



the  
palestinian  
museum

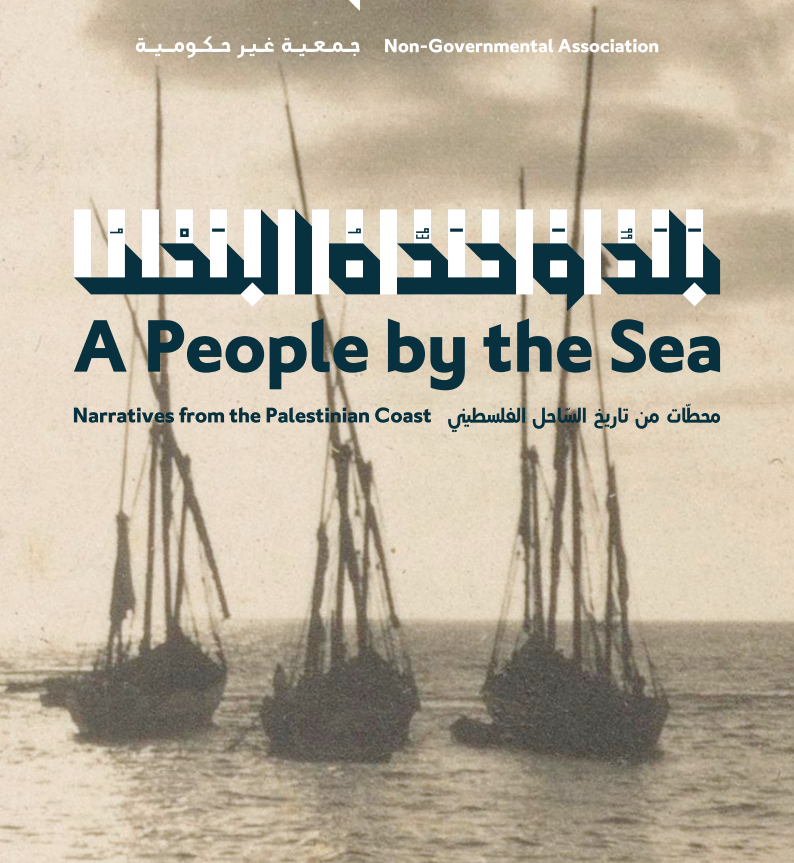
جمعية غير حكومية

Non-Governmental Association

# بلدنا حده البحر

## A People by the Sea

Narratives from the Palestinian Coast محطّات من تاريخ الساحل الفلسطيني





Dear Visitor,

Welcome to the Palestinian Museum's fifth annual exhibition, "A People by the Sea: Narratives from the Palestinian Coast".

With this new exhibition, the Museum continues realising its mission to produce and disseminate emancipatory learning experiences about Palestine, its people, culture, and history.

Through this exhibition, along with its publications, and year-round public, educational, and intellectual activities, we forge a new path in knowledge production on Palestine. A synthesis of academic historical knowledge, rich documentary material, multimedia arts and design interventions, that also affords spaces for reflection and experiencing the past sensorially and cognitively.

The idea to mount an exhibition on the history of the Palestinian coast was born three years ago, and we are delighted to share with you today our vision of the multi-secular experiences and achievements of its people, despite attempts to erase its Palestinian character from the map.

We look forward to meeting you, in person and virtually, in the coming months to contemplate together the narratives of the people of Palestine, a complex society enjoying a continuous and profound bond with its land and sea.

*Adila Laïdi-Hanieh*, PhD  
The Palestinian Museum Director General  
[#APeoplebytheSea](#) [#palmuseum](#)

# **A People by the Sea: Narratives of the Palestinian Coast**

**1748-1948**

*Guest Curator:* Inass Yassin

*Assistant Curator:* Ahmad Alaqla

The Exhibition sheds light on the history of the Palestinian coast. It considers possible futures by reviewing and reflecting on past experiences. Starting from the mid-18th century and ending in 1948, the exhibition allows for a re-examination of the Nakba through a presentation of two hundred years of historical landmarks.

The exhibition includes focused narratives: the first one highlights the rise of Akka (Acre) in the mid-18th century, highlighting its political, economic, urban, and architectural history before modern states' formation in the region. A second narrative focuses on the rise of Yafa (Jaffa) in the 19th century, with the gradual concentration of capital and trade in Palestine's coastal cities. This was accompanied by a growing European influence in the mid-19th century, which led to the 20th century Nakba and the fall of the country.

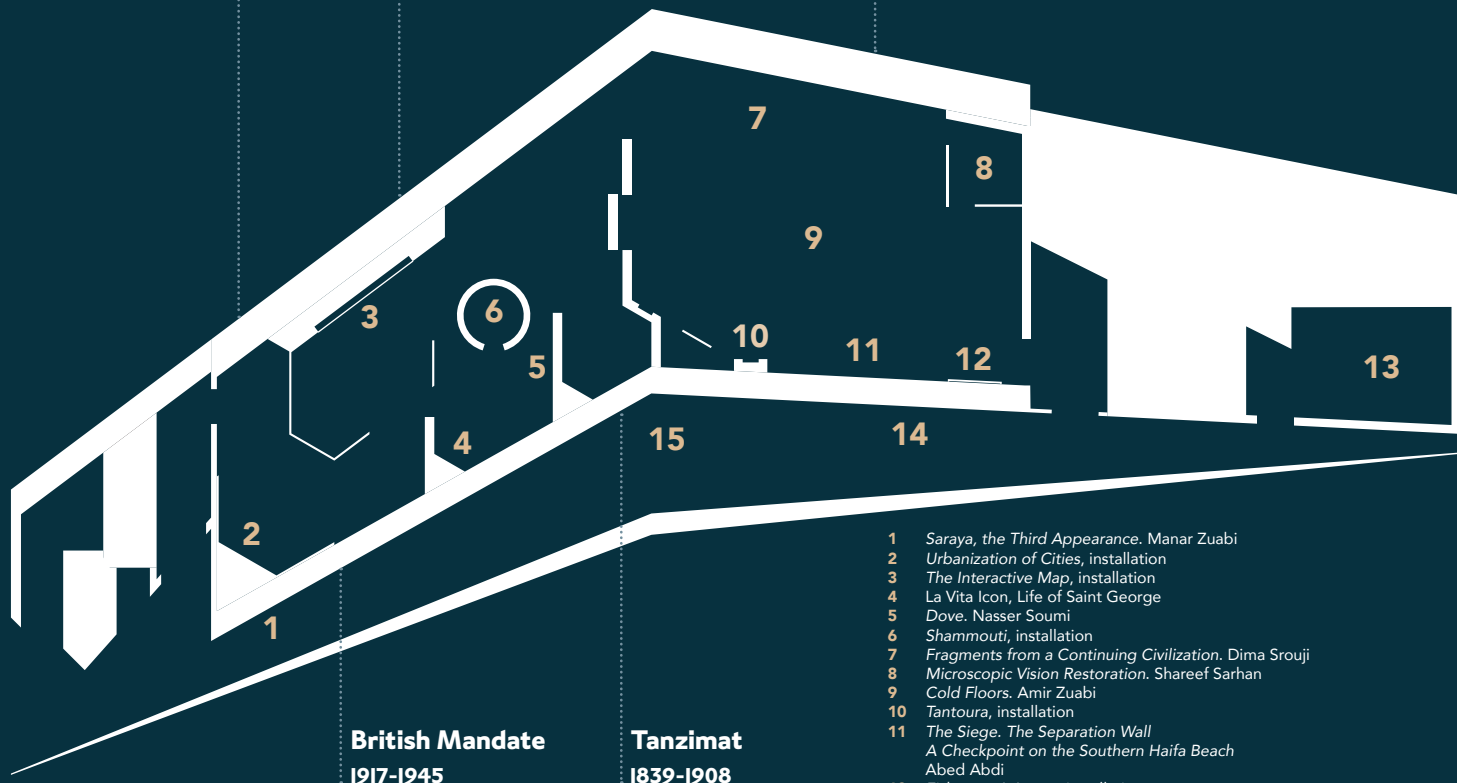
The people of Palestine succeeded in forging diverse manifestations of their deep-rooted existence in the land, through a continuous history and in a semi-independent manner, outside the bounds of official state constructs and encroachments of invading powers that successively ruled the region for centuries - the last of which being the current colonial rule. The presence of an enduring and vibrant Palestine is evident through its urban, architectural, economic, social, and political ensembles and structuring, prior to modern nation-states' formations and their ensuing demarcation of political borders. That Palestinian presence is continuously established and reinforced through Palestinians' steadfast survival and will for self-determination and unhindered access to land and sea, despite colonial attempts to exclude them.

The exhibition showcases a number of historical documents, beginning in the 18th century to the present day, to help understand and probe the concepts of political, economic, and social existence, which constitute a "country" (*balad*) prior to colonialism and to the establishment of modern nation-states. The history of the Palestinian people on their land is one of a complex society with historical continuity and a close bond with land and sea.

**The Rise  
of Akka**  
1748-1840

**Jaffa, the Heart of  
the Mediterranean**  
1872-1916

**Partition of Palestine  
and the Nakba**  
1947-present



**British Mandate**  
1917-1945

**Tanzimat**  
1839-1908

- 1 *Saraya, the Third Appearance.* Manar Zuabi
- 2 *Urbanization of Cities,* installation
- 3 *The Interactive Map,* installation
- 4 *La Vita Icon, Life of Saint George*
- 5 *Dove.* Nasser Soumi
- 6 *Shammouti,* installation
- 7 *Fragments from a Continuing Civilization.* Dima Srouji
- 8 *Microscopic Vision Restoration.* Shareef Sarhan
- 9 *Cold Floors.* Amir Zuabi
- 10 *Tantoura,* installation
- 11 *The Siege. The Separation Wall  
A Checkpoint on the Southern Haifa Beach*  
Abed Abdi
- 12 *Fishermen's Letter,* installation
- 13 *Live the Dream.* Bashar Khalaf
- 14 *Separate Pathways May Lead to the Same Journey.* Essa Grayeb
- 15 *Seaborne Dreams.* Suzanne Groothuis

## The Rise of Akka

Prior to the emergence of statehood in its modern conception, Palestine saw the formation of political entities that were quasi-independent from the Ottoman state. These political entities had a central role in guiding the construction of the urban centres that would become Palestine's coastal cities.

The most significant effort at self-governance was led in the 18th century by Daher al-Omar al-Zaydani, who grasped the importance of the coast and made Akka (Acre) his capital in 1748.

## Tanzimat

The Tanzimat (Reforms) period (1839–1876) led to a change in the structure of Palestinian society and its relation to the state. This was manifest in the empowerment of local political elites, linking local markets to the capitalist world economy, and the displacement of economic and political seats of power from the countryside to the city. Consequently, the state compelled local rulers to relinquish their independent authority and work instead as civil servants of the Ottoman state.

## Jaffa, the Heart of the Mediterranean

The implementation of the Ottoman Tanzimat (Reforms) had a transformative impact that contributed to Jaffa's rise as a prosperous socioeconomic hub between the mid-19th century. The process of land registration contributed to the rehabilitation of more lands, leading to a rapid rise in agricultural production. The culmination of capital resulting from investments reflects itself on the social life in the city.

The development of transportation sector was followed by successive waves of internal and external migration to seek investment opportunities in Jaffa, which becomes a commercial hub.

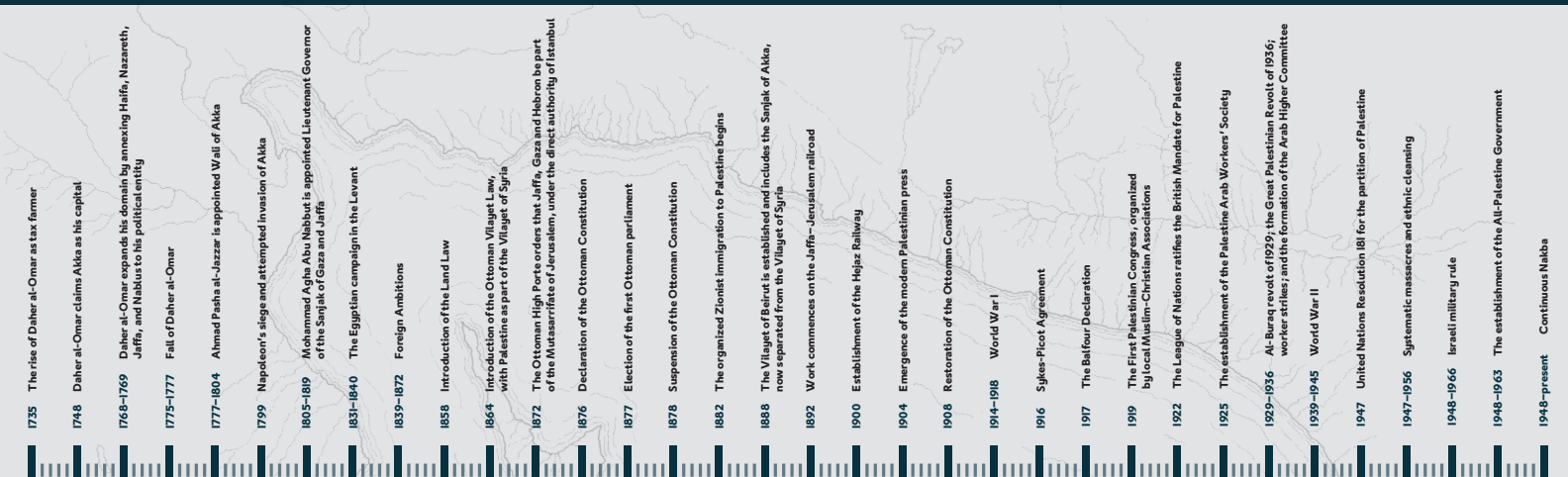
## British Mandate

As a result of the 1916 secret Sykes-Picot Agreement (which enabled Britain and France's fragmentation of the region), the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the end of World War I in 1918, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 and the subsequent ratification of the British Mandate on Palestine by the League of Nations, Britain began preparing favourable political, administrative, and economic conditions for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. This period saw a rise in mass Jewish immigration, an increase in Zionist land acquisitions.

## Partition of Palestine and the Nakba

Palestinians were united in rejecting the 1947 United Nations Resolution 181 for the Partition of Palestine, which gave 54% of the country to Jews and left only 45% of the land to its original inhabitants. This was done despite Palestinians constituting more than two-thirds of the population. It took place at a time when Britain was preparing to withdraw from Palestine.

Palestinians' unequivocal rejection of the fait accompli led to military resistance. Zionist paramilitary groups already committed numerous massacres and crimes as a prelude to the Nakba of 1948.



*Historical Advisers:*  
Professor Adel Manna,  
Professor Mahmoud Yazbek.

*Artists:*  
Abed Abdi, Raed Duzdar, Essa Grayeb,  
Suzanne Groothuis, Bashar Khalaf, Sasha Khoury,  
Nour Abu Hashhash, Shareef Sarhan, Nasser  
Soumi, Dima Srouji, Yanko Todori Tadros, Amir  
Nizar Zuabi, Manar Zuabi.

*Lenders and Contributors:*  
Maha Abushusheh, George Al Ama, American  
University of Beirut, Jonathan Cook, Raed Duzdar,  
Republic of Turkey Presidency of State Archives,  
Getty Images, Amjad Ghannam, Institute for  
Palestine Studies, A.S. Hanieh family, Library  
of Congress, NINO Collection, The Palestinian  
Museum Digital Archive.

*Production and Curatorial Team:*  
Obour Hashash, Sandy Rishmawi, Lubna Al-Araj,  
Malak Abdelwahab, Ashraf Hamdan, Baha' Jubeh.

*Donors:* A. M. Qattan Foundation through the  
"Visual Arts: A Flourishing Field" (VAFF) Project,  
funded by Sweden, the Arab Fund for Economic  
and Social Development, Bank of Palestine.



**The Palestinian Museum** - Non-Governmental Association dedicated to supporting an open and dynamic Palestinian culture nationally and internationally. The Museum presents and engages with new perspectives on Palestinian history, society and culture. It also offers spaces for creative ventures, educational programmes and innovative research.

The Palestinian Museum is a Swiss-registered non-governmental association with a branch in Palestine.

### **The Palestinian Museum**

Museum Street, PO Box 48, Birzeit, Palestine

tel: +970 2 294 1948, fax: +970 2 294 1936

email: [info@palmuseum.org](mailto:info@palmuseum.org)

For general information: [www.palmuseum.org](http://www.palmuseum.org)

Facebook: The Palestinian Museum

Twitter: @palmuseum

Instagram: palmuseum

Visit the Palestinian Museum Digital Archive:

[www.palarchive.org](http://www.palarchive.org)

Visit Palestinian Journeys: [www.paljourneys.org](http://www.paljourneys.org)

Subscribe to our YouTube channel and enjoy the Museum remotely

The Palestinian Museum won the 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture and is LEED-certified Gold by the U.S. Green Building Council.

© The Palestinian Museum 2021.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the Palestinian Museum, Birzeit, Palestine.