

The Social Life of Cannabis in Palestine-Israel: A Global History

A lecture by Haggai Ram,
2021 Greenberg Middle East Scholar-in-Residence
with an introduction by Murat Yildiz,
Assistant Professor, Department of History, Skidmore College



After a century of prohibition, we are amidst a dramatic about-face in cannabis culture and policy around the world, with the drug gaining widespread recreational and medicinal acceptance. This transition from cannabis products' reputation as a "killer weed" and a cause of "racial degeneration" to its late twentieth-century one has been quite remarkable. Arguably, this is hardly the only instance of a drug's reputation radically changing over time. But in the modern world such transformations have more often been from miracle drug to menace, not the other way around.

In his lecture, Professor Ram will examine this global shift of cannabis by focusing on the social history of the drug (i.e., hashish and marijuana) in Palestine-Israel from the late nineteenth century to the present. Ram will offer a vista into the political and cultural contexts within which cannabis became a "drug"; the underworlds of users and traffickers; the complex roles played by race, gender, and class in the construction of cannabis "addiction"; the place of colonial and nation-building projects in dispersing cannabis use and enforcing drug restrictions; and the normalization-cum-medicalization of this intoxicant

in recent decades. In the process, he will demonstrate the extent to which the history of cannabis in Palestine-Israel offers a window through which one can explore broader political, economic, social, and cultural change.

Haggai Ram is the 2021 Greenberg Middle East Scholar-in-Residence at Skidmore College. He received his Ph.D. from New York University (1993) and has been teaching at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Department of Middle East Studies, since 1995. Professor Ram's areas of teaching and research are the social and cultural histories of Iran and the Levant (including Palestine-Israel). In addition to numerous articles and book chapters, he is the author of *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran* (American University Press, 1994); *Reading Iran in Israel* (in Hebrew, 2006); *Iranophobia: The Logic of an Israeli Obsession* (Stanford University Press, 2009); and *Intoxicating Zion: A Social History of Hashish in Mandatory Palestine and Israel* (Stanford University Press, 2020).

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