



# Mapping My Return: A Palestinian Memoir

*Salman Abu Sitta*

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Salman Abu Sitta, who has single-handedly made available crucial mapping work on Palestine, was just ten years old when he left his home near Beersheba in 1948, but as for many Palestinians of his generation, the profound effects of that traumatic loss would form the defining feature of his life from that moment on. In this rich and moving memoir, Abu Sitta draws on oral histories and personal recollections to vividly evoke the vanished world of his family and home from the late nineteenth century to the eve of the British withdrawal from Palestine and subsequent war. Alongside accounts of an idyllic childhood spent on his family's farm estate Abu Sitta gives a personal and very human face to the dramatic events of 1930s and 1940s Palestine, conveying the acute sense of foreboding felt by Palestinians as Zionist ambitions and militarization expanded under the mandate.

Following his family's flight to Gaza during the 1948 mass exodus of Palestinians from their homes, Abu Sitta continued his schooling and university education in Cairo, where he witnessed the heady rise of Arab nationalism after the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952 and the momentous events surrounding the Israeli invasion of Sinai and Gaza in 1956. With warmth and humor, he chronicles his peripatetic exile's existence, as an engineering student in Nasser's Egypt, his crucial, formative years in 1960s London, his life as a family man and academic in Canada, and several sojourns in Kuwait, all against the backdrop of seismic political events in the region, including the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the 1991 Gulf War.

Abu Sitta's narrative is imbued throughout with a burning sense of justice, a determination to recover and document what rightfully belongs to his people, an aim given poignant expression in his painstaking cartographic and archival work on Palestine, for which he is justifiably acclaimed.

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