

## RETURNING HOME, REMAKING PLACE

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RECENT anthropological work has suggested that anthropologists can no longer take the congruence of territory and culture for granted.<sup>1</sup> Not only have anthropologists begun to re-think the presumption that doing anthropology requires going 'there' because the existence of a 'there' as a 'bounded territorial entity' has become strongly suspect; they have also begun to pay increasing attention to the processes underlying the 'construction' of place.<sup>2</sup> Some, however, have cautioned that anthropologists should not abandon the task of understanding 'an equally strongly developed notion of attachment to place' (Olwig 1997: 17).

In this paper I draw, on both of the above viewpoints in order to examine how a group of Jewish settlers<sup>3</sup> in the occupied territory of the West Bank *emplace*

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Appadurai 1991, 1995, Malkki 1992.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Hirsh and O'Hanlon (eds.) 1995, Augé 1995, Yaegeer (ed.) 1996, Olwig and Hastrup (eds.) 1997, Bender 1993, Ben-Ari and Bilu (eds.) 1996, Paine 1995.

<sup>3</sup> The popular English translation glosses over the more varied and specific connotations of the Hebrew words used to describe these people as well as early Zionists: *mitnahel* (one who reclaims his inheritance), *mityashev* (one who sits in or settles in), and *haluts* (pioneer; the common usage has strong Zionist connotations). In my usage here, I am referring to Jews who have chosen to live in the occupied territories for ideological reasons.

themselves in the 'home' to which they claim they are 'returning'.<sup>4</sup> Although these settlers view the occupied territory of the West Bank as an integral part of the sacred 'Land of Israel', argue that it is their inalienable ancestral inheritance (*nahalah*), and claim that it is a place they have always 'known' and to which they are merely 'returning', they are *new* immigrants to this territory. One of the prime challenges of their situation, therefore, is to bridge the hiatus between their status as new immigrants and their claims to have an organic connection to the territory.<sup>5</sup> In what follows, I shall use the settlement of Tekoa in the West Bank as an ethnographic example.<sup>6</sup> I will suggest that Tekoans meet this challenge to their claims of an organic connection by *re-making* the place to which they are 'returning'.

Neither the notion of 'returning' nor the notion of 're-making place' are new to scholarship on Israel.<sup>7</sup> Writing in the late 1980s, Robert Paine drew attention to the issues surrounding both these notions:

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this paper I will highlight the subjective and contested status of this notion with the use of inverted commas. Also for the purposes of this paper, I side-step the complexities of defining 'home' (see, for example, Sarup 1994, Rapport 1995, Rapport and Dawson 1998). Hence 'home', as used in the title of the paper, works as a rather untidy shorthand or gloss for the various claims which Jewish settlers make about the occupied territory of the West Bank.

<sup>5</sup> The category 'new immigrant' (*oleh hadash*) is moored in specific legal and procedural spaces of the Israeli nation-state and connotes 'alien-ness', which the state seeks to eliminate through the process of 'absorption' (Jews from Morocco have further to go in becoming 'Israeli' than, say, Jews from Poland; see, for example, Paine 1989, Eisenstadt 1955, Smooha 1978). By contrast, the category of 'settler' is less bureaucratically circumscribed: because 'settling' is seen as constitutive of the Zionist process of nation-building, settlers are not seen as standing in need of 'absorption' in the same way as 'new immigrants'. In other words, 'settlers' are quintessentially 'local': they absorb, rather than are absorbed. In choosing to problematize the task of these settlers in terms of their 'immigrant' status, I do not mean to take on the connotations of the term as it is used in the context of the Israeli state. My impetus comes from a desire to acknowledge the occupied and thus 'new' status of these territories to the Israeli state and to problematize the 'natural-ness' of the claims made by those who 'return'.

<sup>6</sup> I conducted fieldwork in Tekoa in 1993 in pursuit of a doctoral dissertation. I have since visited Tekoa in 1998 and 1999.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I will limit myself to an 'Israeli-Judaic' frame of reference. Subsumed within what could broadly be termed Israeli literature on 'return migration' are studies of *Israeli* citizens who return to the state of Israel, as well as studies of non-Israeli *Jews* who 'return' to the state of Israel. See, for example, Avruch 1981, Shokeid 1974, Eisenstadt 1955, Weingrod 1985, Gitelman 1982. This literature shares with other work on 'return migration' (see, for example, Gmelch 1980) a concern with issues surrounding the adaptation and readjustment of immigrants and return migrants, and with the impact of returnees on the home society. There has also been a long-standing interest in the problematics of 'place' in Israel. See, for example, Kimmerling 1983, Kimmerling 1989, Schweid 1985, and more recently, Boyarin 1996, Gurevitch and Aran 1994, Ben-Ari and Bilu 1996, Paine 1989, Paine 1995.

The Jews, as a people, are defined by their religion, which is distinctive among the world religions in its territorial focus on *Eretz Yisrael*: the [promised] Land of Israel. Yet the people themselves...have been deterritorialised through the millennia. Now that they have restored themselves to the primordial territory (or part of it), the question arises: how are they to behave *there*? (Paine 1989: 123; see also Ben-Ari and Bilu 1996)

He suggests that Jews' varying answers to this question depend on *what* they see as being restored to them (a national homeland or a land of destiny), as well as on *how* they see this restoration as having come about (whether through human or divine agency). He moves on to argue that, because Jews' understanding of the Land of Israel and its history reflects different readings of a *common text*, they 'enact their lives as though they are living in different Israels' (ibid.), each reflecting its own 'distinctive accounts of time...and of place' (ibid.: 122). Hence, 'in constructing behaviour they reconstruct (or "continue") selected Jewish "traditions"' (ibid.: 124). Furthermore, people 'pull' their 'present day-world...into a measure of consonance with the ideological message from a Jewish tradition that is being restored' (ibid.: 131) by resorting to an inventive form of behaviour that resonates closely with what Schecher calls 'restored behaviour'—behaviour which

offers to both individuals and groups the chance to become someone else 'for the time being'...or the chance to become what they once were. Or even, and most often, 'to *rebecome what they never were*'. (Schecher 1981, cited in Paine 1989: 124; emphasis in original)

While I find the core of Paine's hypothesis compelling, I am concerned that his explanation of Jews' behaviour in Israel concentrates on the fact of 'restoration' at the expense of two other salient factors: the 'migrant/immigrant' experience of those who 'return', and the influence of the dominant nationalist discourse on place and settlement.<sup>8</sup> These two factors are especially significant for an understanding of the settlers' 'return' to and behaviour in *particular* settlements in the occupied territories. I would therefore like to add two connected suggestions to Paine's argument that Jews construct their 'Israels', and correspondingly their behaviour in Israel, on the basis of different views as to what happened *there* previously, stemming from different readings of a common text. First, we need to consider what has happened to *them previously (there and elsewhere)*. I will argue that rather than re-becoming what they never were, the settlers often become *as*

<sup>8</sup> The dominant discourse on settlement as a practice has come to be crystallised retroactively around the ideology and activities, and pioneering activity (*halutsiyut*), of the members of the Second and Third Aliyah (i.e., Jewish settlers who immigrated to Palestine during the periods 1904–14 and 1919–24 respectively).

they were: individual, often immigrant pasts are *lived out* in the settlement of Tekoa, and they give it its form. Secondly, I will argue that what Paine calls the 'common text' and 'Jewish tradition' must be extended to include the Zionist 'practice of settlement' and the dominant nationalist discourse on 'place'. It is not so much the different readings of the practices of Zionist settlement which are important, however. Rather, the dominant discourse on place and the practices associated with settlement *dictate* the manner in which the settler's return to 'place' is actualized. Both immigrant pasts and Zionist practices have roles to play in explaining how Tekoans meet the challenge posed by their immigrant status to their claims of an organic connection to their 'home' in Tekoa: on the one hand, 'familiar' life-styles are re-created; on the other hand, familiar or at least institutionalized practices guide the process of return and emplacement.

To give something of the background, I shall first provide a general overview of the process of 'return' that led to the creation of Tekoa. I will suggest that the founders of Tekoa saw the 'place' they were returning to as inherently malleable. In the following section, I focus on how the Tekoans 'work' this malleability to emplace themselves in Tekoa. I examine three aspects of their emplacement: the physical, the structural, and the communal.<sup>9</sup> The structural aspects reveal the influence of the practice of Zionist settlement, while the spatial and communal aspects reflect the influence of the immigrant pasts of the settlers. In the conclusion I return to the original question of whether Tekoans are able to bridge the gap between their immigrant status to Tekoa and their claims of an organic connection to it.

*Tekoa: Creating the Possibility of a 'Place' to Return to*

*And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked out of the land that I have given them (Amos 9:14–15)*

(Tekoan pamphlet for newcomers, n.d.)

The actual process of 're-claiming' Tekoa, the supposed home of the prophet Amos, located some twenty kilometres south-east of Jerusalem in the Judean desert, was prosaic: there was no 'miraculous' intervention of the kind that was credited with winning Israel the West Bank in 1967. Nor was there any 'stealing out in the dead of the night and capturing wind-swept hills'—classic settler activity asso-

<sup>9</sup> In the interests of brevity, I do not focus here on personal emplacement through language, dress, occupation, or children's names (see, for example, Rapport 1998, Kaul-Seidman 1999).

ciated with the Gush Emunim movement.<sup>10</sup> Instead, Tekoa came into existence in 1975, when the Labour government sent a Nahal *garin*<sup>11</sup> there to create a 'security outpost' in order to check smuggling activities from Jordan into Israel along the shore of the Dead Sea. With the change in government in 1977, Tekoa was handed over to the offices of the Jewish Agency, which was made responsible for populating the place with civilians.<sup>12</sup>

Around this time, a group of Russian immigrants living in a suburb of Tel Aviv decided, as Doris,<sup>13</sup> a member of the group, put it, that their mere presence in Israel was not 'enough'. Born in the Ukraine to a non-religious Jewish family, Doris received an 'ordinary' education culminating in a doctorate in physics in the former Soviet Union. Engaged in matters political, she spent her adolescent years in the Communist Youth Party (Komsomol) and later, as a young adult, was part of a clandestine 'democracy group'. Through this underground group, she came across the writings of a 'Jewish Zionist', Jabotinsky, and the novel *Exodus* by Leon Uris, both of which impressed upon her the importance of the idea of Zionism. Spurred by the realization that Israel was 'the place for the Jews', she moved to Israel with her husband and daughter in 1973. In Israel, she and her husband

<sup>10</sup> The Gush Emunim, or Bloc of the Faithful, was a social movement that came into existence in 1974. It was distinguished by its irredentist stance towards the occupied territories. In the Gush's parlance, these territories formed the historic heartland of the covenanted 'Land of Israel', the settlement of which was a religious obligation (*mitzvah*) incumbent on every Jew, because the unity of the Jewish people with 'the land' would signify the advent of the messianic age. Underlying this stance was the belief that the events of the 1967 Six-Day War were 'miraculous', and that divine intervention had 'redeemed' the historic heartland of Israel for the Jewish people. Settlement activity spearheaded by the group which preceded the movement began in the aftermath of the Six-Day War and echoed classic Zionist settlement activity of the 'Tower and Stockade period' (1936–9), where 'facts on the ground' were illegally and daringly set up under the cover of night.

<sup>11</sup> Nahal, a Hebrew acronym for 'Fighting Pioneer Youth', is a regular unit of the Israeli Defence Forces that combines military service with agricultural training, with the aim of producing potential members for co-operative agricultural settlements. Its soldiers are organized into *garinim* (literally, nuclei) or groups. *Garin* also denotes an 'élite' or 'vanguard' group that precedes other settlers.

<sup>12</sup> The Jewish Agency was set up in 1920 and is a non-governmental Zionist organization responsible for programmes relating to immigrant absorption and settlement construction. Since 1967, it has been responsible for assigning approved sites to settlement movements and groups. For reasons of political convenience, all activities of the Jewish Agency in the occupied territories are carried out under the auspices of the 'World Zionist Organization's Department of Rural Settlement'. For details of the role of the Jewish Agency in the Jewish settlement of the West Bank, see Peretz 1986.

<sup>13</sup> All personal names here are pseudonyms.

were struck by the humdrum existence of life. The 'normality' of work, *ulpan*,<sup>14</sup> and even the holy city of Jerusalem left them looking for more.

We felt there was more to be done.... This just couldn't be the end—that we got here and simply sat on our backs...there had to be things to be done.

'More' became an option when she and her husband encountered the Gush Emunim at a demonstration that the latter staged against a visit by Henry Kissinger and the pending negotiations over the Sinai. Impressed by the optimism, activism, and 'faith' of the Gush Emunim, she and her husband affiliated themselves with Amanah,<sup>15</sup> the settlement wing of the Gush Emunim, and formed a *garin* or 'nucleus for settlement purposes' in Givon, north of Jerusalem, in 1976. In 1977, she wrote to the Minister of Agriculture, Ariel Sharon, and asked whether her *garin* could move to Tekoa, which was still a Nahal outpost.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the year they were offered the option of settling Tekoa, as long as they could populate it with twenty-five families, the minimum required to turn a Nahal outpost into a settlement. Although only seventeen people (two families and eight single persons, all of them Russian) moved to Tekoa, the authorities were 'convinced' that the stipulated number would be achieved in due course of time.

The winding road leading up to Tekoa was a barely navigable dirt track, and all that existed on top of the hill were the few prefabricated structures which had housed the Nahal *garin*. The future builders of Tekoa were offered a couple of prefabricated trailers in which to house themselves. When the Nahal *garin* left in December 1977, the 'settlers' adopted a kibbutz lifestyle and, spurred on by Doris, decided to experiment with a 'mixed' settlement in which religious and non-religious settlers would live together in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. Their resolve was put to the test by the arrival of members of a *yeshivat hesder*.<sup>17</sup> Some members of the original Russian *garin* left immediately, but by July 1978, the balance had reversed itself, escalating friction between the *yeshivat hesder* and the secular Russians, causing the former to leave.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrew language class.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, 'covenant'. When Likud came to power in 1977, the Gush Emunim turned the political patronage this provided to their advantage by establishing a recognized settlement movement backed by Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Settlement of the World Zionist Organization. In doing so, all settlement activity came within the category of government-recognized and -sponsored activity.

<sup>16</sup> At that time all activity relating to settlements in the occupied territories was overseen and approved by a cabinet-level committee called the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Settlement. As Minister of Agriculture, Ariel Sharon was the chairman of this committee.

<sup>17</sup> An arrangement made in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) whereby religious men can combine military service with their rabbinical studies. The *yeshivat hesder* serves as a 'field seminary'.

Matters improved for the fledgling settlement with the arrival of a *garin* from New York called Lev Zion ('the heart of Zion') in 1979. Formed at about the same time that Doris and her Russian cohorts were attempting to find something meaningful to do in the state of Israel, this *garin* of New Yorkers began as a neighbourhood synagogue movement.<sup>18</sup> Its members had, for varying reasons, felt impelled to 'return to Zion' and to 'contribute in some way'. The 'best thing', they decided, would be to 'build in Judea and Samaria...the heart of the country'. The reasons behind this impulse to 'return' and 'build' differed for each member. For example, Michael, one of the leaders of the group, had been raised on a staple diet of revisionist Zionist ideology<sup>19</sup> and believed that:

Every Jewish person who is born in this age has to confront who he is as a Jew at some point in time. This is the effect of the modern era and the existence of a Jewish state. Now that there is a Jewish state, one has to decide whether one wants to be part of it...whether one wants an active role or a role as a spectator in this unfolding of Jewish state history.

David, on the other hand, had grown up in a religious Zionist home with the idea that living in the USA was 'temporary' and that he was 'obligated' to live in Israel. His adolescent notions were strengthened after a visit to Israel in 1968 when he was able to 'realize [his] dreams' by visiting Jewish sites in the occupied territories. He resolved then to 'return' and make his 'contribution'.

United by their 'deeply ideological' personalities, the group had spent countless hours debating the form, structure, and location of their future settlement. Among the issues discussed were whether they would 'build their own place', that is, follow in the footsteps of the original Zionist pioneers (*halutsim*) and build a settlement from scratch, or whether they would locate their settlement near a city; how the settlement would follow the tenets of Orthodox Judaism if it were to have a swimming pool; and whether the settlers could plant blueberry bushes. Eventually they agreed on the pragmatic course of moving to an existing settlement and were accepted as a '*garin* for settlement purposes' by the Jewish Agency just two days before their departure from America.

<sup>18</sup> Membership of the *garin* waxed and waned. Not all the members in New York moved to Israel.

<sup>19</sup> He was a member of Betar, an activist Zionist youth movement founded in Latvia in 1923. Betar encouraged its members to immigrate to Palestine/Israel and espoused the importance of personal pioneering to the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the river Jordan. Many Tekoans, especially those who are immigrants, have belonged to Betar at some stage in their lives.

Upon its arrival in Israel, the *garin* based itself in Jerusalem and began visiting various settlements.<sup>20</sup> Although they received quite negative reports about Tekoa ('it had only three families but major social problems') from the officer in the Jewish Agency who oversaw their immigration to Israel, they decided to visit it. And, contrary to their expectations, they were impressed by the 'open' and 'friendly' Russians, as well as with what Tekoa 'had to offer': the potential to build anew because of its infancy, and the potential for growth because of its location near Jerusalem. These were sufficient reasons to sway the Americans who had wanted to build a 'religious' settlement to experiment with the 'mixed' nature of Tekoa.

In addition to these Americans, other couples (both immigrant and native Israelis) and stray single persons (immigrant and native Israelis) had straggled into Tekoa from the end of 1978, motivated by their Zionist training and idealism.<sup>21</sup> By the end of 1979 Tekoa boasted eighteen families; and by February 1980 Tekoa's constitution, which described it as a community village (*yishuv kefar kehilati*), was accepted by the Labour Ministry of the State of Israel. Because Tekoa was located across the Green Line, the World Zionist Organization<sup>22</sup> formally granted it 'pioneering status'. This entitled Tekoa to cheap loans and government subsidies (which individual settlers were and still are entitled to).<sup>23</sup> Hence Tekoa's population has grown steadily to reach about 180 families today. In 1993, an extension was built to Tekoa called Tekoa Beth.

The story of the founding of Tekoa reveals two facts that are crucial to an understanding of the way in which Tekoans have come to emplace themselves in Tekoa. First, it reveals that Tekoa's founders were moved by the desire to 'return' to and 'build' the Land of Israel, rather than Tekoa in particular. Circumstances, and to a certain extent personal preferences, led them to move to Tekoa. An important implication of this is that Tekoa's founders did not see Tekoa as *the* ancestral home to which they had dreamt of returning. Rather, Tekoa was a space they could *make* into their *own* home because it lay in one corner of the expansive ancestral estate.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, because Tekoa was not *the* ancestral home, it did not throw up

<sup>20</sup> Their ardent scouting let them to be dubbed the 'Americans who were looking for free *shabatot* [sabbaths]'.

<sup>21</sup> Among them were a native-immigrant, secular couple who had been committed Labour Zionists. They moved to Tekoa as a mark of protest against the territorial concessions made by Israel to Egypt in the Camp David Accords.

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 12.

<sup>23</sup> A person buying a house in Tekoa today can avail himself of special mortgages and loans totalling up to US \$49,000. Of this, \$14,000 turn into 'grants' if the person remains in Tekoa for at least fifteen years.

<sup>24</sup> While the settlers view the entire land of Israel as their rightful ancestral inheritance, it is in and through individual settlements (in this case Tekoa) that settlers are able to 'mark' or demarcate their own space within this estate. Hence, for example, when settlers talk about



any behavioural proscriptions and prescriptions about the manner of their emplacement. In other words, even though Tekoa was part of a larger 'Jewishly' inscribed place, it presented itself as a *prima materia* (Bowmann 1999: 1), or as a space waiting to be made into a place.<sup>25</sup>

*Emplacement: Closing the Gap between Immigrant Status and Claims of Organic Connection*

Physical-temporal emplacement:

Biblical home, American suburbia, military barracks

Today, Tekoa bears the signs of contented middle age, its houses spilling, like a corpulent belly, over the hillside. From a distance, the few prefabricated structures at the top of the hill are barely visible. Instead, one is struck by the slanting red roofs of the suburban houses that protrude starkly against the barren landscape.

An electronic gate, manned around the clock by Tekoans and Israeli soldiers, greets one at the entrance to the fenced-in settlement. Just past this security post, the road splits into three roads; the ones in the centre and on the left loop round to form a ring road around 'new' Tekoa, while the road to the right leads to 'old' Tekoa at the top of the hill.

New Tekoa forms a wobbly semi-circle. Along its diameter is the central bus stop, the local mini-market (*makolet*), the dispensary, a second-hand clothes store, a milliner's factory, and the offices of a computer software firm. Near the centre of new Tekoa is the Ashkenazi synagogue, the kindergarten, the day-care centre, the men's ritual bath (located in the basement of someone's house), and the library. Suburban houses are built along tree-lined pathways; a few are hidden behind dense green shrubbery. Many are completely unfenced, with children's bicycles and toys littering the pathways.<sup>26</sup>

The vineyard and the 'parents' park' (complete with a basketball court and memorial plaques among the swings) separate new Tekoa from old Tekoa. To the right of the road to new Tekoa is a mushroom farm owned by a local family, which employs some people from Tekoa. Located right at the top of the hill are the administrative offices of the settlement, the residents' mailboxes, the community 'dining room' (used today to host visiting tour groups or festive gatherings in Te-

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imparting the sense of a 'home' to their children, they are referring to their settlements in particular, rather than to the West Bank in general.

<sup>25</sup> Here I am invoking Tuan's (1977) distinction between space and place.

<sup>26</sup> The erection of fences to demarcate individual properties has been contentious. Among the issues debated have been the suitability of fences to communal living and the permissible height of fences. For details, see Rokeah 1984.

koa), the community centre (where communal meetings and leisure activities are held), and the office of the goat ranch. Located between the administrative centre and new Tekoa are the Sephardi synagogue, the women's ritual bath, and several prefabricated trailers which house residents who are 'trying out' Tekoa, as well as those who are awaiting permanent housing in Tekoa. Housed in other prefabricated trailers are Israeli girls doing National Service, IDF troops when the need arises, and the local youth group, Bnei Akiva. The school in Tekoa was housed to the right of the administrative block, but has since moved to the area near the mushroom farm, the old school premises now serving as a study house for married men (*kolel*). All the buildings in old Tekoa except the trailers of those 'trying out the settlement' are used for distinctly communal activities. Even these trailers, it could be argued, are in fact communal spaces, because the liminal condition of their inhabitants puts them under public scrutiny. In sharp contrast to the buildings in new Tekoa, these are remarkably temporary, makeshift structures reminiscent of the bygone 'pioneering' period of the settlement.

Past old Tekoa, further along the hill, are rows of prefabricated trailers housing both visiting tour groups and new immigrants to Israel who are given their 'first home in the homeland' (*bayit rishon bemoledet*) in Tekoa. I was given half a trailer at the edge of the settlement.

The location of Tekoa and its spatial arrangement provide an interesting commentary on the process of emplacement. Tekoans have expressed their desire to reconstruct Tekoa as a biblical site by maintaining the Nahal outpost on a hilltop, the 'proper habitat for the nation of Israel in biblical times' (Kellerman 1993: 9), rather than in a more hospitable valley. This desire may arise from the fact that, although Tekoans claim that their settlement is the site of the biblical home of the prophet Amos, they are aware of and often visit archeological evidence which suggests that the probable site is actually located in the neighbouring Arab village of Tu'qua.<sup>27</sup> In a bid to emphasize the 'naturalness' of Tekoa in the Judean landscape, Tekoans long resisted fencing in the settlement. When a fence was eventually erected in 1993, much controversy surrounded it because it was seen as marking Tekoa as an 'alien ghetto' in the landscape. This equation between fencing and alien-ness clearly springs from two sources: first, images of Jewish ghettos in exile; and secondly, the unspoken issue of the unfenced nature of the surrounding Palestinian habitations.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, it is only in this aspect of their physical emplacement that Tekoans formally acknowledge the Palestinian presence on 'their' landscape, or recognize that their settlement is not 'peacefully' embedded in

<sup>27</sup> For reasons unknown to me, Tekoans have not attempted (so far) to 'reclaim' this site. They do however, mention, the 'unchanged' name of the site as 'proof' that Palestinians recognize it as a Jewish site.

<sup>28</sup> This does not mean that Tekoans see the unfenced nature of Palestinian villages as symbolic of the organicity of the Palestinian relationship to the landscape.

it. This is not to say that Tekoans have been oblivious to the Palestinians or to their own role as occupiers. Rather, until the *intifada*, individual Tekoans walked an unusual path of contradiction: some prided themselves in maintaining 'cordial' relations with their Palestinian neighbours and expressed this by offering lifts or, more radically, as in the case of Menahem Fruman, the rabbi of Tekoa, by espousing a bi-national state.<sup>29</sup> Others saw the Palestinians as 'temporary' dwellers who would, they hoped, recognize that they had overstayed their welcome and leave. Since the *intifada*, this latter view has changed into a more honest militancy, where Tekoans (whose numbers have been reinforced by an influx of Russian immigrants and less 'idealistically' motivated Israelis) see room only for themselves. Moreover, those who had seen themselves as 'moderate' earlier have also come to realize that their acts of 'cordiality' were at best gestures of unreciprocated, righteous, colonial largesse. Hence the fencing in of Tekoa bespeaks its self-conscious fortification and acknowledgement of a situation of war.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Tekoans' desire to see the settlement as 'organically' connected to the landscape, the architecture of the settlement does not do much to further this ambition. Buildings vary not only in the degree of their permanency, but also in their style. All the public buildings, save the Ashkenazi synagogue, bear the marks of standard military structures, with an air of bureaucratic unimaginativeness as well as dusty impermanence. Some, such as the original school and the secretariat, are barrack-like, with rooms running off long front verandahs. Others, such as the day care centre, do not have a verandah, but still have a regimental air. The houses in new Tekoa, by contrast, are far more imaginative, even though some have a standard appearance because they were built in phases by a contractor. Even among these there is variation, as they have been altered externally to accommodate growing families. Needless to say, many have remodelled the interior to suit their personal tastes. And despite their uniformity, the 'contractor houses' are unlike general housing in mainstream Israel. To begin with, they are independent bungalows, while most housing in mainstream Israel is in the form of apartment blocks. Secondly, unlike a minority of neighbouring Arab independent housing and some of the newer housing projects in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, these houses are not ostentatious villas. Rather, they are quintessentially suburban in a way that evokes American suburbia. And whereas most housing in mainstream Israel and Palestinian housing in the occupied territories uses stone to blend into the landscape, these houses, with their slanting red roofs, deliberately protrude out into the landscape. Houses that have been built privately are imaginative and take cognizance of their surroundings. Almost all of these, for instance, have large windows that afford a view of the spectacular scenery. One person has created a top 'deck', where the

<sup>29</sup> I cannot comment on how the neighbouring Palestinians saw these 'relations'.

<sup>30</sup> The increasingly militant stance adopted by Tekoans has led at least two marriages to break up, with the 'moderate' partner leaving the settlement.

upper floor of the house has windows on three sides. Another person has built a windmill on top of his house in order to take advantage of the strong winds that buffet Tekoa. And a couple of people have adorned the walls of their homes with photographs of the surrounding scenery. Despite these concessions to the natural environment, most of the houses do not *aim* to belong in or to the landscape. The following sentiment, for example, is typical: 'Nowhere in Israel could I have a place like this. Perhaps in upstate New York, yes, but not here.'

The settlers' 'foreign-ness' is especially evident in the internal lay-out of their homes and in the style of decoration. The immigrants to Israel bring with them their stock of records, books, newspaper clippings, photographs, and other memorabilia, which are replenished by visitors from their twenty-odd countries of origin. Similarly, the children of immigrants grow up with toys and books sent from their parents' country of origin. Those who grew up in mainstream Israel decorate their homes with artwork done by their children, or with gifts from relatives who have travelled abroad, notably to India and the Far East. Religious books (*sforim*) line the bookshelves of those who are religious, as they would in any religious home. Computers with noisy computer games, constantly whirring washing-machines, beeping microwaves, and television sets tuned either to MTV, American soaps, or local news programs, and video-cassette recorders playing Disney movies, vie to dominate the chaos of homes with several young children. There is little in the decor of the homes to distinguish these as 'biblical/settler' homes, except perhaps for the odd banner from a demonstration or the presence of an Israeli national flag.

Tekoans emplace themselves in their 'home' spatially by building physical structures that allow them to replicate a familiar life-style (including the infrastructure needed to maintain an observant Jewish life) or to attain a life-style to which they had aspired elsewhere. On the other hand, by retaining 'old Tekoa' as a communal space whose architecture is transient, run-down and unfamiliar, Tekoans remind themselves that they have to journey to reach this 'home'.

The manner in which Tekoans emplace themselves temporally is somewhat similar to that of their spatial emplacement. Tekoans, who are enthusiastic consumers and producers of information technology, are very much moored in the temporal present. Moreover, as avid readers of history, they see themselves as active agents in it, meeting a 'need of the hour'. However, when they are asked to attribute a precise date of origin to their settlement, Tekoans are deliberately vague, conflating history with cosmology, and claiming that 'Tekoa' has existed for 'five thousand' years. When pressed for a precise date, they cite that in the 1970s, with the caveat that it merely signifies the 'building up' of *this phase* of 'Tekoa'. Understated though it is, the distinction between the mythical 'Tekoa' and Tekoa, their settlement, is clear to them. Hence, it becomes important for them to set their actions against the background of a timeless cosmological eternity, even as they perform them in the temporal present.

## Structural emplacement: The community village

While the architecture of Tekoa makes little attempt to reflect the local environment, its structural organization reflects greater cognizance of local conditions. Formally organized as a 'community village', Tekoa differs from the more traditional forms of settlement, the kibbutz and the *moshav*, in that it makes no attempt to be an economically self-sustaining industrial or agrarian community. Rather it is quasi-urban, with its members owning their property and often commuting to work. In this way the structural organization suits the arid conditions of the Judean desert, which do not support intensive agriculture.<sup>31</sup>

Just as importantly, Tekoa's organization provides enough flexibility to allow for variety in the economic and social profile of prospective settlers, since Tekoans can work either in the settlement or outside it. Members of Tekoa are academics, bureaucrats, artists, entrepreneurs, schoolteachers, journalists, doctors, and farmers, among other vocations. Many of those who have chosen to work in the settlement work in agriculture, often because they want to be 'Zionist pioneers' or to be 'one with nature' (or both). For the sixty per cent of Tekoans who commute to work, on the other hand, the move to Tekoa has not meant any dramatic change in their professional lives. Rather, it has allowed them to 'kill two birds with one stone': to be 'Zionist pioneers', even while continuing to pursue their own careers. Moreover, by limiting the size of its population, Tekoa's organization as a 'community village' allows it to aspire to idyllic rusticity, even while its members pursue a cosmopolitan mix of professions.

The population is limited through the process of absorption (*kelitah*), which is remarkably similar to the procedure in a kibbutz. Potential settlers are screened before they are allowed to become members of the settlement. This process, which is long and drawn out, is initiated outside the physical confines of the settlement. Normally, when a person, family, or *garin*<sup>32</sup> decide they would like to move to Tekoa, they make an enquiry with Amanah, which organizes a meeting for them with the Tekoa 'absorption department' (*va'ad kelitah*). Invariably, interested people are invited to spend a sabbath in Tekoa, as an introduction to the settlement. During this visit they stay with one or sometimes two families. Frequently, the host families are friends or relatives, from whom the prospective member has come to hear of the settlement in the first place. Since the visit is over the sabbath, the prospective applicants are able to get a feel for communal life, either by attending synagogue services or Torah classes, or by taking part in other sabbath activities, such as eating leisurely festive meals and walking around the settlement. If,

<sup>31</sup> For details of the 'community village' system, see Newman 1985, Benvenisti 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Initially in that order of preference. With the passage of time, 'families' have come to top the list. Single people have always remained the least favoured. As a stalwart whose own single status had been cause for concern explained, despite the fact that he belonged to a *garin*, 'The mark of a settler was a child and a tree. Anybody lacking both was suspect.'

after this meeting, the prospective applicants want to proceed further, they are required to submit to various psychological and psychometric tests at the office of the Jewish Agency in order to prove that they are 'mentally sound' as well as fit for life in a community. This is followed by a formal interview with a committee comprising one representative of the Jewish Agency, one from the Tekoa absorption department, and one from Amanah. If all goes well, the applicants are invited to live in the settlement for a year, during which 'the settlement tries them out' as much as 'they try out the settlement'. At the end of this period, the final decision on whether the applicants can become members is taken by the community, which votes collectively. In the past, one partner might be accepted, while the other was not. In such circumstances, the absorption committee could override the decision, or alternatively the couple could decide to leave. A change has now been made whereby couples are voted on as a unit, in order to avoid such embarrassing situations. However, the collective unit has been limited to couples and does not extend to a *garin*. During the trial period, people typically inhabit the prefabricated trailers in 'old Tekoa', moving into their own houses only on acceptance.

The 'process of absorption' reveals that, despite the rhetoric of a 'natural, normal' emplacement, both 'returning' and belonging in Tekoa have a formal, procedural side, the structure of which derives from the classic Zionist practice of settlement. Like Zionist 'pioneers', the settlers are selected to form an 'élite vanguard'. Just as importantly, *kelitah* reveals a certain self-consciousness about the attempt to re-emplace. One New Yorker who recognized the élitism of *kelitah* argued that it was a necessary evil for the 'small, isolated, artificially created community', because 'if [it was] open to everybody it would be a sociological disaster'. He was quick to remind me, however, that he had felt free to use the word 'artificial' with me because he 'trusted' me and because I, unlike *The Times*, would not use this as 'proof' of the alien-ness of the settlement in the West Bank. Now that Tekoa has managed to achieve a level of social stability, many argue that this process of *kelitah* is an anachronism.

Other organizational features which Tekoa has as a 'community village' ensure that Tekoans are involved in and engaged with the communal life of the settlement. Rather like the kibbutz and *moshav*, for instance, Tekoa is a co-operative union, with ultimate authority resting with the forum of all official members of the settlement, the *asefat haverim*. Its affairs are administered by officials elected by and from the *asefat haverim*. The management committee, *va'ad menahel*, which oversees various sub-committees, meets weekly. It consists of a mayor elected for a period of five years, and five members elected for periods of two years. Its decisions are implemented by the secretariat, which is usually staffed by members of the settlement. At the time of fieldwork, however, the secretary was commuting from an adjoining settlement. The budget of the settlement is drawn up and administered by the mayor in conjunction with the secretary. The power of the manage-

ment committee is kept in check by the 'standards committee' (*va'ad bikoret*), which also receives complaints from the members of the community.

Entertainment and leisure activities are organized and controlled by a special sub-committee. Provision is made for a wide range of classes for both children and adults. The classes on offer for children range from karate, ballet, choral singing, carpentry, football, maths, drawing, electronics, ceramics, and philately to Talmud and Torah. For adults, the range is considerably narrower and focuses on educational subjects: thus Jewish philosophy, accounting, and 'the way to early rising' are offered alongside choral singing, ceramics, and dance. In addition, the settlement runs Hebrew language classes for new immigrants. Communal life is also facilitated by the publication of a local fortnightly, which features articles of local political interest, theological discussions, recipes, and local gossip.

The structural organization of Tekoa reveals its embeddedness in Zionist topography. Like other forms of Zionist settlement, Tekoa is formally organized and its 'social balance' carefully constructed. Rather than re-create a structure found in the common text of 'Jewish tradition', Tekoa reproduces earlier prototypes of Zionist settlement, adapted to meet the requirements of its terrain and of its inhabitants.

#### Communal emplacement:

Beyond the 'ghetto', cosmopolitanism, and new 'frontiers'

Tekoans boast that there are 'no average Tekoans', but they are proud as a collective to fly the banner of a 'mixed community settlement' (*yishuv me'urav*). The brainchild of Doris and of several other Gush Emunim activists, the *yishuv me'urav* is unusual among either the Gush Emunim settlements or other forms of ideological settlement in Israel.<sup>33</sup> While most of the latter place emphasis on social homogeneity, Tekoa has chosen to stress heterogeneity (albeit ensuring that 'social balance is maintained'). Hence it 'welcomes religious and secular Jews, immigrants as well as native-born Israelis (*sabras*), professionals, and farmers'. Translated into practicalities, the fact that the community is 'mixed' means several things: no discrimination on the basis of religiosity is made for admission to Tekoa; traffic is allowed on the sabbath on the ring road that circles a part of the settlement; the settlement welcomes visitors who drive into the settlement on the sabbath; the school, although supervised by the National Religious Board of Education, admits children from 'secular' and 'religious' homes and does not 'force' any male child to don a skullcap on the school premises; and there are no stipula-

<sup>33</sup> Other *me'urav* settlements associated with Amanah are Har Gilo, Kfar Eldad, and El-David.

tions on the kind of dress that can be worn in the settlement.<sup>34</sup> In fact, most of these principles are modified somewhat to accommodate the 'religious'. Hence, children are required to bring vegetarian food to the school in Tekoa in order to avoid any transgression of the dietary laws. Similarly, the single grocery store stocks only kosher food certified by the Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel. And Tekoa has yet to build a swimming pool, despite longstanding plans to build one and repeated debates about gender-segregated opening hours to ensure 'modesty'. Also, even those families who are publicly labelled 'secular' more often than not maintain a kosher kitchen, or at least a vegetarian one, so that they can have comensal relations with their neighbours.

When Tekoans describe their settlement as 'mixed' in daily conversation, they refer, not so much to the above details, as to the various *possibilities* which the settlement offers: the possibility of expressing one's religiosity as one wants to; of exposing one's children to 'difference' in a non-threatening manner; of expressing individuality; of escaping pigeon-holing; of maintaining a 'mixed' (religious-secular) marriage; of approximating to the ideal of 'Jewish unity' etc.—in other words, the possibility of creating the kind of community they would be 'comfortable' in. These possibilities not only are important to those who are categorised as 'religious' (*dati*), but also to those who are categorised as 'secular' (*hiloni*). Thus, for example, Israeli-born *dati* women do not feel the need to express their religiosity through dress in Tekoa.<sup>35</sup> And many individuals whose level of observance marks them out as secular, but who consider themselves 'privately religious', are able to avail themselves of the opportunities for learning afforded by a 'religious' environment without the attendant proscriptions and prescriptions.

The fact that families from different backgrounds live next to each other enables parents to expose their children to 'difference' in a non-threatening manner. Prompted either by their experiences of a multicultural city in their country of origin, or by their experiences of being 'ghettoized' in housing colonies in Israel as children or as new immigrants, Tekoans seek to recreate the best of what they left behind or to avoid what they hated. Hence several religious Israelis argue that, as young children, their 'outsider' status was reinforced to them by the housing colonies within which they lived and through which their parents 'protected' them from the secular world. Representing a far more confident generation, these religious Israelis believe that it is 'good' for their children to be exposed to difference (albeit within Judaism alone). For religious immigrants, the mixed settlement offers the possibilities of a multicultural city within the 'closed' environment of a village. Like the religious Israelis, these immigrants are keen to escape 'ghettoiza-

<sup>34</sup> At one point one of the residents of Tekoa was a transvestite who wore flamboyant mini-skirts.

<sup>35</sup> Many *dati* women wear trousers and do not wear any form of head covering, save on certain ritual occasions.



tion' because of its diaspora connotations. Surprised by the stringent 'ghettoization' along lines of class, ethnicity, level of religiosity, etc. within Israeli society, these immigrants are aiming to break free from the diaspora conditions in which they lived with their 'noses pressed against a window'. Once again, it is not only the religious who see this aspect of the mixed settlement as advantageous for their children, but several secular members. In their case, they want to give their children an element of Jewish education and some exposure to Jewish tradition, but are unwilling to be the role models. Here neighbours fill the role.<sup>36</sup>

Not only do the Tekoans actively seek to maintain these possibilities, they also guard them zealously against any encroachment. For example, when a group of strictly Orthodox Jews sought membership of Tekoa *en masse* in 1993, after much acrimonious debate they were allowed in, only because it was deemed politically necessary in the wake of the Oslo Accords.<sup>37</sup> Even those who voted to accept the strictly Orthodox Jews expressed reservations about their 'colonizing' tendencies.

By creating a 'mixed' community, Tekoans support their claim to be a 'vanguard' group, inhabiting not merely a geographical frontier, but also a social one. Moreover, they are able to create a 'Jewish' space where their own individuality is neither compromised nor stifled. As with their physical emplacement in Tekoa, their communal emplacement informs the home they create with the contours of their past.

### Conclusion

If one asks Tekoans to list the key words they associate with Tekoa, one is likely to hear words such as mixed community, strong winds, goat ranch, and mushroom farm, and to hear the rabbi's name and the names of individuals.<sup>38</sup> Conspicuous in its near absence will be 'home to the prophet Amos'.<sup>39</sup> Herein lies the distance

<sup>36</sup> This rhetoric of multiculturalism weakens considerably when applied to the 'enemy without' (Palestinian Arabs) and the 'enemy within' (Jewish nationalists who do not view the 'Land of Israel' as central to the Jewish nation and are willing to 'trade land for peace'). Many Tekoans had formerly been more tolerant of Palestinian 'difference' than of the difference of the 'enemy within', had said that they 'understood' (but did not accept) Palestinian demands for sovereignty, and acknowledged that they would also 'throw stones' if they were Palestinian. However, Tekoans have increasingly come to conceive of the situation as one of 'us against them', and have cast the Palestinian Arabs in the role of antagonists, whose 'difference' is not to be ignored but rejected.

<sup>37</sup> Large settlements were less likely to be dismantled in an eventual peace deal.

<sup>38</sup> Some residents of Tekoa are prominent in the national political arena.

<sup>39</sup> In fact, a recent advertisement for homes in Tekoa advertised the property simply as being located 'near Jerusalem'.

that Tekoans maintain between the biblical place they have 'returned' to and the individual home it has become. In examining, therefore, whether and how Tekoans close the hiatus between their status as immigrants to Tekoa and their claims of organic connection to it, one needs to ask with *which* Tekoa they aim to close the gap: the ancestral, biblical home they return to, the Zionist 'fact on the ground', or the individual home they create.

Since it is their organic connection with the biblical home which Tekoans call upon to justify their 'return', one might expect that it is the need to bridge the gap between themselves and their biblical home that is most pressing for them; and since they actualize their connection to the biblical home through the act of settling, one might think that the activity of settlement is an attempt to bridge precisely this gap. But as I have argued, the act of settling is embedded in Zionist practices, and the home this act creates not only betrays but celebrates their foreignness in the surrounding landscape. Tekoans make no attempt to 'restore' a biblical home homologous with the one which exists in their reading of 'Jewish texts' and which they call upon to justify their 'return'; rather, they are content to *re-make* the place to which they 'return' as a Zionist fact on the ground, and as an individual home with which they are both comfortable and familiar, leaving the gap between themselves and the biblical home that justifies their presence wide open, and evident for all to see.

How, then, are Tekoans able to live with the evident hiatus between the home they create and their biblical home? I offer two suggestions.<sup>40</sup> First, returning to the biblical home is analogous to entering a 'themed' or 'pre-narrated space' (Yaeger 1996: 17). Even as one claims to 'return' to it, one *journeys* through it as one would through a museum or through Disney World: when one is conscious of having entered a museum or theme park, the fact that one has 'returned' does not imply that one has closed the option of leaving. Unsurprisingly, some Tekoans maintain passports of their country of origin and admit that, if political circumstances 'force' them to, they will 'return' to those countries. By maintaining their status as 'new' and 'immigrant', they are able to relate to the biblical place as it is for them: a themed space.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For another, not altogether unrelated suggestion as to why such a gap is inherent, see Bowman 1999. While Bowman's analysis focuses on the reproduction of antagonistic *relations*, which he sees as central to and constitutive of the articulation of identity, my analysis has focused on *structures* created in the process of emplacement.

<sup>41</sup> The concept of 'themed spaces' clearly resonates with Olwig's 'cultural sites'. However, while the term 'cultural sites' highlights the attachment to place in the face of movement *away* from 'the local', for example, in the face of de-territorialization, the term 'themed spaces' highlights a 'strategy of re-territorialization' (Yaeger 1996: 17).

Secondly, I draw on Rapport's (1997) argument about the role of the contradictory. He suggests that the contradictory is a 'cognitive resort, indeed a cognitive norm. In the contradictory is our evidence of our creativity, our artistry—of the constructed provisional nature of the social worlds of either/or which we inhabit—and also our inspiration to create further' (ibid.: 671). Hence it is perhaps inevitable and essential that returnees' efforts only reveal their distance from the ancestral home they claim: rather than living in a world of 'make-believe', where they attempt to become something they never were, settlers live with all the contradictions of being new immigrants to a place to which they claim an organic connection, but where they can be themselves.

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