

The Emergence of a Palestinian National Identity: A Theory-Driven Approach

By Zachary J. Foster

Introduction

Nationalism is one of the most powerful transnational force of the past two centuries. Although most scholars consider the phenomenon a peculiarly modern one (Anderson 1994[1983]; Gellner 1994[1964]; Kedourie 1994[1960]; Smith 1991b: 43-44), theories abound as to exactly when, how and why nations emerged. Issues of nationalism in the Arab world, however, and in particular the Palestinian case, remain the subject of determined neglect (Lockman 1999; Seikaly 1991). Moreover, the little scholarship available has been charged with Orientalism (Doumani 1992) and fraudulence (Finkelstein 2003; Porath 1986).

This paper will explore how the people living in historic Palestine, what is today Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, transitioned from a politically passive community to a nation seeking self-determination. I will account for the emergence of Palestinian nationalism, beginning in the 1910s throughout the 1920s and 1930s within the framework of Anthony D. Smith's theory on "vertical ethnies" (Smith 1991a:43-70). The main argument of this paper is that the Palestinian national identity developed not as an accidental product of external historical developments (e.g. Zionism or British colonialism), but rather through a directed effort by the Palestinian intellectual class to endow the ethnic community with a *Palestinian* national consciousness.

Conceptual Framework

A rich literature has attempted to explain how and why nations emerge. Anthony D. Smith traces two routes by which ethnic communities develop into nations.¹ The first is a state-sponsored effort aimed at welding together disparate classes, regions and populations into a single political community based on the cultural heritage of the dominant ethnic core. Classic examples include England, France, Spain and Sweden. The second route starts from a small circle of intellectuals who set out to transform their self-conception from ethno-religious to political. Typically, this is accomplished through an appeal to the community's glorious ethnic past. In this second model, coined by Smith as "vertical ethnies," the project of the ethnic intelligentsia involves several interrelated processes:

1. A movement from passive subordination of the community to its active political assertion.
2. A movement to place the people at the center of concern and to celebrate the masses by re-educating them in national values, memories and myths
3. A movement to place the community in its homeland, a secure and recognized compact territory
4. A movement to endow the territorial community with economic unity
5. A movement to turn ethnic members into legal citizens by conferring civil, social and political rights on them

¹ This paper assumes Smith's (1991a: 21) definition of an ethnic group, which, to summarize briefly, requires a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific 'homeland,' and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. Smith himself uses the Arabs as an example of an ethnic group.

To frame the emergence of Palestinian nationalism in these terms deviates from other scholarly approaches in two critical respects. First, it combines the diversity of political, economic, educational, social and cultural developments in Palestine before and during the British Mandate period that other scholars have individually documented but have not comprehensively analyzed. Second, utilizing Smith's framework helps explain how the emergence of the Palestinian nation is similar to, rather than different from, other national movements for self-determination. This approach locates internal developments in Palestinian society (as opposed to Zionist settlement or British colonialism) as central rather than peripheral to the creation and perpetuation of a Palestinian national consciousness. In metaphorical terms, Zionism and British imperialism may have provided the fuel and oil changes for the vehicle of Palestinian nationalism to operate easier, faster and better. But it was the Palestinian intelligentsia that provided the contours, structure, and ultimately the engine that imbued in the Arab community of Palestine a distinctly *Palestinian* national identity.

The Sociological Problem

A discussion of the sociological problem of nationalism is fitting in order to explain the emergence of a distinctly Palestinian national consciousness. It should not be assumed that nationalism and the development of nation-states is the logical conclusion of human history. As Kedourie argues,

Races, languages, religions, political traditions and loyalties are so inextricably intermixed that there can be no convincing reason why people who speak the same language, but whose history and circumstances otherwise diverse, should form one state, or why people who speak two different languages and whom circumstances have thrown them together should form one state. (Kedourie 53)

Those who believe in the naturalness of nationalism cannot logically explain, for instance, the separation of Britain and America or the union of English and French Canada. To argue convincingly that similarities among peoples such as a common language or belief in shared ancestry should entitle them to an exclusive government, it must also be demonstrated that the similarity in one respect absolutely supersedes the differences in other respects (Kedourie 53).

This competition among inextricably intermixed identities was particularly acute with the Arabs of Palestine in the decades preceding World War I. Identification with a village or city, for instance, was especially strong. Family names frequently coincided with urban centers, such as al-Maqdisi (Jerusalem), al-Nabulsi (Nablus), al-Ghazzawi (Gaza), al-Khalili (Hebron) (Khalidi 1997: 153).

Moreover, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of family clans leading up to (and including) the Mandate period. The Husaynis, a prominent family in Palestine, trace their ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad. Other families, such as the al-Khalidi, Nusayba and Nashashibi boasted many great Islamic scholars and public officials (Muslih 24-37).

Rifts between and among family clans further illustrate their significance. In the 1920s, family rivalries crystallized into a "two clan-system," which pitted the dominant Husseinis against their traditional rivals, the Nashashibis (Morris 111). The Husseinis gained British succor whereas the Nashashibis and their allied clans obtained the status of the "opposition" (*mu'aridun*). The failure to produce a unified leadership plagued Palestinian society throughout

the mandate period. For instance, more Arabs were killed by fellow Arabs during the Arab Revolt of 1936-39 due to intra-family feuds than were killed by the British or the Jews (Morris 151).

Beyond family and city ties, religious identities commanded allegiances. Muslims considered themselves subjects of the Ottoman Empire, owing loyalty to the Sultan/Caliph as the leader of the Islamic community. Many of the nationalist political groups in Palestine, during the late 1910s and 1920s, developed along either Christian or Muslim religious lines. In fact, the extent to which these groups dealt with the religious affairs of Palestine, such as the Muslim demand for independent management of religious matters, raised the British authorities' fear of a Pan-Muslim uprising (Porath 1974: 107).

Perhaps even more powerful than these allegiances was the Pan-Arab ideology. This twentieth century movement sought to unite the Arabs living in Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Palestine into a single political community (e.g. Antonius 1979[1946]; Farah 1987; Khalidi et al. 1991). The Palestinian response to the King-Crane Commission best exemplifies the extent to which the community in Palestine supported Arab Unity. This post-World War I American-led initiative, operating under the auspices of Wilson's Fourteen Points Speech, sought to determine the will of the local inhabitants vis-à-vis their political future.

The Palestinian elite indeed opted for unity with Syria. This issue was discussed at the first Muslim-Christian Association (MCA) meeting (also known as the First Palestinian Congress) in January-February 1919 (discussed subsequently). The Congress produced the following resolution: "We consider Palestine as part of Arab Syria as it has never been separated from it at any time...we are connected with it by national, religious, linguistic, natural, economic and geographical bonds...in view of the above we desire that our district Southern Syria or Palestine should be not separated from the Independent Arab Syrian Government and be free from all foreign influence and protection..." (cited in Porath 1974: 81-82). While the Congress would eventually abandon the pan-Syria idea, it dominated the discourse of organized Palestinian politics for its first few years and remained central for many younger Palestinian intellectuals throughout much of the Mandate period. Despite the strength of these familial, local, religious and regional identity markers, however, the Arabs of Palestine would eventually define themselves as Palestinian and demand independence for Palestinians.

The subsequent discussion of Palestinian nationalism, therefore, is not an attempt to accurately represent the range of political currents or goals among the Arabs of Palestine during the period under consideration. Indeed, for every nationalist who believed in Palestinian self-determination there were others who supported Arab unity. Palestinian nationalists themselves often expressed Pan-Arab idealism, but directed their efforts towards achieving a state for the Palestinians because that was most feasible. Some political organizations and cultural clubs embraced Christian-Muslim unity while others rejected it. Whereas several political associations in Palestine formed along strict family lines, many did not. For every newspaper that desired Palestinian independence, there was another that emphasized Arab unity. Some teachers and textbooks highlighted Palestinian distinctiveness while others stressed Arab unity. Proposals to establish a Palestinian flag were countered with ideas to adopt the general Arab flag.² The same can be said of the Palestinian historians, novelists and poets of the time. From these fissures, however, emerged a Palestinian rather than Arab, Husseini or Muslim national movement that has survived to the present. The remainder of this essay, therefore, aims to capture the source of what remains a Palestinian struggle for national independence.

² The general Arab flag remains the Palestinian flag today.

“Palestine” Before World War I

Scholars agree that the predominantly Muslim and Christian Arab population of Palestine before World War I did not consider themselves part of a distinctly Palestinian national group. There is evidence, however, that the people living in what is today Israel, Gaza and the West Bank had a regional identity. Until the thirteenth century, the Muslims referred to Judea, Sumaria and the adjacent coastal region (part of modern day Israel, the West Bank and Gaza) as *Filastin* (Ruether and Ruether 95). Haim Gerber parses through a two-volume *fatwa* (legal opinion) composed by the Arab Mufti Khayr al-Din al-Ramli dating from the seventeenth century, which on many occasions, “mentions the concepts *Filastin*, *biladuna* (our country), *al-Sham* (Syria), *Misr* (Egypt) and *disyar* (country), in senses that go far beyond ‘mere’ objective geography” (Gerber 563). His conclusion is that educated Palestinians, even in the seventeenth century, were in fact conscious of living in a territorial region called “Palestine” that was separate from, even if it constituted a part of, “greater Syria.”

Although Palestine was not its own administrative unit in the Ottoman state, the Turks proposed unifying Palestine into a single political province in 1830, 1840 and 1872, but feared the measure would assist European colonial interests (Doumani 9; Schölch 13-14). The boundaries envisaged were similar to those of the eventual British Mandate. Moreover, cooperation between the various districts in Palestine occurred for administrative and military purposes (Porath 1974: 5).

Kimmerling and Migdal’s comprehensive “history” of the Palestinian people begins with the 1834 revolt against Egypt’s governor and occupier of most of Palestine, Ibrahim Pasha (6-13). This largely populist uprising, they argue, brought together disparate and dispersed Bedouins, rural sheikhs, urban notables, mountain fellaheen and Jerusalem religious figures of Palestine against the invading forces of Ibrahim. Moreover, European penetration in the mid-nineteenth century, both its bureaucratic advances and demand for locally produced products, lies at the embryo of the Palestinian national identity (Kimmerling and Migdal).

Economic, religious and cultural practices further bound the Arabs of Palestine. Cities were often integrated with their adjacent hinterlands, such as Galilee farmers were to Nazareth. Local cultural practices, such as the Nabi Musa pilgrimage,³ which enjoyed participation from Southern, Central and Northern Palestine, provided a sense of collective identification for the Muslims in the area (Porath 1974: 6). Additionally, the Christian and Muslim Arabs were likely cognizant of living in a unique region due to their religious scriptures. Frequent western travelers to the sacred sites of Palestine undoubtedly reinforced the “holy” character of the land (Doumani 7). Finally, the Zionist settlers who arrived beginning in 1882 crystallized this idea of Palestine as a distinct region.

This very terse survey of “Palestine” before World War I demonstrates that a combination of religious, cultural, economic, administrative and foreign factors provided the Arabs at least *some* self-conception of living in a distinct territory. Still, the Arab peoples of Palestine prior to World War I would not have considered themselves part of a Palestinian nation and therefore did not advocate for Palestinian self-determination. This would quickly change, however, beginning in the late 1910s. The remainder of this paper will explore the process by which this identity metamorphosis unfolded.

³ For centuries, Muslims have made this annual pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Jericho, the believed tomb of the Biblical figure Moses. The Ottomans were, in fact, active proponents of the pilgrimage. See Doumani: 9-10.

A Distinctly *Palestinian* National Movement

The “vertical ethnic” model posits that the clerisies of a given ethnic group construct a new self-definition for the hitherto politically passive community. These individuals accomplish this task through the fulfillment of the five aforementioned processes, summarized as follows: (1) engaging in active political assertion; (2) embracing the homeland; (3) moving the people to the center through re-education in national values, memories and myths; (4) endowing the territory with economic unity; and (5) turning the ethnic members into legal citizens. Fortunately, much archival material remains from the period under discussion. I will employ these materials, including newspapers, school textbooks, school curricula, mosque and church sermons, periodicals, historiographies, plays, poems, radio broadcasts and notes from cultural clubs and political association meetings, to explain how the Palestinian nation emerged.

This section will begin with a discussion of the origins of the political movement for Palestinian self-determination (1). Processes (2) and (3) will be discussed together because the elite’s effort to place the community in its homeland was inextricably linked to the development of myths, memories, values and symbols associated with the homeland. The final two sections will correlate more directly with processes (4) and (5).

Active Political Assertion

Organized political activity among the Arabs of Palestine emerged in the aftermath of World War I. The Allied powers divided the Middle East and the British gained control of Palestine. For the first time, Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, constituted an administrative unit in the inchoate world of nation-states. The first political group to form, called the Muslim-Christian Association (MCA), appeared in Jaffa in early November 1918 and in Jerusalem about two weeks later (Porath 1974: 31). These MCAs formed a countrywide network of predominantly older, land-owning notables and religious authorities from the most important families of Palestine.⁴ British officials often urged the Palestinians to organize politically in order to keep “the balance of power between the races,” wrote the Military Governor of Jaffa (Porath 1974: 31). Indeed, the primary motivation for political organization and source for cavernous concern among the Arabs of Palestine was Zionist settlement in Palestine (ibid 31-74). Concurrently, two additional political organizations were formed, *al-Adabi* (the Literary Club) and *al-Nadi al-Arabi* (the Arab Club). Compromised of the younger generations of Arab nationalists, these groups were founded by fervent supporters of Arab unity.

From November 1918 through 1919, the primary method of action of the Jerusalem, Nablus and Haifa MCAs was the presentation of “protest notes” to the British authorities (Porath 1974: 44-6). The principle subject of petition was their absolute opposition to Zionism. Among the arguments presented to the British was the historical continuity of Arab settlement in Palestine. The Palestinians also expressed their grievances with Zionism in religious terms. If there were 350 million Muslims, 750 million Christians and only 14 million Jews in world, argued the Palestinians, why would the religion of the few take precedence over the many? The numerous Muslim and Christian holy sites in Palestine further attested to the religious importance of Jerusalem (and the whole country) to the Arabs. MCA petitions, letters of protest, and

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the social, educational, economic and political backgrounds of the “Palestinian elite,” see Nashif 1977; Al-Hout 1979

memorandum to the British also claimed that Palestine had been promised to the Arabs in McMahon's famous letter of 24 October 1915 to Sharif Husayn.

The next set of arguments of the Palestinian Arabs pertained to their perceived right to self-rule based on the statements of world leaders. The Allies, in particular American president Woodrow Wilson, declared a new world order after World War I based on the free will of nations. An Anglo-French declaration of 7 November 1918 further announced that Britain and France would help "in the establishment of government and administration deriving their authority from the initiative and free desire of the native population" (cited in Porath 1974: 42). In addition, Paragraph 4 article 22 of The League of Nations stated that "certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice [by the Mandatory power]" (cited in *ibid* 44). The Palestinians referenced these declarations in their petitions as well. A Palestinian spokesman, for instance, came forward with data in a memorandum presented to Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill that the Palestinians deserved the status to which this League of Nations article bestowed (*ibid*: 45).

Porath poignantly notes that these arguments came close to the fundamental principle of the nationalist movements in Europe towards the end of the First World War, the right of nations to self-determination. In other words, a group of people speaking a common language, dwelling in unbroken territorial continuity and possessing a common consciousness of their unique historical development, constituted a nation, and therefore possessed the right of self-determination, meaning their own state (1974: 41).

During the First Palestinian Congress from January-February 1919, as previously noted, the delegation opted for unity with Syria. Most scholars agree, however, that this was an ephemeral political maneuver rather than the chief object of struggle for the Palestinians (Muslih 1988; Porath 1974: 103). Amir Faysal had established the first Arab government of Syria in 1919 and the Palestinians believed they had a legitimate chance of achieving independence from colonial rule by uniting with him. As Porath suggests, "the orientation towards Damascus was based less on the growth of nationalism around this area than upon a given political situation" (1974: 101). The French deposed Faysal in 1920, however, which shattered the pan-Syrian movement in Palestinian politics. That Faysal had met with Chaim Weizman and was perceived by some Palestinians as sympathetic to Zionism, also contributed to the break. At the very least, Faysal did not undertake as his primary political objective the curtailment of Zionist immigration which was the chief political goal of the Palestinians. The establishment of a British civil government in July 1920, moreover, reinforced the feeling among the Palestinian political elites that they would have to deal with the British.

These January-February meetings, despite their outcome, were characterized by divisions between the older notables representing the MCA, and the predominantly younger nationalists of *al-Adabi* (Literary Club) and the *al-Nadi al-Arabi* (Arab Club). Four of the twenty-nine participating delegates opposed the proposal adopted by the Congress, which considered Palestine part of Arab Syria (Porath 1974: 81). While schisms occurred along many lines, significant for this discussion was the constituency that opposed unity. Indeed, six of the delegates presented the following note to the Congress: "Palestine should have a constitutional autonomous government, independent for its home internal affairs, based on the wishes of its inhabitants, able to promulgate special laws—laws, suitable to the aspirations of its inhabitants, having, however, [a connection with] general Arab unity" (cited in *ibid* 83). Many of these

dissenters were Jerusalemites, who indeed wrote a strong condemnation of the resolution to the Military Governor of Jerusalem after the dissolution of the Congress.

In a public meeting in Jerusalem on 8 February 1919, one of the proponents of unity, Mumuh Aziz al-Khalidi spoke out against the “faint-hearted old men” who refused to support the resolution (Porath 1974: 84). The notables of Jerusalem and the older members of the influential families would, unsurprisingly, benefit the most from the establishment of a separate government for Palestine. Under these circumstances, they would likely obtain the administrative positions, ministry posts and political power from the British. Conversely, the youthful pan-Arab partisans would most likely gain political power if Palestine opted for unity with Damascus. In fact, many of the pan-Syrian nationalists had already played a role in Faysal’s incipient government.

A countrywide gathering on 27 November 1919 was the first official attempt to unite *all* the political associations in Palestine. The Jerusalem and Jaffa branches of the MCA, however, failed to attend the meeting (Porath 1974: 94). This was again a result of ideological differences over the political future of Palestine. The younger nationalists envisaged Arab Unity with a political center in Damascus whereas the older notables preferred a nexus in Jerusalem, not unlike the Jerusalem administrative unit during the Ottoman era (Muslih 158-74).

This internal struggle for political power is a classic example of Smith’s theory on the formation of vertical ethnies. He posits that the process of nation-building was “often bitterly opposed not merely by the imperial or colonial power and its indigenous upper-class allies, but also by the guardians of tradition, whose values and leadership were jeopardized by the new definitions of community proposed by the intellectuals” (Smith 1991a: 65). While the nature of this particular dispute is quite different from internal struggles of other nationalist movements, this fissure nevertheless constitutes strong evidence of the process, according to Smith, by which nations form.

The first occasion on which the Palestinian Arabs demanded a national government was at the Third Palestinian Arab Congress convened in Haifa on 13 December 1920 (Muslih 205-7).⁵ Over a period of seven days and nine sessions, the delegates gathered from the cities of Haifa, Jerusalem, Lydda, Ramla, Tiberias, Safad, Nazareth, Acre, Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, and the organizations of the National Club Association of Christian Youth, the Association of Muslim Youth, and the MCA, a geographically diverse assembly.⁶ In the first session, the group agreed to three foundational principles: the establishment of a national government, the rejection of the idea of a Jewish National Home, and the organization of the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement. In a later session, they would demand “a national government responsible to a representative assembly, whose members would be chosen from the Arabic-speaking people who have been inhabiting Palestine until the outbreak of the War” (cited in Muslih 207). As Muslih argues, “the absence of reference to pan-Syrian unity in the resolution of the Third Palestinian Arab Congress, as well as the focus of the delegates on local Palestinian issues, indicates that the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement for the first time defined its objectives, from both an ideological and organization perspective, in distinct Palestinian terms” (209). Already in 1920, then, the Arab elite in Palestine considered the Arabs of Palestine part of a distinct political unit.

The above discussion surveys the first few years of Palestinian political activity. There would be a total of nine Palestinian Arab Congresses by 1929, all of which would support the idea of establishing an independent Palestinian state. During the Mandate period more than forty Arab

⁵ The Second Palestinian Congress did not convene due to the riots in 1920.

⁶ Both were Haifan groups of politicians, established after World War I to coordinate the affairs of their communities.

political associations emerged, with a total membership of over 3,000 (Muslih 156). Internal disputes, however, would plague the efficacy of the Palestinian political agenda throughout the Mandate period, especially during the 1920s. Still, the community would demonstrate considerable unity. It is beyond the scope of this essay, however, to exact the punctilios of the Palestinian political developments in Palestine throughout the Mandate period. For a detailed discussion of the evolution of Palestinian politics, see Porath's landmark two-volume work (Porath 1974; Porath 1977). The main point here is that the Palestinian Arab elites transitioned from a politically passive community prior to World War I to a large and active group of nationalists determined to secure self-rule for the Palestinian people. Their struggle continues to the present day.

People to the Center: Values, Memories, Myths and the Homeland

The Press

In this section, I suggest that the expansion of print media in Palestine during the period under discussion was essential for the emergence of a Palestinian national consciousness. Benedict Anderson argues that print-capitalism was a central cause of the development of nations, or "imagined communities." Print-capitalism "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate to themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (Anderson 1991: 36-7). Print media, interestingly, is still one of the most important mechanisms by which Palestinians around the globe, who would otherwise have almost no forum in which to comprehend their relationship to one another, experience a sense of national solidarity.

The Arab intelligentsia in Palestine had begun a process even before World War I of promulgating myths about the "homeland." On 24 May 1911, the Jewish paper *ha-Herut* included the text of a leaflet describing Arab opposition to Zionism, signed "The Ottoman National Party" (*al-Hizb al Watani an-'Uthmani*) (cited in Kayyali: 26). This inclusion was not remarkable for its opposition to Zionism, but for its vitriolic rhetoric that squarely placed the Palestinian Arabs in their proper homeland, with all its natural beauties:

Zionism is the danger which encompasses our homeland; [Zionism] is the awful wave which beats [our] shores; it is the source of the deceitful acts which we experience like a downpour and which are to be feared more than going alone at the dead of night. Not only this; it is also an omen of our future exile from our homeland and of (our) departure from our homes and property (cited in Kayyali 26).

The first *Arab* newspaper to appear in Palestine was *Filastin* in 1911. The British, however, shut down *Filastin* during the first few years of the mandate, and as a result, the *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* newspaper replaced *Filastin* as the most influential newspaper in Palestine during these years (Khalidi 1996: 168). In 1921, *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* published an article by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, who would later become the Mufti of Jerusalem, which called for the Arabs to take a lesson from the people long dispersed and disliked, with no place to call their homeland, but who nevertheless decided to regain their glory after twenty centuries of exile, despair and oppression. While the article purports to address all Arabs, the author makes a number of comments indicating his target audience is Palestinians. For example, he writes, "you can see

others with far less than yourselves trying to build their house on the ruins of yours” (ibid 168). Although al-Husayni does not explicitly mention the Jews or Zionists in the article, the references are undeniable. He is tacitly calling for the Arabs of Palestine to consider themselves in terms similar to their Jewish counterparts, as a nation that needs to establish political control in its homeland.

An article written by Hajj Amin al-Husayni in January 1920 of the same newspaper expressed this feeling in classic nationalist rhetoric:

Palestine, oh stage of the Prophets and source of great men; Palestine oh sister of the gardens of paradise; Palestine, oh Ka’ba of hopes and sources of fulfillment; Palestine, oh beloved of millions of people; Palestine, oh lord of lands and pride or worshippers; Palestine, oh source of happiness and spring of purity; Palestine, my country and the country of my forefathers and ancestors; Palestine, only in you do I have pride, and only for you am I ashamed; Palestine, oh maiden of nations and desired of peoples; Palestine, my honor, my glory, my life, my pride (cited Khalidi 1996: 169).

The paean was published under the signature name “Ibn al-Jazira” meaning “son of Arabia.” It was followed by a list of declarations of loyalty to the beloved Palestine, stressing the “patriotic bonds and national rights” which bind the Palestinian people together. That these words were published in the most popular Palestinian newspaper of the day by one of the leading intellectuals in Palestinian society suggests the presence of a new phenomenon in Palestine. Moreover, to the extent that the *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* newspaper was avidly pan-Arabist, this article suggests the acceptance of Palestine as the central entity in the minds of even some pan-Arabists.

Towards the end of the 1920s, there began a process among *Filastin*’s readership in which the sanctification of the land and territory became a significant element in Palestinian national identity (Sorek 281). This involved the mapping of Mandatory Palestine as a political unit with defined and rigid borders. The process of turning the ethnic community into a nation, as Smith notes, often obtains a “strategy of furnishing ‘maps’ of the community, its history its destiny and its place among the nations...” (Smith 1991a: 65).

This evidence suggests that the nationalists writing and editing for these papers had specific political ambitions. This can be seen in the varying political orientations of the newspapers—some pro-Arab unity others pro-Palestinian independence. Moreover, as Pape (83) argues, the nationalists used the newspapers to mobilize a common response to the challenges facing the Palestinian Arabs of the time. In short, the newspapers were an indispensable medium by which Palestinian elites propagated glorious myths about the “homeland.”

Memorandum

There is also support from memorandum, petitions and decisions of the nationalist groups that the Palestinian clerisy sought to imbue a time-immemorial connection between the Palestinian people and the land of Palestine. A memorandum to the League of Nations, produced in 1922 by the Palestinians, notes that the Arab population of the country was composed “of the stock resident in Palestine since its earliest history with an admixture of Amorite, Hittite, Phoenician, Philistine and other elements” (cited in Porath 1974: 40). Moreover, the First Palestinian Delegation claimed that even before the Jews entered the land thousands of years ago there was a local population that has been preserved throughout the

generations which did not assimilate into the Jewish kingdom. They suggested that the Arabs had been living in the area for thousands of years. While this contradicted traditional Muslim historiography, which considered the Muslim conquest the first noteworthy event in the history of Arabia, many Palestinian intellectuals used this argument to encourage a sense of continuity among the Palestinians: “Our Canaanite ancestors dwelt in this land before your ancestors (the Jews). Can you deny this?” (cited in *ibid*: 40).

In an address to Winston Churchill in March 1921, an unknown author expressed this very argument: “an experienced statesman like you can hardly be unaware that the first to settle in Palestine in the earliest antiquity were none other than the Amalekite Arabs, our early ancestors. Abraham, the father of the Jews, may he rest in peace, did not move to this land from Babylon until many centuries afterwards” (Porath 1974: 40). Even those individuals consistent with Muslim historiography emphasized the historic connection between the current Arabic-speaking population of Palestine to the land. Beginning with the Muslim conquest in 634, argued these nationalists, the Palestinians lived and ruled continuously in their country (with brief Crusader and Ottoman interludes), making their culture predominant and leaving no traces of other cultures.

The movement to shift the Palestinian people to the center often involved greatly exaggerating their skills and talents. The nationalists alleged that the inhabitants of Palestine were as worthy of independence as Iraq or Transjordan, who had already obtained more or less independent forms of government. This was based on a claim that “45% of the inhabitants of Palestine were literate, and more than a thousand had completed advanced studies in the fields of medicine, law, engineering, agriculture and various branches of industry” (cited in Porath 1974: 44). If the people become the object of reverence for Smith, it is no surprise the Palestinian nationalists sought to bolster their achievements.

Literature and Poetry

The Palestinian intelligentsia began to develop a rich literary tradition during the period under discussion that also contributed to the collective identity of the nation. Short stories and novels produced during the Mandate often reflected the social contexts in which the Palestinians were living. Abu-Gazaleh writes that representative of the Palestinian novels during the Mandate period were “The Angel and the Land Broker,” by Mohammed Izzat Darwazah and “The Diaries of a Hen,” by Ishaw Musa al-Husseini (cited in Abu-Ghazaleh 46-7).⁷ Darwazah’s work opens in a typical Palestinian village in the mid-twenties. While the head of the family, an illiterate farmer, had never been exposed to the attractions of city life, a Jewish broker inveigles him to visit Tel-Aviv. He is introduced to a girl who convinces him to spend his money. Realizing that his yield of land will prove insufficient to meet his financial obligations to the landlord, the poor farmer assumes a mortgage. While the farmer fails to come up with the money, the Zionist broker offers him a price for his land that far exceeds its value, and so the farmer sells his land. The money does not last long, however, and the farmer deserts his wife and children and turns to begging. He winds up in an insane asylum. The story ends with a political message when the author describes the way other villages had created a fund to save land threatened by Zionist invaders. The author of this novel identifies Zionism as the source of adversity for the helpless Palestinian victims. His writing also aims to invoke a sense of group solidarity among Palestinians facing Zionist advances.

⁷ Darwazah’s work was produced in Nablus, 1934, al-Husseini’s work in Cairo, 1943

The second novel by al-Husseini depicts the struggle of the Palestinians through the eyes of a hen. The hen is owned by a Palestinian family, where food is plentiful and life is easy. The hen documents the life of its owners, their strong connection to the produce of the land, and their bonhomie approach to their everyday life situations. One day the hen finds its land blocked by a fence, and discerns that its owners had to pay a rich foreigner with some of their land due to an increase in taxes. The remaining land no longer meets the needs of the family, so the head of the family sells some of his belongings, including the hen, to a local shopkeeper in a neighboring town. Deprived of its freedom and thrown in a cage, then hen has to obey the whims of its master, who sometimes feeds it well and sometimes withholds food altogether. The master brings a number of other hens into the cage, relegating the old hen to just a single corner. Then the master brings in a number of new, more sophisticated hens. The old hens cannot understand the language of the new hens and cannot compete with them when food is provided by the master. The old hens begin to learn the language of the new hens, however, and find out they are planning to expel the old hens. The master takes pity on the old hens and prevents the arrival of the new hens for some time. The master changes his mind, though, and realizes the new hens will soon outnumber the old hens. The old hens must persuade the master to prevent the new hens from coming. In the last line of the story, the old hens are contemplating ways of ensuring their very existence in the future.

This parable highlights a number of classic nationalist themes. The story begins with the revival of a “pure and pristine community modeled on a former collective golden age,” as Smith (1991a: 64) argues, inasmuch as the hen, symbolizing the Palestinian Arab, had existed from time immemorial in its glorious and carefree state of being. The Zionists (new hens) arrived and precipitated the displacement of the Palestinian Arab (single hen), forcing its owner, ostensibly referencing the Ottoman Empire, to sell the Palestinian Arab to the Shopkeeper, representing the British. The Palestinian Arab was first bombarded with other Palestinian Arabs who were similarly relocated to tiny plots of land without adequate resources, and further confined by the onslaught of Zionist immigration. The tale is a rather exaggerated reflection of the social contexts in which the writer was living. The final message, characteristic of national discourses, is political. The hens are thinking of new avenues to fight for their right to exist. The desire for national self-determination, to which the hen eludes in the end, is not surprisingly the very message that nationalisms invariably herald.

While poetry, unlike novels, has a longstanding history in Arab societies, this too acquired a uniquely Palestinian flavor during the Mandate period. Among the most famous, as well as representative poets of the time, was Ibrahim Tuqan, who was primarily concerned with national issues such as calling his compatriots to rebel against the British and liberate their homeland. Tuqan wrote Red Tuesday (*al-Thalatha al-Hamra*), for instance, in memory of three Palestinian Arabs from Hebron who were executed by the British authorities for their participation in Arab riots (Abu-Ghazalah 49). The poem emphasizes the heroic accomplishments and veneration of justice exemplified by these Palestinian nationalists:

These heroes are no criminals although those who have condemned them think so.
They have been crucified just as Jesus Christ was in order to pay with their blood
the price of your redemption. They will go straight to Heaven and reap the
reward which God has promised for martyrs. Should you not follow in their path
and reap the blessing of God? (cited in Abu-Ghazalah 49).

This translated version of the ballad connects the current political quagmire to ancient religious symbols of approbation. Tuqan utilizes Jesus' crucifixion and the Muslim concept of *shihad*, or martyrdom, to rediscover, as Smith remarks, "an ethnic past of pasts that will elevate the people and their vernacular culture to center stage, often in place of (or reinterpreting) the old religious traditions. Instead of being merely a chosen vessel of religious salvation and passive recipient of divine ordinance, the 'people' now become the source of salvation..." (1991a: 46). The congruity between Smith and Tuqan is striking. Just as Jesus and Muslim martyrs sacrificed their lives to God, so too, the Palestinian Arabs executed by the British sacrificed their lives to the nation. Tuqan transforms these age-old religious sentiments into instruments of nationalism. Moreover, he crosses religious boundaries in a seemingly concerted effort to unite the Christian and Muslim Palestinian Arabs by switching in the middle of the poem from Christian to Muslim imagery. The final line, reminiscent of the literary works previously discussed, is a call to political action. National consciousness, as we have seen, has the inevitable consequence of promoting national self-determination.

Other members of the Arab intelligentsia such as Burhan al-Din al-Abbushi, a western educated playwright, exacted more straightforward supplications. His introductory remarks in his play, *The Homeland of the Martyr (Watan al-Shahid)*, were as follows:

This play of mine is, to my knowledge, the first of its kind to be written on the Palestine problem. I have discussed in it, in verse, the designs of our enemies and their plots against our beloved country, Palestine. I have collected data from the press, from every available document, from historical works, and from any place I could have had access to in order to show the preparedness of our enemies, their watchfulness, and their dangerous plots against our homeland. This work of mine is dedicated in the first place to the commoner to lay off his slumber (cited in Abu-Ghazaleh 50).

Abu-Ghazalah notes that the "play" is barely recognizable by western standards in ways that speak to its nationalist invocations. For instance, the narrator slips into lengthy tirades that idolize the great achievements of Arabs in their early history, their conception of justice and their devotion to the protection of rights. He expressed fondness for the Muslim faith, noting the prophet Muhammad saying "love of one's country is part of the faith." Yet he also divulges his fidelity to the pre-Islamic Arabs (Abu-Ghazaleh 50). Islam, of course, categorically rejects the pre-Islamic Arabian tribes, labeling them as idolaters in a state of *jahilliya*, or ignorance. A Muslim with even dearth knowledge of Islam would have probably known this. The poem, therefore, should not be interpreted as a form of religious incitement, but a historical claim of continual presence in the land. In this play, Burhan al-Din al-Abbushi is uniting peoples of various periods even though these very peoples were ideologically and militarily against one another. Furthermore, al-Abbushi aims to arouse his readers' nationalist feelings by stressing that they need to imitate their forefathers, who had also responded to foreign invaders—an unmistakable reference to the Crusades (this part is not cited above). Again, the author seeks to imbue the Palestinian readership with a connection to the ancestral defenders of the homeland.

Historiography

Palestinian historiography of the period under discussion varied in content yet maintained a pungently nationalist savor. The writings of Palestinian historians covered subjects such as Islam, Muslim institutions, biographies of Palestinian Arabs, archeology, local history, Arab

nationalism and European history.⁸ They glorified past heroes and accomplishments, inculcated their readers with love for past generations and emphasized the timelessness of the Palestinian connection to the land.

In his 1948 monumental topographical historical dictionary of Arab Palestine (*Buldaniyyat Filastin al-'Arabiyya*), father Marmarji surveyed various classical Arab geographers relating to the towns and villages of Palestine. He writes that

In these days of crisis especially, truest patriotism is being demonstrated in Palestine and the solidarity of Arab nationalism is at its peak among Muslim and Christian Arabs. Their hearts are united; they are in full agreement; their sacrifices have multiplied; indeed, their blood has been split on the field of righteous battle...The texts cited in this topographical and historical anthology are manifest proof of the Arab character of this land for many centuries past (Marmarji 1948, cited in Khalidi 1981: 64).

His rhetoric is more characteristic of nationalism than antiquarianism. Other works also demonstrated this nationalist flavoring of history. A.S. Khalidi, for example, wrote a biographical dictionary of the prominent men from the Palestinian countryside. The matter is “scholarly but the spirit is nationalist,” writes the contemporary scholar Tarif Khalidi (1981: 65). Ethnographic studies titled “Mohammendan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine,” “Animals in Palestinian Folklore,” and “Judicial Courts Among the Bedouins of Palestine,” strove to show “the Semitic roots of the Palestinian peasant as an ancient and continuous occupier of the land” (ibid: 65). In his historiographical account, ‘Arif al-Arif of Jerusalem, Gaza and Beersheba similarly reconstructed an ancient Palestinian lineage: “For we must consider Gaza to have been an Arab city all through the ages...and that the Muslim conquest ...was merely a new consolidation of the Arab conquest which preceded it” (al-‘Arif 1943, cited in Khalidi 1981: 66).⁹

Sidqi al-Dajani emphasized the hardships and legal claims of Palestinians during the twenties and thirties in his 1936 manuscript, “The Explanation of the Palestine Injustice” (Abu-Ghazaleh 53). The subject of inquiry carries the same nationalist rhetoric:

“...many Arab villages have been ousted from the lands their forefathers had tilled for centuries; they are not even allowed to work as wage-earners on these lands...It is true that the Jews have suffered but it is grave injustice to try to solve the misfortunes of some human beings at the expense of others” (ibid 53).

The image of the dignified Palestinian farmer is once again invoked. Well-known Arab historian, Sati al-Husri, summarizes Palestinian historiography of the time as a movement led by a national consciousness to share the pride “in the glories of the past and a collective sorrow over the present misfortunes” (ibid 57).

Symbols

⁸ See for example, *al-Qadiyya al-Filastiniyya: Tahlil wa naqd* (The Palestinian Cause: Analysis and Criticism), (Jaffa, 1937); *Tarikh Filastin* (History of Palestine) (Jerusalem, 1922); *Tarikh al-Quds wa dululuha* (History and a Guide to Jerusalem) (Jerusalem, 1920); *Tarikh al Nasira min aqdam azmaniha ila ayyamina al-hadira* (History of Nazereth from Ancient Times to Our Present Days), (Cairo: Matba al-Hilal, 1923) –all cited in Doumani 1992: 26.

⁹ See the above analysis why this too is a problematic interpretation of the Muslim conquest

Symbols are core elements in the identity of nations. Robert Bellah (1967) classically asserted that flags act as ‘totems’ of the secular nation, analogous to the cross in Christianity or the Buddha in Buddhism. Unlike religious symbols, however, national symbols are standard insofar as every nation-state adopts the same set of symbols in order to realize its ‘nation-ness’ (Sorek 271). Interestingly, nation-states (or simply nations in the case of the Palestinians) rarely seek to maximize the variety of flag proportions, color combinations or geometric patterns. The flag can be interpreted, then, as an effort by its inventors to mark not its uniqueness but rather to locate its place in the community of preexisting nations. Therefore, the debates over the nature and form of the Palestinian flag (discussed subsequently) should be considered more than proclamations of a Palestinian national identity since they constituted a claim for national self-determination.

The newspaper *Filastin* published two proposals for the Palestinian flag on 20 October 1929 both inspired by the original Arab flag (Sorek 273).¹⁰ Not surprisingly, there is great controversy over the origin of the Arab flag. Some believe it was produced from the ‘The Literary Club’ (al-Muntada al-‘Arabi) that convened in Istanbul in 1909 (Sorek 273). The club’s members, according to this narrative, were inspired by the thirteenth century Arab poet, Safi a-Din al-Hili, who wrote that “our graces are white, our battles are black, our meadows are green and our swords are red.” The veracity of the rationale for the colors is less significant than was the inclusion of this line of poetry in *Filastin*’s article to justify the choice of hues. It speaks to the propensity of national movements to cling to, as Smith argues, “a golden age of communal splendour, with its sages, saints and heroes, the area in which the community achieved its classical form, and which bequeathed a legacy of glorious memories and cultural achievements” (Smith 1986: 191.)

Others believe the flag was created with the establishment of the Young Arab Society in Paris in 1911. Similarly invoking a glorious ethnic past for the Palestinian Arabs, this chronicle posits that each color represented a certain period of Arab historical independence: the Umayyad Empire (white), the Abbasid Empire (black) and the Fatimid Dynasty (green). The red triangle was added in 1916 after the forces of Husayn heaved a red flag upon defeating the Ottoman Empire in the Hejaz (Sorek 273). These accounts are strikingly consistent with Brass’s theory on nation forming. He remarks that “the leaders of ethnic movements invariably select from traditional cultures only those aspects that they think will serve to unite the group and that will be useful in promoting the interest of the group as they define them” (87). If the colors represented, in the eyes of the Palestinian clerisy, the majestic dynasties of the past, as well as the sublime Arab victories for national self-determination, then the flag discourse in the newspapers constitutes a remarkable example of the process of glorifying the memories and myths of the nation.

Whereas the first of the two proposals included only these four colors from the Arab flag appearing as four triangles comprising a rectangle, the second included a fifth color, orange. This was suppose to represent the orange fruit, one of Palestine’s most important exports during the time period under discussion. Indeed, the Palestinian coastal areas underwent rapid economic development during the last few decades of Ottoman rule. By 1911, the Jaffa orchard industry was shipping 870,000 cases of oranges abroad, accounting for nearly one-third of the port’s export revenue. Most of the readers of *Filastin* seemed to agree with this uniquely Palestinian supplementary color. In fact, Munir Dakak from Jerusalem even proposed drawing an orange on the flag (Sorek 278).

¹⁰ This included three horizontal stripes in green, black and white with a red triangle on the left side.

While the choice of the orange as a symbol of the Palestinian people may have been self-evident for the coastal elites, this was not always the case among the inhabitants of the mountainous interior. As'as Shufani from Nazareth, for example, sent a proposal that included two additional crops typical among the Palestinian farmers in the Galilee – an olive branch and a wheat spike (Sorek 279). If the orange, olive branch and wheat spike were characteristically Palestinian, the attempt to link the collective self-image with a popular crop is certainly not among modern national movements (Malkki 1992). This was particularly salient among peoples fighting against colonialism. Whatever the symbol, though, the editors and readers of *Filastin* began a process of sanctifying the land and produce of Palestine. Indeed, perhaps the most defining element of the Palestinian national identity remains the centrality of the land.

Subsequent articles in *Filastin* on 25 October 1929 and 9 November 1929 incorporated an additional symbol, a cross located inside the crescent emblem, which was supposed to symbolize Muslim-Christian brotherhood (Sorek 282). Whereas religious symbols can be found on many European, African and Asian flags, the combination of two religious symbols was an innovation. The anthem of the Palestinian scouts, published in *Filastin* on 18 June 1930, further exemplified the unity between the Muslim and Christian Arabs of Palestine: "...whatever the religious differences between us or differences in age, the brotherhood united us with God's (help) – oh, homeland" (cited in *ibid* 282). These were further attempts to unite the Arabs of Palestine into one nation. Taken together, the anthem and various flag proposals reflected an affirmation that Palestinians constituted a homogeneous collective entity deserving of self-determination.

Education

Access to education vastly increased during the Mandate period. In 1922-1923, it is estimated that just over twenty percent of Arab school-age children in Palestine were enrolled in schools (Khalidi 1997: 173-4). By 1947, that number increased to nearly half. During the mid-thirties, there were only six government schools (not including private or foreign) in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Nablus, Hebron and Gaza and only two secondary institutions, the Arab College and the Rashidiya College, both in Jerusalem. By the end of the British mandate, however, twenty government institutions provided elementary schooling and eight offered higher secondary training (Abu-Ghazaleh 39). Ahmed Samih al-Khalidi, Principle of the Arab College in Jerusalem, notes that around one-sixth of the total school age population of boys were attending government schools in 1911 (Abcarius 101-2). Among boys in towns, attendance rose to as high as eighty-five percent by the end of the mandate period (Abu-Ghazaleh 39). Admittedly, this figure does not include village school-age children, but it nevertheless suggests that the ideas propagated reached not only the elite, but also the middle and even lower social classes in the urban centers of Palestine.

These academic institutions promulgated an Arab if not Palestinian national consciousness among the students. While the British Mandatory authorities in the Department of Education deemed the local population unfit to determine their curriculum, and therefore excluded them from this decision-making process, the Arabs never ceased to resist this policy of tutelage. To paraphrase the Chief Secretary of the Government in Palestine in Geneva in 1934, the Arabs sought control of education in order to raise the social level of the Arab population to lead it on the highway of independence of foreign rule, as well as to preserve the national culture against an invasion of an alien people and culture (read Zionists) (al-Tibawi 194). Even without "official" control, nationalism indeed thrived in the schools. The Peel Commission of 1937

reported that “like Jewish nationalism, Arab nationalism is stimulated by the educational system and by the growth of the Youth Movement...worse than the insufficiency of Arab schools, however is the nationalist character of the education provided in the schools of both communities and for that the Commission can see no remedy at all.” If a bi-national system of education was ideal and if the British were simply unable to weld together Arab and Jewish schools, as the Peel Commission reported, the nationalist proclivities of each system must have been tenacious.

There is further evidence that the instructors encouraged a distinctly Palestinian national consciousness. Sabri Sharif ‘Abd al-Hadi, who taught geography in the Nablus government school, published a book entitled *The Natural Geography of Syria and Palestine* (translated from Arabic) which was widely used in Palestinian schools (al-Hadi 1923, cited in Khalidi 1997: 174). This text discusses the natural features, agriculture, communication routes, demography and administrative divisions of Syria and Palestine. Already in 1923, then, Palestinian students were learning that Palestine was its own territorial entity whose geography merited separate treatment from Syria. Moreover, the book describes Jerusalem as the “capital of the country,” shifting the national focal point from Damascus or perhaps the Arab world at large to Palestine. This is again redolent of the importance of furnishing ‘maps’ of the community and its history described by Smith (1991a: 65).

In the secondary schools, too, the students were imbued with nationalist ideas. First, instruction was conducted in Arabic. Arabic language, literature and history were treated with great adulation. Students were acquainted with the literary contributions of the leading Arab writers and novelists. In the ‘thirties and ‘forties, some Western educated professors brought their newly acquired European ideas, such as nationalism, into the schools as well. Abu-Ghazalah, a former pupil of an especially prominent educator, Nicola Ziyadeh, notes that “he encouraged students to invite persons known for their national devotion to speak at its [the College’s cultural society] weekly meetings. His own teaching further imbued the hundreds of his students with a feeling of national consciousness which they carried with them after graduation to the various schools they were assigned to all over Palestine” (Abu-Ghazalah 40). That the British sought to subvert exactly this mode of national expression is all the more indicative of a powerful movement emerging in Palestine.

In conclusion, basic elementary and secondary education transitioned from highly exclusive to widely accessible during the period under consideration. The institutions, moreover, imbued a strong sense of Arab as well as Palestinian national consciousness. Evidence from school curriculum, textbooks and interviews with former teachers support this. This *Palestinian* movement to re-educate the hoi polloi, albeit precipitated by the British, was a crucial element in the development of the Palestinian national consciousness.

Territorial Community with Economic Unity

The most apparent attempt by the Arab elite to endow the Palestinian community with economic unity came in the form of opposition to Zionism. A newspaper article from *Al-Asma’i*, dating back to 1908, identified the economic disparities between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine (Kayyali 22). The paper proposed, as a remedy, that the Arabs of Palestine buy local rather than foreign products and similarly called for the wealthy Arabs to support the development of native commerce and industry. On 14 June 1914, *Filastin* published a letter from R. Abu al-Sal’ud which divulged the names of four nationalist and welfare societies founded to “stand in the face of the impending dangers threatening their homeland and save their existence from destruction”

(cited in *ibid* 22). The societies preached patriotism, promoted education, and of importance here, supported *national* industries. Even before the Mandate, then, some influential Palestinians sought to unite the Palestinian Arab community along economic lines.

Among the more successful Palestinian political achievements during the Mandate period was their ability to sway the British to limit Jewish immigration to the absorptive capacity of the country. The British government issued White Papers in 1922 and again in 1930 that sought to restrict Jewish immigration and Zionist land purchases (Silsby 86). Zionist settlement, the Palestinians argued, precipitated an increase in the price of goods (e.g. foodstuffs, industrial commodities and housing), caused public debt to grow and had the effect of uprooting Arab peasants from their land (Kaufman 24-5; Porath 1974: 55). The *al-Karmal* newspaper reported on its front page huge demonstrations in Nablus, for instance, against the intended sale of the Beisan land to the Jews (Kayyali 32).

On 7 July 1914 *al-Karmal* published a “General Summons to Palestinians,” which was a full-blown call for economic unity among the Palestinian Arabs. The community was urged to take the following action:

- 1) Apply pressure on the Government to act in accordance with its laws stipulating that it is completely forbidden to sell *miri* (state) lands to foreigners.
- 2) Try to develop local (*wataniyah*) trade and industry. Do not trade except with your own people, as they (the Zionists) do because they do no trade with the Muslim and Christian.
- 3) Do not sell them your lands and use your power to prevent the peasant from selling. Henceforth, scatter the land agents and revile them.
- 4) Be concerned to stop, by all means you can, the stream of migration from and to Palestine
- 5) Demand of your *awqaf* to found Arab religious schools and also other schools for crafts, agriculture and science.
- 6) Trust in God and in yourselves; do not trust in the Government because it is occupied with other things. Strive that Arabic will be the language of instruction in schools.
- 7) You must implant in the hearts of the local population, especially the youth, love of agricultural work, of trade and industry (cited in Kayyali 35).

The article concluded with more advice for the readers: “Mobilize public opinion so that you can achieve these objectives. You should not blame the Zionists as much as you should blame the leaders of your county and government officials who sell them lands and act as their brokers. Prevent those selling and you will halt the Zionist movement” (cited in Kayyali 35-6).

In short, the Palestinian intellectuals supported local trade and industry and they opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine. They “officially” objected to land sales to Jews in order to ensure the economic viability of the Arab population.¹¹ They supported establishing new schools for training in agriculture and other crafts. The Palestinian Arabs of the period under discussion, therefore, sought to endow the territorial community with economic unity.

Ethnic Members into Legal Citizens

As previously discussed, the Third Palestinian Arab Congress convened in Haifa on December 13, 1920. The extent to which the delegates legally represented all the classes and communities of Palestinian Arabs, however, was disputed. Musa Kazim sent a memorandum to

¹¹ Nevertheless, many Palestinian nationalist sold land to Zionist settlers, see Morris 88-128.

the British High Commissioner Herbert Samuel that the congress did not legally represent all Palestinian Arabs. Instead, it was composed of members “appointed by small groups” (Muslih 206). The more prominent elements of the delegation from the MCA and other clubs stressed to Samuel that the congress indeed represented all Palestinian Arabs, entreating him to disregard the statements of Musa Kazim (Muslih 206). The importance of the debate lies not in whether or not the group legally represented Palestinian Arabs. Rather, the dispute evidences a careful effort on behalf of the Palestinian elite to turn their ethnic community into a legal body to which they could represent.

The outcome of the meetings reinforced this desire. As previously noted, the delegates unanimously voted in the fifth session to establish “a national government responsible to a representative assembly, whose members would be chosen from the Arabic-speaking people who have been inhabiting Palestine until the outbreak of the War” (cited in Muslih 207). The framers were using Iraq and Transjordan as models for the kind of government they envisioned for Palestine. Muslih notes that “in principle, the government must be ultimately independent and responsible to a parliament elected by native Muslims, Christians and Jews” (ibid 207). Insofar as the assembly sought to incorporate all Arabic-speaking peoples in their proposal, including the Arabic-speaking Jews constituting the *Old Yishuv*, they marked the contours of their community along linguistic, ethnic and territorial terms, a classic basis for legal citizenship among national movements.

These sentiments were echoed in a correspondence between the Arab intellectual George Antonius, and a British official (Silsby 87). From 1932 through 1935, Antonius worked, albeit unsuccessfully, at securing constitutional reforms in Palestine. He urged for an enlarged executive and a unicameral legislature with popularly-elected officials.

In their appeal to the King-Crane Commission, the Younger Politicians stressed the need to confer upon the Palestinian Arabs individual rights, the principles of democracy and consent of the governed. They demanded independence because

We are competent and qualified. Many of us have been trained to administer high posts [...] many of us occupy posts in Egypt and the Sudan. In Europe and America hundreds of thousands of our people have long lived in the midst of a refined civilization. They were imbued with modern ideas; they acquired sophisticated values [...] and became familiar with the style of modern life...(cited in Lesch 197).

The plea asserts that the civil, social and political characteristics of the ethnic community merit self-determination, and consequently, the right to citizenship. In a similar language of “rights,” the Muslim-Christian Association sent a letter to the colonial secretary in October 1921: “the [Balfour] Declaration should be superseded by an Agreement which would safeguard the rights, interests and liberties of the people of Palestine, and at the same time make provisions for reasonable Jewish aspirations, but precluding any exclusive political advantages to them which must necessarily interfere with Arab rights...” (cited in Lesch: 79-80).

School curriculum, even if it was controlled by the British, sought to teach the pupils about citizenship issues. The final year of elementary schooling was “to coordinate the work of the previous years so that the pupil will, on leaving school, know in a systematic way (a) the circumstances of the development of human society and present systems of government; (b) the problems that face human society at present, and (c) the duties of the citizens to his country”

(cited in al-Tibawi: 86-7). As a result of the British control over education during the Mandate period, the reference to “the duties of the citizens to his country” made no specific mention of Palestine. The nationalist oriented teachers, however, as previously noted, not only imbued the students with a strong sense of pride in Arab culture generally, but also Palestinian history and uniqueness. The British education, which ostensibly aspired to teach the Palestinian Arabs a lesson in the European concept of citizenship, was more likely appropriated by the Arab teachers for nationalist purposes.

Conclusion

This paper aims to reframe the scholarly understanding of the development of Palestinian nationalism. The main argument presented is that the Arab elite of Palestine imbued in their politically passive ethnic community a Palestinian national identity beginning (primarily) after World War I and extending well into the Mandate period. Consistent with Smith’s model on vertical ethnies, this process occurred when the Arab elite of Palestine established political organizations, placed the people at the center of the group’s new definition through the exaltation of the homeland with its myths and memories, endowed the Palestinian community with economic unity, and conferred civil, social and political rights onto the group.

It is not coincidental that Arab newspapers took off just before World War I. Nor is it surprising that Palestinian cities and villages witnessed unprecedented accessibility to elementary and secondary education. Moreover, the Arab elite began to develop political organizations and cultural clubs, which would all eventually advocate for Palestinian self-determination around the beginning of the Mandate period as well. As a result, political, social and civil rights were conferred upon the Palestinian Arab community. Historians, novelists and poets developed a literature that positioned the community in its homeland, reminisced of the nation’s glorious heroes and dynasties and invoked a time-immemorial connection between the people and the land. The elites produced various proposals for a national flag, to situate the new Palestinian nation in world of nation-states. The Palestinian leadership also sought to bind the people along economic lines. At the same time, there emerged a rift between the older notables and younger nationalists over to the political future of Palestine. These are the processes, according to Anthony D. Smith, by which “vertical ethnies” develop into nations.

Whereas I have treated the period under examination as a single snapshot of history, further research is needed to investigate in greater detail how this process evolved *during* the Mandate period. Furthermore, this essay does not include a discussion on how the masses were actually affected by the efforts of the Palestinian elite. Of course, we do not have social scientific data to assess the level of Palestinian national consciousness during the period under discussion. It is possible to anachronistically point to later periods where such evidence does exist and suggest the developments discussed in this paper led to the eventual Palestinian consciousness. Admittedly, I have adopted this approach. Additional research, therefore, is necessary to develop this relationship.

Nations are dynamic constructs. As Kimmerling and Migdal note, “the making of a people is not a volcanic experience, coming out of a singular, critical moment...It is, rather, a long process, with all sorts of reversals and changes of direction, marked by continuing struggle against others, particularly powerful others, and internal struggles among contending groups” (398). Indeed, it is impossible to identify a “beginning” of the Palestinian nation. Moreover, the “core” elements of the Palestinian national identity constantly change. Al Nakba in 1948, the

Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and two subsequent Intifadas have all transformed the meaning of Palestinianism. Bearing more significance than the events themselves, however, as this paper suggests, are the ways in which the Palestinian intelligentsia define and provide a framework for interpreting the experiences of the nation.

Works Cited

- Abu-Ghazalah, Adnan. 1972. "Arab Cultural Nationalism in Palestine during the British Mandate." *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1)3: 37-63.
- Abcarius, Michel Fred. 1946. *Palestine through the Fog of Propaganda*. London: Hutchinson & Company.
- Al-Hout, Bayan Nuweihid. 1979. "The Palestinian Political Elite during the Mandate Period." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9(1): 85-111.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Antonius, George. 1979[1946]. *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*. New York: G.P. Putnam.
- 'Arif al-'Arif. 1943. *Tarikh Ghazza*. Jerusalem: Matba'at Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyya,
- Bellah, Robert. 1967. "Civil Religion in America" *Daedalus* 96: 1-21.
- Brass, Paul R. 1991[1979]. "Elite Competition and Nation-Formation." Pp. 83-89 In *Nationalism*. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Doumani, Beshara B. 1992. "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21(2): 5-28.
- Farah, Tawfic. 1987. *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*. London: Westview Press.
- Finkelstein, Norman G. 2003. *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (2nd ed.). New York: Verso.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1994[1964]. "Nationalism and Modernization." Pp. 55-63 In *Nationalism*. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gerber, Hamn. 1998. "'Palestine' and Other Territorial Concepts in the 17th Century." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30:563-572.

- al-Hadi, Sabri Sharif. 1923. *The Natural Geography of Syria and Palestine (Jughrafiyyat Suriyya was Filastin al-Tabi'yya)*. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Ahliyya,
- Katul, Jibra'il. 1950. *al-Ta'lim fi Filastin* (Education in Palestine). Beirut: unknown publisher.
- Kaufman, Menahem. 1998. *The Magnes-Philby Negotiations, 1929: The Historical Record*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press.
- Kayyali, Abd al-Wahhāb. 1978. *Palestine: A Modern History*. London: Croom Helm.
- Kedourie, Elie. 1994[1960]. "Nationalism and Self-determination." Pp. 49-55 In *Nationalism*. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khalidi, Rashid. 1997. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Khalidi, Rashid, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon (eds.). 1991. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Khalidi, Tarif. 1981. Palestinian Historiography: 1900-1948. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10(3): 59-76.
- Kimmerling, Baruch and Joel S. Migdal. 2003. *The Palestinian People: A History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lesch, Ann Mosely. 1979. *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lockman, Zachary. 1999. "Railway Workers and Relational History." "Pp. 99-128 In *The Israel/Palestine Question* Pappé, Ilan (ed.). London: Routledge
- Malkki, Lisa. 1992. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees." *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1): 24-44.
- Marmarji, A.S. 1948. *Dictionary of Arab Palestine (Buldaniyyat Filastin al-'Arabiyya)*. Beirut: Jeanne d'Arc Press.
- Moriss, Benny. 2001. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Muslih, Muhammad Y. 1988. *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nashif, Taysir. 1977. "Palestinian Arab and Jewish Leadership in the Mandate Period." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6(4): 113-121.

- Pappe, Ilan. 2004. *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Peel Commission Report. 1937. Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the United Kingdom Parliament by Command of His Britannic Majesty. (July 1937).
- Porath, Yehoshua. 1974. *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929*. London: Cass.
- Porath, Yehoshua. 1977. *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion 1929-1939* (vol. 2). London: Cass.
- Porath, Yehoshua. 1986. "Mrs. Peters's Palestine." *New York Times Review of Books* 32(21 & 22) 601- (January 16, 1986).
- Reuther, Rosemary Radford and Herman J. Reuther. 2002. *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Silsby, Susan. 1986. "George Antonius: The Formative Years." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15(4): 81-98.
- Schölch, Alexander. 1993. William C. Young, Michael C. Gerrity [translators]. *Palestine in Transformation, 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic, and Political Development*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies.
- Seikaly, Samir. 1991. "Shukri al-'Asali: A Case Study of a Political Activist." Pp. 74-96 in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon (eds.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sorek, Tamir. 2004. "The Orange and the 'Cross in the Crescent': Imaging Palestine in 1929." *Nations and Nationalism* 10(3): 269-291.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1987. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1991a. *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1991b. "The Crisis of Dual Legitimation." Pp. 113-121 in *Nationalism*. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Charles D. 2001. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History With Documents* (fourth edition). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- al-Tibawi, Abdul Latif. 1956. *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine: A Study of Three Decades of British Administration*. London: Luzac & Company