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Michael Romann and Alex Weingrod, *Living Together Separately: Arabs and Jews in Contemporary Jerusalem*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

Reviewed by Mary Tepfenhart

Michael Romann and Alex Weingrod are professors at Tel Aviv University and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, both residents of Jerusalem. This comprehensive study focuses on the everyday ethnic relations between Jews and Arabs, both in residential and business locations within the ancient Holy City. Utilizing a mix of documents, studies, official reports, field interviews and observations, detailed investigations in large factory and a major hospital, the book covers two decades from 1967 to 1987. As the authors stated, the study is an attempt to present “Jerusalem’s realities without ideological preconceptions” and to examine the variety of exchanges from the view point of both Jews and Arabs.”(xxii)

The first of the nine chapters of the book deals with the history of this very contested city, from biblical times to the 20th century. The Jews cannot envision a state without Jerusalem as the capital. The city holds great religious significance for the Arabs, Muslims and Christians, who inherited that land for thousands of years. In time, Jerusalem was divided according to religious and ethnic times into four sections: Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Armenian. Despite this voluntarily segregation, there were frequent contacts between them. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the political forum in Jerusalem was made up of a Muslim mayor and Christian and Jewish councilors. The same pattern continued under the British Mandate system.

After the war in 1948, the city was partitioned into two different and disconnected entities. The border line became dangerous and both communities moved away, in opposite directions. Jerusalem was reunited in 1967 under Jewish jurisdiction, and this created different kinds of problems. There were problems regarding the legal status of the Arabs (some had Jordanian passports, some took Israeli citizenship). The Jewish government wanted to impose laws on the Arabs, who did not recognize their authority. Arabs expressed their resistance in different forms such as demonstrations, strikes, terror or noncooperation. However, many worked for Jewish companies and have continued to do so.

The authors exemplify the complexity of problems with an example of a village, Abu Tur, inhabited by Arabs before 1967, where Jews moved in after the war. The two groups have separate schools and hospitals. There are few incentives for these two groups to interact. Jews are apprehensive of Arabs for terrorist attacks. Arabs are also afraid the Israeli police might pick them up following an incident in the neighborhood. However, this does not mean the groups have no contacts whatsoever. Many Arabs work for Jewish companies and stores, though it is not common to see Jews working for Arabs. There are Jews who rent apartments from Arab landlords. In the past, some of these landlords dealt with British and Jewish citizens. There is an economic incentive. Many times, these Jewish renters

would act as brokers for the Arab landlords and for other Arabs. At the same time, the landlords became “protectors” for their tenants against any kind of harassment.

Michael Romann and Alex Weingrod continue the study with an analysis of work relations between Jews and Arabs. According to Israeli Labor Legislation, Arabs are entitled to the same wage and benefits as Jews. Arabs are represented in local labor committees. However, Arabs find it difficult to climb the professional ladder. This is the result of lack of the certifications required to obtain a better position. The classes offered for these certificates are conducted in Hebrew.

There are some paradoxical situations where Jews have complained that they are discriminated against and Arabs favored by a boss:

“When one of the Arabs asks the boss for a loan, he’ll always get it. Let’s say that it’s a few days before payday and the Arab comes along and says that he has a big payment that he must make now. The boss will say: “How much do you need?” and he’ll give him an advance on his salary. And then, let’s say that a Jew comes along and asks for the same thing. The Jew will be refused. He’ll tell him that he must learn to live within his means, has to budget his money and all of that. That’s the way he is, I’m telling you. He helps Arabs but not Jews.” (135)

Jews and Arabs work together out of economic necessity. They can have very good relations at work, but outside, these relations do not continue. There are other constraints for both groups. The Jews will work with the Arabs but not for the Arabs. The Arabs are confronted with the dilemma that they are employed by a Jewish company.

The last chapter and the conclusions cover the problem of integration. Their research showed that there is a “widespread segregation” (221) in commercial and residential public institutions. Because of deeply rooted antagonism, differences in religion, and cultural-ethnic prejudice and violence, neither the Jews nor the Arabs want to be totally assimilated to the other. Low-level integration in commercial locations and employment enables both groups to keep their identity and avoid conflicts.

Segregation in Jerusalem is more intense than in other cities such as Haifa and Acre, which have large Arab minorities, and where Arab businesses have moved into Jewish neighborhoods. There, Arabs vote in municipal and national elections. They also participate more in politics, setting up exclusive Israeli Arab parties.

Occasionally, there are outbreaks of violence (like the intifada) or civil disobedience, such as refusal to pay taxes. Arabs have been urged by their leaders to boycott Jewish businesses and products, but this has had negative effects on both communities from an economic point of view, since Jewish merchants use Arab brokers to channel their products to the Arabs while the Arabs do the same thing to channel their products to the Jewish population.

The authors conclude that low-level integration based on everyday interests will continue in the future but that major issues such as political rights and fair distribution of resources, and employment still remain unresolved. It rests upon these ethnic groups to decide how much compromise they are willing to accept in order to reach peaceful coexistence.

Grounded in important issues of our time, this book addresses questions of integration, tolerance and making a living in changing times. This volume offers thought-provoking observations, and is an excellent source of information for everybody interested in the topic.