Mas'udiyin / al-Azazmeh

Mas'udiyin / al-Azazmeh – Palestinian Bedouin Clan of the Beersheba Subdistrict

The Mas'udiyin were a Palestinian Bedouin clan belonging to the al-Azazmeh tribal grouping of the Beersheba Subdistrict. They did not constitute a single nucleated village with one permanent built-up center. Their encampments and lands were distributed among several locations within the broad al-Azazmeh territory of the central and southern Naqab.

Mandate records and Palestinian historical mapping identify the Mas'udiyin as a distinct al-Azazmeh group. Cartographic indexes also record several Mas'udiyin-related localities, including places shared or adjoining the Subayhat and Subhiyin, confirming that the clan's geography cannot be reduced to a single village point.

Item	Information
District	Beersheba
Tribe	al-Azazmeh
Type of Community	Dispersed Bedouin and semi-settled clan rather than one nucleated village
Location	Several locations within the central and southern al-Azazmeh domain; historical maps record Arab el Mas'udiyin and areas jointly named with Subayhat and Subhiyin
Distance from Beersheba	No single documented distance applies to all clan encampments
Elevation	No single elevation applies to the clan's multiple dwelling areas
Population in 1931	926 – official Census of Palestine

Item	Information
Population in 1944/1945	No independently documented clan-specific figure in the 1945 Village Statistics
Estimated Population in 1948	974 according to Salman Abu Sitta's updated Register – a later estimate, not an official census
Displacement / Relocation	No single date; Abu Sitta classifies the Mas'udiyin as “Relocated by Israelis”
Military Operation	No independently documented Mas'udiyin-specific operation; Operation Yoav forms part of the wider regional context
Military Unit	No particular brigade or battalion is independently documented at clan level
Land Area	No independently documented clan-specific total
Settlements on Clan Land	No particular post-1948 settlement can be reliably assigned to Mas'udiyin land without clan-level cadastral boundaries

The Mas'udiyin within al-Azazmeh

The Mas'udiyin were one of the ten principal al-Azazmeh clans recorded in historical Palestinian sources.

The principal branches were Muhammadiyin, Subhiyin, Subayhat, Zaraba, Farahin, Mas'udiyin, 'Usiyat, Sawakhneh, Mri'at, and Sarahin.

The broader al-Azazmeh territory extended from Beersheba and Wadi al-Khalil in the north toward Wadi al-Raman, al-Hasira, and the highlands overlooking Wadi al-'Araba in the south.

The Mas'udiyin therefore occupied part of a broad system of tribal territory, pasture, wells, and seasonal agricultural land rather than a conventional bounded village estate.

Clan Leadership

Palestinian documentation of the al-Azazmeh shaykhs identifies the Mas'udiyin shaykh during the Mandate period as:

Salama bin Muslim bin Sulayman bin Sa'id.

Later tribal accounts likewise describe the Mas'udiyin shaykhship as being held by “Ibn Sa'id,” consistent with this recorded name.

Mas'udiyin Subdivisions

Palestinian tribal documentation commonly lists the following principal Mas'udiyin subdivisions:

- al-Fadalat.
- al-Hamamda.
- al-Muhsiniyin.
- al-Walayda.
- 'Ayal Salim.

Other tribal accounts add names such as al-Buqu' or al-Qulu', together with additional later family subdivisions.

Because these classifications derive from tribal documentation rather than a formal administrative register, differences among versions are preserved rather than combined into a single supposedly definitive list.

Mas'udiyin Territory and Encampments

Palestinian historical mapping confirms that the Mas'udiyin occupied more than one locality.

The locality indexes include:

- Arab el Mas'udiyin.

- Arab es Subeihat & Masudiyin.
- Arab es Subhiyin & Mas'udiyin.

This indicates adjacent or jointly used dwelling and territorial areas among several al-Azazmeh branches.

The Mas'udiyin are also associated in Palestinian sources with the al-Khalasa region, where members lived alongside other al-Azazmeh groups.

A single coordinate, elevation, or distance from Beersheba would therefore misrepresent the clan's historical geography.

Population in 1931

The official 1931 Census of Palestine separately recorded the Mas'udiyin under *El Azazma*:

Total	**926**
Category	**Number**
Males	507
Females	419

All were recorded as Muslims.

The occupied-houses field is blank in the official table, so no house count should be described as an official 1931 census figure.

Household Estimates

Some later tribal sources give approximately **176 “houses”** for the Mas'udiyin.

This number does not appear in the occupied-house field of the official 1931 census and is therefore treated as a tribal or household estimate.

In Bedouin usage, a “house” can also mean a family or tent unit rather than a

permanent masonry dwelling.

Mas'udiyin versus the al-Azazmeh Total

Several modern databases display 8,678 for 1931 on pages concerning the Mas'udiyin. That figure is intended as a total for al-Azazmeh as a whole, not for the Mas'udiyin.

The official Mas'udiyin total was 926.

Moreover, the arithmetic sum of the ten al-Azazmeh branch figures in the official 1931 table is **8,661**, not 8,678.

Population in 1944/1945

The Mas'udiyin do not appear in the 1945 Village Statistics as a conventional independent village unit with a separate population and land-ownership table.

No 1945 population is therefore extrapolated from the 1931 census, nor is an al-Azazmeh-wide estimate reassigned to the Mas'udiyin.

Estimated Population in 1948

Salman Abu Sitta's updated Register gives an estimated **974 people** for Masoudiyeen / Azazema in 1948.

Some modern Palestinian databases round the figure to 970, but Abu Sitta's Register gives 974.

This is a retrospective demographic estimate rather than an official census conducted in 1948.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1931	926	Official Census of Palestine

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1944/1945	Not independently available	No conventional independent Mas'udiyin statistical village unit
1948	974	Later estimate in Salman Abu Sitta's updated Register

Land and Property

The 1945 Village Statistics do not provide an independent Mas'udiyin land unit from which a reliable clan-level ownership table can be constructed.

Figures for the wider al-Azazmeh tribal territory cover numerous clans and cannot be reassigned to the Mas'udiyin alone.

No Palestinian / Transferred to Zionists / Communal-Public ownership table is therefore supplied without independent clan-level cadastral data.

Economic Life

The Mas'udiyin shared the pastoral economy of al-Azazmeh, based largely on raising sheep, goats, and camels and moving between grazing areas and wells according to rainfall and seasonal conditions.

Seasonal cereal cultivation was also practiced in suitable areas, and increasing agricultural settlement occurred around places such as al-Khalasa.

No independent agricultural table exists for the Mas'udiyin, so crop acreage or livestock totals belonging to the broader tribe are not reassigned to the clan.

Water, Education, and Services

Mas'udiyin settlement patterns were closely connected with wells, grazing routes, and seasonal cultivation areas within the al-Azazmeh domain.

The reviewed sources do not provide a comprehensive independent inventory of

Mas'udiyin wells.

Nor is there sufficient documentation for a single school serving the entire clan. Schools at al-Khalasa or 'Asluj should therefore not automatically be described as Mas'udiyin institutions merely because some clan members lived nearby.

The Mas'udiyin and the Nakba

Military operations in 1948 radically transformed control of Beersheba and the Naqab, particularly during Operation Yoav and the occupation of Beersheba on 21 October.

Salman Abu Sitta's Register, however, does not give the Mas'udiyin a single 1948 displacement date and does not assign them an Operation Yoav code.

Operation Yoav therefore forms part of the wider military background but should not be described as a documented “occupation of the Mas'udiyin.”

Post-1948 Relocation

Salman Abu Sitta's updated Register classifies the Mas'udiyin as **“Relocated by Israelis.”** No single displacement date is given.

Palestine Land Society provides an important additional detail. In describing the methods by which Bedouin communities were removed from their original land, it notes that authorities sometimes claimed a relocation would be temporary and specifically cites the **Arab Mas'udiyin** as an example.

The same account describes recurring searches, military pressure, threats to supplies, interference with livestock, and other forms of pressure preceding many of these relocations.

The Mas'udiyin experience is therefore better understood as part of a postwar forced spatial reorganization of the Naqab Bedouin population rather than as a single-day village depopulation.

The Wider Expulsion of al-Azazmeh to Sinai

Alongside internal relocation, al-Azazmeh as a whole experienced repeated expulsions toward Sinai during the postwar years.

Palestine Land Society estimates that approximately 6,200 al-Azazmeh were expelled to Sinai in a series of operations between 1949 and 1954, with many attempting to return.

This figure applies to al-Azazmeh as a whole and cannot be used as a Mas'udiyin-specific population figure.

Occupation and Displacement Chronology

Stage	Period	Details
Pre-Nakba Encampments	Until 1948	The Mas'udiyin occupied several locations within the al-Azazmeh domain, including sites separately mapped under their name and jointly with Subayhat and Subhiyin.
Operation Yoav	15 October – 4 November 1948	The operation transformed control of the Naqab and led to the occupation of Beersheba, but it is not recorded as a Mas'udiyin-specific displacement operation.
Occupation of Beersheba	21 October 1948	The loss of the district's administrative and commercial center profoundly affected Bedouin movement and access to land.
Relocation of the Mas'udiyin	After 1948	Abu Sitta classifies the clan among communities relocated by Israeli authorities, without assigning one date.
Relocation Presented as “Temporary”	Early military-rule period	Palestine Land Society cites the Arab Mas'udiyin as an example of a community told that removal from its land was temporary.

Stage	Period	Details
Wider al-Azazmeh Expulsions	1949–1954	Al-Azazmeh experienced repeated expulsions toward Sinai; no separate total for Mas'udiyin involvement is established.

Military Operation and Unit

Military Operation: No single military operation is independently documented as “the occupation or displacement of the Mas'udiyin.”

Operation Yoav and the occupation of Beersheba form a major regional military background, but Abu Sitta classifies the Mas'udiyin under postwar relocation and assigns neither a Yoav code nor a clan-specific displacement date.

Military Unit: No particular brigade or battalion is independently documented at the Mas'udiyin clan level.

Cause of Displacement

The Mas'udiyin loss of access to their original encampments was connected with the military and political transformation of the Naqab following the Nakba and with policies relocating Beersheba Bedouins away from their original lands.

Palestinian documentation indicates the use of military and administrative pressure and records the Mas'udiyin as an example of a community whose relocation was represented as temporary.

The most supportable characterization is therefore **multi-stage forced relocation and resettlement following the military conquest of the Naqab**, rather than one documented attack on a single date.

Destruction of Encampments

There was no single compact masonry village called Mas'udiyin for which a reliable

destruction percentage can be calculated.

Studies of demolished and dispossessed Naqab communities identify multiple Mas'udiyin locations, reflecting the evacuation and destruction of parts of the clan's historical settlement landscape during the creation of the postwar Bedouin concentration zone.

The sources do not provide a complete count of all Mas'udiyin houses, tents, wells, or structures before and after destruction, so no numerical destruction percentage is supplied.

Settlements on Mas'udiyin Land

The reviewed sources do not provide a clan-specific cadastral map distinguishing Mas'udiyin property from the lands of other al-Azazmeh branches.

Historical mapping records several Mas'udiyin-related sites, making site-by-site analysis necessary before attributing any particular modern Israeli settlement to the clan.

No settlement is therefore assigned to Mas'udiyin land solely on the basis of proximity.

Mas'udiyin / al-Azazmeh Today

The Mas'udiyin did not disappear as a clan after the Nakba, but their geographical distribution changed through relocation and the wider dispersal of Beersheba Bedouins.

Palestinian refugee documentation also records Mas'udiyin-origin refugees outside the Naqab; for example, a 2008 study of UNRWA records in West Bank refugee camps identified registered refugees whose place of origin was Mas'udiyin / al-Azazmeh.

At the same time, Abu Sitta's classification of the Mas'udiyin as “Relocated by

Israelis” indicates that part of the community remained within the territory under Israeli control while being removed from its original land.

There is no single former “Mas'udiyin village site” to describe today because the clan already occupied multiple historical locations.

A precise contemporary reconstruction therefore requires separate cadastral and field study of each historical Mas'udiyin site. This section is not a comprehensive 2026 field or demographic survey.

Sources

- Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine, 1931: Mas'udiyin / El Azazma
- 'Arif al-'Arif – Tarikh Bir al-Saba' wa-Qaba'iliha
- Encyclopedia of Palestinian Villages – Mas'udiyin / al-Azazmeh
- Salman Abu Sitta – Register of Depopulated Palestinian Localities: Masoudiyeen / Azazema
- Palestine Land Society – Half of Forgotten Palestine: Beersheba District, Where the Nakba Continues
- Palestine Land Society – The Return Journey: Localities Index, Arab el Mas'udiyin and associated sites
- PalQuest – Operation Yoav, for the wider regional military context
- Palestinian Tribal Documentation – Mas'udiyin Branches and Leadership