



# **Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps (The Ethnography of Political Violence)**

*Julie Peteet*

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Nearly half of the world's eight million Palestinians are registered refugees, having faced partition and exile. *Landscape of Hope and Despair* examines this refugee experience in Lebanon through the medium of spatial practices and identity, set against the backdrop of prolonged violence. Julie Peteet explores how Palestinians have dealt with their experience as refugees by focusing attention on how a distinctive Palestinian identity has emerged from and been informed by fifty years of refugee history. Concentrating ethnographic scrutiny on a site-specific experience allows the author to shed light on the mutually constitutive character of place and cultural identification.

Palestinian refugee camps are contradictory places: sites of grim despair but also of hope and creativity. Within these cramped spaces, refugees have crafted new worlds of meaning and visions of the possible in politics. In the process, their historical predicament was a point of departure for social action and thus became radically transformed. Beginning with the calamity of 1948, *Landscape of Hope and Despair* traces the dialectic of place and cultural identification through the initial despair of the 1950s and early 1960s to the tumultuous days of the resistance and the violence of the Lebanese civil war and its aftermath. Most significantly, this study invokes space, place, and identity to construct an alternative to the received national narratives of Palestinian society and history.

The moving stories told here form a larger picture of these refugees as a people struggling to recreate their sense of place and identity and add meaning to their surroundings through the use of culture and memory.

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