auditory queues as to whether to engage in Hebrew or English, stands, and gestures towards the baskets of fruit. On a quiet weekday she may not have more than a few customers all day long, but is sure to be at her station all day nonetheless. She adjusts her prices from day to day based on demand, and on a busy Saturday will easily make more than her son would in two days of construction labor.

She would rather spend days with her young grandchildren, but she doesn’t think of work as an excessive hardship. Working at home in the Old City means that friends, neighbors, and family members are endlessly stopping by for coffee and conversation. It is also deeply comforting to Rania to be able to live and work in the Old City. She was born and raised there, and while she inherited the tenancy of her current house from her late husband, her childhood home is still in the family and not far away. When tourists ask for directions to a popular restaurant owned by a non-resident Jewish Israeli, she tells them that it is right in front of her childhood house, and to wave hello to her sister. With a kettle and stack of plastic chairs always at the ready for hosting, friends and family stop in for fifteen minutes at a time to catch up on each other’s news. The house where she and the families of two of her children live encompasses the lower two floors of a four-
story stone building. The exterior of the house is covered in a layer of beige plaster just as it has been since the early twentieth century, according to archival photos. A satellite dish, laundry lines, and an air conditioning unit hang outside the central window on the second floor, marking the building as residential. It stands in stark contrast to a similarly sized house a few doors down, recently purchased by a non-local Jewish Israeli who intends to use it as a weekend home and vacation rental. The new owner has stripped the exterior to bare stone and bright white mortar, and freshly painted all of the window trim in pale blue.

Rania, like many residents operating small or informal enterprises in the Old City, makes numerous important statements about heritage in her day-to-day acts. Though her work is not her passion, she shows a path to living with the precarity of tourism. Work is a means of staying close to the place and people most dear to her. By keeping her investment to a minimum—a sturdy manual juice press and a daily crate of citrus fruits—she brings in income without having to take out loans to renovate rooms for a guesthouse or purchase kitchen equipment for a restaurant. She is not interested in accumulating capital for reasons other than to supplement her household income that supports herself and her family, and thus has no plans to scale her business. Through these acts, she makes obvious to visitors the contrast between the boutique experiences that developers are trying to promote and the lived relations that residents have to each other and to the city. She signals that tourists are welcome and that this place has special meaning, but that tourists should consider why it is meaningful beyond what is represented to them by the state and developers. Rania, of course, is not alone in this.
Dozens of residents work around or near their homes selling mass-produced toys for visiting families, or push ice cream carts, or set up snack stands on the weekend. None expect to build a fortune on this work but view it instead as a means of getting by with and around kin—family, friends, and home. It is a source of pride that they are the people operationalizing tourism because it makes clear to visitors their close relationship to this place.

**Surface Survey: Static Loci**

The sociality of residents’ informal work in the Old City does face challenges from state visions of urban space. Two loci in the surface survey showed little or no change over the course of the study period. It is worth considering how the histories of these now static spaces have affected people’s day-to-day interactions with them, or lack thereof. The first locus in question was the northeastern quarter of Khan esh-Shawarda, a restored Ottoman-era caravanserai now home to several restaurants and coffee shops. The second was a plaza associated with the entrance to a modern youth hostel. In both places, the only material interventions on their surfaces were occasional appearances of waste—typically empty chip bags, coffee cups, and water bottles—which according to a temporal analysis of the survey data are most likely attributable to weekend tourists.

Khan esh-Shawarda gets considerable foot traffic, being a stopping point for residents and tourists alike in their leisure and work pursuits. The *khan*, for the latter half of the twentieth century, was an open parking area surrounded by workshops and a single coffee shop. The *khan* was closed off to parking in the early 2000s and the IAA undertook a major renovation and conservation project to make the *khan* amenable to
tourism development. IAA conservators reinforced the stone arcade around the khan’s perimeter, and a contractor repaved the asphalt courtyard with brick. A single boat-building workshop remains in the khan, whereas the other stalls are now occupied by restaurants and cafés. While residents and tourists frequent these establishments in the evenings, their use is mostly limited to their indoor seating and a small strip of shaded outdoor patio space. Most days and nights, the open square that was originally used for watering pack animals and parking carts and later vehicles is empty. In the photo survey, there are few material markers of dynamic relations with the locus (figure 5.12).

Figure 5.12. Northeast quarter of Khan esh-Shawarda in foreground (al-25 in figure 5.1). Representative photos (clockwise) from February 5, February 12, February 19, and March 4, 2018. (Photographs by author)

The youth hostel was opened in 2011 on a former open area at the north end of the Old City. The front plaza and driveway of the hostel face the north entry of the Old City, away from the residential and commercial zones to the south. Residents explained
that the land upon which it sits once offered stunning views looking out towards the White Market and Mosque of al-Jazzar, and was also a much-used parking area. Whenever the subject of the youth hostel came up with my interlocutors, whether residents or heritage professionals, all characterized it in some way as upsetting their sense of place in the Old City. Its construction created a material barricade between the open area at the north end of the Old City and the residential/commercial area to the south. This is in keeping with the Old Acre Development Company’s vision for the Old City, which foresees creating a northern tourism “anchor,” a space designated foremost for tourist facilities (Harari 2012). Aside from the occasional guest walking in or out of the hostel, it was typically deserted and materially static across the temporal range of the photo survey.

Materially, these two places are the most heavily touched by state-sponsored tourism projects among the survey loci. The khan’s renovation and the hostel’s construction were both part of a Ministry of Tourism master plan for the Old City still undergoing implementation. The transformations of the last fifteen years have severed formerly communal relations with these places. The multi-generational and communal patterns of relationality traceable in the surfaces of other parts of the Old City no longer exist in these two places. Despite being ostensibly public, these static loci reveal how state heritage management disciplines residents’ use of space in their city in order to extract capital from it.
**Resisting and Reclaiming Heritage in Acre**

In Palestinian national discourse, Acre is emblematic of Palestinians’ historical and contemporary relationship to the Mediterranean Sea, access to which was dramatically reduced after the 1948 War. To talk about Palestinians maintaining their belonging in that place is a story of *sumud*, or steadfastness. Shehadeh (1982) describes *sumud* as a form of non-violent resistance to occupation and land loss that involves Palestinians taking up the space that they know to be theirs and refusing to participate in practices that sustain or normalize occupation. With outside investors buying up former state property at an unprecedented rate, it is no surprise that Palestinian residents of Acre see state-driven heritage tourism development as a continuation of Israel’s appropriation of Palestinian space. At the center of this state heritage work is the use of an authorizing heritage discourse, shared by heritage authorities and professionals worldwide, that sanctions the valuation of heritage on grounds of monumentality and time depth, and views preservation (read: commodification) as the means of making that value legible (read: extractable) (Smith 2006). In this chapter I have argued that such a stance ignores the archaeological principle of site formation processes by failing to see how these processes are ongoing and generative of life. The impetus to see heritage as something from the past to preserve has harmful effects in a place like Acre, where heritage might more usefully be understood as an ongoing process of inheritance and ethical responsibility to a place that offered displaced Palestinians a sense of spatial and cultural sovereignty since the loss of historic Palestine in 1948 (see also Rego 2016). Rather than seeing contemporary habitation and use of old cities as disruptive to authenticity or alternatively as part of a site’s afterlife, archaeologists might rather turn their honed
methods of survey to document the creative ways that contemporary communities continue to animate “old places,” and act as allies and facilitators to these communities in their resistance to gentrification and displacement.

In May 2021, in the wake of state-sanctioned evictions of Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah (East Jerusalem), Palestinian protestors in Acre revolted against encroachment by the state and outside investors in a place they know foremost as home. Led largely by youth, demonstrators articulated their local experiences of racism and marginalization in Acre to a broader Palestinian experience of ongoing colonization and displacement. During the demonstrations, several buildings occupied by non-resident businesses and organizations (including the above-mentioned youth hostel, vacation rental properties, several restaurants, and an office of the Israel Antiquities Authority) were set ablaze or otherwise vandalized. While these more destructive acts of revolt were not believed to have been led by ‘Akkawi residents (who in the following days took to the streets en masse to literally mop and clean the Old City), these acts were clearly tied to an understanding of non-local development—in this case state heritage projects and tourism development—as intrusive and oppressive. For years, outside real estate purveyors openly called the Old City an “unpolished diamond” whose charm they would help to reveal by purchasing and renovating properties that would never again be accessible to Palestinian residents as homes. If outsiders view the Old City’s pastness as a route to commodification, residents invoke its oldness—its capacity to endure—as a route to reclamation. The protests of May 2021 loudly proclaimed that Acre is not a commodity. And for whatever of Acre has been commoditized, it is worth recalling that the commodified life of a thing is not a terminal phase, but part of a process of unending
cultural redefinition (Kopytoff 1986). Residents have much to gain in reclaiming the Old City for the sake of community life.

The findings of this analysis echo Shannon Lee Dawdy’s (2016, 45) research on the affect and aura of patina in post-Katrina New Orleans: “[…] historic places laminated with layers of social life rather than those brushed by essentialized myth are what residents value—those places where patina accrues with repetitive handling.” Relationships in Acre are registered in the textured and dynamic surfaces of the Old City. These surface engagements index people’s histories of attachment to the Old City and their promise to maintain it as a lived place. State conservation work resulting in tidily conserved façades of Ottoman mansions-turned-boutique hotels, or the monumental and authoritatively interpreted Crusader halls that lie beneath the Old City, create disruptions in residents’ urban relationality and instate a pattern of alienation (see also Fuhrmann Naaman, Nitzan-Shiftan, and Kallus 2018). Residents readily identify the state heritage project, which legitimizes itself under the auspices of preserving a place of “universal value,” as a colonial project. Following residents’ everyday engagements with the past and the materiality of the Old City reveals heritage as it is practiced and legitimated on a daily basis, allowing us to decouple heritage from the logic of statecraft. In critiquing the state heritage project in Acre, a friend pointed me to the poem *Diary of a Palestinian Wound*, by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1987), whose village al-Birweh on the outskirts of Acre was depopulated by Israeli forces in 1948. In the poem, Darwish refuses an archaeological vision of the land that can be known only by examining its stratigraphic depth; rather, the Palestinian narrator knows their land through a lifetime of intimate engagement and care:
[...] Ah, my intractable wound!
My country is not a suitcase
I am not a traveler
I am the lover and the land is the beloved.

The archaeologist is busy analyzing stones.
In the rubble of legends he searches for his own eyes
to show
that I am a sightless vagrant on the road
with not one letter in civilization's alphabet.
Meanwhile in my own time I plant my trees.
I sing of my love. [...] (1987, 202)

In lieu of conservation or management, an anthropological perspective informed
by local knowledge and ethics reveals heritage work that is already in process, that might
better be described as care—distinct from conservation—of a used, lived-in, and beloved
landscape. Care, as practiced by many residents, more often involves leaving stale bread
on electric boxes or tied in plastic bags. It includes combining the historical aesthetic of
Ottoman and Crusader structures with playful objets d’art: wedding decorations,
discarded paintings, and framed pictures of Spider-Man. For residents of Acre, heritage
means caring for and maintaining relations with the walls, streets, and animals that
constitute home. In moving towards a heritage ethic that denormalizes the state’s
fascination with constructing a commodifiable space-time, Acre’s residents construct
their present and future upon the surfaces of an accumulated past. The accumulation of
matter over time, resulting in a warren of alleyways, a lagoon in the foundations of a
Crusader castle, and old stone walls, creates a platform of relationality that, counter to the
state project, does not obligate one to share in the memory of a particular time or place,
but rather nurtures connections forged over time that shape the conditions of livability.
CHAPTER 6
FROM PRESERVATION TO CARE: SEEING HERITAGE IN DIFFERENT PLACES

Historically, state heritage work around the world has often depended on dismantling community intimacy with places that the state deems central to national historical narrative (see Herzfeld in Byrne 2011). In this research, I have examined how this work of alienation and erasure extends to places of marginal significance to national narrative, producing places that are standard and commodifiable—picturesque, old, stone cityscapes. State heritage, as a project of value extraction, has the capacity for legitimizing harm towards communities inhabiting old places. And yet, I have also shown that the marginalized residents of Rhodes and Acre continue to create possibilities for the quotidian amidst the rearrangement of their home cities—conditions for everyday social and economic possibility. In this chapter I draw out Rhodian and ‘Akkawi practices that shake off the standards of state heritage work and recreate what it means to live in old places in a time of intense commodification that threatens communities’ relations to place. I return to a definition of heritage that I introduced in Chapter 1 that echoes Harrison (2015, 28) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995, 369): as relational practices among people and things that make sense of the present and assemble the future by way of reference to the past. I discuss how non-standard ways of engaging with old places does the work of heritage for the people who live there and possible implications for the professionalization of heritage.

Few of my interlocutors ever described these non-standard practices in terms of heritage. The field of critical heritage studies emerged largely in recognition of a
distinction between “official”—state-recognized—and “unofficial”—popular, everyday, and often subversive—heritage (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000; Harrison 2010, 2013). While my analysis depends on a recognition of heritage beyond the official, I hesitate to call most resident practices unofficial heritage because officialdom is not the metric upon which I am evaluating these practices. Instead, I suggest these are better thought of as alternative formations of heritage. The work is certainly unofficial in the eyes of the state, but importantly, residents recognize it as more legitimate than state (“official”) heritage. The practices I discuss below embody a sense of heritage oriented foremost towards justice, care, and livability. Recognizing these practices as alternative emphasizes the possibility of alternative futures—that the future envisioned in state heritage projects is not the only or best option. Residents of Acre and Rhodes engage in these practices as a reclamation of everyday life from the grasps of state heritage regimes.

Rhodes and Acre, or almost any “old city” for that matter, might look considerably different if the contemporary process of place formation was guided by the hands of people who know these places most intimately—people who call them (or historically have called them) home. My discussion below examines everyday practices that do the work of heritage—of making sense of life in the present with recourse to the past—but that recapture the possibility for a good life by way of distance from the language and practices of state heritage. The intent of this chapter is to move beyond the porous boundaries of heritage (official or unofficial) as experienced in Acre and Rhodes and to speculate what a more diverse, de-standardized, and un-managed understanding of heritage might lend to the future of old places. This is not a rejection of all things that heritage professionals do, but an exploration of what else heritage might be.
Heritage professionals that I engaged with in Rhodes and Acre, including tourism developers and state heritage officials, defined heritage through a preservationist lens, that is, focusing on the aesthetic and structural integrity of historical buildings in relation to a past time. For staff of the Archaeological Service in Rhodes, heritage is located in buildings that are at risk of deterioration or collapse if not adequately controlled and protected, something that had become difficult under austerity conditions. This caused substantial anxiety among staff during my fieldwork. Control by closure of formerly accessible spaces in Old Town was not the solution they desired but was understood to be necessary to protect heritage and fulfil their roles as stewards of heritage in Old Town. In Acre, developers and state officials viewed heritage as a set of values primarily associated with buildings. The IAA maintains an inventory of every building in Acre and each is assigned a letter grade from aleph (א) to dalet (ד) in the Hebrew alphabet. An aleph building is deemed to have high heritage value for its aesthetic, structural, and unique character, and a dalet building is regarded as having low value. These values were assigned by IAA heritage professionals, and community input was not integral to this evaluation. With the opening of the Old City property market, developers translate these heritage values into commodity values, whereby higher heritage value buildings are expected to generate higher revenue as vacation rentals. One retired IAA engineer regretted this system of evaluation completely, admitting that it had made residents deeply skeptical of the IAA and that it created a distorted narrative of Old City heritage that professionals still adhered to. Assuming the ability to assess the significance of a place is not unique to Israeli heritage professionals. Rather, it is a problem facing the global field of heritage management, which has not fully embraced the notion that
preservationists, archaeologists, and planners are not always best equipped to assess the value of a place. Addressing the North American field of cultural resource management, heritage scholar Elizabeth Chilton (2012, 226) echoes this critique:

> Despite the changes in archaeological theory and practice over the past 40 years, most archaeologists are still not very good at acknowledging that the ‘significance’ of an archaeological site [...] is context-dependent and non-material. There may be a variety of stakeholders or ‘memory communities’ for whom a site might be considered to be significant.

Most of the resident interlocutors that I interacted with would agree that keeping buildings from collapsing is an important part of preserving social life in an historic city. These are the structures in which people build lives with their families, socialize, work, and commemorate. However, what became clear from their narratives and from observations of the city’s surfaces was that preservation—the bulk of what heritage professionals are concerned with in these cities—is but one of many practices that constitute heritage practice. Defining heritage as primarily the preservation of things from the past renders other treatments of old things as anti-heritage and consolidates power among those who advocate for preservation. Many of the professionals that I encountered in Rhodes and Acre were trained in the same small number of technical programs, in which heritage was a problem of the integrity of things, and they learned to respond to this problem formulaically. In their view, applying standard conservation practices approved by national and international heritage bodies is a solution to the problem of heritage. Often, such preservation practices actively impeded residents’ livability and relations to place. Preservation conducted by tourism developers seldom accounts for generational residency patterns, the unsettled history and future of property ownership by Rhodian Turks and Jews or Palestinian refugees, or other resident concerns and
aspirations, and therefore contributes to resident alienation and social death in certain parts of Rhodes and Acre. Preservation is but one component of heritage work if heritage is to be defined, in part, as creating relationships and possibilities for the present and future. This observation is not a critique of expertise writ large, but rather is a critique of what many heritage experts claim to be experts of. Often, urban preservation ends up being about stripping the patina of social life, about setting old things on the trajectory of resources in a commodity chain. This pattern of commodification-by-preservation is not, however, hegemonic and Rhodian and ‘Akkawi residents meet it with resistance.

Accounting for this resistance and incorporating into ways of thinking about social justice-centered heritage involves foregrounding what C. Nadia Seremetakis calls the uninheritable (Seremetakis 2019, 64). In an exhibition that she coordinated in the Peloponnesian city of Kalamata in commemoration of the 1986 earthquake, residents brought together material elements that they deemed important to individual and collective memories. Seremetakis argues that the exhibit was not an aestheticization of these fragments, but rather a public recognition of what residents were already up to, reassembling the memorial fragments of their place, an interface between theory and practice. What came together was an assemblage that she terms the uninheritable, the everyday sense of place that could never be sensed through official representations of heritage preoccupied with classical antiquity or European futures. The exhibit did what monumental reconstruction and official memorialization could not, showing that “[…]the built environment has to become more of a living membrane and empathic skin upon which citizens can write and capture the flux, immediacy and indeterminacy of everyday life” (Seremetakis 2019, 69). The uninheritable is that affective stuff—memories,
narratives, adored places and objects, and practices caught up in identity-work—which cannot fully be passed on in representational form, but rather must be sensed through everyday relational attachments. It is the stuff that states, historically, are unlikely to honor, but are expert at co-opting and commodifying or suppressing entirely.

All of this means that there is considerable room for reclaiming heritage—in the sense of everyday relations—from preservationism. In this chapter, I re-visit some of the practices that I described in chapters 4 and 5 as embodying heritage that resists dispossession in the present and creates possibilities for just futures. It is a matter of community choice whether to call this heritage at all. I regard these practices as alternative formations of heritage. While understood locally as practices of everyday life, they encompass qualities that scholars would characterize as heritage—as the work of making meaning in the present with reference to the past. They are alternatives to the prevailing local discourse of heritage so closely associated with the state, but certainly not less dominant. These everyday practices are the enactment of organizing principles of life for those who inhabit these old cities. This framing recognizes residents’ practices not only as different from heritage norms established by the state in both case studies, but as departures and legitimate alternatives, with possibilities of and for heritage beyond the normative. Residents and local workers in Rhodes and Acre engage every day in practices that are uninheritable not by way of conserving painted ceilings or repointing mortar or installing interpretive panels—though these do feature from time to time—but by crafting relationships with each other, with place, and with pasts according to specific social, economic, and political needs. Recognizing these practices as heritage is not a matter of suggesting that they represent an ideal formation of social justice-oriented
heritage, nor that the state should incorporate them in their commodification of the old city. Rather, it is to see how alternative formations of heritage sustain community life in ways outside of the state’s operationalization of heritage.

Pathways to Community Control

In Rhodes and Acre, residents view the state’s legal control over the old cities as an impediment to the long-term viability of community life. In Rhodes, the Ephorate controls space by closure and, with limited staff, inspects and monitors buildings in Old Town as the designated enforcers of Greek cultural heritage law. In Acre, the public housing agency and Old Acre Development Company neglect swaths of residential and commercial buildings that they ostensibly manage. While state ownership historically shielded these properties from being purchased by private developers, this is no longer assured, and state ownership has consistently been critiqued as appropriation of Palestinian property (S. Bishara 2009). State agencies in Rhodes and Acre, whether under-resourced or uncaring, have created neighborhoods full of empty or barely inhabitable buildings that make the old cities less livable for residents and increasingly accessible to outside developers. Spatial control, however, is more than legislative. Residents in both cities maintain and reclaim spatial control through creative economic, artistic, and political work based in relationality and care.

Claiming Their “Commodity”

Several residents who I interviewed described strategies that make use of commodification to give durability to their sense of place attachment. Individual property
ownership, for example, is something that heritage authorities in both Rhodes and Acre want to see more of. State appropriation of property in Rhodes and Acre after their incorporation into the Greek and Israeli nation-states has perpetuated inequalities created by nationalist and racist ideologies, old and new. From the complete dislocation of *Rodesli* (Rhodian Jewish) property rights in la Judería to the creation of a tenant class among the inhabitants of Acre, many of whom previously held property that was destroyed or appropriated by the nascent Israeli state, the conditions of ownership are unjust from the start. Explicitly, state authorities explain that they would like to work with current residents as owners rather than tenants, because owners have a greater stake in the long-term viability of the buildings they inhabit. Implicitly, they know that most residents cannot afford to purchase property, and they want to see properties preserved sooner rather than later. This means that the Greek and Israeli states envision an influx of outside developers in the old cities. And while developers often take shortcuts, they tend to share heritage professionals’ aesthetic visions for the cities. Residents in both cities are aware of this dynamic, and some are taking the route of property ownership, however an unjust route it is, to ensure their futures in the cities.

In Acre, Bassem and Samia live and work in buildings that they or their family own. For Bassem, purchasing his family house has made way for projects of reconnection with the Old City. In addition to having control over the house, he makes loan payments by hosting tourists and introducing them to *his* city. The process of purchasing his house has been a process of rebuilding relations to neighbors engaged in their own projects of making a good life *in situ*, like the baker he sends guests to for breakfast and the owner of the mini-market around the corner from whom he buys all of his supplies. In creating a
space that tourists want to spend time in, he is renovating the house according to a local aesthetic sensibility and without compromising his own sense of home. He is doing what heritage authorities claim they want to see, but it is the antithesis of what outside developers, who the authorities engage with more enthusiastically, are doing. Samia’s restaurant is housed in the building that her father purchased for his restaurant and souvenir store several decades prior. After her father’s death, the building stayed in the family, meaning that she has considerable freedom in styling and operating it as she wishes. Indeed, she attributes the distinctiveness of her restaurant to the fact that she doesn’t have to cater only to tourists’ established tastes, which is fundamental for restaurants who lease space from the Old Acre Development Company. Instead, she can create a space that is an extension of her and her community’s vision for the city where tourists happen to be welcome.

Ownership cannot be seen as an exclusive path to community control. In Rhodes, Irina and Georgios live and work in owned properties, but in neither case is ownership enough to pursue work that improves the quality of their relations to Old Town. Both view their work as tiresome and look forward to a time when they might retire or move on to different work somewhere else. Georgios, especially, recalls a time when Old Town was primarily a residential quarter that tourists came to visit, a far cry from its status today, effectively a cruise ship port where perhaps a few thousand residents live in emptying pockets that haven’t yet been overwhelmed by restaurants and souvenir stores. In effect, control over one’s own place of residence and business means much less when the bulk of the city that you once knew is lost beyond the point of retrieval or recognition. When neighbors are unrecognizable, when the infrastructure of a residential community
is overtaken by the infrastructure of tourism, and when most people walking the streets of your neighborhood approach it as a tourist site rather than as a home, a sense of alienation creeps into the assurance of connection that ownership might once have provided.

The comparison between Rhodes and Acre suggests the presence of a tipping point where state heritage work overtakes residents’ alternative formations of heritage and its capacity to sustain attachment. Residents of ‘Akka recognize this encroaching tipping point every time they invoke the fate of Jaffa as their worst fear. In my earliest visits to Acre, beginning in 2013, most residents I spoke to acknowledged Jaffa as a worst-case scenario but didn’t think it could realistically happen in Acre. Whereas Jaffa adjoins the metropolis of Tel Aviv and is easily accessible to most of Israel’s population, Acre is in the far north, poorer than the central region with less developed public services. Recently, residents have expressed much greater concern at the possibility of total gentrification, as seen in the May 2021 uprising. If Jaffa is the worst-case scenario for tourism development, Rhodes may reflect an intermediary stage in state heritage development whereby a resident community persists but is overwhelmed by a sense of alienation towards their surroundings. In this light ‘Akkawi heritage work, beyond property ownership, is deeply important locally, and has important implications for residents in Rhodes and other old cities who see little hope in salvation by participating in regimes of ownership.
Tending to Trauma

The traumatic histories of loss that shaped Rhodes, Acre, and their residents, figure peripherally in heritage professionals’ work. Professionals acknowledge that most residents trace their family histories to somewhere else before the traumas of 1944 in Rhodes and 1948 in Acre, and that the dramatic change in population after those years is the result of genocide and expulsion. They acknowledge that these events happened, but in their view, these events are not constitutive of heritage. The memorialization of la Judería, for example, is driven by the work of mostly U.S.-based Rhodian Jews through the Jewish Community of Rhodes, a transnational organization. Restoration of the Kahal Shalom synagogue, the only remaining synagogue which now also houses a museum, was funded primarily by private donors, the European Union, and an American Express Endangered Sites grant. Rhodian Turks commemorate their experiences mostly from abroad in social media groups and periodic reports on the state of the community on Rhodes and in Turkey. Rhodian Turks who remain in Old Town generally do not express their identity outwardly, and the only public-facing space that they retain control of is the city’s Islamic library. State acknowledgments of their history are limited to the city’s monumental (but closed) mosques and hammam, each of which bears the standard bronze plaque of all state antiquities sites providing the building’s name and century of construction. In Acre, the Nakba is commemorated privately in households and club meetings, and erupts into the public sphere around Nakba Day, when many residents return to their ancestral villages or the sites where they once stood. As far as it being the origin point for near total state control over the Old City and its resident population, there is no official acknowledgment in state heritage representation.
A heritage practice that centers care would seek justice for historical traumas, drawing attention again to those practices that are already happening among current and former residents, as well as the descendants of those who once called these places home.

Sophia roams Old Town Rhodes with a keen awareness of the people who were deported, who fled, and who never returned. She was the first person who brought up la Judería with me in my first days in Old Town, and she instructed me as to how I should behave should I walk through that area, which she avoids out of respect: “There are ghosts there, and the people selling t-shirts and souvlaki there don’t want you to think that. Be gentle when you walk there.” There are coalitions yet to congeal between the local community and Rodesli diaspora, which until now has focused its attention on maintaining a few specific sites of memory, like the Kahal Shalom synagogue and museum and the Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of the city. Even this work has required the permission and oversight of the Ephorate, the municipality, and other state agencies, and as such it is understandable that there are minimal relations between the Jewish Community of Rhodes and Old Town residents, who have no representational body.

Old Town residents are aware of the traumatic history through which Old Town was forged through the twentieth century. One evening in May 2016, I attended a public lecture in the Italian-built National Theater (once the Puccini Theater) given by an Irish historian of the Holocaust on the subject of the deportation of Rhodian Jews in 1944. The professor painted a nuanced portrait of the Jewish community, disrupting stereotypes that it was ever insulated from Greek or Turkish communities or that Jews ever represented a monolithic elite class on Rhodes. Over a hundred people sat in the audience, almost entirely Rhodian, and enthusiastically participated in the question-and-answer period that
followed. Some expressed remorse on behalf of their families for not having combatted anti-Jewish racism. Some wanted to know more about the dynamics of life in la Judería. One person asked why there is no public discussion about the history of Rhodian Jewish life and history and why it does not figure in historical representations in Old Town. People knew a lot and wanted to learn more.

After exiting the theater, I walked to the nearby seaside promenade to gather my thoughts and take field notes. In the adjacent garden of the Grande Albergo delle Rose, the monumental reminder of Italian tourism investment on the island, sunburnt Scandinavian tourists were being taught the basic steps of *sirtaki*, the popular line dance featured in the film Zorba the Greek, and the film’s theme blared over loudspeakers just as it does over every lunch hour at a dozen or so Old Town restaurants. Restaurant servers streamed into the garden holding platters of roasted meat over their heads while shouting “Opa!” at random intervals, and the tourists’ cameras flashed like wild, lighting up the night. Still moved by the evening’s presentation, I felt frustrated with what I was witnessing, as if it were an insult to Rhodian place and Rhodian history. This representation of culture, which draws on disparate national symbols with little specificity to Rhodes, has successfully drawn tourists and tourist capital to Greece for decades. It is a kind of representation that takes up space, and through representation has become part of Greece’s (and Rhodes’s) place identity (Tzanelli and Koutoulas 2021).

Tourists visiting Old Town are there for a feast of these signs which, for them, constitute Greece. The Archaeological Service, as well as numerous merchants and restaurateurs in Old Town, provide this by buttressing the Medieval/Greek time-space that they have constructed in the name of economic development. But residents like Sofia, the audience
members of the lecture, and diaspora groups reminded me that while the traumatic history of genocide and dispossession in Old Town is displaced in this time-space configuration, it is not disappeared.

In Acre, the Israeli state is reticent to acknowledge the lasting trauma of the Nakba, but residents acknowledge it on their own in their everyday lives. The bulk of the Old City’s population bears the memory of the Nakba, and they are prepared to grapple with that memory as it relates heritage and tourism. Their determination to stay, to be leaders in the tourism economy, and to marginalize state influence is a project of redress for historical injustice. Virtually all residents and workers that I interviewed expressed in some way that their commitment to the Old City is rooted in a shared refusal of displacement, and several specified that that this is tied to their family’s Nakba history. Tending to collective trauma is central to a viable ‘Akkawi heritage practice that stands up to state heritage projects. For residents of Acre, as for many Palestinians, the Nakba is a lived and ongoing rupture, and this experience animates their analysis of state heritage practice as an expansion of that rupture.

Rhodian Greeks in Old Town do not inhabit that place as an experience of rupture, but some readily acknowledge the trauma of others, which opens the door to coalitional forms of heritage. Most Rhodian Greek residents of Old Town are economically marginalized, and their families experienced a different kind of dispossession with the collapse of smaller island economies in the middle of the twentieth century. They know Old Town as a place where most of its current and former residents, regardless of ethnicity, have experienced some form of oppression or persecution. There are grains of projects that could come together. During my time in the field, a group of
artisans started a co-op in Old Town with the intention of providing a space for local cultural performance, discussion, and creation. It was to raise funds by selling artisanal products to tourists and locals alike, and by hosting alternative tours based on diverse Rhodian histories. It was an exciting venture that ultimately fell apart after a year, failing to sustain itself financially. Another non-profit organization, the Rhodes International Culture and Heritage Society, is led by Greek and expatriate advocates for the preservation of Rhodian heritage. The group emphasizes Rhodes’s distinct and diverse pasts and aims to stimulate local interest in the island’s unique identity, offering occasional thematic walks and lectures. The group is also actively advocating for the preservation of the city’s Ottoman and Italian architecture, which they view as being neglected by official bodies and insufficiently interpreted to the general public. The group acknowledges that their ability to organize is limited by their funding, and for now it is not clear that there is active engagement among residents of Old Town, nor whether their preservation advocacy considers local social memory of Italian rule or the ruptures of the mid to late twentieth century. During my fieldwork, a group of local Greek performers organized a thematic event at the normally shuttered Turkish bath, the Yeni Hammam. For three days, the hammam was open to the public to enter and explore, and the organizers offered youth-oriented interpretation of Rhodian Turkish culture and its impact on Rhodian culture, broadly. One of the performers, who lived in Old Town, recalled going to the hammam as a child with her mother and sister, and considers its closure, along with the closure of other gathering places, as one of the reasons for the disintegration of community in Old Town.
Projects like these are aspirational, and some may find traction and grow, hopefully with enthusiastic local participation. That they have not yet coalesced as a serious challenge to state heritage is not indicative of future failure or success. As Davis (2019) has carefully illustrated of state heritage projects, those that are deemed to have succeeded are reflections of moments when necessary interests aligned, and as interests fall out of alignment just as many projects fail. The same, I suggest, can be said for local projects. The basis for coalitions between groups who identify as Rhodian—be they current residents, displaced communities, or Holocaust survivors and their descendants—exists, and as local heritage activism grows, so too do possibilities for tending to the traumas that formed this place.

**Expanding Capacity**

Undergirding state heritage authorities’ focus on preservation is a basic truth that stone buildings require a degree of maintenance over time in order to remain standing. Resident practices of “shoring up,” life projects of folks such as Ahmad, and centuries of maintenance undertaken by people who did not call themselves “heritage experts” reminds us that the structural integrity of buildings is also a concern among residents and within their purview. Given the dramatic transformation of local populations in Acre and Rhodes, as with numerous historic urban centers worldwide in the era of industrialization and urban expansion, few residents possess the generational knowledge of stone masonry that was maintained prior to the mid-twentieth century. While dozens of residents in Acre’s Old City work in construction trades and are skilled at working with stone, Ahmad is the sole career mason and carver in the city. In the 1944 census of the Old City,
thirty-two residents listed their profession as stone dresser or mason, and this does not include the 369 who identified as laborers (Winter 1944, 10).

The incursion of state experts into old cities as overseers of preservation should not be seen as a response to a new problem, but rather a new response to an old problem. Community-based knowledge and skills that once met the needs of life in a stone city were lost in the destruction of whole communities, leaving structural preservation as an entryway for the state into nascent communities in Acre and Rhodes and as a technology of control. Nonetheless, residents of Acre and Rhodes do tend to their buildings, and in doing so reinforce their connections to place. In this light, Ahmad’s work is critical to reclaiming knowledge and translating that knowledge to practices of shoring up that most residents already engage in. He is actively pursuing this very goal, and as he bicycles through the Old City streets he stops to examine residents’ structural improvisations. He is patient in conversation with neighbors who cannot afford to acquire replacement stones or lime plaster, so turn to cinder blocks and cement in their repair work. When I asked what his optimistic vision of the city was for the next decade, he responded that “Less is more,” and that he hoped that the pace of change in the Old City would slow down dramatically to give residents the chance to develop knowledge about the care of stone buildings and how to manage tourism. The urgency that heritage authorities vocalize about the need to preserve buildings in Acre and Rhodes is absent in Ahmad’s approach, and leaves room for residents to engage with the city on their terms to make mistakes, to learn, and in the process create new possibilities for the city that may not involve catering to tourist desires.
This approach resonates with the notion of a post-preservationist heritage that frames humans’ relationship to old places not as protector, but as caring companion. The impetus to freeze buildings in an imagined time-space is a recent development, tied to the belief that the past is a fleeting, fragile thing in need of stabilization. In her exploration of a post-preservationist paradigm, DeSilvey (2017) writes that we must:

[…] unsettle our own sense of a coherent and unified self, to recognize that our identities are made through processes of subversion and fraying as much as they are through processes of consolidation and stabilization. When we accept the continual becoming of the objects and architectures we share our world with, beyond a narrow conception of their instrumental value, we also acknowledge our own becoming. In the process, our sense of temporality shifts to allow the past to fold into the present in indeterminate ways. (2017, 183)

I argue that such a post-preservationist paradigm should be guided by practices that already avoid the instrumentalization of old buildings. Post-preservationism is not the abandonment of structures, but rather a radical openness to the fact that these buildings were not intended to be preserved or restored in perpetuity and that allowing parts to decay, be disassembled, reassembled, or modified is not only okay, but may engender the renewal of place connections.

Residents of both cities tinkered with their surroundings during my fieldwork, often in minute ways so as not to draw attraction of an inspector. Often after dark, I witnessed and sometimes assisted residents in repairing loose paving stones in the street, removing mortar from walls to insert utility cables or air conditioning ducts, or plastering and painting over stone walls. Other times it involved installing braces against a wall where the resident spotted a crack. These actions were about adapting a beloved space to current needs. Where these actions are insufficient to achieve a desirable result for residents, there is room for expert knowledge. This could involve
initiatives like Ahmad’s, where knowledge about stonework is mobilized based on community research and practice, or similarly with local carpenters in Acre. It could also involve the participation of state-associated heritage experts, if those experts were willing to act as facilitators of local knowledge production as opposed to adjudicators of local needs. Facilitating resident life projects would be reparative and would contrast to the current disciplinary tactic of prescribing standards and monitoring resident building practices. This was a key problem for the International Conservation Center in Acre, which residents expected might be a facility where they could learn specific methods or acquire subsidized building materials. Ultimately, it became primarily a training center for IAA staff and a center for monitoring resident activities. Non-local expert cooperation is probably a necessary route in Rhodes, where outside of general contractors there is little local knowledge about local sandstone construction or historic carpentry.

Expanding capacity to cooperate in useful and creative ways with the built environment need not only be about conservation and construction techniques. In Rhodes, hundreds of buildings are damaged or decayed beyond repair and are unlikely to be reclaimed by former residents, many of whom were Rhodian Jews or Turks. Expanding capacity in a post-preservationist paradigm also means learning how to meaningfully remember these places, which for current residents may be a space of reconnection with Rhodes’s diverse marginalized and diasporic communities. As buildings age in Acre and Rhodes, it will become increasingly difficult to keep up with the decomposition of their soft sandstone blocks. Residents, like Sophia who curated piles of stone fragments in her garden, may end up being
better equipped than preservation experts at accompanying crumbling buildings into their next phase of being.

(Trans)Forming the Site

Throughout this dissertation I have included accounts of the contemporary and future-oriented formation of the old cities of Rhodes and Acre. A contemporary archaeology of old cities disentangles pastness—that stable and comforting aesthetic so valuable to the state and to tourists (Holtorf 2013)—from oldness—an inhabited temporality that, for those most intimately acquainted with a place, bears memory, relations, and life (Taylor and Sesma 2022). If pastness is created by producing a standard aesthetic of bare stone walls separated by lines of clean, white mortar, oldness is sustained by dropping a piece of bread on an electrical box or tagging the walls of alleyway with affectionate words for the city. Residents animate what archaeologists have increasingly come to acknowledge of their own practice. No site ever stops undergoing formation, whether by disturbance by other-than-human forces, or by the very investigation of an archaeological site.

The contemporary formation of Old Town Rhodes is characterized by three main processes: the surrender of empty spaces to ecological processes, the production of a medieval/Greek time-space, and the maintenance of a local aesthetic. State heritage champions the production of a medieval/Greek time-space. It views both local aesthetics and emptiness as potential threats to heritage, but also views emptiness as preferable to uncontrolled development. Residents and local workers have a more nuanced relationship to all three processes. The maintenance of a local aesthetic is critical to knowing Old
Town as a home place, as not totally lost to tourism and the state heritage project. Gardens consisting of fruit trees growing from patches of open soil, herbs and tomato plants growing in old oil cannisters, and flowering vines covering walls are emblematic of resident spaces. So too are plastered and painted buildings, as opposed to bare stone, and a stack of plastic chairs left outside the front door. These elements embody a local material culture that signals neighborliness and a shared, distinctive Old Town culture. Maintaining this aesthetic is a priority for residents, and the most important material process in a future-looking heritage practice. But they also recognize the significance of the medieval/Greek time-space for their economic livelihood and Old Town’s emptiness as a reminder of the traumas past residents have faced. Acre does not have the same swaths of empty buildings as Rhodes, but residents nonetheless carry the sense of trauma that that emptiness indexes. By visibly marking the Old City with building adornments and bread, residents forcefully signal that the Old City is an inhabited place, and a place inhabited by a people who know the trauma of displacement. And while Acre residents welcome tourists, they are less enthusiastic about state-driven production of Crusader and Ottoman sites that monopolize tourist time, capital, and interpretation of the Old City. In Rhodes, the medieval/Greek time-space is a fait accompli, facilitated by the grand-scale retrofitting of Old Town for tourism by the Italian colonial regime. In Acre, this kind of progress is still in its early phase, and residents are concerned about it progressing any further.

An alternative heritage formation that takes its cue from resident-driven placemaking would create expansive local control over public space. In many ways, residents of Acre and Rhodes already assert control over public space without seeking state
approval. Graffiti, murals, gardens that spill into the streets, bread scatter, ephemeral adornments. These are all ways that residents mark the cities as theirs, and these forms of marking could be even more fulsome without the state’s disciplinary actions against them. Experts in these cities have created a false dichotomy between local life as detrimental to the historical and structural integrity of the old cities, and preservationism as the stabilizer of said integrity. On the structural front, this dichotomy effaces residents’ desire and willingness to care for the structures they inhabit. On the historical front, it ignores basic principles of site formation—that the reason these old cities are important is because of the layered traces of human attachments to place, attachments that persist today and contribute to the cities’ ongoing transformation. Such an approach to site formation readily accepts that old cities will look drastically different in another decade or century, whether they are preserved or not. In the former case, Acre and Rhodes may be devoid of resident populations, fully replaced by boutique hotels, vacation rentals, boutiques, and upscale restaurants. In the latter case, they may be vibrant homeplaces where families feel assured that generations to come might also know these places as home.

Re-Narrating the Old City

An important dimension of reclaiming the old city is the process of re-narrating the old city. Communitarian forms of place narration are well-developed in Rhodes and Acre, but in the realm of tourism—the main economic component of heritage work—is outcompeted by state heritage narrative. The state controls much of what tourists come to experience in the first place—museums, Crusader halls, and the old cities’ monumental
public architecture—and narrates these spaces through the World Heritage framework as being of universal value, marking major moments in world history in which cultures variously met, fought, and collaborated. It will be a matter for future research to determine how much this state narrative resonates with tourists, or whether tourists are more drawn by the simple aspect of age and monumentality. As mentioned earlier, when I asked tourists about their impressions of the old cities of Rhodes and Acre, they more often invoked fantastic imagery of wizards and dragons, or the novels and films of Game of Thrones or Lord of the Rings, than an interest in Crusader or Ottoman history.

Tourists are relevant to local projects in this instance in that they play a significant role in mobilizing narratives about the places they visit along their routes and in their own homes. After a decade of traveling in Palestine/Israel, I cannot fathom the number of tourists, faith leaders, international students, and volunteers I have encountered who told me that they were visiting so that they could “see the situation” for themselves. Nonetheless, much tourism in Acre remains in the form of guided day tours from other parts of the country, and increasingly Israeli weekenders staying in short-term rentals. Rhodes is more of an international sun and fun destination than Acre, and tourists generally do not visit there for a political education. But making a city into a recreational place is clearly a political project, too. Resident empowerment in Rhodes can only go so far without a considerable proportion of visitors to the island having any empathy for their hosts’ relations to that very place.

Despite the dominance of state heritage narratives in Rhodes and Acre, there are numerous existing forms of community-based narration that could grow or are already being amplified. In Acre, residents who host tourists in their homes, like Bassem, make a
point of engaging tourists in conversation about local life. In these spaces, place narration happens in explicit and subtle ways. Introducing a tourist to their lodging as one’s home, for instance, shapes tourists’ relationship to their host and the place they are staying. Pointing tourists to neighbors’ businesses and explaining his relationship to that neighbor is a tactic that Bassem uses to forge local economic networks and also to keep tourists within a particular narrative environment as they navigate the city. For example, he often spends an hour or more in the evening conversing with guests on his balcony, carefully weaving together subjects including his family’s history, the challenges of residents’ life in the Old City, recommendations for walking routes and resident-owned restaurants, and options for travel to other regional destinations. When his guests follow his recommendations, they are inevitable draw into further discussion with vendors in the market, restaurateurs, and shopkeepers who share their own stories. While very informal, the network of information that builds up in these cases can be deeply impactful for tourists. On several occasions, I encountered guests of Bassem who told me that they ran out of time and never ended up visiting the state-run Crusader halls, but felt deeply satisfied with their visit nonetheless.

People like Samia and Rania also sustain these kinds of narrative networks in Acre, either as starting points or as hubs. From just outside her front door, Rania hooks tourists who are wandering in the streets, often the first resident they will have encountered if they’ve just emerged from one of the nearby state-managed sites, or parked their car in the nearby lot. She readily informs customers that this is her house, that they are welcome as guests in the city, and either recommends other local businesses or points them toward their next destination by describing local, and often familial,
landmarks. Through the aesthetic of her restaurant and her menu offerings, Samia offers a local representation of the Old City distinct from that of the state. Samia described to me what she encourages tourists to do by reflecting on her own practice as a tourist in other places. Specifically, she is deeply committed to the notion of food as a form of local narrative:

When I go to Turkey, I go to a simple coffee shop, and I sit there. I don’t get in anybody’s way, but I sit and I try to feel the people there. I go to places where there are ordinary people, where people eat ordinary local food. I think you can feel people through their food. So for me, I am from an old ‘Akka family, and we make very traditional old ‘Akka food. And I saw that people from other places weren’t eating this food, so I wanted to change that. For me, if you try the food of the people, you touch the people.

The space that she has created, named for her family and replete with imagery meaningful to herself and her community, forcefully reminds visitors that they are in a residential quarter where families have deep connections, and encourages visitors to take time to reflect upon that after a day of wandering an un-peopled underground Crusader complex.

Local narrative operates through numerous other media in Acre. Local artists have hung street signs bearing pre-1948 street names, still used locally but erased by official Israeli renaming. Youth groups, like ‘Akka 5000, organize cultural programs that occasionally have a public-facing component, like the summer 2021 outdoor exhibit, “Souq Stories.” “Souq Stories” was a display of contemporary and historic images of the Acre market accompanied by locally generated narratives. The exhibit was one node in a series of parallel Souq Stories exhibits mounted simultaneously in other Palestinian cities, including Gaza, Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Nazareth, together weaving threads of Palestinian experience that persist across a colonized geography.
In Rhodes, local narrative is less prominently represented and is strongly overshadowed by the dominant state narrative. There is still work to be done to translate the experience of contemporary cultural diversity to a counter-narrative that will galvanize a viable local heritage practice. Irina and Khaled, for example, live against the grain of the dominant state narrative that describes Rhodes as essentially a Greek place with a Hospitaller past. Although Old Town does not bear the same cultural diversity as it did for centuries as a place of belonging for Rhodian Turks, Jews, and Greeks, it is still a culturally diverse place home to Greeks from Rhodes and elsewhere and immigrants from around the world who came to Rhodes because of its expansive tourism industry. This experience is narrativized mainly in intimate spaces, among family and close friends. While Irina and Khaled’s conversational work with tourists presents Rhodes as a Greek place, in their personal and familial lives they are maintaining the cultural diversity that has long been characteristic of Old Town. Irina is the co-founder of a Russian-language school and cultural center and Khaled joined fellow Arabic-speaking Rhodians in organizing aid for asylum seekers from Syria and Iraq in 2015 and 2016. Initiatives like the Rhodes International Culture and Heritage Society might do more to engage critically with the contemporary and recent past in Rhodes, to see the cultural plurality of Rhodian past and present and use this to challenge the state’s monolithic narrative of Rhodes as singularly Greek.

The sensory-scape of Old Town also offers another pathway to constructing local narrative. Among the few joys that Georgios describes about working in Old Town are those sensorial relations that animate memories of the place in his youth—hearing Italian church bells or spotting a patch of Byzantine fresco. These relations are for the most part
unspoken. Georgios didn’t describe these things as sources of connection to Old Town when I asked him about his own sense of attachments to Old Town. Rather, they prompted visceral expressions of relationality as he encountered them throughout his day. Sophia’s deeply felt connection to the city’s stones, and her practice of curating piles of found stones in her garden, echoes this sensorial relationship. Amidst the loss of neighbors and resident services, and the transformation of their home into a sometimes-unrecognizable landscape of tourist fantasies, these sensorial attachments are among residents’ few remaining tethers to Old Town. A key distinction that residents make between their sense of place and state heritage narrative is one of experiential versus topographical narrative. Ultimately, if state heritage work engenders alienation, then centering local narrative as a dimension of care-full heritage work is a matter of centering relational narrative.

Heritage as Relating; Relating as Care

Peering beyond that formation of practices and things that the state calls “heritage” are worlds of relations to place and to past that are grounded in an ethic of care. Residents and workers in the old cities of Acre and Rhodes engage in everyday practices that sustain their relations to those places despite overwhelming processes that threaten to sever those relations. The state’s deployment of standard heritage practices and participation in projects like the UNESCO World Heritage program makes its work legible to powerbrokers and tourists as heritage. In doing so, the state displaces relational practices that residents engage in as something other-than-heritage, or worse, threatening to heritage.
Seeing heritage in different places resonates with themes from the work of feminist geographers J.K. Gibson-Graham (2008), who argued that engaging and bringing light to diverse economic projects is critical to making capitalism a less formidable force in our world. We do not have to wait for a great upheaval when alternative modes of making a good life exist all around, should we as activist scholars organize ourselves to take note and engage with them. Rhodes and Acre are already sites of creative and diverse heritage projects, some subtle and some monumental, that empower communities in their relations to these places. This discussion demonstrates that heritage expertise, in its adherence to standardized and replicable practices tied mainly to preservationism, ignores or suppresses those relations that are most meaningful to residents. Expertise in heritage might more usefully be thought of as facilitating life-giving projects that are already in process and as reparative work that attends to historical trauma and injustice. Doing so would mean dwelling in messier time-spaces, breaching standard practices to foreground local knowledge, and making the old cities with residents who care for them now with intentions for a just future.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Heritage Under and Beyond Commodification

In this dissertation I argue that seeing heritage through local communities in the old cities of Rhodes and Acre is to see relations of care through time; here residents and local workers cautiously engage with state heritage as a component of their own life projects, but their sense of heritage is constituted by wholly different relational practices. Under conditions of intense commodification, residents shape their livelihoods around work adjacent to state heritage projects but engage in that work with distinct aspirations than those of the state. Residents re-create the meaning of heritage by doing heritage work, but importantly this work is done relationally and politically, using it to honor ancestors and predecessors, deepen their relationship to place, and create new possibilities for future generations to live in these places. Their practices are diverse, everyday, and often specific to community and place, constituting heritage that is given meaning on local grounds and geared towards alternative futures than those envisioned by state actors. This is a key distinction from the concept of heritage shared by state actors in both cities.

From Cuzco (Silverman 2002) to Pom Mahakan (Bristol 2010; Herzfeld 2016) to Salvador (Collins 2008), state heritage actors often view urban residents and their practices as problems to be managed for the promotion of national and global heritage (see De Cesari and Herzfeld 2015 for a review). In Acre and Rhodes, where the state conceives of heritage in the sense established by international standards and national priorities, established residents experience expanding state heritage projects as projects of
disconnection, as trauma compounded with the traumas of historical displacement and dispossession. While examining the individual motivations of state heritage actors was not a priority in this research, it was clear that residents interpreted the collective actions of state professionals and developers (often referred to as a collective “they”) as contributing to an increasing sense of alienation. The uprisings in Acre during May 2021 made this alienation abundantly clear. This was an action against real-time eviction and dispossession in Jerusalem and any place where Palestinians faced continued threat of repeated displacement. Rhodes, being further along the trajectory of expansive commodification facilitated by a century of colonial and nationalist governance, is what residents of Acre fear whenever they invoke Jaffa. They see how easily old places can be emptied of their people—whether evicted, bought out, or violently ethnically cleansed—while the state outwardly declares that it is protecting the place in the name of heritage preservation. Claims of preservation, however, should always be met with skepticism. While the term suggests stability, preservation can be a process of intense urban transformation that makes old cities into places unrecognizable to those who call them home.

It is in this light that seeing beyond state claims about heritage to life projects is important. Beyond critiquing state heritage work as displacement of life projects, there is an urgent need to see life projects that are attuned to just futures as worthy of social, political, and economic solidarity and cooperation on the part of scholars, activists, and visitors to these places. While life projects are threatened by state heritage, residents continue to pursue them even where local power seems most diminished, as in the case of Rhodes. Even as the commodification of cultural heritage reduces their control over a
space they once knew intimately, Old Town Rhodians appropriate components of the state heritage project to the extent that it allows them to stay in place, all while grasping for a version of Old Town where memory and aspiration are interwoven. Residents of the Old City of Acre dread this scenario. State professionals there are explicit in claiming that this is not their goal for Acre but acknowledge it as a common result of heritage development projects worldwide. Residents are already experiencing it in the replacement of neighbors with tourists staying in short-term vacation rentals, of neighborhood shops with art galleries, and the imposition of an unfamiliar place narrative. They are making a collective push to reclaim heritage and tourism on their own terms before they are overwhelmed by the thrust of state heritage.

**Methodological Innovation**

I approach the old cities of Rhodes and Acre not as cities that “once were” and are now “old,” as state narratives would have them, but as cities that are old in the sense that they bear memory, attachment, and life over time and through to the present. Residents speak of these places as old not in reference to a distant origin, but because of the cumulative human experience they embody. Viewing old cities as places still and always undergoing formation disrupts the assumption undergirding the dominant preservationist narrative that things and places should be stabilized or restored to their condition in a particular temporal episode because they were most meaningful at some point in the past. Residents of Acre forcefully argue that the Old City must continue to be a space of Palestinian cultural life and will be pivotal in constructing a just geopolitical landscape for all in the country. Its role in the region’s political history is far from over. Residents
of Rhodes understand that they are caught up in a process of state-sanctioned urban transformation that, rather than seeking justice for the destruction of its Jewish community and near loss of its Turkish community, has seized upon its emptiness to exert spatial control and create a new national time-space. Acknowledging these old cities as places still undergoing formation is an ethical imperative to leave room for residents, descendant communities, and their allies to imagine and create just futures.

There is an exciting future for bridging cultural and archaeological anthropology in the realm of archaeological ethnography and contemporary archaeology. Here I have drawn from ethnographic and archaeological methods to show how people and place cooperate and co-form each other over time. The materiality of these places allows residents to forge relations that would not be feasible elsewhere, and that constitute alternative formations of heritage that disrupt the logic of standards in state heritage work. Tracking the formation of old cities as voiced, practiced, and materialized by different constituencies offers enormous potential to unpacking the politics of heritage. Following the making of old cities from the perspective of local communities who aspire to maintain livability for themselves, their families, and their neighbors illuminates processes of relations-making, and as such illuminates a post-commodity future for these places. In this sense, the methodology employed in this dissertation is a “restorative methodology” (Bruchac 2010) that honors local visions and intentions for justice. Old cities are places in progress, produced through communities’ commitments and recommitments to place. As the material traces of those commitments render old cities ever more attractive to an extractive heritage industry, those who know these places as
home deserve research that repairs the damage of state heritage and that provides
guidance for living in its ruins.

Further Research

Translating critical heritage scholarship into action should be a priority as states,
real estate developers, and tourism marketers expand the heritage industry and its
alienating effects. Considerable research has shown the harmful potential of state-level
heritage work for its tendency to conjure monolithic narratives of the past, manipulate
notions of diversity, and erase the spatio-temporal relations of indigenous and
marginalized communities (see Abu El-Haj 2001; J. F. Collins 2011; Doxtator 1988;
Hamilakis 2007; Herzfeld 1991; Kohl 1998; Little 2019; Shackel 2001; Sinamai 2020;
Trigger 1984). In this dissertation, I prioritized the work that local communities were
engaged in that centered livability and relationships, drawing attention to alternative
heritage practices at work beyond the state project. I intend to continue this work in Acre,
but as action research that re-articulates my analysis of alternative formations of heritage
within local activist projects. Though residents share hopes for building collective local
power, their projects are mostly individual. Beyond creating a record of diverse life
projects, future research will explore relations between life projects and organized
activism. This research will explore possibilities for networked life projects in resisting
state heritage regimes in Acre and beyond, with a focus on community-based knowledge
mobilization.

This research has raised questions beyond the purview of the dissertation. Tourists
are a third constituency, beyond residents and state actors, who are at the crux of both
state heritage projects and many local projects as well. While some of my resident interlocutors expressed frustration with the overgrowth of tourism (especially in Rhodes during peak cruise ship season), most pointed not to tourists, but to the state and developer-driven heritage industry as the colonizing force in their spaces. Overall, residents endorsed the presence of tourists as a source of necessary income and viewed them as potential agents of local narrative mobilization. There is rich discussion in the anthropology of tourism regarding the ethics of tourism in relation to structural inequalities, climate change, environmental degradation, and social movements (Di Giovine 2017; Gibson 2021; Pi-Sunyer and Thomas 2015; Salazar 2017). Some view the COVID-19 pandemic, with its slowdown in international travel, as a time to reimagine global tourism (Lew et al. 2020). Many emphasize the need for greater ethnographic attention to how tourism practitioners enact concepts such as “sustainability” and “resilience” to destabilize structures of global tourism that create inequality (Adams et al. 2021; Salazar 2020). Among tourism practitioners, can resident practices like those observed in Rhodes and Acre point to more resilient practices in their emphasis on local livability above the tourist experience? By engaging tourists in alternative heritage practices, are old city residents changing tourists’ understandings of themselves and their practices, thereby mobilizing alternative heritages on tourists’ transnational routes?

This research also raises questions about the future of heritage professionalization. Many training programs around the world retain a technical approach to heritage. Most of the state heritage professionals that I encountered in my field research were trained in these settings, where they learned to understand heritage as an inherent quality of old things that is always at risk of being lost. Preventing the loss of
heritage, in turn, can be achieved through specialized technical training. Such a stance recruits students to the idea that the first approach to old things is that they are potential objects of preservation, and that professionals are best equipped to make interventions in spaces that may bear special meanings for non-professional communities. There are notable exceptions to this, of course, in institutions that frame heritage as a subject of critical inquiry, a contemporary activity subject to public discussion and debate. Among them is the UMass Amherst Center for Heritage & Society, my intellectual home for my first several years of graduate study. This research has shed light on an expansive repertoire of care practices beyond the category of preservation that deserve much greater attention in programs that emphasize technical training. These practices do not always call for professionalization, but residents of Ḍakka and Rhodes are ready for allied grassroots actors cooperate in reclaiming and reconstituting them in a more-than-preservationist model of caring for old places. Given the proliferation of critical research in the past twenty years shedding light on qualities of heritage beyond its preservationist futures (for examples see Harrison et al. 2020), there is reason for optimism that heritage training is becoming increasingly multivalent. That Caitlin DeSilvey’s (2017) *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving*, an account of post-preservationist heritage practice, was awarded the University of Mary Washington’s Center for Historic Preservation Book Prize in 2018 is one example of a crossing of heritage paradigms.

**Concluding Thoughts**

During the demonstrations of May 2021 in Acre, numerous Israeli and international media outlets reported the events as a sudden rejection of Arab and Jewish
coexistence (a conveniently ambiguous description for Acre and other “mixed cities” that obscures profoundly asymmetric power relation, see Tostrick 2000). Demonstration organizers were clear that they demanded structural change, an end to an ongoing Nakba, and distanced their movement from the few who turned to interpersonal violence during the protests. In the Old City of Acre, organizers emphasized the progressive loss of spatial control to the state and to developers and tied this to threatened evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and Israeli police invasions of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. They historicized these immediate events in a context of sustained colonization and displacement since 1948. In the days leading up to organized demonstrations, friends on social media were already following the hashtag “#SaveSheikhJarrah” with “#SaveAkka.” Media accounts of ruptured coexistence in the Old City flatten a deeply unequal landscape in which an incoming investor class is repeating the settler-colonial practice of displacement and replacement that pushed resident families to the Old City in the first place. In their response to damage to properties owned or leased by Jewish Israelis, organizers were also explicit as to how these actions harmed the cause of Palestinian solidarity. In a statement, the People’s Committee of ‘Akka, a Palestinian advocacy group, wrote, “We reject any offensive act or vandalism of public property. Any damage of public property in ‘Akka is sabotage of the Palestinian Arabs of ‘Akka, first and foremost.” Though compromised by the violence of a few, the demonstrations aimed to reclaim Acre’s future from that of a gentrified Ottoman/Crusader fantasy landscape—the kind of landscape that residents know exists in places like Rhodes and Jaffa. In censuring the harassment and vandalism of Jewish Israelis and the buildings they occupied as uncaring and self-defeating, organizers reiterated that belonging in the Old
City is a matter of relationality, not legal title, and that the Old City must be carried into the future by ‘Akka residents with care.

‘Akkawi life projects create options for reclaiming a sense of home beyond the Israeli state’s colonial commodification of heritage. Rhodian life projects create possibility from the ruins of colonial and nationalist urban co-optation and resist and complicate the state’s national homogenization of Rhodes and its past. These case studies represent distinct trajectories of heritage commodification and distinct political uses of heritage, but each offers the other important lessons in loss, resistance, and reclamation. In both places, residents have forged alternative heritage practices that not only combat the violence of state projects, but that keep other ways of being in these places—ways of being grounded in care for community and place—well within reach. Bringing these experiences of reclamation to light allows us—as anthropologists and heritage professionals—to join communities in building a theory and practice of heritage as care.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


