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JERUSALEM

Korrespondenz

Bi-annual report of the Austrian Pilgrims' Hospice



JERUSALEM
Erleben. Gestalten!
Österreichisches Pilger-Hospiz





IMPRINT:

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zur Heiligen Familie
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Cover-photograph: © Manuel Rossmann

Dear friends and guests,

I hope you enjoyed a relaxing summer break. Our current Jerusalem Correspondence 18/2017 introduces you to the new logo of the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice of the Holy Family.

The city silhouette of Jerusalem is framed in gray; above right the red Jerusalem cross on a white background, the coat of arms of the local church and our connection to the Order of the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The colours of Austria are inserted into the city wall as building blocks: our pilgrim hospice belongs in this city; indeed, only in this most important site of Christendom does a church guesthouse really make sense. The building blocks also point to our construction project, the establishment of Casa Austria and the general renovation of the main building which is presently in its planning stage.

The importance of this city, which the faithful consider the focus of the world and of their lives, is captured in large characters. With the oasis of the hospice as your starting point, Jerusalem becomes an experience. We invite our guests and friends to join us!

In our social mission, in our academic work as well as in the peace work we conduct here in the Middle East. Or by gifting us a personal building block through which you are ensured a perpetual presence in Jerusalem.

All that constitutes the pilgrim hospice of the Holy Family is brought to the fore in the new logo.

We are fortunate, once again, to have attracted high-profile guest authors for this edition of the Correspondence: the contribution of Archbishop Dr. Georg Gänswein, Prefect of the Papal House, deserves special mention. The Apostolic Administrator, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, writes exclusively for us about his personal perception. Dr. Andrea Nasi offers us insight into his work at the Austrian representative office in Ramallah. Dr. Ali Qleibo, an internationally renowned essayist, describes the annual Ramadan festival



Photo: © Photostudio Floyd

in Al Quds. Professor Dieter Vieweger introduces us to the German Archaeological Institute of the Holy Land on the Mount of Olives.

Of course there is also a wealth of news on the domestic front. The building of Casa Austria on our premises continues to set the tone (albeit a rattling tone!). Our building block campaign is now well under way: the first donation blocks have already been laid. Our “social” enterprise is dedicated to the Domari community in Jerusalem. One article traces biblical hospice stories: what do they have to tell us about the character of a pilgrim hostel?

You will be pleased to know that we are updating our postcards. In the near future you will be able to buy colorful postcards at the reception, with quotations on the Holy City of Jerusalem – from Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They invite you to visit and to return.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours

RECTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYAR



JERUSALEM
Erleben. Gestalten!

Österreichisches Pilger-Hospiz

The Austrian Hospice as Parable of Pilgrimage in Jerusalem

By ARCHBISHOP DR. GEORG GÄNSWEIN

Whoever grew up with the Bible as a child, as I did, can hardly feel alien in Jerusalem. Later, as a priest, when praying the Liturgy of the Hours, I would recite Psalm 87, where it is said: "The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob ... Indeed, of Zion it will be said, 'This one and that one were born in her.'"

This one and that one, applies to me too. I too was born there, like the whole Church of Christ. How very much at home I would actually feel within Zion's gates from day one, however, was something I could never have anticipated. This is entirely thanks to the spirit of the Austrian Hospice. In the topography of the history of salvation, the Hospice occupies a special place of honour. Directly in front of its entrance, the Via Dolorosa, along which the Lord bore his cross to Golgotha, meets Al Wad Street, down which as a child the Lord had previously made the annual pilgrimage with Mary

and Joseph to the Temple of Herod, of which eleven ancient pillars are still revered today in St. Peter's in Rome. This temple was razed to the ground in 70 CE. The old pilgrimage routes, however, have remained intact in the city. The Hospice of the Holy Family lies but a few blocks away from the empty tomb of our Lord and Saviour, the ultimate goal of all Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem. Everywhere in the city we follow in the footsteps of the Saviour.

Standing on the flat roof of the Hospice, you can almost grasp with your hands the golden dome of the Dome of the Rock mosque, which for more than 1,400 years has commanded the platform where the Holy of Holies of the Jewish temple towered some 2,000 years ago. This was the temple that Jesus called the "house of my father." Behind it, the Mount of Olives, where he sweated blood. Fifty metres higher he cried over Jerusalem. To the right, the domes of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre rise from among the jumble of houses of the Old City, where our Lord was nailed to the cross, and three days later returned from the realm of the dead to the land of the living. It is a challenge to all the senses to stand on the roof of the Hospice and listen to the bells of the city, the calls of the muezzin, the many sirens, and the stirring of the Jerusalem breeze upon which Jesus' last cry wafts.

At the same time the peaceful House seems as if from another world, where with a single step we leave the Oriental bazaar of Al Wad Street behind and enter the orderly spirit of the House of Habsburg, from East to West: from the midst of the Holy Land to the heart of Europe. For in the midst of the tension-laden Old City, the House reflects something of the old Habsburg splendour and proverbial "Pietas Austriaca", at whose front

Photo: © Manuel Rossmann



The Austrian Hospice at the Via Dolorosa.



Archbishop Dr. Georg Gänswein attending an event at our Hospice.

door the history of revelation in general, and of Christianity in particular, is literally spread beneath our feet. I am doing my ministry in Rome, at the tomb of Petri, the apostle prince. But the beginning of our salvation is here. Only Christianity – and no other religion – comes from this city. Here you can almost breathe the history in. The story of the Incarnation of God unfolds in front of the Hospice like a kaleidoscope. Immediately opposite, at the fourth Station of the Cross, we find the representation of a small pair of women's sandals beside the footprints of Jesus in a Byzantine-Armenian mosaic from the 6th century. Here Mary is said to have met her martyred son on his way to Calvary, with the crown of thorns on his head and the cross on his bloody shoulder.

But from the roof of the Hospice, we can also see the enormous wall that the Holy Land is cutting into the Judean escarpment to the south of Jerusalem. "All walls fall, today, tomorrow, or in a hundred years", Pope Francis likes to repeat in the face of the existential challenges that the world is currently encountering. Seemingly vanished borders take on contours again. In new dividing lines, rolls of barbed-wire, and also walls, twenty-six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when Europe appeared once again to have come to its senses, or so it seemed to many people at the time.

This is precisely why pilgrimage to Jerusalem can help in reassuring us of our roots. The Christian Occident has been striving towards the "heavenly Jerusalem" for centuries, as a last city of peace which we can only request of God himself. In this context, the Austrian Hos-

pice offers a unique invitation to pilgrimage. Especially in times of crisis, more pilgrims than ever are needed in Jerusalem. More and more Christians are leaving the country whose ancestors lived here for around 2,000 years. The opposite would have to take place to help the Holy Land. Pilgrims do not stay away, they come. Pilgrims are not afraid and need not be afraid – especially not in the Austrian Hospice. Pilgrims are not tourists. Pilgrims are always en route to God. Pilgrims are therefore always bridge-builders. The Holy Land and Europe – and the whole world! – needs them more than ever before.

As a prefect of the Pontifical House, I am, of course, not permitted to publicly advertise a hostel, no matter the impact it made on me. However, I would like to publicise a re-conception of one of the most venerable traditions of the Occident. I would like to promote pilgrimage to the Holy Land with its bewildering array of places and sites that together can be read as an impressive icon for the Incarnation of God. So come, best in droves! Or, in the words of John the Evangelist: "Come and see!" To our birthplace, where everyone is at home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Archbishop Georg Gänswein was born in Reidern am Wald, a small town in the Black Forest region of Germany. Once he completed his studies of theology in Freiburg and Rome, Archbishop Gänswein was ordained a Catholic Priest. After his doctoral studies he became a Professor of canon law at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. In 2003 he became Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's private Secretary. Joseph Ratzinger became pope Benedikt XVI in 2005. He kept being his secretary and is appointed as Prefecture of the Papal Household since 2012.

The Task of the Latin Patriarchate Apostolic Administrator

By ARCHBISHOP PIERBATTISTA PIZZABALLA OFM

It was one year ago that I was asked by the Holy See to be the Apostolic Administrator for Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. This raised questions for some: “What is an apostolic administrator?” “What does it mean?” “What is the duration of the assignment?”

The term Administrator in its general sense signifies a person who administers some common affairs, for a longer or shorter period, not in his own name or in virtue of the ordinary jurisdiction attached to a certain office, but in the name and by the authority of a superior by whom he is delegated. His jurisdiction may extend to temporalities only, or to spiritual matters exclusively, or it may comprise both. There are different kinds of administrator.

When a diocesan administrator is appointed by the Apostolic See, the title of Administrator Apostolic applies principally to clergymen – bishop or priest – who are appointed directly by the Holy See, with episcopal jurisdiction to administer the affairs, temporal, or spiritual, or both, of a diocese. Initially, as a priest, I was appointed Apostolic Administrator with all the rights of a bishop, and, shortly thereafter, was elevated to the dignity of archbishop, retaining the title of Apostolic Administrator.

The task is to oversee the affairs of the diocese. And the duration of my tenure, determined by the Pope, is contingent upon the completion of tasks of my mandate and the appointment of a new Patriarch. The statement issued by the Holy See made it clear that I would hold the nomination “until appointment of a new Patriarch”.

To date, my task has been to make administrative changes – additions and subtractions – to encourage the Holy Land to look ahead. An American writer, James Baldwin, wrote, “Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced... and most of us are about as eager to change as we were to be born, and go through our changes in a similar state of shock.” Change, indeed, is painful; yet ever needful.

Clearly, the change of replacing an Arab Patriarch with an Italian priest was a painful change for some. But, Pope Francis feels free to choose a non-Arab figure for the position, partly because the face of the Latin



Photo: © Latin Patriarchate

Church of the Holy Land has changed exponentially over the past almost 30 years. The Church that I have been called to guide is no longer a purely Arab Church: it is made up also of several thousand Filipinos, Indians, Sri Lankans, and Sudanese people, who came to Israel as immigrants, to work, and found that the parishes were their only point of reference. They have surpassed Arab Christians in terms of numbers (even though their presence is only temporarily because of Israel's incredibly strict immigration laws). In addition to problems such as the groups in Jerusalem, I also face the challenge of really keeping Palestinian parishes together, Israeli parishes filled with migrants, and Jordan parishes, which are struggling with the massive influx of refugees who have come to the Holy Land to escape war in the Middle East. Part of my task is to ensure the further progression of ecumenical dialogue, in light of Francis and Bartholomew's meeting at the Holy Sepulchre. Challenges, which are – probably – just as tough. Personnel changes also bring varying levels of pain.

I am aware that, as Apostolic Administrator, I have a limited time and must then realistically measure the service to be carried out. It is clear to me that I can do nothing by myself, but that the cooperation of the whole Church, bishops, priests and laity is a priority. I think my role is to lead the way, as John the Baptist did. I have met with all of the Patriarchate clergy, the soul of

Diocese, and the seminarians and the large religious presence. I give attention to the Vastness of the diocese and its complexities, to enter into the situations with respect, and together try to find ways of solution.

Our situation in the Holy Land resonates with that of the whole world facing growing extremism and fundamentalism. What strikes us is that this fundamentalism is rooted in the young generation. We have deplored several acts of vandalism against Christians, cemeteries or churches, in recent years. Not only do we want to raise our voices, but we want to help find viable solutions, tackling the problems at the root, by offering to the young generation a brighter future. Education is fundamental in our vision. This is the very beginning of the construction of a better future for all. Nevertheless, our schools in Israel are still passing through an unprecedented crisis and no concrete solution has been offered till now.

Our Future seems blurred. We are lacking vision. The continuing obstacles to peace in Israel and Palestine and the lack of dialogue and commitment to a true peace built on justice and security are still obvious. As a result of the lack of unity and the lack of vision on both sides, it seems that hatred and violence are prevailing over reason and dialogue. False pretenses and egoism should be left aside, politicians should look with courage at their people suffering and aspiring for peace and justice for all.

In Israel too, we, as a universal Church, are welcoming and caring for thousands of foreign workers, many of them Christians. We are trying to rebuild hope, again with a special attention given to the little ones, to the powerless, to the children.



Photo: © Latin Patriarchate

Finally, a word about prayer! Jesus says, “he who believes in Me... greater works that these will do...” (Jn 14:12) We’ve all grown up with the idea, to pray is to equip us for “greater works” whereas I now see that prayer is the greater work. The way that the “greater works” of God remain firm is through prayer, but we should remember that prayer is based on the agony of Jesus in redemption and not on our agony. Prayer is the struggle, the battle. When the “greater work” is done, when one labors at prayer, from the perspective of God, the results are always fruitful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Pierbattista Pizzaballa was born 1965 in
Cologna al Serio, Italy. After the completing his
studies in Theology and Biblical Research the
Franciscan friar had been ordained priest in
1990. He served as Custos of the Holy Land,
starting from 2004 until 2016. Pope Francis
appointed him Administrator of the Latin
Patriarchate on the 24th of June 2016 and
elevated him to the rank of an Archbishop. On
10th Sept. 2016 he received his episcopal
ordination in Bergamo.**

Travel to Jerusalem



Sister Bernadette in conversation with Evelin Steinberger-Kern.



Wolfgang Sobotka met with the Archbishop of Salzburg, Franz Lackner, in Jerusalem.

By THE EDITOR



Zoltan Balog is hungarian minister for human ressources. On the right side: Georg Habsburg, president of our association of friends.

Chancellor of Austria Christian Kern, who visited us on April 24th, was greeted on our roof terrace by a champagne reception followed by a buffet in our coffee-shop. Minister of the Interior Dr. Wolfgang Sobotka also visited us, on February 13th. After a guided tour of our exhibitions, he and Provost Wolfgang Schmidt, chairman of the church council for the German-speaking Protestant Church in Jerusalem, and Archbishop Dr. Franz Lackner, enjoyed dinner in our salon. Andreas Matthä, CEO of the Austrian Federal Railways and Christian Kern's successor, as well as Zoltan Balog, Hungarian Minister for Health, Education and Culture, were also welcomed at the Hospice, along with several other prominent guests.

In April His Most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, Protector of our House, came for a lengthy stay with us.

Faces in Prayer

Katharina Heigl

Katharina Heigl is an Austrian film-director, doing mainly documentary films on cultural and socio-political topics (e.g. "Srebrenica – Die Heimkehr der Toten", "Heimat 2.0", "Österreich rüstet auf"). The idea for the photo-project "Faces in Prayer" arose during her research for the film "Looking for God", which is currently at the development stage.

By THE EDITOR

Thirty faces, lit by the beauty of prayer, of meditation. In the new exhibition "Faces of Prayer", the Austrian Hospice presents intimate photographic portraits of people of different faiths. At a time when religion is so often used as an excuse for political and economic struggle, we forget that religion as such is not the reason for death and disaster, but the people who misuse it as a tool of indoctrination and power.

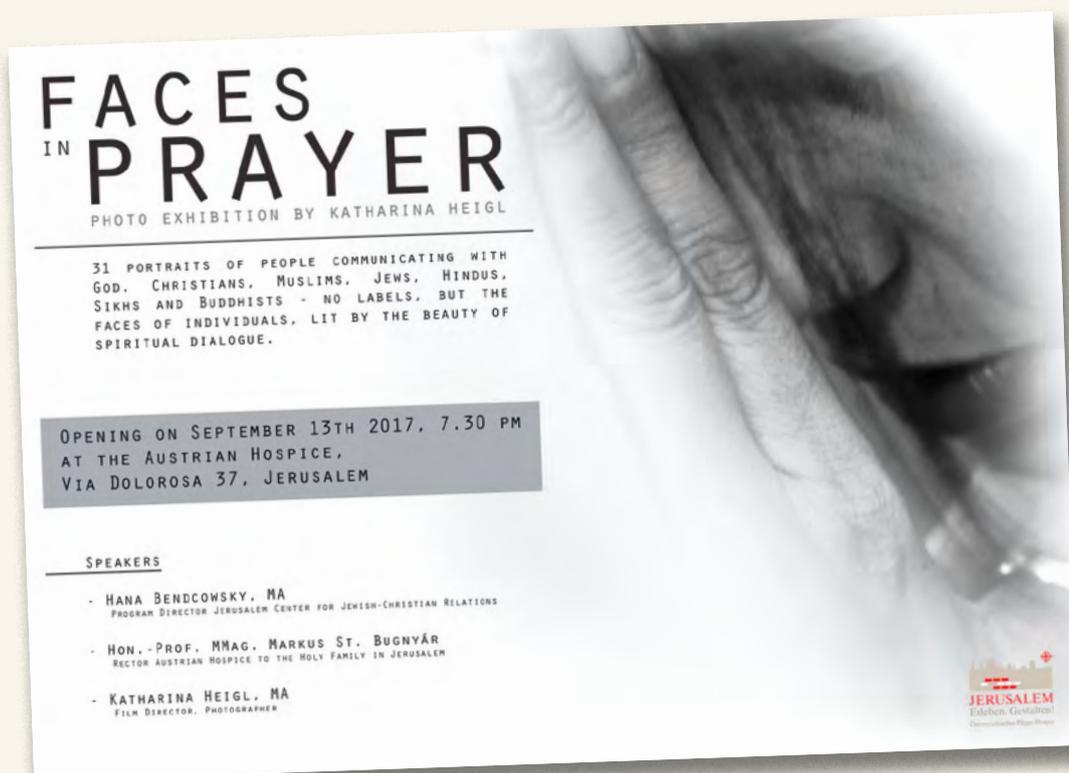
With her project "Faces in Prayer", Katharina Heigl wants to restress the individual aspects of religion, away from all political components – religion as a tool to give one's life structure, a spiritual component and a set of moral guidelines. And the portraits reveal

that in worship people of different faiths may have more in common than one might assume.

Which religion the people portrayed adhere to, is not obvious through the pictures – and that is part of the concept. The faces are closely framed, and the focus of the pictures lies on the beauty of their concentration, devotion and serenity, and not on the name of the higher being they communicate with. Hanna, a student and one of the portrayed, explains: "In prayer, I find strength. And I can really feel that I can exercise trust, that I don't have to walk alone. I can feel that something is happening that is out of my range of control."

The photographer, Katharina Heigl, has collected the portraits on a journey through many different churches, synagogues, monasteries, mosques, temples and private homes in Israel and Austria. "I am very grateful to every person portrayed, because they have shown me so much beauty – and so much trust", she explains. For being photographed at such an intimate moment is not easy, and neither is the decision to allow it.

The exhibition, opening September 13th 2017 at the Austrian Hospice, is supported by the Austrian Cultural Forum Tel Aviv.



Shaping Jerusalem!

The construction of Casa Austria is progressing.

By **MARKUS ST. BUGNYAR**

Our new hospice logo highlights the fact: the red-white-red building blocks that we are adding to the cityscape of Jerusalem indicate the construction site on which “Casa Austria” is being built: an adjoining building on our north-eastern enclosure wall with twelve rooms, two living units, an archive and a safe-room, and plenty of space for the infrastructure that we can finally move out of our main building. The name “Casa Austria” is a reference to the extant main building, the “Austrian Hospice”, and is a welcome addition to the host of Franciscan-run guest-houses in the Holy Land, called Casa Nova.

This enterprise is costing 3.5 million euros. Our location in the middle of the Old City of Jerusalem, a source of pride to our Austrian guests and a delight to our visitors, proves to be rather less attractive when it comes to such a project. It is impossible to drive heavy equipment and large vehicles into the area; indeed, the construction site recalls the time of our founding in 1856–1858, when we had to rely on many an industrious worker’s hands.

Casa Austria represents the realization of two major and important concerns: firstly, we are increasing the economic viability of the pilgrim hospice and can



Photo: © Photostudio Floyd

better meet the needs and wishes of our pilgrims. Secondly, the expectations of a visitor to Jerusalem in the 21st century have shifted towards higher standards. Casa Austria sets us up for the future. We are honouring our vision.

Our new Hospice logo invites you, esteemed Jerusalem pilgrims, dear friends of our house, to join us in shaping the future. In order for us to meet the costs of Casa Austria, we have created a building-block campaign which gives you the unique opportunity of placing your name in the Holy City of Jerusalem for eternity.

All donors, regardless of the amount of their donation, will be entered into our donors’ book kept in the house chapel. This comes with a promise: to pray for you in the celebration of the Holy Mass in this very special place.



This artistic depiction of the Holy City of Jerusalem underlines the importance of our esteemed donors.

Photo: © A.H.

Photo: © Architect Zeev Baran



The buiding process continues as planned, in terms of costs and timing.

This is how you can assist us:

Österreichisches Hospiz – Bauspende
 AT17 1919 0004 0015 0124
 BSSWATWW

Photo: © A.H.



“The Casa Austria is continuously growing – thanks to your support!”

At this point I have to ask for your understanding: a second option, befitting your generosity, only applies to donations of 10,000 euro and above – we have set up a donor wall next to the entrance of the house chapel. Vic Lepeijan, a well-known Armenian artist, a resident of the Old City who lives close to Jaffa gate, has devoted hours of hard work in creating a Jerusalem scene set on hand-made ceramic tiles, which now crowns the row of donors: In Honorem Benefactorum – In honour of the benefactors.

We would also like to commemorate those people who are no longer with us, but who supported the Hospice generously throughout their lives: Dr. Huberta Roithner and Dr. Felix Vetter van der Lilie, whose names are also inserted here, as well as members of the bishops’ conference and those donors who already pledged themselves in the summer. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all.

May I make a suggestion?

Please help us, Austria in the Holy Land, to lead the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem into a good future. Enter your name too into this time-honoured city, secure yourself a place in the heart of the Old City and a direct passage into the City of God.

Many thanks!

REKTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYAR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Markus St. Bugnyár (born 1975) has been the rector of the Austrian Pilgrims’ Hospice in Jerusalem since April 2004. His term of office has witnessed the general renovation of the sisters’ house and the expansion of the Viennese coffee house. The driving force behind the Hospice Academy, he organises intercultural concerts and scientific symposia and publishes material on the history and present of the pilgrims’ hospice.

Tiara and Benny



Photo: © A.H.



Photo: © A.H.

By VICE-RECTOR SISTER BERNADETTE SCHWARZ

Today I would like to present our two housekeepers, Tiara and Benny. They have been with us since 2010 and are not the first dogs to reside in the Hospice. Their predecessors had the commendable but unenviable task of barking off less welcome “pets” from the Old City, while Tiara and Benny do this only in exceptional cases. Thanks largely to the new sewerage system.

A small confession: we did not seek these two pets out. Tiara is a foundling from the Ölberg, brought to us by guests. And Benny, abandoned in our parking lot shortly afterwards, was fortunately found and rescued by Tiara and me. But now they have become an integral part of Hospice life. They provide a welcome change and delight our guests.

The fact that neither is in the slightest malnourished is only partly due to the treats we give them. It seems that guests in the coffee house can't resist their languishing glances either.

The bottom line is that the number of dogs in the Old City is increasing. While people used to keep them as sheep-herders and as guard-dogs, today not a few proud gentlemen can be seen strolling in the city, morning and evening, with larger breeds of dog. Tiara and Benny are certainly privileged to enjoy the luxury of our Hospice garden.

How did they get their names? “Tiara” was on a list of dog names on the Internet, and because of the church reference, the decision was easy. And when Benny came to us, he could fit under Tiara's body, so that name too was quickly chosen. Please don't take offense: Tiara and Benny remind us, in their own way, of our service to the Church here in our pilgrimage hostel, and once again emphasize our Catholic underpinnings.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sister Bernadette Schwarz, born on 24 November 1948 in Schloss Brunwald/Vorderweissenbach, took vows in 1970; from 1971 to 1998 she acted as administrator in the province of Upper-Austria-Salzburg. From 1999 to 2008 she was proctor at the Benedictine Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem.

Since 1 March 2008 she has been in charge of housekeeping at the Austrian Hospice and on 1 September 2011 she was made Vice Rector of the Hospice.

UNESCO Jazz Day

Masterful

By FELIX MICHLER

Concert evenings, workshops, masterclasses. The Academy of the Austrian Hospice has set itself the task of supporting young people in the development of their musical skills. Together with our partners, we offer young talents from Jerusalem and the surrounding area the opportunity to refine their techniques, to study new pieces with experienced musicians and, often for the first time, to present them to an audience.

To this end we have for a long time been cooperating with Austrian music manager Petra Klose and the Viennese KuK agency. Last spring, we again held our masterclasses in which soprano Veronika Dünser prepared two Palestinians for an international singing contest in Alexandria. The two were exceptionally successful – gaining first and second place, they amply demonstrated their prowess in their category.

But we also look back on a long history of successful cooperation with institutions located here. For example, we granted the Franciscan Magnificat Institute, an established Jerusalem institution for music instruction, the use of our premises for the holding of concerts. In the last six months, advanced students had the opportunity to present their skills before the public on several evenings. International players such as Ofer Canetti and Michael Klinghofer were also involved. A Mozart concert on our organ and the works of a chamber music ensemble were small highlights of those evenings.

ACADEMY

Our Academy addresses the history and significance of the Bible, the Holy Land and the role of pilgrimage in scientific publications, exhibitions and lectures, as well as the contemporary history of the Middle East. The chief focus is on intercultural dialogue and music education in cooperation with local partner institutions.



The austrian Jazz-Trio Baldachin performed in Jerusalem.

Photo: © A.H.

By FELIX MICHLER

It is the original combination of different instruments that makes their music so exciting and unmistakable. Apart from saxophone and piano, the members of the Vorarlberg Baldachin Trio also use less well-known instruments such as the Indian sitar or the Swiss hang drum in their concerts. This creates a style that the trio itself would most likely refer to as Ethno-Jazz.

The multicultural element in their music is certainly one of the reasons why the trio's performance on 30th April 2017 was so stimulating. This was already evident in the overture on the roof terrace: the experience of listening to jazz against the backdrop of the silhouettes of the medieval city of Jerusalem was unique, replete with minarets and spires. But the evening had not yet come to an end; after nightfall a concert was held in our salon. The evening attracted considerable interest – so much so that we had to place additional chairs in the corridor of the first floor, outside the salon.

The occasion was the International Day of Jazz, which UNESCO launched in 2011. Since then, the event falls annually on April 30th. For the Austrian Hospice this was reason enough to organize a workshop as well as the concert. The Baldachin Trio agreed to teach those interested how to improve their skills on different instruments. At the end of the afternoon, again directed by Petra Klose, the small group was in the position to present some jazz standards.

New Exhibition about the History of the Pilgrim's Hospice

“With God’s help it is now completed. On an elevation in front of which Damascus Street and the Via Dolorosa meet, the Austrian pilgrims’ house rises in noble and capacious form out of stone.”

By THE EDITOR

The foundation stone for the Austrian Hospice was laid on New Year’s Eve 1856 – but in fact the history of this house spans more than 160 years. How did it come about that the Habsburg monarchy decided to construct such a building in the Ori-

ent? What can these old walls tell us about the vagaries of the history which they so valiantly withstood? And more importantly, what does the future hold for our tradition-steeped guesthouse?

Our in-house exhibition on the second floor is devoted to these very questions. Those of you who still have a thirst to quench after partaking of the wholesome fayre in our Viennese coffee house are warmly invited to share in our colourful history and to delve further into the imperial-royal flair of the monarchy.

Starting with the earliest rumblings of an Austro-Hungarian presence in the Holy Land, you will be chronologically guided through the history of our house, culminating in a glimpse into our social and cultural activities in the present. Of course, the former rectors of the Hospice cannot be overlooked, which is why a further part of the exhibition is devoted exclusively to them.

The initial idea in the Habsburg period of an Austro-Hungarian presence in Jerusalem was followed by a laborious building phase. Once completed the Hospice became one of the city’s leading ecclesiastical guesthouses. However, it soon fell victim to the age: taken over by other parties, the Hospice was variously used as an orphanage, internment camp, officers’ school and as a military hospital. It is therefore all the more gratifying that the Austrian Hospice has finally returned to its original function – and more so than ever! After all these grueling years, and mindful of the past, we look optimistically to the future. And that is exactly what our comprehensive exhibition offers: a glimpse into our rich historical and cultural heritage, as well as an understanding of what the Hospice is today and will be in the future. So join us in delving into the exciting story that this house has to tell!

Photo: © Cathedral in Linz



This glass-window shows the Austrian Hospice in the cathedral in Linz at the beginning of the 20th century.

“For the living know they will ...”

(Koh 9,5) – Biblische Kunst im Hospiz

The Austrian Hospice explores new paths in interreligious dialogue. The Israeli artist Ethan Dor-Shav presents the Austrian Hospice with a painting for Lent.



Photo: © Ethan Dor-Shav

By **MARKUS ST. BUGNYAR**

Art is rarely neutral. And least of all in the thrice Holy City of Jerusalem. A Jewish artist makes a Lenten cloth for a Christian institution in a Muslim neighbourhood. The subject of the book Ecclesiastes, however, is universally human: “For the living know they will die”. (Eccles 9:5)

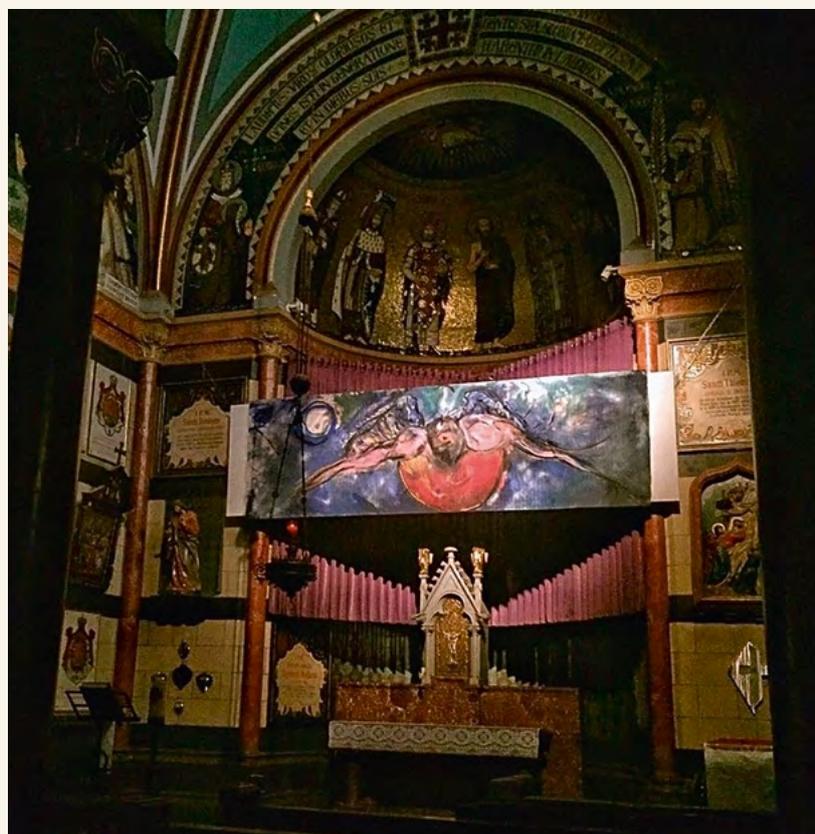
Ethan Dor-Shav deliberately leaves the end of this quotation open; the finitude of every human being is too familiar, too obvious, no matter what religion you may belong to.

But this omission also allows for a different ending: does death really have the last word? Do the living already know that they will live on? That, thanks to the strength of their faith, after a short earthly life a care-free existence with God awaits?

Dor-Shav’s vision depicts a human body that ascends from the earth to the sky. The figure is poised to transform, to turn, to get wings, to outgrow the red of the earthly flesh, and to adopt the transcendent white of the Divine.

It means a lot to me that it is possible to show Ethan’s art in an Austrian Catholic chapel. As a church, we must take every opportunity to enter into dialogue with our Jewish siblings. Especially when this art is so poignant and beautiful.

Photo: © Ethan Dor-Shav



Ethans lent-altar-piece at our chapel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in New York, Ethan Dor-Shav has spent most of his life in Israel. The artist, who mostly acquired his knowledge autodidactically, lives in Tel Aviv. Current exhibitions are “Mouth to Mouth: The Telling of Moses” in the Ottoman Gallery in Tel Aviv, and the upcoming “Who by Fire, who by Water”, part of the 3rd Jerusalem Biennial for Contemporary Jewish Art (October–November 2017).

2018: 20 Years of the Austrian Representative Office, Ramallah

By DR. ANDREA NASI

The opening of the Austrian Representative Office in Ramallah took place in the context of the Austrian EU Presidency in the second half of 1998. Since the founding of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the representative office has been jointly run by the ADA and the BMEIA, focusing on the comprehensive handling of core foreign policy tasks, especially in the cultural, economic and citizens' service sectors. This also includes managing Austria's contacts with the PLO and the Palestinian Authority, which have a history dating back to the era of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky in the 1970s.

Development cooperation is a very important issue in this context. The aim is to help the Palestinian people build democratic, competent and accountable institutions for a state which will live in peace and security with all its neighbours and which will come about in the wake of a two-state solution negotiated between Israel and the PLO.

The priorities of Austrian development cooperation are the sectors of health and water, humanitarian aid and the promotion of equality of women. These same priorities are espoused by ADA in its local projects under the auspices of the EU, UN and UNRWA, which are carried out in close consultation with the EU as well as with other donors. The Pregnancy Diabetes Prevention Clinic run by the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem (since 2010) and a water desalination plant for the production of drinking water (in operation since 2003) are two further examples of Austrian aid in the area.

Civil society initiatives are also an important focus. In the Sternberg Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah, for example, a project is underway to support people with disabilities in learning trades and other professional skills, as well as helping two civil society organizations, an Austrian ("Diakonie") and a Palestinian ("Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre") find work placements, both projects supported by the civil society programme of the ADA ("NGO Cooperation"). Additionally, the so-called small-scale projects (maximum

funding EUR 10,000) focus on supporting the most vulnerable groups in society, in particular women and children with disabilities, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in relation to financial input.

Academic cooperation within the APPEAR programme (Austrian Partnership Program in Higher Education and Research for Development) of the ADA contributes to the development of "centres of excellence" in Palestinian educational institutions. An important highlight at the interface between culture, education and service is the annual visit made by Austrian Hospice volunteers to the Al-Aksa mosque, which the Representative Office coordinates.

Maintaining contact with Austrians working in the Palestinian Territories, for example in the context of international and Austrian governmental and non-governmental organizations, is another important task of the office.

With regard to Austrian-Palestinian political contacts, the two visits of the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sebastian Kurz, in April 2014 and in May 2016, are to be emphasized. In talks with the Palestinian leadership, in particular Foreign Minister Riad Al-Malki, the importance – especially in the profit-oriented economic sector – of deepening Austro-Palestinian relations was made manifest. As a result, in October 2016, five Palestinian companies participated in an import-export trade fair of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKÖ) in Vienna.



Photo: © UNDP

Dr. Anrea Nasi (second to the left) during a field inspection for an ADA project regarding health promotion through sports and exercise in the west bank

Following this, Chancellor Christian Kern met with the Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah for bilateral talks relating to Rawabi, a new city-in-the-making, which was conceived as an environmentally friendly city with the participation of Arab and Israeli investors.

A powerful example of the broad profile and the interlinking of service-oriented, cultural, development-related and political tasks of the Austrian Representative Office, Ramallah, was the recent procurement of support for the Palestinian Olympic Committee's "Middle East Peace Tour" organized by a private investor group headed by the Austrian entrepreneur and former cyclist Gerhard Schönbacher. The route of this round-trip, scheduled for 2018, currently plans to include Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories. A test event took place on the 28th of April 2017, and was successful. Such an event does not only come within the auspices of the health focus of Austrian development cooperation and of ADA's work. It is also a symbol of the Olympic spirit that serves peace, as the founder of the International Olympic Committee, Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), expressed it in his "Ode to Sport" (1912): "O, Sport, You are Peace!" It is therefore only fitting that the Austrian Hospice once again served as an Austrian and European "meeting place" for athletes from all over the world.

In view of the imminent jubilee year, the opportunity should not be missed to express thanks to all the former

leaders of the Austrian Representative Office, Ramallah, for their achievements:

1998–2002: **WOLFGANG LAPUH MA**
 2002–2006: **DR. LEONHARD MOLL**
 2006–2010: **DR. OSKAR WÜSTINGER**
 2010–2014: **DR. LEONHARD MOLL**
 (second term in office)

DR. ANDREA NASI,
 head of the Austrian Representative Office,
 Ramallah, since 1 August 2014.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Nasi Ph.D., born 1977, heads the Austrian Representative Office in Ramallah since 2014. He served previously in his career in Beijing, Budapest and Amman. In 2014 he was also nominated "Integration Ambassador".

Ramadan in Jerusalem

By DR. ALI QLEIBO

Instrumentalizing religion for political ends undermines both the sanctity of Jerusalem and is a desecration to the holy month of Ramadan. Apart from the gruesome incident in Damascus Gate Ramadan this year has been spectacular. Even with permits restricted to those over forty years old and children under twelve tens of thousands came to Jerusalem to celebrate the month of Ramadan. The exalted position of Jerusalem in Muslim thought adds a special virtue to prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque. Over 200 thousand entry permits have allowed many West Bankers to swarm the winding alleys of Jerusalem and the courtyards of al Aqsa mosque. A joyous atmosphere welcomes the thousands of pious men and women who flock daily to pray, study the Qur'an, meditate, and perform the Ramadan specific evening taraweeh prayer.

Sufi Sacred concerts (zhiker) proliferated this year; Damascus Gate, Herod's Gate, Burj el Laqlaq and the roof of the Austrian Hospice became improvisatory theaters for classical religious zhiker performances. Turkish whirling dervishes and famous Pakistani soloist, Sami Yusuf among others were flown over to celebrate Ramadan in addition to the numerous local zhiker musicians and cantors.

To celebrate Ramadan, Jerusalem has cast away its wistful melancholy and has donned joyful, festive apparel. Between prayers, sacred music and Ramadan social visits Jerusalem night life has become convivial. One strolls in the alleys of the old city under brightly lit canopies of colourful lamps that stretch across the streets. Shops reopen after the breaking of the fast; vendors selling katayef, nammurah, and other Ramadan pastries proliferate. The vendors of sugar candy (sha'r el banat), spinning the wheel as they weave the sugar candy ... and the trays of candied apples add to the sense of festivity. Cold drinks made from extracts of carob, tamarind, and almonds are sold around every corner by flamboyantly dressed men bearing shining-silver, heavily ornate containers on their backs. The sparkling, colourful light installations dominated by the crescent – the symbol of Islam – transforms Jerusalem's night into day.



Photo: © Ali Qleibo

Collective meals are a special feature of Ramadan. Ma-wa'ed El-Rahman, (literally Tables of the Merciful) abound. Almost seven thousand iftar meals are served daily throughout the Old City – in the various “soup kitchens” and in El-Haram El-Sharif. The sight of the huge multitude breaking the fast simultaneously is awe inspiring. Under a deep blue sky, the pious await the sunset in parallel, orderly lines stretched in front of the Mamluk water fountain and the Aqsa Mosque in the golden glow of the Dome of the Rock.

Jerusalemites break their fast to the sound of the cannon explosion – a tradition that dates back to the Ottoman period. Moslems wake up at dusk for the last meal, suhur, to the first sound of the cannon, and they will return to bed and begin the imsak, the abstaining from food and drink, to the second sound of the cannon.

Fundamental to the ritual of fasting is one of the major distinctive attributes of Allah, namely, that of self-sufficiency, al samad. The theological concept emphasizes the notion that Allah is sufficient unto himself, that Allah suffers no lack, that Allah transcends desire. In performing the ritual of fasting, the Muslim emulates one of God's major attributes – al samad. Fasting as such is not self-denial; rather it is to be understood as an act of transcendence, of modulating one's consciousness beyond desire. Fasting is an act of active renunciation of desire in emulation of God.

Muslim theologians distinguish between plebeian fasting and prayers during Ramadan and the fasting and prayers of the more refined and cultured who observe the holy month. Whereas fasting for the plebeians refers to abstaining from food, drink, or any carnal pleasure from sunrise to sunset, observing Ramadan for the cultured has its spiritual-mystical dimension. Through the sublimation of the need for food or drink, in fasting one assumes the quality of samad; a divine space is carved in the heart of the faithful. Observing Ramadan as such modulates to an inner religious experience; Ramadan is the fast of the heart.

Ramadan is the sacred month because the Qur'an was revealed during the lunar month of Ramadan punctuated in a special night, Leilat al Qader, Night of Destiny, on the 27th of Ramadan. Palestinians poured into Jerusalem from the occupied West Bank on Tuesday for a night of prayer at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in a rare opportunity for many of them to visit one the three holiest sites of Islam. To keep the vigil at the site of the rupture of the sacred where Prophet Mohammed connected with God during the Night Journey has an added spiritual merit. During the Night of Destiny, and according to commonly held beliefs, the sky opens and the wish of the fortunate one who witnesses the miraculous light is fulfilled.

Ramadan is solemn. The holy month is totally devoted to fasting, worship, contemplation, charity and also to intensive socializing. During the rest of the year, in profane time, one's social time is concentrated within the circle of immediate family and close friends. During Ramadan, sacred time, the circle expands to include distant relatives, neighbours, and general acquaintances ... Rarely does a single family break the fast alone. The iftar meal assumes a focal social position. Each night friends and relatives meet in a different house to break the fast. Lavish meals and specialty foods are associated with this season amidst merry gatherings.

“Ramadan Kareem”, literally Ramadan is generous, is the salutation with which Muslims greet each other during the month of Ramadan. The response is: “Allahu Akram,” God is more generous.



Photo: © A.H.

Ramadan in Jerusalem

Time develops a different rhythm; a sense of excitement pervades every aspect of life. Between the readings of the Qur'an, the long afternoons spent in reclusive meditation in El-Haram el-Sharif, the evening taraweeh, and the suhur prayers, the relationship with the Almighty modulates to heighten the consciousness of the Other and deepens the sense of religious feeling, casting a different colour on the way in which Muslims discourse with God, themselves, and others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ali Qleibo is an artist, anthropologist, and author. A Jerusalemite Palestinian Arab Muslim, his books and artwork have taken him all over the world. Dr. Qleibo successfully straddles multiple categories as a professor, author, ethnographer, and artist. A prodigious ethnographer, he has produced numerous articles for This Week in Palestine over the past twelve years, and five books that form a veritable cultural archive of Palestinian intangible heritage and its roots in ancient Semitic civilization. As an artist, he has enriched the Palestinian cultural scene for the past 30 years, mounting art exhibitions almost annually that include oil paintings, photographs, or multimedia ethnographic installations.

The German Protestant Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Studies (DEI)

By **DDDr. DIETER VIEWEGER**

When the German Emperor Wilhelm II traveled to Jerusalem in 1898 to inaugurate the Protestant Redeemer Church, he witnessed a memorable event in scientific research. Archaeologist Conrad Schick discovered that the wall uncovered beneath the church during foundation work was in fact the Jerusalem city wall at the time of Herod the Great (37–4 BC) and that therefore the area of the nearby Church of the Holy Sepulchre – where the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians believed the crucifixion of Jesus on Mount Golgota and his burial took place – was actually located outside the city of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. A long and bitter dispute was thus ended and, the Emperor's interest in archaeological science awakened, a critical assessment and determining of the historical facts of the Old and New Testaments rendered possible.

On June 19, 1900 the DEI was subsequently founded in Eisenach by the Protestant churches in Germany, with the remit to “explore the Holy Land with its diverse history, different cultures and religions” and to convey the “insights to the professional world and also to make them comprehensible to the laity” (Articles of Association). Since then archaeological, historical, religious and theological research and educational work have been at the centre of the Institute's activity. Excavations and archaeological research, geophysical prospecting, restoration and museum projects are also part of the daily business of Institute employees. The DEI museum in Jerusalem houses among other things a herbarium, an amulet collection, and models made of wood and plaster which Gustaf Dalman used for his epochal, eight-volume (!) ethnological work on the culture of Palestine entitled “Labour and Customs.”

In 1982 an institute in Amman was built near the university in addition to the Jerusalem Institute building on the Mount of Olives.

In 2005 Dieter Vieweger became director of the DEI. Since then, the Institute has been working in parallel in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and conceives of itself as a



Photo: © Dieter Vieweger

bridge between the different peoples and religions in an area that was formerly connected through its cultural history.

One of the most famous projects is the archaeological park, ‘Through the Times’. The former site under the nave of the Church of the Redeemer was handed over to the public in November 2012 as a walk-in museum. With the help of 3D animation and light effects, the more than 2,000 year city history is brought to life in an accessible manner. The excavation is currently one of the most visited attractions in the Old City of Jerusalem. It can be accessed online at www.durch-die-zeiten.info.

Since 2015 excavations on Mt Zion, on the former city wall of Jerusalem and on the inner city area have been carried out in the course of the project ‘City History Jerusalem’. The preservation, restoration and touristic development of the Anglican-Prussian Zion cemetery and the construction of a historical-archaeological park are of great importance in addition to the unique scientific value inherent in the excavations in the former inner city area of Jerusalem.

The most extensive programme of the Archaeological Institute to date is the excavation of Tell Zirā'a in Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee. The ancient site, which has been explored since 2001, was populated for more than 5,000 years. It relates the important history of the first settlements in the region ranging from the Old and New Testament epochs into the Cassical period and to the Middle Ages: the tell reveals a Roman temple and a later Jewish village settlement, a Byzantine monastery and more recently, Umayyad and Ottoman farms. After 18 campaigns and the publication of eight excavation volumes, excavations there will commence again from 2018 ... (www.tallziraa.de).

Photo: © APAAME, David Kennedy 2001



Tell Zirā'a in the north-west of Jordan – more than 5000 years of human history in approx. 30 different city layers, making up just one Tell.

In Amman, the DEI is currently implementing a four-year Cultural Heritage Programme. The finds in the famous Citadel Museum of Amman, the oldest museum in Jordan, are cataloged, recorded, documented, restored and made available for researchers in a database. The pilot project is to be continued at other museums in Jordan. The research was made possible by a circle of friends, the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach Foundation, the cultural programme of the Federal Foreign Office, the DFG and many other donors.

The DEI cooperates with local institutions, the Antiquity Authority, universities and the relevant ministries. It has close research contacts with national and international experts.

In order to convey the research results of the DEI and to facilitate their scientific discussion, the Institute maintains its own libraries, puts out a series of publications, organises conferences, lecture series and exhibitions. A special feature in this area is a course on antiquity, which has been held annually for a hundred years, for theologians and scholars of antiquity at European universities.

At the 'Schmidt-School' in Jerusalem (a German school overseas), the DEI offers an annual history programme under the title: "My City – My Story". There are also specialist books for young people (and adults) in German, Arabic and English: 'The Secret of the Tell' and 'Jerusalem Adventure'.

We invite you to cross borders with us between archaeological science and the study of the biblical scriptures, between the east and the west of the Jordan, and between the peoples and religions of the Near East, without ideological reservation, paying homage to science and the Enlightenment alone.

You are welcome to participate in excavations, at events held at the Institute in Israel, in Jordan and in Germany – welcome, Shalom and Salam – we are always here for you at www.deiahl.de.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dieter Vieweger, Prof. Dr. Dr. Dr. h. c., 1958;
Studies of Evangelical Theology in Leipzig; 1985
doctorate, 1989 Habilitation; 1986 until 1989
pastor of the Thomanerchor Leipzig, 1989 until
1991 professor for Old Testament Studies at the
Kirchliche Hochschule Berlin, 1991 until 1993
at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin; since 1993
at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal; 1993
until 1998 studies of Pre- and Early History in
Frankfurt a. M.; 1998 doctoral; since 1998
director of the biblical archeological institute
Wuppertal (www.bainst.de); since 1999 visiting
professor at the Privatuniversität Wit-
ten-Herdecke; since 2005 leading director of the
german evangelical institute for ancient studies
in the Holy Land which is simultaneously the
research unit of the german archeological
institute (DAI) (www.deiahl.de); since 2005
representative of the provost in Jerusalem and
and coordinator of evangelic educational work
in the Holy City, archeological projects in
Cyprus, Greece, Italy; Jordan Israel and
Palestine.

The Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem

By AMOUN SLEEM

The gypsies are a distinctive ethnic group whose various languages and dialects share a common origin – India. The Gypsies of India originally referred to themselves by the term ‘Dom’, meaning ‘man’. The word Dom is still used by the Gypsy populations of the Middle East and North Africa. Today, Dom communities reside in Afghanistan, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq/Kurdistan, Israel/West Bank/Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Uzbekistan.

While there exist different legends about their origin it is widely believed that waves of Dom people migrated between the third and the tenth centuries C.E. from India and Persia to settle in different parts of the world to escape famine and other hardships in their homelands. They moved in two directions: Western Europe, where they are still known as Rom or Romani and the Middle East, where they called themselves Dom or Domari.

200 years ago the Dom used to stay in tents in the Jerusalem’s neighborhood Wadi al-Joz which is outside the walls of the Old City. Gradually, in the following years, the Dom began to settle inside the walls of the Old City, in the neighborhood known as Burj al-Laqlaq and exchanged their tent for a hut or a house. Most of the Dom still lives there while the rest of the Dom population is spread out amongst a few other neighborhoods like Izarizah, Abu Dis, Ras Al’amod or in the Shu’afat Refugee Camp. They usually live with their extended family.



Photo: © Domari Society

It is assumed that there are around 3000 Dom living in Jerusalem. The Dom blended in by adopting both language and religion of their surroundings. They accepted the local language and religion of East Jerusalem, in this case Arabic and Islam.

The Dom Society of Jerusalem has not been immune from the tumultuous history of this region, and their populations within the city have greatly reduced over the years. The greatest immigrations occurred after the Six Day’s War of 1967, after hiding in the Church of St. Anne, within the walls of the Old City for the duration of the conflict. Those who fled now reside in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan.

During this time, the younger generation have become less interested in the ancient traditions and culture, preferring to assimilate into the neighbouring Arab communities. Because of this, the Dom language is rarely used in everyday speech, and the traditional dress and other customs have largely been abandoned.

This self-afflicted and imposed assimilation is contributed to the discrimination and marginalization the Dom face from both the Israeli-Palestinian population, and as a result the economic and social limitations that come from being identified and recognizable as Dom.

Photo: © Domari Society





A settlement in front of the École biblique in the background.

Photo: © Domari Society

The school dropout and illiteracy is high and the education level therefore very low. As a result unemployment and poverty is considered to be very high within the Dom Society.

It was these issues and a desire to affect change that moved me to action. I started the Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem in the year 2000.

In order to advance and empower the Dom community and preserve its unique cultural heritage through programs that provides economic empowerment, child development, and women's support. Working at the grassroots level, my house was transformed and I seeks to serve the social, cultural, and educational needs of the surrounding Domari community. I am a Dom myself and therefore know the needs of the Domari Society very well.

I witnessed and experienced first-hand the severe discrimination, cultural marginalization, poverty and adult illiteracy that the Domari Society in this area faces. Because of the discrimination that the Dom community faces, many of them hide their true identity and designate themselves as Arabs. As a result, the Dom community which consists of mostly Muslim people has largely assimilated a lot with the Arab community which led to a loss of their Dom culture.

It was this situation that encouraged me to open a community center in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Shu'afat in 2005. The center is a warm and welcoming place and has always offered the members of the community a secure space to gather as well as various courses for women and children to attend. Basically the center provides after-school tutoring, vocational train-

ing, literacy courses, humanitarian aid, and programs that foster cultural pride. Thereby, the center tries to improve the poor living conditions and keep alive the Dom identity. That is the reason women of the Dom Society are working in the center and sell beautiful, authentic gypsy products e.g. Jewellery, Bags, Pillows.

The Domari women just finished a Catering Course and start making their own authentic Gypsy recipes. The Gypsy Kitchen is new and we are proud of our cultural heritage. Renowned for our custom of hospitality in everyday life, this dining time brings the community together to rejoice.

Come, celebrate life and rejoice with us!

Shu'afat Road 10

91514 Jerusalem

Call for a visit: (+972) (0) 25 32 45 10

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

When she was younger, Amoun Sleem got an opportunity at Notre Dame University in Jerusalem to study Business Management. Since 2000 she is the director of Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem. Amoun Sleem regards her work not just a job; her work is her life mission, her life task. As a member of the Gypsy community she knows every struggle, and that life is hard and one has to fight for it. She wants to break the vicious circle, to make a difference for the generations to come and give them a better future.

How is the Middle East conflict treated in schools?



Photo: © Raoul Lechner

By **JAKOB POSSERT**

Writing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is completely different for me than writing about most other problems in the world today. No other ongoing conflict has lasted so long and seems so unsolvable. An important aspect of the conflict is the attempt to understand what people think about it. The hope of peace, or at least calm, which is cherished by the vast majority of people in the Middle East, is difficult to achieve as long as ideas about each other are as negative as appear to be the case in this region.

In order to understand what people think, it is crucial to investigate what is taught in the school system. This is basic to finding out what the average Palestinian thinks about the average Israeli and vice versa.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jakob Possert was born 1998 and completed his volunteering at the Austrian Hospice in 2016/17. At this very moment he begins his studies at the US-american Minerva KGI University. Beside his academic and professional obligations he continuously publishes several blogs and works on his first book "Thinking Bigger about Education" – here you find more information: jakobpossert.wordpress.com.

Neutrality is unfortunately very difficult to find in this conflict, and there are several levels and several perspectives that relate to the facts. Regarding the explicit question of what the two sides teach about each other in schools, the studies of third parties were revealing – although there were also significant deviations from the norm. While the research on school-books highlighted the formal and official aspects, I tried to find out what is really taught in the classrooms in a series of interviews from the stance of neutral observer.

On the Palestinian side, pupils and teachers from different schools assured me that at the moment only historical facts were taught. For example, when the Balfour Declaration was signed, when the Six Day War took place or what could be said objectively about the Intifadas.

The direction in which students are steered in questions relating to the Middle East conflict is therefore often dependent on the teachers themselves. My interviews have shown that there are some Palestinian teachers who harbour strong reservations about Israelis. This was in part attributable to the fact that some of them had spent time in Israeli prisons, an experience that had embittered them. However, according to one Palestinian teacher, most of her colleagues in the classroom talk only in very abstract terms about the conflict, to avoid possible problems.

On the Israeli side one must distinguish between state-secular and state-religious schools. According to one graduate, the latter is the place where most of the problems originate on the Israeli side. He said that teachers and school-books in religious schools presented approximately the following line: "This is our country because it is the promised land of the Bible". However, according to an Israeli religious teacher, religious instruction in secular state schools makes no reference to the Palestinians. The Bible is understood as an historical document and not as divine revelation, and thus does not offer any legitimation for what is happening today.



Photo: © A.H.

What is discussed very closely in secular teaching is the Holocaust and Zionism – two fundamental Jewish themes. In a certain way the events of 1948 are also treated in a one-sided manner, which according to liberal Jewish historians leads to an uncritical narrative. An Israeli student said that his history lessons, as far as he could remember, ended with the Yom Kippur War of 1973. According to a former student, pronouncing the word kibush (Hebr. Occupation) reflects an “extreme political attitude”. She reported that what she had learned at school about the current situation in the West Bank was simply that Israel had acquired the area in the 1967 war and now controls the area for security reasons.

Students on both sides told me that they generally learn very little about the conflict. This was echoed in my interviews with teachers, who told me how difficult it was to talk about the conflict – especially constructively.

Moderate Palestinian teachers mention that it is often difficult to ask the students to understand the Israeli approach. Moreover, in the eyes of progressive Israelis, the reports of terror that basically comprise the totality of Palestinian news coverage, makes it difficult for them to cultivate compassion.

In summary, my field research led me to conclude that schools in Israel/Palestine in most cases do not tackle the conflict, with the exception perhaps of Israeli state-religious schools. Rather, they attempt to avoid the conflict in the education system. It tends to be de-

pendent on the teacher whether the conflict is brought up on either of the two sides and, of course, how it is brought up.

In the perception of most of the people whom I interviewed, the approach of both sides does not help to constructively deal with the conflict. If anything, it makes the conflict even more entrenched. In order to build trust between Israelis and Palestinians in the hopes of eventually creating peace, we must begin to talk about the conflict- in schools and elsewhere!

PEACE SERVICE

As part of our peace service we see our mission as providing survivors of the Holocaust and their families with the opportunity to talk about that chapter of our history in in-depth encounters. Our volunteers should also have the opportunity to get to know the respective viewpoints of the parties to the conflict in the region.

The content of this article reflects solely the opinion of its author.

A Guest with Friends

A Disambiguation

By **MARKUS ST. BUGNYAR**

The vast majority of people connect the word “hospice” with the idea of a facility for the incurably ill in their last weeks of life. Even those staying with us. Some of our visitors have been known to suddenly fall silent in our corridors and one or two applicants for a volunteer position with us have thought to mention their first-aid experience.

Originally, the word “hospice” simply meant “hostel”. In Latin *hospitium* contains the word *hospes* – guest. Only in its transposed sense, and as an expression of the estimation in which patients are held, did the term come to refer to a specialized hospital.

The real meaning of the word has been preserved in the Pilgrim Hospice of the Holy Land and in the Way of St James (Camino de Santiago). The fact that it is necessary to explain the term today indicates just how precious and self-evident concern for the dying has become in our day.

The word *hospitium*, encountered a striking number of times in the Latin text of the Bible, can illuminate our task as a pilgrim hostel and teach us how to treat and value our guests (in biblical times, patients).

To extrapolate from some passages: a hospice is never a hotel, nor a purely commercial establishment offering accommodation. The places where the word is mentioned in the Bible always refer to accommodation or lodging in a private household offered to an acquaintance, ie a friend and fellow believer.

The passage about the duties of the faithful to one another in 1 Timothy 5: 9f is particularly beautiful: “No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord’s people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds”.

In order to welcome a brother or sister hospitably, one might even have to turn a stranger away according to Sir 29:27!

These and other references in the Bible (eg, Gen 24:32; Judg 19:15,19:23; Acts 10:18,23, 28:23; Heb 13:2;

Phlemon 1:22) seem to me to have an enduring significance in how we as a hospice distinguish ourselves from a hotel: amicable and striving towards mutual understanding and deepened faith.

In Acts 28:23 we read about Paul’s sermon in a pagan Rome: “They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus.”

Without question, our running costs must be met and salaries paid. But we must not overlook the social hardships in this country, nor shield our eyes from the intercultural tasks that face us in the world today. It is also our duty in Jerusalem to turn well-intentioned visitors into agreeably surprised multipliers, so that tourists can become pilgrims.

Photo: © A.H.



The holy bible translator Hieronymus can be found right in the center of our apse mosaic. He was born in Dalmatien and was therefore considered Austrian.



This is how you can assist us:

Österreichisches Hospiz – Sozialfonds
AT43 1919 0003 0015 0125
BSSWATWW

Österreichisches Hospiz – Bauspende
AT17 1919 0004 0015 0124
BSSWATWW

I am very grateful to you!



Die Österreichische Gesellschaft vom Hl. Land

Der Freundeskreis des Österreichischen
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