MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN PALESTINE DURING THE
BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD

Erik Eliav Freas

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews

2006

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DURING THE BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD

ERIK ELIAV FREAS

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of St.
Andrews

MAY 2006

St. Andrews
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Abstract

My dissertation examines Muslim-Christian relations in Palestine during the British mandate period, specifically, around the question of what constituted Palestinian-Arab identity. More broadly speaking, the dissertation addresses the topic within the context of the larger debate concerning the role of material factors (those related to specific historical developments and circumstances) versus that of ideological ones in determining national identities. At the beginning of the twentieth century, two models of Arab nationalism were proposed—a more secular one emphasising a shared language and culture (and thus, relatively inclusive of non-Muslims) and one wherein Arab identity was seen as essentially an extension of the Islamic religious community, or *umma*. While many historians dealing with Arab nationalism have tended to focus on the role of language (likewise, the role of Christian Arab intellectuals), I would maintain that it is the latter model that proved determinative of how most Muslim Arabs came to conceive of their identity as ‘Arabs.’ Both models were essentially intellectual constructs; that the latter prevailed in the end reflects the predominance of material factors over ideological ones. Specifically, I consider the impact of social, political and economic changes related to the Tanzimat reforms and European economic penetration of the nineteenth century; the role of proto-nationalist models of communal identification—particularly those related to religion; and finally, the role played by political actors seeking to gain or consolidate authority through the manipulation of proto-nationalist symbols.
Acknowledgements

I would like first of all to acknowledge Dr. Richard Kimber, my advisor; without whose guidance this work would not have been possible; also my mother, Camille Ezagui Freas, whose unconditional support I could always count on, and to whom this work is dedicated. Special thanks to Dr. Ali Ansari, for his help with corrections; my good friend Ethan Greenwood without whose kindness and hospitality my many research trips to the Public Records Office in London would not have been feasible! For similar reasons, I would offer my sincerest gratitude to Irina Dolinskaya, Cristina Cheptea and Robert Tchaidze. Among my many friends at the University of St. Andrews who provided me with much needed moral support (as well as the occasional pint), I would make special mention of Fabio Caiani and Mehran Zabihollah. A special thanks also to Nabih Bashir for his invaluable research assistance. Finally, a special word of appreciation to my wife, Elena Churikova, who more than anyone provided me with a good reason to look forward to post-doctoral life!
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Introduction

"The age of religion is over. Today comes the age of science, of steam and electricity. Take away from your eyes the blindfolds, and renounce this hatred. Fly to lofty heights that we might follow, and proclaim no religion save that of brotherhood"¹

George Suwaya, Christian Arab poet

"In the face of Zionism, Husseinis might be said to represent Church and extreme Arab nationalism, Nashashibis, State and making the best of a bad job."²

Ronald Storrs, Governor of Jerusalem from 1917 until 1926.

The aim of the thesis is to examine the relationship between Christian and Muslim Arabs in Palestine during the British mandate period. The relationship between the two was a complex one, turning largely around the question of what constituted Arab identity, and, perhaps more importantly, the relationship between Arab identity and Islam. Was Islam simply a part of the Arab legacy, albeit a highly significant one, or was it Islam that defined who the Arabs were? Certainly, it is fair to say that it was Islam that had shaped Arab high-civilisation. Moreover, the Qur’ān, Islam’s most sacred text, was written in Arabic, the language of the Arabs; it was thus the holy language of sacred writ.³ Could one then speak of an Arab nation apart from Islam? There were those who maintained

¹ Appearing in Al-Kamil, 5 December 1929.


that the only true Arab was one “whose ancestors came out of Arabia to spread the word of Islam.” The question that might be asked then is whether such an identity was inclusive of Christians. One historian went so far as to suggest that for many, “the term ‘Christian Arab’ is an unlawful contradiction.” In the aftermath of the First World War, in Palestine as in most parts of the Arab world, what exactly was the nature of Arab identity was still very much an open question. How this question came to be addressed would be of particular significance to Christian-Muslim relations in Palestine, and would determine, in no small measure, the extent to which Christians and Muslims were able to see themselves as sharing a common national identity.

Most Christians had a fairly clear idea what they thought the relationship between the Arabs and Islam ought to be—the latter, while constituting a significant part of a shared culture and history, by no means defined who the Arabs were in any definitive sense. One was no less an Arab for being a non-Muslim. More important, however, was how Muslims—who made up the vast majority of Arabs in Palestine as elsewhere in the Middle East—felt. When considering Palestine during the mandate period, one must take into account what were the rather unique circumstances related to the Mandate itself. In many respects, nationalist sentiment was shaped first and foremost by a shared opposition to Zionism. In connection with this, it is perhaps worthwhile considering a statement made by Sir Herbert Samuel, the first High Commissioner of the Palestine Mandate, in his annual survey for 1922, when attempting to define the mind-set of the Muslim community:

Three currents of thought combine to create and to maintain [their] opposition [to the British occupation]. First, there is the Arab national movement, which desires to see the establishment of a great Arab Empire, of which Palestine should form a part; a movement which was always

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5 Ibid.
hostile to Turkish rule, and which welcomed the British as the agents of liberation. Second, there is the anti-Zionist movement, which came into existence after the occupation, which is inspired by a dread of submergence under a flood of Jewish immigration and of political subordination, sooner or later, to a Jewish Government. Third, there is the Pan-Islamic movement, which commands the support of numbers of religious Moslems, which sympathises with Mahommedanism wherever it may be found, and feels it be its duty to adopt whatever course in Palestine may contribute to the advancement of the common cause, paying only secondary attention to the facts of the local situation. These three motives intermingle. The minds of some men may be more influenced by one, of some by another. The majority of the Moslems of Palestine are probably moved, in greater or lesser degree, by all three [emphasis mine].

Palestinian identity—defined first and foremost through its opposition to Zionism—was, for most Muslims, both 'Arab' in the more secular nationalistic sense, and Islamic. The two, as already stated, were intrinsically linked. The question that interests us here is in what manner. Arguably, for most Muslims, the distinction was one of little consequence—for all practical purposes, being Arab and being Muslim were one and the same thing. For Christians, obviously, the distinction was of huge consequence, and had serious implications as far as what their status might be in any future independent Palestinian Arab state. As long as the much strived for state remained a political hypothetical as opposed to an actual impending reality—that is, as long as there was the immediate problem of Zionism to contend with—such differences of perspective might be considered as constituting minor details to be ironed out later. Better yet, they might be rationalised away altogether. As Khalidi discusses it, underlying the nationalist project

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was an attempt to "elide, ignore, or resolve religious differences, or to bury them in a shared vision of an other." This tendency would constitute an underlying tension in Muslim-Christian relations in Palestine, a tension often exacerbated both by the fact of the Mandate itself—given that Britain was a ‘Christian’ power and the significance of Jerusalem to the ‘Christian’ West—as well as local political rivalries.

It is the latter which constitutes a key focus of the thesis—local politics in Palestine were generally defined by the political rivalry between the two main factions for control of the leadership of the nationalist movement; the extremists, centred around Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and often referred to as the Majlisīn, and the moderates, centred around Rāghib al-Nashāshībī and often referred to as the Muʿāridīn or ‘Opposition’. With regard to the former, Hajj Amīn, as Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Supreme Muslim Council—religiously derived titles both—tended to emphasise the Islamic character of Palestine and of its indigenous people. In addition to radicalising the Palestinian nationalist movement by appealing to religious sensibilities, it also served to enhance his own status, both in Palestine, and regionally, inasmuch as it redefined the Palestinian nationalist cause as an Islamic one regional in scope. Through him, the Palestinian cause against Zionism was to a large degree defined as a matter of defending Palestine’s Muslim holy sites, in particular, Jerusalem’s Haram al-Sharīf. The moderate faction, in


8 The term Majlisīn was a reference to Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī’s position as President of the Supreme Muslim Council, al-Majlis al-Islāmiyyah al-ʿAliyyah. This institution functioned in many respects as Hajj Amīn’s power base. The term Muʿāridīn or ‘Opposition’ referred to those who were ‘opposed’ to Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, specifically, to what often appeared his absolute control of the Council.


10 Literally the *noble sanctuary*, in the West, most closely associated with the monumental ‘Dome of the Rock.’
addition to being politically more accommodating, both with respect to the British and Zionism, tended not to emphasise the Islamic character of Palestine. For one thing, doing so would only have served to strengthen the position of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and his supporters. It would also have had the effect of undermining popular support for the more moderate policies they favoured. Most Christians active in the nationalist movement tended to affiliate with the latter.

The World Islamic Conference, held in Jerusalem in 1931, under the auspices of the Supreme Muslim Council, marked something of a turning point in the struggle between the two factions. It was through the Conference that Hajj Amīn was able to redefine the Palestinian nationalist cause as a pan-Islamic one. Interesting to consider here by way of contrast is the Second Arab Orthodox Congress, organised by the Christian Orthodox community in Palestine, and held concurrently with the World Islamic Conference. While ostensibly concerned with what was an internal church matter—the election of a new Patriarch—the Congress touched on the broader question of what constituted Arab identity. Specifically, the Congress demanded that the new Patriarch should be Arab rather than Greek. More generally, the Orthodox community sought the Arabisation of the Orthodox Church in Palestine—hence their self-designation as Arab Orthodox (as opposed to Greek Orthodox, as had been the case historically). Orthodox Arabs saw their conference and the World Islamic Conference as somehow analogous. Both, though focusing on religious issues specific to their respective communities, were representative of the larger Palestinian Arab nationalist cause. In truth, however, the two were not analogous. Whereas the Arab Orthodox Congress sought to redefine what was essentially a religious issue in nationalist terms, the World Islamic Conference did quite the reverse—it sought to take an issue arguably specific to Palestine and turn it into a pan-Islamic one.

The first chapter of the thesis starts off by considering changes that took place during the late Ottoman period as would impact on Christian-Muslim relations during the British mandate period. Particularly relevant in this respect were the Tanzimat reforms, many of which dealt directly with the status of non-Muslims in the Empire. Also considered in
this chapter are the different Christian communities in Palestine—most specifically, the
Orthodox, Latin Catholic, Greek Catholic and Protestant communities. Of them all, the
Orthodox community would, over the course of the Mandate, prove to be the most
committed to the nationalist cause; Latin Catholics, arguably the least. The second
chapter focuses on Christian involvement in the nationalist movement. At the beginning
of the Mandate, cooperation between the two communities was fairly strong, something
exemplified by the Muslim-Christian Associations (MCAs), which early on were the
front-line organisations of the nationalist movement. Muslim-Christian relations were
severely strained with the convening of an international missionary conference in
Jerusalem in the spring of 1928, the subject of the third chapter. By that time, the
nationalist movement had begun undergoing a process of radicalisation and Islamisation,
something immediately apparent with the Wailing Wall riots of August 1929. Hajj Amin
al-Husaynī, the leading figure within the extremist faction of the traditional leadership
was quick to capitalise on the emotions aroused by the Wailing Wall riots, his efforts
culminating in the World Islamic Conference of 1931, the subject of the fourth chapter.
The final chapter focuses on the nationalist movement’s radicalisation and Islamisation
following the World Islamic Conference, and the impact this had on Muslim-Christian
relations. The emphasis given Islam, particularly during the Great Revolt, would put a
great strain on inter-communal relations and would see Christian Arabs almost
completely marginalized within the nationalist movement.

Identity and Arab Nationalism

Historians addressing the manner in which nationalist identities are formulated have
tended to focus on one or another factor underlying their actual development. Some, such
as Elie Kedourie, have stressed the role of intellectuals in the formulation of nationalist
ideology, and have sought to explain nationalism’s rise almost solely through a
consideration of ideological factors.11 Thus, Kedourie characterises modern nationalism

11 Thus, for example, Gellner, who rejects Kedourie’s view of nationalism as being ‘anti-historical,’
characterises him as believing that nationalism was an “avoidable aberration, accidentally spawned by
as largely a ‘German intellectual invention,’ the most important contribution perhaps being that of Johann Gottfried Herder, who stressed the relationship between language and ethnicity.¹² Other historians have tended to stress more material factors, factors related either to broader historical developments, for instance, or the behaviour of political actors seeking to gain or consolidate power. An example of the former might be Breuilly, who, while not denying the doctrinal dimension of nationalism, sees its rise (in Europe at least) as being due to a crisis of the modern bureaucratic state. Thus, while its genuineness may indeed derive from the fact that it was an intellectual response, one cannot overlook the fact that it addressed a very concrete problem—namely, that of the relationship between the state and civil society in the modern period.¹³ It was because of the need to bridge the widening gulf between the two that intellectuals became preoccupied with the question of the nature of society and the relationship between the individual and the whole.¹⁴ In a similar manner, Benedict Anderson, in his work, *Imagined Communities*, contends that, in Europe at least, people found it necessary to construct ‘imagined communities’ as a response to the crisis of meaning and orientation that resulted from the destruction wrought on religious and dynastic authority by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.¹⁵ An example of the latter might be Eric

¹² Specifically, Kedourie focuses on three German philosophers as having provided the ideological underpinnings of modern nationalist thought. These are Immanuel Kant and his idea of individual self-determination; Johann Gottlieb Fichte and his belief that the social whole is more important than the individual parts; and Johann Gottfried Herder, who emphasised ethno-linguistic diversity. Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd, 1960 [fourth edition]), especially pp. 12-64.


Hobsbawm, concerning the role of political actors. Thus, he asserts that nationalism functioned as a means of political legitimisation in connection with developments in Europe during the latter half of the nineteenth century. 16 A final consideration, which might be seen as constituting both an ideological and material factor, concerns the relationship between modern national and proto-nationalist identities—the latter referring to communal identities pre-dating the modern period, and often expressed in religious and ethnic terms. 17

In emphasising either ideological or material factors on the question of nationalism—whether as a general phenomenon or with respect to the formulation of specific national identities—it is not necessarily the case that historians wish to absolutely assert the one against the other. Nonetheless, such emphases have implications as far as understanding why any particular national identity took the shape it did. The thesis addresses the role played by factors of the types noted above in the formulation of Arab national identity. More to the point, it is argued that one is only able to understand the nature of Arab national identity and how it came to be formulated if one properly accounts for material factors. These might be categorised as follows—those related to proto-nationalist modes of communal identity (particularly as related to Islam); those related to social changes that took place during the late nineteenth century in connection with the Tanzimat reforms and European economic penetration; and those related to the aforementioned rivalry between the Majlisin and Muʿāridin (thus addressing the behaviour of political actors). Such material factors determined in large part the way in which Arab national

16 As put by Hobsbawm, the advent of the state “raised unprecedented problems of how to maintain or even establish the obedience, loyalty, and cooperation of its subjects or members, or its own legitimacy in their eyes.” Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” The Invention of Tradition, eds., Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 265.

17 Concerning the relationship between the two, see, for instance, Hastings (The Construction of Nationhood, 1997), Breuilly (Nationalism and the State, 1993), Hobsbawm (Nations and Nationalism since 1780) and Smith (The Ethnic Origins of Nations, 1986).
identity came to be formulated—more specifically, the relationship between Arab national identity and Islam, and to what extent Arab identity is inclusive of non-Muslims.

None of this is to say that more purely ideological factors were irrelevant. Nonetheless, the extent to which any intellectual construct of identity matters is, in the end, a measure of how closely it corresponds to the experienced reality of a people. Thus, for example, Hobsbawm, when considering the relationship between proto-nationalist notions of community and modern nationalist ideology, has noted that where a certain degree of compatibility exists, "existing symbols and sentiments...could be mobilized behind a modern cause or a modern state."\(^{18}\) Considering more directly the Arab case, Suleiman characterises nationalist movements as a case of mining the past in order to legitimise 'modernisation projects.' In this sense, nationalist movements might be seen as being aimed at addressing contemporary issues while maintaining a sense of continuity with the past. The success of a nationalist movement would depend on how effective it was at "reining in the conflicting forces of modernisation in the community in a manner which enable[d] change to take place without appearing to jettison the legitimising element of tradition."\(^{19}\) A nationalist ideology then was more likely to be adopted by a particular community if that ideology found a correspondence with its proto-nationalist sense of communal identity and with contemporary social, economic and/or political issues.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there existed two very different intellectual conceptions of Arab nationalist identity. For Muslim intellectuals, as discussed briefly above, it was still an identity largely subsumed within the more inclusive one of Islam. Arab identity was seen largely as an extension of the Islamic community of believers, or *umma*; whereby it was defined on the basis of that people's special role with respect to


Islam. This model of Arab nationalism came to constitute the movement known as *salafiyyah*, a ‘return to the way of the ancestors.’—as a model of national identity, it is here referred to as *salafi Arabism*.\(^{20}\) Christian intellectuals, on the other hand, propounded a more secular model of nationalism, one based on a shared language and culture, and largely founded on a liberal ideal that defined the relationship between the state and the individual as one of ‘social contract’—certainly it was a model wherein religion did not play a determinative role.\(^{21}\) Initially, neither model enjoyed much popular support, as the vast majority of Muslim Arabs still tended to see their primary identity as ‘Muslim.’ Nonetheless, it is fair to say that the former model corresponded more closely with the existing mode of identity (that is, religious) and thus would eventually prove more effective at acquiring adherents. Conversely, the latter model, based more on secular notions of nationalist identity, was unfamiliar to the majority of Muslims. While it would find ready adherents among Christian Arabs, many of whom were educated in Western missionary schools, it simply did not find a correspondence with the way most Muslims at the time identified themselves.

Historians dealing with the topic of Arab nationalism have often stressed (much as have Arab nationalists) the role of the Arabic language in the formulation of Arab national identity. Inasmuch as it emphasises language, one might imagine that such an identity would be equally inclusive of non-Muslims as of Muslims. Certainly, historical accounts of the Arab nationalist movement emphasising the role of ideology (for instance, Antonius’s *The Arab Awakening*\(^{22}\)) would seem to suggest this\(^{23}\); indeed, there are still

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\(^{20}\) Tellingly, it was first thought of as a movement aimed at Islamic reform.


\(^{23}\) Thus, for Breuilly, the fact that Antonius’s account of the early Arab nationalist movement is in many respects flawed is largely due to its being (misguidedly) based on an ‘intellectual interpretation of Arab
many Middle East historians who maintain the validity of a language-based Arab national identity equally inclusive of non-Muslims. Models emphasising the role of language with respect to non-European nationalist movements are not exclusive to historians of the Middle East; several historians dealing more specifically with nationalism per se have asserted that such a model is particularly appropriate when considering non-Western national identities. Kohn, for instance, sees the advent of cultural nationalism as something quite natural to non-Western countries given their backward political and social development, and colonial and imperial legacies. With respect to the latter, cultural nationalism might be seen as constituting a reaction against what are perceived as externally generated challenges. It is a model of nationalism seen in many respects as mirroring the German model, which “substituted for the legal and rational concept of ‘citizenship’...the infinitely vaguer concept of ‘folk.’” As in the German model, the emphasis is on language—as Hutchinson puts it when considering the case of Irish nationalism, it becomes the means of morally regenerating the historic community.


27 Ibid.

28 In his own words, a “drive to recreate the nation which, integrating the traditional and modern on a higher level, will again rise to the forepronte of world progress.” John Hutchinson, The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism, The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 32.
main difference in the Arab case, however, is that the language being emphasised is not that of the ‘folk’ but of the Qur’ān.

When considering the role of the Arabic language in the formulation of Arab national identity, this becomes a crucial factor. One might argue, of course, against over-emphasising the link between the Arabic language and Islam. The attachment many Arabs feel to the language is by no means limited to its connection to the Qur’ān. In considering the Arabic language as a defining aspect of a proto-nationalist identity in keeping with the model proposed by such figures as Adrian Hastings and Philip S. Gorski, one ought not to assume that the Arabs’ appreciation of the Arabic language has ever been limited to its religious function. Historically, much has been made, for instance, of its poetic function as something predating Islam; of its capacity as a language of administration and intellectual pursuits; likewise, as a source of lexical and grammatical influence on other languages (for instance, Turkish). Certainly, Arabs have always shown a strong appreciation of the language from a purely linguistic standpoint. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to speak of the Arabic language as something apart from the Qur’ān, and correspondingly, as something apart from Islam. Modern-day nationalists concerned with its standardisation, for instance, have generally resisted borrowing from the language’s many dialects, in large part, in order to ensure that it remain in concordance with its Qur’ānic form. As noted by Suleiman, “any attempt to replace the

29 Zimmer, Nationalism in Europe, p. 18. Philip S. Gorski is arguably more relevant in this respect, inasmuch as he argues for that pre-modern communal-identities, even where expressed in religious idioms, might be understood as constituting early manifestations of nationalism. In ibid.


32 Ibid, pp. 74-79.
standard by the colloquial as a marker of...nationalism [would] inevitably [be] met with religious opposition.”33 The question of the role of language in the conception of Arab national identity is dealt with more fully in the conclusion.

For now, even if accepting that a conception of Arab nationalism strongly linking Arab identity with Islam should inherently have a greater appeal, there is still the question of how the transition was made from a proto-nationalist identity to a nationalist one. Well into the twentieth century, the great majority of ‘Arabs’ still saw their identity in largely religious terms. This was especially true of Muslim Arabs. That any conception of Arab national identity should find adherents would reflect a number of developments. If at the beginning of the twentieth century, the vast majority of Palestine’s Muslim Arabs identified themselves on the basis of their faith, it was in a very informal manner. We might consider this as constituting a proto-nationalist basis of communal identity. The thesis suggests a process whereby, through the formalisation of religious and political institutions, in connection with the Tanzimat reforms of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, religious identity itself became more formalised, and thus something more easily subsumed within a modern nationalist model of identity.

In the period leading up to the Mandate, being ‘Muslim’ simply meant being part of the mainstream of society, and required little consideration of what such an identity actually entailed in its particulars. The Tanzimat reforms, coupled with increased European economic penetration, saw the development of a much more formalised ‘Islamic’ identity than what had existed in the past, one based more on a legalistic understanding of correct Islamic religious practice and more closely affiliated with Islamic institutions. Most importantly, it provided the basis of a definable shared Islamic identity, significantly, one easily exploited by individuals of a certain Islamo-religious qualification, individuals who would prove to have a strong appeal among the masses, particularly those less educated, as was the case with the great majority of the Arab peasantry throughout the

33 See, for example, ibid, p. 10.
Mandate. Most notable in this respect was the militant leader Sheikh `Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām (discussed more fully below).

Some studies of nationalism address the role played by political figures seeking to manipulate proto-nationalist symbols within a new nationalist context in order to further their own political ambitions. According to Eric Hobsbawm, nationalism has often served as a device for political legitimation. In Europe, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the question of political legitimacy arose, largely due to what was the expansion of political participation. The elite found nationalism—invented traditions and the historicizing of the present—a useful means of shoring up an endangered power base. It became a means of engendering feelings of loyalty and patriotism among the masses through the appropriation of public national ceremonies, rituals and symbols.34 Similarly, in the Arab case, we find during the inter-war period a growing political awareness among the larger population and an attempt by the traditional elite to legitimize their status. During the Mandate, two main factions struggled for control of the traditional leadership, one of which, it turned out, was better able to manipulate proto-nationalist symbols (that is, Islamo-religious symbols). Thus, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, through his positions as Grand Mufti and President of the Supreme Muslim Council, proved particularly adept at appropriating such symbols for the purpose of strengthening his own political position vis-à-vis his political rivals. This became particularly evident following the Wailing Wall disturbances of 1929, at which point Hajj Amīn sought to characterize the nationalist cause as a pan-Islamic one—that is, as a matter of defending the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. The World Islamic Conference, following shortly thereafter, and cosponsored by Hajj Amīn,35 served to greatly enhance his status, both within Palestine and regionally.

34 See, for example, Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions," pp. 268-283.

35 Together with Shawkat `Ali, the President of the Indian Muslim Khalifat Committee.
Gellner refers to these proto-nationalist symbols as cultural ‘shreds’ and ‘patches’ which nationalists utilise for their own purposes—-the equivalent of Hobsbawm’s ‘tool-kit’ from which political actors may draw as required by their situational needs. Suleiman criticises Gellner for dwelling too much on the question of such symbols’ empirical truth or falsity; more important, according to Suleiman, is their efficacy as instruments of political mobilization in pursuit of national objectives. More to the point, as Hobsbawm puts it, their manipulation should correspond to a “felt... need among particular bodies of people.” Relevant in this respect is to what extent they correspond to genuine concerns of a socio-economic or socio-political nature. Exactly such a concern existed in mandatory Palestine—what was perceived to be the under-employment of Muslim youth, the expression of which often manifested itself in anti-Christian sentiment, as it was generally held that Muslims were being discriminated against in favour of Christians for government positions. Missionary activity as conducted by Western Christians was another such concern, one that resonated quite strongly with the majority Muslim Arab population in Palestine—perceived as an external threat to their way of life, it also served to create a link in the minds of many Muslim Arabs between Christians in general and their much chafed at colonial status. The convening of an international missionary conference in Jerusalem in 1928, not surprisingly, was greatly resented by Palestine’s Muslims, and while protests were for the most part directed against foreign missionaries and the Palestine Government, Christian Arabs as a whole were not spared the resulting Muslim indignation—this in spite of the fact that not a single Palestinian Christian Arab attended the conference.

36 Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, p. 56.

37 In Zimmer, Nationalism in Europe, pp. 21-22; see also Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions,” pp. 268-270.

38 Suleiman, The Arabic Language, p. 41.

39 In Zimmer, Nationalism in Europe, pp. 21-22; see also Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions,” pp. 266-268.
Relevant here is the fact that, as discussed by Khalidi and Kayali, *salafi* Arabism—that is, a model of Arab national identity emphasising the link between the Arabs and Islam—would, from the beginning, constitute an anti-establishment socio-political movement.\(^{40}\) More specifically, it would prove an attractive ideology for Muslims who felt disenfranchised, whether by the traditional leadership or by non-Muslims. Those who felt most hard done-by, both during the Ottoman period and during the Mandate, were newly educated Muslims and second-rank notables. The former, members of a fast-evolving professional class had, from the mid-nineteenth century on, found themselves competing for newly created jobs and political positions (to a large extent brought about by the Tanzimat reforms and increased European economic penetration) both with members of the traditional elite (who often tended to monopolise such positions) and with non-Muslims, (who, on the basis of their education, were often better qualified). The latter, mostly the younger members of elite notable families, likewise often found their way blocked by the older and more well-established members of their own families.

In many respects, not much had changed by the time of the Mandate—newly educated Muslims again found their career and political aspirations frustrated, though this time, they were competing for positions not only with Christians, but with Jews (that is, Zionists). They were equally frustrated regarding nationalist goals. The main culprits here were, of course, the Zionists and the British. Christians, however, were implicated to some extent as well—many were seen as being all too willing to cooperate with the ‘Christian’ mandatory power, a power too often seen (as noted) as favouring Christian Arabs when hiring for government positions. As before, the traditional elite was also targeted, though now, largely because of their ineffectual leadership of the nationalist

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movement. Too often, they seemed willing to compromise nationalist goals when these conflicted with their own more narrowly defined interests.

Historians such as Berlin and Smith have characterised the rise of nationalism in Europe as an intellectual reaction against the appropriation of Enlightenment ideals by the traditional elite (in this case, kings and princes) for the purpose of maintaining the status quo. Spearheading this movement in the European case was a newly educated strata that resented the fact that in spite of the lofty sentiments associated with Enlightenment thought, they found themselves marginalized politically, socially, and economically. Arguably, one finds a parallel in the situation in mandatory Palestine, wherein what was a newly developed Muslim educated strata rejected the liberal ideals associated with British mandatory rule. Such 'liberalism' was seen as upholding the status quo—that is, the authority of the traditional notable class. Moreover, it was seen as hypocritical—for many Muslims, what seemed clear was that the supposed values they represented related to equality and meritocracy really only applied to Christians and Jews (that is, Zionists). It is perhaps not surprising then that young Muslims embraced an ideological movement that provided a 'religious rationalisation' of modern ideas and institutions, one moreover wherein Muslim Arabs had a privileged position. In many ways, it might be considered as having served a similar function as 'Romanticist' nationalism in post-Napoleonic Europe. Both were, in effect, movements of opposition against the established order and the supposed values they represented.

41 Zimmer, Nationalism in Europe, p. 9.
42 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 48.
43 That is, nationalist movements based on a Romanticist tradition as opposed to the liberal model associated with the French Revolution, and concerned more with relationship between the state and the individual, and "connected with the concepts of individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism." Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism, p. 330.
In comparing *salafi* Arabism with the European ‘Romanticist’ nationalist movements of the preceding century, we might make one crucial distinction—that relating to the role often assigned the development of ‘high culture’ by historians of nationalism. In the European case, this has usually meant an emphasis on folk culture and vernacular languages. As Gellner puts it, nationalism “conquer[ed] in the name of a putative folk culture...drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasant, of the *Volk.*”\(^4\) Of course, as Gellner points out, even if defining its objective as being the defence of ‘folk culture,’ its real objective was to forge a new high culture.\(^5\) Nonetheless, the notion of ‘folk culture’ was instrumental to its formulation. In the Arab nationalist context, the emphasis was always on high culture as high culture.\(^6\) This is most evident in the emphasis given the standard form of Arabic over its dialectical forms. Significantly, as noted above, one of the reasons for this had to do with that language’s special relationship to the Qur’ān. It is perhaps not surprising then that, in the case of mandatory Palestine, we find within the nationalist movement during its more radical phase a strong element aimed at religious reform. Thus, whereas, European Romanticist nationalists tended to uphold folk practices (folklore, popular culture, etc.) as somehow embodying the essence of a ‘people,’ Arab nationalists, in many cases, sought to eradicate them as part of a reformation of religious practice, something often characterised as a necessary precondition to the achievement of nationalist goals. In the case of Palestine, such an attitude was best exemplified by the aforementioned al-Qassām, an individual who would prove to have a strong appeal among the peasantry, particularly during a period when they had become increasingly disillusioned with the British. It was no coincidence that the majority of the militant leaders during the Great Revolt of 1936-1939 modelled

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\(^5\) Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 57-58; also Suleiman, *The Arabic Language*, p. 34.

\(^6\) The bias towards high culture is reflected, for instance, in the comparatively low status given oral and folk literature, and in the “less-than-flattering attitude towards the peasant (*fallāḥ*) in classical and modern Arabic literature.” Suleiman, *The Arabic Language*, p. 35.
themselves after al-Qassām and were known as Qassamites. Such leaders were popular among the peasantry largely because of their reputations as pious Muslims.

One other factor warrants mention here—alongside the formalisation of Islamic religious practice, the mandate period saw the semi-proleteriatisation of the peasantry, as increasing numbers of landless peasants made their way to the cities and larger towns looking for work. It was here, in fact, that many first became affiliated with Islamic institutions and came into contact with religious reformers like al-Qassām. While the analogy is an imperfect one, Gellner’s argument that European nationalism arose during the modern period because industrial societies... need[ed] homogenous, language-based high cultures in order to work efficiently”⁴⁷ seems relevant here when we consider the role played by religious institutions and, more importantly, religious reformers, in formalising the Islamic identity of the peasantry. Notably, the reform of Islamic practice among the peasantry came at a time when its members were becoming increasingly literate and nationally aware; for many Muslim peasants, nationalist and religious commitment went hand in hand. The development of such a link would form the basis for a shared understanding between the peasantry and Muslims of the more educated strata, the large majority of whom were nationally motivated by salafi Arabism, a model which, likewise, linked Arab national identity with Islam.⁴⁸

Which brings us back to the two different models of Arab national identity noted at the beginning: the one emphasising a shared language and culture in largely secular terms and generally favoured by Christians; the other, defining Arab identity as an extension of the Islamic religious community, or umma. Initially, historians tended to over-emphasise the influence of the former in shaping the Arab nationalist movement during its formative period. In no small part, this reflected the influence of Christian Arabs in shaping Western perceptions of the Arab nationalist movement. The most notable manifestation

⁴⁷ Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, p. 34; also Zimmer, Nationalism in Europe, p. 12.

of this is George Antonius’s book *The Arab Awakening*, and even today, his work proves extremely influential in determining how modern historians view the Arab nationalist movement, at least during its early stages. More recently, it has been the tendency of historians on the subject, not only to stress the significance of the latter model, but also to point out that it is highly questionable that a strong nationalist consciousness existed among Arabs at large during the period in question, whether in Palestine, or anywhere else in the Arab world. This thesis not only asserts that the latter model prevailed in the end, but suggests some reasons as to why, largely through a consideration of more material factors against more purely ideological ones as determining the particulars of what came to constitute Arab national identity. At the heart of the matter is the fact that an Arab nationalism based on *salafi* Arabism corresponded quite well with the experienced realities of Palestine’s Muslim majority, whether in terms of socio-economic grievances or existing proto-nationalist forms of identity, or in connection with the ability of political figures to manipulate relevant symbols for their own purposes.

The nature of Muslim-Christian relations in Palestine over the course of the Mandate very much reflected developments in the formulation of Arab national identity. Early on, when Arab national identity was still something of an open book, Christian-Muslim unity was quite strong, something evident in the Muslim-Christian Associations that formed the bases of the Arab Executive and the various Palestinian Nationalist Congresses. Significantly, their strength also reflected the fact that early on, nationalist activity was largely confined to the traditional leadership—indeed, the MCAs were made up primarily of members of the notable class—and it is questionable whether a sense of common cause with respect to the nationalist movement was equally prevalent among the greater mass of Palestine’s Arabs, whether Muslim or Christian. Arguably, what largely bound

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49 For example, as referenced above, Susan Boyle in her recent biography of Antonius. Boyle, *Betrayal of Palestine*, in particular, pp. 24-33. While most historians today no longer accept Antonius’s account of the early Arab nationalist movement as entirely accurate, there is still a tendency to exaggerate the role of Christian Arabs, particularly with respect to its intellectual formulation. See, for instance, Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, pp. 150-151; also Cleveland, “The Arab Nationalism of George Antonius Reconsidered,” p. 86.
Muslim and Christian notables, both to the movement and to each other, was not so much strong nationalist sentiment, but a sense of shared economic interests.

Initially, the majority of Arabs in Palestine were content to put their trust in the traditional leadership. It was not long, however, before they became disenchanted with the traditional leadership's inability to achieve nationalist goals. Continued frustration in this respect would see the eventual radicalisation of the nationalist movement. As noted, certain elements within the traditional leadership—most notably that represented by Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī—would attempt to harness this sense of frustration to enhance their own status at the expense of their political rivals through the manipulation of proto-nationalist Islamo-religious symbols. Such manipulations corresponded quite well with a growing nationalist consciousness among Palestine's Muslims that emphasised an Arab identity tied to Islam. By the time of the Great Revolt, Christians had become almost completely marginalized with respect to the nationalist movement. Very few took an active part in the Revolt, either among the leadership or the rank-and-file, and Christians would find themselves increasingly subjected to harassment and accusations of disloyalty with respect to the nationalist cause.

Christians would try desperately to maintain for themselves a role in the nationalist movement: first, by trying to maintain a model of Arab national identity equally inclusive of Muslim as non-Muslims; later, by defining Islam as something more cultural than religious such that it might be inclusive of Christians. Some Muslim intellectuals, particularly in connection with the formulation of a cultural Islamic model, would also seek to maintain a place for Christians within a shared identity. The more pressing problem of Zionism would to a large extent allow both Muslims and Christians to ignore differences regarding perceptions of Arab national identity; likewise concerning what kind of state they aspired to and what should be the place of non-Muslims in it. In the end though, this was only a temporary expedient; by the end of the Mandate, what had become largely evident was that the only Arab whose identity as such went unquestioned was a Muslim one. The fact of the matter was that, for many of the reasons noted above,
an Arab national identity that emphasised the Arabs' ties with Islam resonated much more strongly with the great majority of Palestine's Arabs.

The primary sources used in this thesis consist, among others, of contemporaneous Arabic-language newspapers and periodicals. Many of these were owned by Christians, and provide valuable insight concerning Christian reactions to incidents touching on Muslim-Christian relations. Those used most extensively were Filastīn, published in Jaffa by 'Īsā al-Īsā, an Arab Orthodox, and al-Karmil, published in Haifa by Najīb Nassār, a Protestant. While in part their use reflects their relatively easy accessibility, it is also indicative of the fact that both were widely read in mandatory Palestine and enjoyed a high level of prestige. Material derived from two has been supplemented with material culled from several other newspapers as relevant, among these for example, Mirāt al-Sharq, a Christian newspaper based in Jerusalem. Several newspapers might likewise be considered as representative of mainstream Muslim views, for instance, al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, which additionally functioned as something of a mouthpiece for Hajj Amin al-Husaynī and the Supreme Muslim Council.50 In addition to Arabic-language publications, the Jewish English language publication, the Palestinian Bulletin/Palestinian Post, proved particularly valuable. In addition to providing a non-Arab perspective on events, it was also suggestive of where one might find material in the Arabic language press, not least in its daily summaries of articles appearing the previous day in Arab publications. Non-Palestinian newspapers published abroad, such as the London Times and Oriente Moderno, were also used.

Among non-press sources, British government documents, primarily from the Colonial Office and Foreign Office, were used extensively. Particularly valuable were the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) reports that provided information concerning localised incidents between Muslims and Christians, incidents that at the time often did not seem to warrant extensive press coverage. Most of these were ascertained at the

Public Records Office in London, though some came from the Israeli State Archives in Jerusalem. Documents from the Zionist Archives, also located in Jerusalem, were also used. Other British documents used were the Command Papers dealing with Palestine, the various censuses taken, special reports dealing with specific topics—for example, the inquiry made into the affairs of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem produced by Sir Anton Bertram and Harry Charles Luke—and various other materials that might best be characterised as miscellaneous. Not all non-press source documents were government documents. Quite useful, for instance, were the minutes of the Christian Missionary Conference, held in Jerusalem in April of 1928.

Various memoirs were also examined. These might be divided into three categories—those by missionaries; those by British individuals serving in the mandate administration; and those by Palestinian Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, reflecting on their experiences during the Mandate, generally in connection with the nationalist movement. Within this last category, I am inclined to group certain historical accounts written by individuals who took part in the related events—though setting out to provide a broader account of these events, much of the information provided is anecdotal in nature and reflects personal experiences. A good example of this is Matiel Mughannam’s *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem*. Secondary sources of course proved invaluable, though at times, frustrating. Certainly they were useful as far as providing a sense of the larger historical backdrop against which the relationship between Muslim and Christian Arabs played itself out. At the same time, though vague reference is often made to the declining state of affairs between the two communities in relation to broader events, little is often provided by way of detail.\(^{31}\) In part, it is this tendency that inspired this thesis, suggesting as it did an area for research yet to be fully explored. Hopefully this thesis has gone some way towards remedying this.

\(^{31}\) The one notable exception in this respect are the works by Daphne Tsimhoni.
Chapter I, Ottoman Days

The Tanzimat

Any discussion of Muslim-Christian relations in Palestine during the British Mandate must find its beginning in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the nature of Muslim-Christian relations would undergo substantial change in connection with the Ottoman Empire’s attempt to modernize along European lines. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, authority in the Arab provinces lay primarily in the hands of the local (mostly urban) notables. Particularly in Palestine, such authority manifested itself in the control they exercised over certain administrative functions, the most important of these—for instance, those of qādī and muftī—being of a certain religious qualification¹; likewise, in the loyalty they commanded from the peasantry or certain elements therein, often acquired through patronage (see below). Notable authority was usually limited to the urban centres and their respective surrounding villages, and often it was the case that there existed in any given centre several notable families vying for control—for example, in Jerusalem, the Husaynī, Khālidī, Alāmī, and later, Nashāšībī families, and in Nablus, the Tuqān and 'Abd al-Hādī families.²


In keeping with its desire to modernise, the Ottoman centre sought to consolidate its control of the Arab provinces, in large part, through a series of reforms known as the Tanzimat. More than simply seeking to extend its administrative reach, it hoped to instil within its subjects a sense of loyalty to the Empire in nationalistic terms; correspondingly, a sense of identity apart from one’s religion or place of residency, until then the prime markers of who one was. Whereas till then, one identified him or herself as the member of a religious community or as coming from a particular village or a region—that is, as a Muslim or Christian, or a Hebronite or Nablusite—one was now to think of him or herself as a citizen of the Ottoman Empire. Equally important, all Ottoman citizens, regardless of faith, were to be considered equal in all respects. This principle was fundamental to the Tanzimat, and was stated in the very first reforming edict, the Hatt-i Sharif of Gülhane, promulgated in 1839.

The conception of individuals as citizens of the state was a fairly radical notion. This was particularly problematic for Christians for whom the relationship to the broader Ottoman society had been determined primarily by the millet system, wherein the political identity of Christians was defined at the level of the community rather than that of the individual. Whatever interaction they had with the Ottoman authorities was as a

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6 In Arabic, millah. Under the Ottoman Empire, each non-Muslim religious community was recognised as a ‘nation,’ or millet.
community, and was usually mediated through their clerical leaders. The ecclesiastical hierarchy responsible for any given millet managed all of its internal affairs—religious and educational matters, as well as those related to personal status such as marriage, divorce and inheritance.\(^7\) As individuals, and with respect to the larger Muslim-dominated Ottoman society, their status was effectively that of second-class citizens.\(^8\) Christians were not eligible for the highest administrative posts; could not serve in the armed forces (on the basis of which, they had to pay an exemption tax); nor provide evidence in a Muslim court of law.\(^9\) Disputes with Muslims and crimes against the State came under the jurisdiction of the Muslim courts. Among those crimes punishable by death were crimes against the State, blasphemy against the Faith, the Prophet and the Qur'an, plotting on behalf of an infidel power, the murder of a Muslim man or woman, highway robbery against Muslims, the seduction of a Muslim woman, and religious proselytising.\(^10\) The second-class status of Christians (and other non-Muslims) found expression in other ways. Christians might be debarred from riding horses or wearing colourful clothing, have their homes inexplicably invaded by Muslim functionaries

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\(^8\) Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East* (New York: Caravan Books, 1958 [reprinted 1973]), p. 27.

\(^9\) Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” p. 62.

demanding food or lodging, find themselves subjected to levies of money without reason, or even be forced off the pavement when their paths crossed with Muslims.\textsuperscript{11}

With the Tanzimat reforms, Christians suddenly found themselves expected to participate as citizens in the administering and governing of the Empire. The Tanzimat would effect a change within Christian communities as well. Thus, reforms were initiated that dealt directly with their internal administration, the most significant of these being those calling for a radical restructuring of their political organisation. Both the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox communities saw the promulgation of new constitutions calling for the creation of representative assemblies with lay majorities, which would be responsible for matters related to education and the general welfare of the community.\textsuperscript{12} Effectively, the new constitutions sought to promote the interests of the lay communities over those of their respective higher clergies.\textsuperscript{13} Not surprisingly, the changes embodied in the new constitutions were resisted by the clergies, and in the Jerusalem patriarchates of both, the reforms related to communal organisation were never carried out.\textsuperscript{14}

For Muslims, the impact of the Tanzimat reforms was quite different. While the basis of their loyalty to the Empire might have been in a sense redefined, they had always constituted the larger body politic. What was new was that they were expected to relate to individual Christians (and other non-Muslims) as political and social equals. Many


\textsuperscript{12} Shaw and Shaw, \textit{Reform, Revolution, and Republic}, pp. 125-127. Though as it turned out, the Armenian one had considerably more teeth. Shaw and Shaw, \textit{Reform, Revolution, and Republic}, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{13} O'Mahony, "Palestinian Christians," p. 20.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 20; also Shaw and Shaw, \textit{Reform, Revolution, and Republic}, pp. 125-127.
Muslims, however, were sceptical regarding Christian loyalty to the Empire. Relatively speaking, up through the end of the seventeenth century, the situation of Christians under Ottoman authority had been benign. Concomitant with the decline in Ottoman authority in Syria and the other outer provinces beginning in the early eighteenth century, however, their situation had begun to deteriorate, and Christians increasingly found themselves at the mercy of local authority figures no longer accountable to the centre. Added to this was growing Muslim agitation over political developments in the Ottoman Empire’s European territories. When following the Greek uprising of 1821, for example, the Sultan issued a decree providing Muslims with arms and confiscating those of Christians, the local governor in Palestine tried to extort money from the latter by threatening to arouse the former against them. With the European powers’ increasing penetration of the region, both economically and politically (see below), indigenous Christian communities began to look to them for support—in particular, Uniate Catholics (inclusive of Maronites) looked to France, and Orthodox Christians to Russia. What was by then a fast-growing trade with Europe further strengthened ties between local Christians and Europeans, the former often acting as middlemen between European traders and local producers. Christians, on the basis of a shared faith and a greater familiarity with European languages, tended to be more comfortable associating with Europeans than

15 Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” p. 71.


17 Finn, Stirring Times, pp. 276, 304. See also Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen, The Holy Land Christians, ed., Natalie King (Jerusalem: Private Publication, 2003), pp. 65-68. For his part, the Sultan held the Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul personally responsible for the Greek revolt, and had him hanged. Karpat, “Ottoman Views,” pp. 149-150.

18 The Uniate Churches, or Eastern Churches as they are sometimes known, while acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope in Rome, have largely preserved their own liturgies and customs.
Muslims. Generally, they were also more receptive to Western ideas and values, a tendency strengthened by increased interaction.

Christians would also benefit from the Tanzimat reforms, and not only those seeking to eradicate religious divisions. Arguably, those dealing strictly with economic and administrative issues had an even greater impact, inasmuch as they reshaped the overall economic, political, and social environment in a manner favourable to them. More specifically, and of particular relevance to our discussion, they helped initiate a process that saw a change in the criterion determining elite status. During most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period of Ottoman decline during which the centre was no longer able to exert its authority over the outer provinces, the 'ulama—those who were learned in Islamic knowledge and affiliated with Islamic institutions—had become the principal administrators of the Empire. This was no more so than in the Empire’s Arab territories. Status had come to be determined largely by what one might deem an Islamic criterion—whether one held an important position within an Islamic institution, as a qādī

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19 Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 95.

20 This tendency would carry over to the mandate period. As recollected by a Christian from Lebanon, among many Christian Arabs, “European morals, habits, ways of living, dress and general behaviour were idealised as belonging to a superior race.” Edward Atiya, An Arab Tells His Story: A Study in Loyalties (London: John Murray, 1946), pp. 3-4.


22 Singular, ālim—best translated as learned man.

or a mufti; at the very least, whether or not one enjoyed a reputation as a learned and 'pious' Muslim.  

How pious one was often reflected an individual’s overall behaviour—whether he was just, honest, compassionate, and so forth. Significant with respect to later developments, formal practice and formal training would not have constituted the only yardstick, indeed probably not even the most important one, by which one’s worth as a Muslim was measured. This was certainly true of village sheikhs. As noted by Doumani, “[t]heir actions... were circumscribed by social and cultural boundaries that defined ideals for accepted behaviour, notions of justice, and levels of accountability to the collective community.” It equally applied to the urban notability, particularly with respect to town-village relations. As noted by Divine, “[g]enerosity and cooperation from the notability created bonds of loyalty between urban and rural sectors.” Both urban and rural notables were expected to represent the interests of the larger community when dealing with the Ottoman authorities. A fair amount of patronage was often involved as well, particularly in connection with the formation of militias. The Tanzimat reforms, in tandem with the changes brought about by increased European economic penetration, would redefine the criterion determining elite status to one based largely on wealth,


25 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 35.


27 Douwes, The Ottomans in Syria, p. 167.

28 See, for example, Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, pp. 34-44, concerning Nablus during most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
particularly that acquired through commerce. Significantly, this was a criterion considerably more accessible to Christians.

**European economic penetration**

In Palestine, European economic penetration began with the coastal areas and was initially based on the cultivation of cotton for export. During the same period, these areas were also subjected to an influx of European manufactured goods, primarily textiles, with which local production found it difficult to compete. While initially the interior was able to resist European economic penetration, it was not long before it too was drawn into the global economy. The changes initiated by European economic penetration had a particularly positive impact on local Christians who, for the reasons noted above, were often better able to take advantage of related economic opportunities. Added to this, privileges related to the capitulations, until then enjoyed only by foreigners, were extended to many of the local Christians with whom they did business.

31 Inasmuch as this shielded them from Ottoman taxes and the Ottoman courts, it


represented a significant advantage over Muslim merchants.\textsuperscript{34} Needless to say, this fostered a great deal of resentment among Muslims, many of whom began to suspect local Christians of conspiring with their European co-religionists to dominate the Ottoman Empire, not only economically, but politically as well.\textsuperscript{35}

As it was, the European powers would increasingly evoke their self-ordained role as ‘protectors’ of specific Christian communities as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Following sectarian violence in Lebanon in 1860, for instance—violence which saw large numbers of Christians (predominantly Maronites) killed\textsuperscript{36}—the French landed troops and exerted pressure on the Ottoman Sultan to grant the Maronites self-autonomy as a privileged and independent province.\textsuperscript{37} Even the actual content of the Tanzimat reforms directly resulted, in part, from European pressure having been brought to bear on behalf of the Empire’s Christian subjects.\textsuperscript{38} From the perspective of Muslims, Christians seemed all too happy to take advantage of what was a growing European presence. Certainly Lebanon’s Maronites, who now experienced French

\textsuperscript{34} Concerning the capitulations, see Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” p. 72; Shaw, Empire of the Gazis, p. 163; Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen, The Holy Land Christians, p. 54; Sergio I. Minerbi, The Vatican and Zionism, Conflict in the Holy Land, 1895-1925 (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 87.

\textsuperscript{35} See, for instance, FO 195/194, Rose to Canning, Beirut, 21 March 1842; also Ma’oz, Ottoman Reform, pp. 210-211, 219.

\textsuperscript{36} See, for instance, Betts, Christians in the Arab East, pp. 22-23.


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protection and the possibility of direct trade links with Europe, had benefited from the French intercession there.\textsuperscript{39} One might argue that the Maronites constituted a special case (see below); at the same time, it is not difficult to see how events in Lebanon might have been understood as anticipating possible developments elsewhere. Certainly this was fair to say of Palestine, given its special religious significance for Christian Europe and the fact that it had a sizeable indigenous Christian population of its own. It is perhaps not surprising then that Palestine’s Muslims became wary of what they perceived to be a growing ‘special relationship’ between foreign and local Christians\textsuperscript{40}—thus, the establishment of European consulates in Jerusalem in the middle of the nineteenth century was greatly resented by local Muslims.\textsuperscript{41} The visit of a French consul almost a hundred and fifty years earlier, in 1701, had produced similar outrage. Then, the local notables had responded with a petition stating that, “our city is the focus of attention of the infidels” and that “this holy land [could be] occupied as a result of this, as has happened repeatedly in earlier times.”\textsuperscript{42} Arguably, there was some genuine cause for concern on the part of Muslims. In 1841, for instance, Christians in Syria circled a petition calling on Europe to place Palestine under Christian rule!\textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{40} Divine, Politics and Society, p. 158.

\textsuperscript{41} Abu Manneh, “Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period,” pp. 19-21; James Finn, Stirring Times, p. 76.


\textsuperscript{43} See Ma’oz, Ottoman Reform, p. 218.
Education

A number of other factors underlay the advantageous position enjoyed by local Christians vis-à-vis Europeans, not the least being that Christians on average were much better educated than their Muslim counterparts. More important was the fact that it was an education that emphasised more secularly based subjects. This was a type of education to which Christians would have considerably greater access than Muslims well into the twentieth century. In this respect, Christians had considerable outside help in the form of missionary schools. Latin Catholic missionary activity in the area of education (as well as medicine), particularly as represented by the Franciscans, dated back to the Crusades. By the end of the seventeenth century, they were already running fourteen schools in Palestine. Other Catholic orders, such as the Salesians and Dominicans, established schools as well. The opening of Palestine to missionary activity under Ibrāhīm Pasha (see below) proved particularly beneficial to Protestants. Unlike the Latin Catholics, they tended to work primarily through missionary societies. In Palestine, the most important of these was the British-based Church Missionary Society, which commenced its activities there around 1870. Together with the Berlin Missionary Association, it would establish thirty-one schools in Palestine by the end of the century. Another missionary


48 Ibid, p. 252.
society involved in educational activities was the Friends' Mission of America, which maintained two important educational centres in Ramallah, one for boys and one for girls.\textsuperscript{49} Others were the Jerusalem and East Mission, the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Scots Mission.\textsuperscript{50} During the nineteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church was also active in the area of education, particularly as represented by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, which saw the establishment of over a hundred schools in Palestine alone, among them a women’s teachers’ training college in Beit Jala, and a men’s seminary in Nazareth.\textsuperscript{51} Jerusalem was particularly targeted for missionary educational activity, and according to one source, had, by the turn-of-the-century, thirty-five Christian missionary schools with over 2,200 students and more than 150 teachers.\textsuperscript{52}

The establishment of missionary schools had a secondary effect as well, generating a growing demand among Muslims for schools providing a more secularly based education. Missionary schools were generally open to non-Christians, but most Muslims were disinclined to send their children to them for fear they might convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{53} At the same time, the secular education they desired was generally not available in the traditional \textit{madrasa} or \textit{kuttab}.\textsuperscript{54} The latter half of the nineteenth century

\textsuperscript{49} Mogannam, \textit{The Arab Woman}, p. 250; A. L. Tibawi, \textit{Arab Education}, p. 63.


\textsuperscript{51} Elie Kedourie, “Religion and Politics: The Diaries of Khalil Sakakini,” \textit{Middle Eastern Affairs}, 1, St. Antony’s Papers, 4 (1958), p. 84. See also Derek Hopwood, \textit{The Russian Presence}, pp. 107, 112, 137-158.

\textsuperscript{52} Khalidi, \textit{Palestinian Identity}, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, p. 47.

\textsuperscript{54} A \textit{kuttab} provided a very basic education—reading, writing and the precepts of the Islam—to young children roughly between the ages of 5 and 12. The \textit{madrasa} functioned as a kind of theological school with a curriculum based on Arabic and Islamic studies. See A. L. Tibawi, \textit{Arab Education}, pp. 56-58. See
saw an effort on the part of the Ottoman Government to establish secular state schools, inclusive of secondary schools. At the start at least, Muslims generally preferred whenever possible to send their children to the state schools. Moreover, given that Catholic and Protestant missionary activity at that time was directed more at ‘Eastern’ Christians, it was not only Muslims, but often Orthodox Christians as well, who found the state schools a more appealing alternative. With the advent of state schools, Islamic educational institutions were forced to revise their curriculum to include secular subjects in order to compete. In addition, a number of private Muslim schools were established (though these had a rather limited impact).

While the effort never came close to satisfying demand, some of these state schools did go on to effectively compete with the missionary ones, and the attempt at modernising


55 Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p. 39. This was done primarily through the Education Law, enacted in 1869.


59 By 1914, 379 private Muslim schools had been established, with an overall student body of 8,705 (of which 131 were girls). The great majority of these however were of the traditional kuttab type, and provided little instruction beyond the basic precepts of Islam and fundamental reading, writing and arithmetic. A. L. Tibawi, *Arab Education*, pp. 20, 270. A number of private secondary schools were also set up towards the end of the Ottoman period. Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pp. 49, 225.

60 By 1914, in Palestine, the Ottoman Government had established only 95 elementary and three secondary public schools with a student body of 8,248, 1,480 of which were girls. A. L. Tibawi, *Arab Education*, pp. 20, 270.
the educational system did have limited success. The number of Muslims able to effectively compete for administrative and other positions requiring a secular education did increase. Nonetheless, Christian (and Jewish) educational institutions would remain widely perceived as providing a superior education to that of the government provided state schools and many of the private Muslim ones. Moreover, throughout the Ottoman period, the number of state schools would continue to lag far behind demand such that educated Christians (together with Jews) continued to far outnumber educated Muslims. It is worth noting here as well that collectively, these newly educated Muslims would come to constitute an important political constituent with respect to later developments. As noted above, the Tanzimat reforms, coupled with European economic penetration, had seen the creation of numerous new job opportunities for which non-notable Muslims (as well as second-rank notable ones) might now compete. A fair number did so effectively, and would come to constitute a new element within Arab society—a Muslim professional class as it were. At the same time, many would experience frustration as growing political and career aspirations remained unmet, either because the relevant positions were still being monopolised by the traditional elite or on account of competition with Christians (and Jews). Much of this frustration would be equally directed against both—that is, the traditional elite as well as Christians (and Jews). Correspondingly, many would come to support a more radical brand of Arab nationalism, one that emphasised the relationship between the Arabs and Islam—that is, salafi Arabism (discussed more fully below).

61 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 48; also Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 61.

62 Thus, for instance, well into the twentieth century, many Muslim notables were more inclined to hire Christians (and Jews) as secretaries and personal assistants on the basis of their education. Geoffrey Furlonge, Palestine Is My Country, The Story of Musa Alami (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 28.

63 Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 61.

64 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 48.
Muslim-Christian equality

In 1831, İbrahim Pasha, the son of the Egyptian Khedive, invaded Syria, inclusive of Palestine. Though he would only retain control of the region some nine years, his administration oversaw the implementation of numerous political, economic and social reforms of a far-reaching nature. With respect to Muslim-Christian relations in Palestine, by far the most important reforms were those that encouraged Christians to think of themselves as full-fledged citizens of the state rather than members of ghettoised communities. Christians were admitted to the advisory councils, and laws setting restrictions with respect to dress, person and property were abolished. In some cases, Christians were even utilised militarily. Christian soldiers from Lebanon, for instance, were used to suppress Druze and Nusayrî risings. Equally significant in this respect, the Egyptian regime permitted missionary activity to a degree previously unseen. This, together with the establishment of consulates, effectively gave Europeans a more or less permanent foothold in the region, and during the period of İbrahim Pasha’s rule, the

65 Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 60; Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 129.

66 See Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 52-53; also Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 21.

67 Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 60.


69 Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 60.


71 See O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 25.
number not only of missionaries, but also of traders, travellers and religious pilgrims visiting Syria (and Palestine) jumped up dramatically.\textsuperscript{72}

The sudden elevation of Christians to a status politically equal with their own caused a great deal of resentment among Muslims, and went a long way towards undermining the popularity of the new regime.\textsuperscript{73} Not surprisingly, after the Egyptians were forced to leave and the Ottoman Government had begun to reassert its control of the area, something of a backlash ensued. As observed by the American Protestant missionary, Henry H. Jessup, “the new liberties granted to the Christian sects, their growth in wealth, the appointment of their prominent men to foreign consular offices... all these and other causes had kindled [among the Muslims] fires of fanatical hatred.”\textsuperscript{74} Disturbances in Aleppo in 1850,\textsuperscript{75} Mosul in 1854 and in Nablus in 1856,\textsuperscript{76} in which Christians were especially targeted,\textsuperscript{77} might be understood in part as an attempt by the \textasciiacute{u}lami\textasciiacute{a} to restore their old position, particularly in the face of continued reform and a growing European presence. The incitement of anti-Christian feeling always proved an effective means of garnering popular support.\textsuperscript{78} Even where things did not turn violent, it was not uncommon for governors—for example, Najib Pasha in Damascus—to attempt to roll back the reforms made under Muhammad \textasciiacute{A}li and “re-establish the Islamic faith in all its former glory.”\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{72} Hourani, \textit{Arabic Thought}, p. 60.

\textsuperscript{73} Ma'oz, \textit{Ottoman Reform}, pp. 17-18; also Hourani, \textit{Arabic Thought}, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{74} Jessup, \textit{Fifty-Three Years}, p. 165.

\textsuperscript{75} See Ma'oz, \textit{Ottoman Reform}, pp. 190-191.

\textsuperscript{76} Described more fully below. See also ibid, pp. 226-227.

\textsuperscript{77} See, for instance, Ma'oz's discussion concerning the Aleppo riots. Ibid, pp. 190-191.

\textsuperscript{78} Hourani, “Ottoman Reform,” p. 68.

\textsuperscript{79} See, for instance, FO 78/456, Rose to Palmerston, No. 3, Gazir, 26 July 1841.
Given the general atmosphere, Christians were loath to take advantage of early attempts by the Ottoman authorities to institutionalise Muslim-Christian equality. Thus, even though the Ottoman Government almost immediately established administrative councils inclusive of Christians,\(^80\) those serving on them rarely exercised their prerogatives when it went against the will of the Muslim majority. As put by one observer, it was not unusual that they should be ‘bullied down into consent... at the dictation of the Moslem members.’\(^81\)

Such resentment was further aggravated by what was a growing missionary presence. Under Ibrāhīm Pasha, Protestant and Catholic missions had been permitted to operate more freely than ever before.\(^82\) For the most part, missionary activity was directed at ‘Eastern’ Christians,\(^83\) and little attempt was made at proselytising among Muslims.\(^84\) So long as missionaries concentrated their efforts on other Christians, Muslims were

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\(^{81}\) Finn, *Stirring Times*, p. 179. See also Finn, *Stirring Times*, p. 202. Early on, at least, it was not unusual that even when having seats allotted them, Christians were not included on the councils. See, for example, Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, pp. 49-50.

\(^{82}\) Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 63.

\(^{83}\) See, for instance, Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years*, p. 242, 243, 244, 289; also Finn, *Stirring Times*, pp. 151-153, 147, 223; and Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years*, pp. 244, 289.

prepared to tolerate their presence, and by the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries reported a decrease in Muslim interference in their activities. Even the promulgation of the Tanzimat reform known as the *Hatt-i Humayün* in 1856, allowing for conversion from Islam to Christianity, did not create too strong a backlash, though putting the principle into practice would prove another matter. Local Christians were not particularly supportive of Western missionary activity. Nonetheless, many Muslims found it hard to disassociate what was a growing European Christian presence (not only as represented by missionaries, but by merchants, pilgrims, and consuls as well) from a new assertiveness on the part of indigenous Christians.

When the English Protestant missionary Reverend S. Lyde accidentally killed a Muslim in Nablus in the mid-nineteenth century, the Muslim community exacted its revenge against local Christian Arabs. Attacks on local Christians were often inspired by the perception that a special relationship existed between them and their European coreligionists. Hence, the aforementioned French intervention on behalf of the Maronite community in Lebanon set off a massacre of Christians in Damascus, which saw roughly

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85 Though sporadic attempts were occasionally made to limit missionary activity, particularly that of Protestants. See, for instance, FO 618/3, Quarterly Report of the British Charge d'Affaires in Constantinople, 14 April 1908.


88 As noted by one European visitor to Palestine, Protestants were generally perceived as English, Latins as French, and Orthodox as Russian protégés. Ibid, p. 255.
10,000 killed. The association between foreign and local Christians where mob violence was concerned seemingly worked in both directions. In 1876, for example, following the attempt of Greek Orthodox in Saloniki to prevent the conversion of a local Bulgarian girl to Islam, the resultant Muslim mob violence was equally directed against the French and German consuls, both of whom were killed. Likewise, during the (above-noted) massacres of 1860, foreign consulates were among the first houses to be attacked.

A new elite

After reasserting their authority in the region, the Ottomans continued and even extended the reforms initiated by İbrahim Pasha. These reforms, both political and economic, in concert with changes brought about by increased European-related economic activity, inevitably saw an undermining of the criterion determining elite status—one in which one's position with respect to Islamic institutions, and one's reputation defined largely in Islamic terms, played a large role. While wealth had always constituted a factor in determining status as well, it was now to play an increasingly dominant role.

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89 See Betts, Christians in the Arab East, pp. 22-23; also Shaw and Shaw, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, p. 143; Jessup, Fifty-Three Years, pp. 157-214; and FO 78/1625, Robson's report, enclosed in a letter from Dufferin to Russell, No. 9, Beirut, 23 September 1860.

90 Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” p. 74.

91 FO 78/1625, Robson's report, 23 September 1860.

92 In addition to muftis and qādis, for instance, were the imāms, the leaders of public prayer in the mosque, the hatips, who were in charge of public oration, the muezzins, who were in charge of summoning the faithful to prayer, and sheikhs, who acted as religious instructors to the general population. See Shaw, Empire of the Gazis, p. 138.

Effectively, these reforms lay the groundwork for what Doumani refers to in his study of mid-nineteenth century Nablus as the “politics of ‘free’ trade.”94 While it is true, as discussed above, that Muslims lacked many of the advantages enjoyed by Christians vis-à-vis Europeans, those of the till then existing elite, generally referred to as the notable class, were nonetheless, on the basis of their positions under the old order,95 able to avail themselves of the new economic opportunities. In large part this reflected such opportunities’ generally capital intensive nature, such that only established individuals and families (that is, those of the notable class) were able to take advantage of them. Additionally, most notables had over the course of time, established extensive networks, which they were now able to exploit in competing with merchants outside their own immediate region.96 Finally, as discussed more fully below, this developing new elite was able to co-opt newly created political structures. In a word, they were able to adapt, and while the basis of their elite status might have changed—likewise their exact place in the pecking order—the same notable families could still be found among the upper elite. As expressed by Doumani, the old ruling political families were being transformed into rich merchants.97

Probably the most significant new political structure created in connection with the Tanzimat reforms were the advisory councils, introduced in 1840,98 with the objective of

94 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 129.

95 Ibid, pp. 53, 55.


97 See Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 135; also ibid, pp. 51, 240; and Butros Abu Manneh, ‘Aspects of Socio-Political Transformation in Palestine in the Tanzimat Period (1841-1876),’ paper presented at the conference, The Turks and Palestine: A Thousand Years of Relations, 22-24 June 2004, sponsored by Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 35.

98 In essence, a carry-over of the majlis al-shūra initiated by Ibrāhīm Pasha during the time of the Egyptian occupation.
giving local communities a role in local administration. Redesignated as administrative councils, or majālis al-idāra\textsuperscript{99} with the Provincial Regulation of 1858, their main purpose was to better enable the Ottoman centre to maintain control of the outer provinces. In actual fact, they became a means by which the local elite was able to consolidate its authority at the local level.\textsuperscript{100} The great majority of those sitting on the councils came from the notable families,\textsuperscript{101} and while in theory they were supposed to represent the interests of the people at large, it quickly became apparent that it was their own interests with which they were primarily concerned.\textsuperscript{102} Functioning as they did as intermediaries between the appointed governors and the local population, it was often only with their assistance that other Tanzimat reforms could be implemented.\textsuperscript{103} It was thus fairly easy to ensure that such reforms were carried out only if and in such a way as would serve their own interests.\textsuperscript{104}

Prior to the Tanzimat period, villages had been largely self-sufficient and had not depended on the city for their livelihood.\textsuperscript{105} Economic integration together with the urban

\textsuperscript{99} Singular, majlis al-idāra.

\textsuperscript{100} Hourani, “Ottoman Reform,” p. 62; also Shaw and Shaw, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, pp. 84-85, 87; and Mattar, The Mufti of Jerusalem, pp. 2-3.


\textsuperscript{102} See ibid, pp. 129-130, 238-239.

\textsuperscript{103} Hourani, “Ottoman Reform,” p. 62; see also Mattar, The Mufti of Jerusalem, p. 4.


\textsuperscript{105} Abu Manneh, “Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period,” p. 4.
notables' appropriation of the new Ottoman administrative structures, the majālis al-
idāra in particular, quickly undermined whatever leverage the peasant class had had till then. One's ability to exert influence among the peasantry had in large part depended on patronage, as well as the respect one enjoyed as a 'good' Muslim—that is, that one was essentially honest and just (discussed above); it was now increasingly defined within the context of the new administrative structures. Once having appropriated control of these structures, the urban notables no longer needed the willing support of the peasantry, whether tacit or overt. This tendency was further reinforced by the fact that, as urban notables residing in any given urban-centre found a common interest in competing with merchants from rival urban-centres (not to mention foreign merchants based in the coastal cities), internal rivalries quickly diminished. As the possibility of a violent confrontation between rival notable families became less likely, the relative status of individual families became less dependent on their ability to employ actual physical force. Correspondingly, notables found it less necessary to solicit support among the peasantry for the purpose of creating militias, something that had usually involved a certain degree of largesse.

106 See, for instance, Mattar, The Mufti of Jerusalem, p. 4. Added to this was the fact that the peasantry was becoming increasingly dependent on the notables to act as intermediaries with the government in such matters as conscription, new legal codes, and new methods of collecting taxes. Ibid, p. 4. See also Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 15.


110 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 35; also Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform, pp. 109-115.
The Tanzimat reforms (coupled with the effect of increased European economic penetration) saw authority increasingly concentrated in the towns. The majālis al-idāra in particular helped effect a consolidation of notable interests, while simultaneously providing an effective mechanism by which urban notables might extend their authority over their respective hinterlands in a manner that circumvented the intermediary role of the country sheikhs (see below). The aforementioned networks established under the old order constituted an additional factor in this process. In much the same manner that they facilitated the exploitation of the peasantry by urban notables, they provided the framework by which the hinterlands were eventually absorbed into the political, economic and social nexuses of the urban centres. The corresponding commercialisation of agriculture along with the growing pervasiveness of money lending—the means by which town merchants were able to gain greater access to increasing crop surpluses—served to facilitate the consolidation of their control over the surrounding villages. Additionally, through their control of the majālis al-idāra, the notable class were also able to take advantage of reforms dealing with land-registration in order to expand their land holdings. This also had the effect of depriving the peasantry of much of their land usage rights, as many became converted into sharecroppers and


114 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 239.

hired labourers. Compounding the problem was the fact that too often, peasants were unable to pay their taxes. As a result, they were often forced to borrow money, and eventually, under the burden of tax and debt, to sell their land to wealthy notables.

This process saw the diminution of the power of the rural elite, or country sheikhs, who until then had traditionally exercised a fair amount of authority within their respective nahiyas and villages. In some cases, it had been considered that they held paramount power in the rural areas. Thus, for instance, in pre-Tanzimat Jerusalem, it was considered that the authority of the mütesellim, or governor, was entirely confined to the city and that the “country sheikhs were uncontrollable.” In addition to their role as intermediaries between village and town—based in part on their role as tax-collectors—the country sheikhs were responsible for maintaining law and order and dispensing justice in accordance with traditional law, or ‘urf (discussed more fully in the last chapter). As noted by one missionary, justice was “almost exclusively administered by


117 The term country sheikh is here inclusive of both nahiya sheikhs and village sheikhs. Under the pre-Tanzimat Ottoman administration, each sanjak was divided into subdistricts called nahiyas. In addition to collecting taxes, the nahiya sheikh was responsible for maintaining law and order and dispensing justice (discussed further in the final chapter). In each village of the nahiya, a local deputy or village sheik, was appointed to run local affairs. Abu Manneh, “Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period,” pp. 4-5.


120 Perhaps best translated in this instance as ‘customary law.’

the village sheikhs." The authority enjoyed by the country sheikhs was sufficiently dependent on the support of the peasantry to ensure that they might reasonably keep their interests at heart. Additionally, the country sheikhs enjoyed a certain degree of leverage vis-à-vis the urban notables, something reflected in what were generally equitable relations between rural peasantry and townsfolk. This was to change in two important respects. First, for the reasons noted above, the role of the country sheikh as intermediary between town and village was significantly undermined. Second, their authority within the villages themselves was directly diluted by the Tanzimat reforms. Effectively incorporated into the Ottoman bureaucratic system, the country sheikhs were stripped of their judicial powers and converted into appointed mukhtars. As for the peasantry, they were left, as Abu Manneh expresses it, "leaderless," leaving the countryside "open to the influence and domination of the city."

In short, a new elite had come into being which, though consisting of many of the same notable families as before, was now based on a criterion defined to a much greater degree by wealth, particularly that derived of commerce. Many notables were uncomfortable with the new basis of their elite status, and still tended to define it primarily in Islamic terms—either by holding positions within Islamic institutions or at the very least,


124 Thus, for instance, it was commented to the American missionary Elihu Grant at the turn-of-the-century by certain Palestinian natives that "half a century or more ago... the fellahin were often in the ascendancy and the city people glad to treat with them." Grant, *The People*, p. 225.


127 See, for instance, Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, p. 205.
maintaining reputations as pious Muslims.\textsuperscript{128} More than just a question of sensibilities, in many respects, it was also imperative to their success as merchants. In the case of the former, it was often a means of acquiring \textit{waqf}\textsuperscript{129} property, generally a good source of revenue.\textsuperscript{130} Additionally, there was still some value in maintaining a certain degree of legitimacy among the peasantry, particularly in connection with the aforementioned networks. The surest way of doing this was through the cultivation of religious status.\textsuperscript{131} Nevertheless, affiliation with Islamic institutions was less the basis of elite status, and more a means of legitimising status after the fact—it provided a veneer of respectability.\textsuperscript{132}

These developments had a particularly negative impact on the peasantry. It had always been the case that notable authority constituted something of a balancing act, between the legitimacy conferred by the higher Ottoman authority and that given by those over whom authority was exercised. As Hourani puts it, “[i]t is because [the notable] has access to authority that he can act as leader, and it is because he has a separate power of his own in

\textsuperscript{128} Of course, money could facilitate both, whether through exerting influence in obtaining a desirable post, marrying into a family of religious scholars, providing charity, or financing an infinite number of pilgrimages to Mecca. See ibid, pp. 232, 240-241, 266.

\textsuperscript{129} A \textit{waqf} (plural, \textit{awqāf}) is a religious foundation or trust, whereby the related property is designated for a specific, usually charitable, function or purpose. For a fuller definition, see J.B. Barron, \textit{Mohammedan Wakfs in Palestine} (Jerusalem: Palestine Government, 1922).


\textsuperscript{131} As expressed by Swedenburg, “the notables had to ‘work on’ pre-capitalist ideologies of hierarchy, so as to reinforce the peasants’ attitude of deference...” Ted Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” p. 176. See also Johnson, \textit{Islam and the Politics of Meaning}, p. 15.

society that [the higher] authority needs him and must give him access."\textsuperscript{133} What was changing was that the balance was shifting in favour of the former. Under the old system, the authority of the urban notables and country sheikhs had depended at least in part on the support they enjoyed among the peasantry, something in part determined by their ability to respond to the latter's needs, as well as to provide patronage. The peasantry had at least some leverage.\textsuperscript{134} Under the new system, however, the authority enjoyed by the urban notables—likewise, that of the country sheikhs (now mukhtars)—was no longer dependent on peasant support. Given their control of the new political institutions, the notables no longer needed the peasantry to sanction their position. Unable to rely on traditional ties of reciprocity, the peasantry was increasingly forced to resort to more formal Islamic institutions, particularly the Islamic courts, not only for the settling of internal disputes—previously the prerogative of the country sheikhs (on whom they no longer felt able to depend)—but as likely to defend themselves against the less scrupulous among the new class of notable merchants.\textsuperscript{135}

All of this had a strong effect on how the peasantry came to view the notable class. There was a growing sentiment among the peasantry that its exploitative practices constituted something decidedly unethical. Worse even was that they seemed willing to exploit their control of formal Islamic institutions, particularly the courts, to better serve their own commercial interests. For many peasants, such unscrupulous behaviour would have seemed something entirely unworthy of Muslim notables. Given their decidedly un-Islamic behaviour then, it was not surprising to Muslim peasants that this new 'merchant'

\textsuperscript{133} Hourani, "Ottoman Reform," p. 46. See also Divine, Politics and Society, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{134} Evidenced, for instance, by the fact that sheikhs were often chosen "by acclamation or by general consent." Grant, The People, p. 150.

\textsuperscript{135} See, for example, Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, pp. 169, 175.
In principle, one might still have conceived of the elite as constituting two different groups—on the one hand, Muslim notables, in control of the new political institutions, engaging in money lending practices, and owning large tracts of land; on the other, a commercial bourgeoisie, composed chiefly of Christians (as well as Europeans and Jews), representative of banking and merchant capital, and also owning large tracts of land. Yet the line between the two had become blurred, and most peasants had begun to see them as constituting a single interest group. As Swedenburg notes, “Muslim notables, allied with Christian merchants, [had come to constitute] the dominant sector.” Such a perception was hardly without basis. Certainly in the area of commerce, it was becoming quite common to find Muslims and Christians in partnership. The two groups were interacting on levels other than the commercial one moreover. Thus, for instance, Muslim notables were increasingly inclined to send their children to Christian or missionary schools. Together, the two had come to constitute a new elite—one derived first and foremost of commercial success. Significantly, it was this elite which would come to constitute the leadership of the Arab nationalist movement in Palestine during the British mandate period.

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136 By the mid-nineteenth century, Christian merchants were even active in the area of Nablus, an area notably famous for its strong Islamic and conservative character, and with a very small Christian population. See Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, pp. 57, 116.


140 See, for instance, Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 166-168.

141 Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 60. Concerning the experience of one such Muslim, see Geoffrey Furlonge, Palestine Is My Country, pp. 33-34.
Ottomanism

While, for Christians, probably the most important element of the Tanzimat was that elevating their status to one of equality with Muslims, it was actually the various administrative and educational (not to mention civil and legal) reforms that gave the principle of equality practical effect. The majālis al-īdāra, for example, provided a forum within which they might actually exercise their new political status. In reality, much of this remained more a matter of theory than fact. Nonetheless, coupled with the new commercial opportunities that now presented themselves and the relative advantage enjoyed by Christians in pursuing them, it is fair to say that by the end of the nineteenth century, the situation of Christians had markedly improved. The purpose of Ottoman reform efforts, however, had never been simply to improve the situation of Christians, but rather to reinvent the Ottoman Empire as a modern European nation-state. As part of this larger programme, an attempt was made to define an Ottoman national identity inclusive of all members of the state, regardless of faith. As expressed in the Constitution of 1876, all Ottoman subjects were to be considered “Osmanli, whatever religion or creed they hold.” It was an identity to be understood primarily in secular terms, one inclusive of the members of the different religious communities.

Problematic was that, until then, the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty, and by extension, the Empire, had been largely grounded in the Islamic faith—the right of the ‘House of Osman’ to rule was based on its role as leader and protector of the religion of Islam. For most Muslims, the prestige of the Empire was linked to Islam, and loyalty to

142 Thus, both the Hatt-i Sherif of Gülhane of 1839, and the more extensive Hatt-i Hümayun of 1856, called for the equal treatment of all subjects regardless of creed. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” pp. 63-64.

143 See, for instance, Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” p. 64; see also Daphne Tsimhoni, “The Status of the Arab Christians under the British Mandate in Palestine” in Middle Eastern Studies, 20 iv, 1984, p. 182.

144 Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” p. 64.

145 Ibid, p. 75. See also Shaw, Empire of the Gazis, pp. 113, 164.
the one inherently implied loyalty to the other. For Christians of course, the exact relationship between Ottoman identity and religious identity was considerably more ambiguous. Arguably, the Ottoman authorities were not entirely clear themselves. On the one hand, they tried to provide Ottomanism with an Islamic basis in order to assure its acceptance by Muslims. At the same time, they promoted the concepts of political representation and popular sovereignty with the objective of binding non-Muslims “by common interests to the common fatherland.” Thus, for example, following a bad harvest in Nablus, in the name of Ottomanism, Muslims were asked to help those who had suffered on the basis of a shared faith, whereas Christians were encouraged to help because “those who are not coreligionists are [still] brothers in the fatherland [ikhwān fī al-watan].”

For many Muslims, reforms were understood more as being based on a generous interpretation of Islam with respect to non-Muslims than on any kind of secular principles. Thus, for example, while Christians were able to serve on the majālis al-idāra established in the Arab provinces, it was generally as representatives of their respective communities more in keeping with their millet-status than in proportion to their size. Certainly they were never allowed to form a majority, even when making up the larger part of the respective population. As noted above, at least early on, Christians very rarely went against the will of the Muslim majority, even when doing so ran contrary to

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146 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 23.
148 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 176.
150 See, for instance, Ma’oz, Ottoman Reform, p. 198.
their own interests. Many were afraid to exercise their new rights, fearful that it would eventually result in a backlash against them, a concern that no doubt reflected the realisation that most Muslims were having difficulties coming to terms with the idea of non-Muslims as political equals.

To many Muslims, Christians seemed overly quick to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them in having been granted political equality, yet unwilling to own up to their new responsibilities. Many Christians resisted serving in the army, for example, something that till then had not been required of them. This sentiment was further exacerbated by the various drives for autonomy or even independence by Christians in the Empire’s European territories. Following an episode of sectarian violence in Crete, for instance, Muslims in Damascus began threatening local Christians, who, according to one missionary account, began fleeing “by the hundreds to the mountains and Beirut, fearing a repetition of the massacre of 1860.” Many Muslims saw a link between Christians having been granted equal political status and their sudden brazenness in challenging Ottoman authority. Equally, they saw the newly created constitution—one that granted disproportionately high representation to non-Muslims—not as providing a means by which Christians, together with Muslims, might fulfil their civic duties to the Ottoman state, but rather as a concession to Christians’ European backers and Christian separatism. Certainly Muslims were loath to accept Christians in positions of authority.

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152 See, for instance, Finn, *Stirring Times*, p. 188.

153 See, for instance, Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” pp. 63, 67. See also FO 618/3, page 7, General Reports, Damascus 1912, where it is noted that Christians (as well as Jews) preferred to pay an exemption fee of £30 rather than serve in the military.

154 Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years*, p. 328.

155 Shaw and Shaw, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic*, p. 128.

156 Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 30-31; also Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 94.
Thus, for example, the British consul, James Finn, noted that it was considered necessary that body-guards employed by consulates should be Muslim—these might "safely strike or lay hands on an unruly Moslem, or arrest him if a thief, which a Christian could not [do] without provoking a riot if not worse."

Arab nationalism

Ottomanism was not the only supra-communal identity to which Arabs might aspire—primary among its competitors were those of pan-Islamism and Arab nationalism, or Arabism. Though the former certainly had a powerful appeal, and a powerful effect on the manner in which the other two developed, we are here chiefly concerned with the latter. Arab nationalism, at least in its secular incarnation, during the latter part of the nineteenth century was essentially the province of Christian Arabs, often in connection with Protestant missionary educational institutions. As developed by them, Arab nationalism was conceived primarily in secular terms, largely around the Arabic language, a language shared by both Muslims and Christians, and on the basis of which it was believed they might develop a sense of a shared cultural and historical identity.

It should be borne in mind that Christians were in large part motivated by a desire to improve their political position; obviously, this would hardly constitute a motivating factor for Muslims. Given the resistance most Muslims felt at the time towards

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157 Finn, *Stirring Times*, pp. 94.


159 Ibid, pp. 276-279.


161 Ibid, p. 61.
recognizing Christians as political equals, Arab nationalism conceived as such initially had little appeal among Muslims. More than simply being an idea ahead of its time, it was completely at odds with how most Muslim Arabs in the Ottoman Empire conceived of their identity. Added to this was the fact that Muslims had less regular contact with Europeans and thus were not as familiar with ideas related to European secular nationalism. For Christians, it was more than simply a matter of being exposed to these ideas in missionary schools. Many were in constant, often daily contact with Europeans, and were thus regularly exposed to notions related to secular nationalism, hence their greater receptivity towards them. Moreover, many Christians saw themselves as having a special role to play in transmitting these new ideas to their Muslim brethren. They would function as a bridge between Europe and the Islamic world, introducing ideas derived of modern European thought to their Muslim countrymen in much the same way that, centuries earlier, they had transmitted Greek and Roman culture and philosophical thought.

All this is not to say that Muslim intellectuals were indifferent to the question of ‘who were the Arabs.’ They tended, however, to define Arab identity within an Islamic context. As developed by them, Arab identity, while also influenced by European notions of nationalism, took as its point of departure the umma, or Islamic community. The political conception of Arab identity as an extension of the Islamic umma arguably had its roots in the political discourse of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. Al-Afghānī advocated pan-

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162 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 38; Zeine, The Emergence, pp. 52-54
164 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 120.
165 Perhaps best defined in its religious sense as the community of believers.
Islamism, though in a manner that transformed Islam from a belief-system into a modern political force aimed at binding Muslims together into a strong state capable of withstanding their enemies (that is, the European colonial powers).\textsuperscript{167} Islam then was to become a means of producing a state of political solidarity—\textit{asabiyyah}\textsuperscript{168}—among its practitioners.\textsuperscript{169} While one ought not to confuse the pan-Islamism advocated by al-Afghānī with nationalistic belief, it did foster an activist attitude towards politics, arguably an attitude which constituted a necessary pre-condition for the spread of Arab nationalist thought.\textsuperscript{170} Al-Afghānī's concept of \textit{asabiyyah} was further developed by one of his disciples, `Abdāllah al-Nadīm, a radical journalist and political agitator, who sought to use the concept of \textit{asabiyyah}, or Muslim solidarity, to rouse the population at the time of the `Urabī rebellion. Significantly, he argued that Muslim solidarity should be inclusive of Copts (Egyptian Christians) and Jews in a display of national unity. This represented a break with an orthodox understanding of the \textit{umma}, which until then had not permitted non-Muslims to be full members of the body politic. That said, Muslims, were to remain its dominant element.\textsuperscript{171}

More important with respect to the link between Arab national identity and Islam was Muhammad Rashīd Rīda.\textsuperscript{172} Together, with his mentor Muhammad `Abduh, he initiated the Islamic reform movement known as \textit{salafiyyah}—a 'return to the way of the ancestors.' Under Rashīd Rīda, the \textit{salafiyyah} movement placed emphasis on the Arab

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid, pp. 12-14.

\textsuperscript{168} Translated variously as \textit{nationalism}, \textit{tribalism}, \textit{tribal solidarity}, and \textit{esprit de corps}.

\textsuperscript{169} Haim, \textit{Arab Nationalism}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{170} See ibid, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{172} Concerning Rashīd Rīda's background, see ibid, pp. 20-21.
people as the Muslim community *par excellence*. They represented the Islam practised by Muhammad and his immediate successors through the Abbasid period. This was to be distinguished from later Islamic practice, which was understood as having been corrupted due to the *umma*'s eventual domination by non-Arab peoples—in particular, the Turks. The Arab community, or *umma*, was distinguished as something apart from them. For Rashīd Rīda, the Arab *umma* did not constitute an end in itself, but rather the means by which Islam was to be revitalised. Indeed, Rashīd Rīda came around to support Arab independence only after the Young Turks, following the deposition of the Ottoman Sultan 'Abdulhamīd II in 1908, began to demonstrate an indifference towards Islam. His emphasis always remained on Islam, and his thinking would have a profound effect on how Muslim intellectuals came to perceive the nature of Arab identity—that it was to be understood first and foremost within an Islamic context. As with Muhammad Rashīd Rīda, many subsequent Muslim intellectuals would prove ‘more Arab Muslim than Muslim Arab.’ Specifically, *salafi* Arabism, as it came to be known, would have a strong appeal among second-rank notables (the younger members of notable families) as well as what was a growing professional class, both of whom, while supporting the constitutionalism and greater liberalism represented by the Tanzimat, were opposed to its centralising tendencies.

Important with respect to later developments was the fact that *salafi* Arabism effectively constituted an anti-establishment socio-political movement. Both second-rank notables

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173 See, for instance, Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 36; also Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, p. 22.


175 Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 48.

and young professionals often enough found themselves competing for the same positions, both, as noted above, because such positions tended to be monopolised by the traditional elite, and on account of Christian (and Jewish) competition. Owing to the movement’s emphasis on reason and progress, and thus the possibility of obtaining position and prominence in the Ottoman bureaucracy on the basis of merit, the movement had a strong appeal among the younger generation of students attending modern Tanzimat schools. At the same time, it was a ‘religious rationalisation’ of modern ideas and institutions, one instilled with an ethnic consciousness that gave pride of place to Muslim Arabs.\(^{177}\) The practical implication was that, under the system espoused by \textit{salafi} Arabism, the highest levels within the bureaucracy, at least regionally, should fall to them—hence also their support for liberalisation and opposition to centralisation. Among other things, centralisation served to maintain the status of the traditional elite.

In any case, with the involvement of Muslim intellectuals in the formulation of Arab identity, Christians quickly recognised the need to acknowledge the special place of Islam in a shared Arab heritage.\(^{178}\) Of course, there had never really been any question that a connection existed between Arab identity and Islam. At issue was the nature of that connection. Christians tended to define Islam more as one aspect, albeit a very significant one, of a more broadly defined Arab identity; one essentially secular in character, based on a common race and a shared language, and equally encompassing non-Muslims as well as Muslims. In keeping with this perspective, Christians now sought to recast Islamic history as Arab history. The curriculum of the Madrasa al-Dustüriyya\(^{179}\) school,

\(^{177}\) Kayali, \textit{Arabs and Young Turks}, p. 48.


\(^{179}\) For a description of the Madrasa al-Dustüriyya, see Ami Ayalon, \textit{Reading Palestine, Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948} (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 33.
established by the Orthodox Christian intellectual Khalîl al-Sakâkînî\textsuperscript{180} in Jerusalem in 1909,\textsuperscript{181} was indicative of just such an approach.\textsuperscript{182} In any event, prior to the First World War, Arab nationalism as a movement made little impact.\textsuperscript{183} Certainly it produced nothing resembling a broader political programme, and so long as this remained the case, differences between Muslim and Christian conceptions of Arab identity remained largely abstract. Moreover, its political implications with respect to non-Muslims remained something that largely concerned only Christians. Not surprisingly, the great majority favoured the idea of a secular state within which religion, while having an honoured place, would be divorced from government.\textsuperscript{184}

**Palestine’s Arab Christians**

At the start of the British Mandate, the great majority of Palestine’s Christians were Arab (that is, ‘Greek’) Orthodox.\textsuperscript{185} The next largest community was the Latin Catholic one. In addition, there were sizeable communities of Greek Catholics (also known as Melkites), Protestants, Maronites, Armenians (of which most were Orthodox, or Gregorian\textsuperscript{186}) and

\textsuperscript{180} An educator by profession, Sakâkînî was initially a strong supporter of the CUP (see below). He would quickly become disillusioned with them, however, and become involved in Arab nationalist politics.

\textsuperscript{181} Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{182} As Khalidi (1998) put it, the school “reimagine[d] what had heretofore been taught as Islamic history as Arab history.” Ibid, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{183} See, for instance, Zeine, *The Emergence*, pp. 60-63.

\textsuperscript{184} See, for instance, Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 277; also Hopwood, *The Russian Presence*, p. 176.

\textsuperscript{185} See below.

\textsuperscript{186} For the purposes of this paper, all Armenians, whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant, are considered as constituting one community. In large part, this reflects the fact that Armenians regardless of church
non-Chalcedonian Orthodox (such as the Syrian Orthodox, or Jacobites). At the beginning of the Mandate, Christians made up close to 11 percent of the total Arab population.\(^{187}\) Though Christian birth-rates would not keep pace with Muslim ones, as of 1931, they still constituted a little over 10 percent of the total Arab population.\(^{188}\) While Palestine's Christian population was generally widely dispersed,\(^{189}\) there were certain cities where Christians featured more prominently than others—for instance, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jaffa, as well as Haifa, Acre, Nazareth, Tiberias and Safad.\(^{190}\) Likewise, there were certain areas where Christian villages tended to be concentrated—


\(^{188}\) Based on the figures given in the 1931 census—see Table VII, Part I, pp. 24-25, in *Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II*, Part II, Tables, by E. Mills, B.A., O.B.E., Assistant Chief Secretary, Superintendent of Census, by Authority, Printed for the Government of Palestine, by Messrs. Whitehead Morris Limited, Alexandria, 1933; also Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine," p. 144. It might be noted that the figures given for Christians for both censuses were inclusive of foreigners. By 1931, this would account for a sizeable number—based on the statistics for ‘citizenship,’ 86 per cent of the Christian population at that time was indigenous, 2.5 per cent from other Arab countries, and 11.5 per cent from Europe or America (though some of the latter were Arab Christian emigrants returning to Palestine or local Christians who had obtained foreign protection). The great majority of foreign Christians were Protestant. See Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, p. 20.

\(^{189}\) O'Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 36; Tsimhoni, “The Status of the Arab Christians,” pp. 185-186.

\(^{190}\) O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 36.
for instance, around Acre, Nazareth and Ramlah. Christians tended to be well integrated with respect to the larger Muslim population, often living side-by-side with them, even in the smaller villages. Certainly this was the case with the Orthodox, many of whom lived in remote and rural Muslim areas, and were relatively unexposed to Europeans. In some areas, there were hardly any Christians at all. Most notable in this respect was ‘the bloody triangle,’ encompassing Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm (so named because of the blood feuds between the various important families there), which had very few Christians. The town of Hebron had no Christians at all (though there was a sizeable Jewish community). As of the 1931 census, of the roughly 24 per cent of rural Christians living in villages, half lived in villages where they constituted a minority.

Even when living apart, however, there was often little to distinguish an Orthodox Christian village from a Muslim one. At the time of the Mandate, one Orthodox Christian commented to a visiting Western pilgrim that “[b]etween a Moslem and a Christian village, there was no discernible difference.” For a breakdown of the Christian population as of 1922 by town and village, see Table A.1 in the Appendix.

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191 Ibid, p. 36. Tsimhoni, “The Status of the Arab Christians,” p. 184, footnote 126. It might be noted here that Trans-Jordan (modern-day Jordan), which as of the beginning of the Mandate was considered part of Palestine, had a sizeable Christian population as well. During the mandate period, they numbered between 25-30,000. Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, p. 67.


194 See also ibid, p. 253.

195 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” pp. 36-37.

A high level of integration was also evident in the larger towns, even those containing sizeable Christian populations. Jaffa circa 1840 is case in point. An examination of the eight main neighbourhoods shows that Christians and Muslims were fairly intermixed—with the possible exception of Sheikh Ibrahim, all had sizeable numbers of both.

### Table 1.1. Religious Distribution of Jaffa’s Neighbourhoods circa 1840

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Muslims (%)</th>
<th>Christians (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fallahin</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh Ibrahim</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marah</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naqib</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasara</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal’a</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabiyya</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burj</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The above figures are based on the selling of contracts for homes from the period in question. Mahmud Yazbak, ‘Jaffa: The Formation of the City and Society at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century According to Local Sources,’ paper presented at the conference, The Turks and Palestine: A Thousand Years of Relations, 22-24 June 2004.

The high level of integration between Muslims and Christians, particularly Orthodox, was often evident in their manners and customs. Many local Christians had over time come to adopt what were essentially Islamic practices. Thus, one English missionary, while visiting Nablus during the mid-nineteenth century, observed local Christians applying rules of inheritance based on the *shari‘a*. The Russian Orthodox missionary Porfiri Uspenski, while visiting Palestine and Syria in the mid-nineteenth century, noted that many Muslim practices such as the veiling of women and their strict segregation in harems were adopted by Christians. He further noted that “[t]he Arab Muslims and

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Christians are exactly the same in Palestine—in language, customs and vices, the worst vice being blood revenge." An Arab Christian admitted that "[w]e are very ignorant, the only difference between our women and those of the Moslems is that the latter swear by the Prophet and ours by the Virgin." Mary Eliza Rogers, the sister of the British vice-Consul in Palestine, while travelling through the country during the mid-nineteenth century, noted that Christian women in particular were "very much wedded to the ancient customs of the country, and... will not abandon them notwithstanding the persevering efforts of the priesthood." While the priests did try to discourage practices that were at odds with church dogma, often by threatening excommunication, it was noted that "if the priests persisted in carrying out their threats.... Their congregations would soon be scattered; so they are lenient, and thus Greek and Roman forms of Christianity are blended insensibly with [customary] ceremonies and practices." For their part, many Muslims considered local Christian churches to be the equivalent of saints’ shrines, and between Muslims and Christians, there were many common saints, festivals, and holy places.


200 Wilson, Peasant Life, p. 55. Concerning similarities in the practice of Muslims and Christians, see also Elihu Grant, The People, pp. 93, 117.

201 Rogers, Domestic Life, p. 97. Though she was speaking here specifically about the Greek Catholic community, it might equally have applied to the Orthodox one.


The high level of Christian integration with respect to the larger Muslim community was also evident in the Christian communal law courts, which in many cases, adopted Muslim laws, particularly those related to inheritance.\textsuperscript{205} Even with respect to marriage, in the case of the Orthodox at least, while practice was in principle based on the old Byzantine law, the Arab laity and lower clergy often adopted customs derived of the *shari‘a*.\textsuperscript{206} This came, in fact, to constitute one of the bases for the conflict between them and the Greek higher clergy (discussed more fully below).\textsuperscript{207} The tendency for adopting Muslim law was particularly evident among Orthodox Christians, though also to a lesser extent among Greek Catholics, Armenians, and in certain remote districts, Latin Catholics.\textsuperscript{208} Cases related to intestate succession and the guardianship of minors were generally not even dealt with in the respective communal court, but rather were referred to the Islamic *shari‘a* courts.\textsuperscript{209} Christian religious foundations further served to integrate Christians within the larger Muslim community inasmuch as such ‘*waqfs*’ were permitted only if done in accordance with Muslim law and before a *shari‘a* court. As such, all matters pertaining to religious properties established for the benefit of Christians came under the jurisdiction of the *shari‘a* courts.\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{205} Tsimhoni, “The Status of the Arab Christians,” p. 173.

\textsuperscript{206} Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, p. 131.


\textsuperscript{208} ISA 2/B, B/20/38, Report by the Haifa and Northern District Commissioner, 2 May 1929.


As noted above, Orthodox Arabs by far comprised the largest Christian community in Palestine. (For a complete breakdown of Palestine's Christians by church community as of 1922, see Tables A.2 and A.3 in the Appendix.) The Patriarchate was (and still is) based in Jerusalem. The Orthodox community was the oldest Christian community in Palestine, its patriarchate tracing its origins to the sub-apostolic Bishopric of Jerusalem, which dated back to the very founding of the faith.\footnote{Pedersen, \textit{The Holy Land Christians}, pp. 9, 20; Fannie Fern Andrews, \textit{The Holy Land Under Mandate}, Volume I (Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1931), p. 153.} At the beginning of the Mandate, Orthodox Arabs numbered roughly 33,400.\footnote{From Table XII, p. 43 in \textit{Census of 1922}.} By 1931, their numbers had risen close to 38,000.\footnote{Table VII, Part III, pp. 29-43 in \textit{Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II}. If including those claiming European origin (mainly Greek and Russian), the number was closer to 40,000. Ibid.} The community was particularly strong in Jerusalem, where, as of 1931, they numbered over 5,500.\footnote{Counting non-Arab Orthodox (again, mostly from Greece and Russia), the number was closer to 6,550. Ibid.} During the Mandate, they made up the majority of the Christian population in eight of the eighteen subdistricts,\footnote{O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 38.} and could be found in large numbers in the towns of Bethlehem (particularly in its suburbs of Bayt Jala and Bayt Sahur), Ramallah, Nazareth, Jaffa, Ramlah, Lydda and Acre, as well as in a number of Christian villages in Judea and Galilee. In towns where Christians outnumbered Muslims, Orthodox Arabs often made up the majority of the former—particularly notable in this respect were Jerusalem and Ramallah. In Nazareth and Bethlehem, two other cities dominated by Christians, the numbers were equally divided between Orthodox and Catholics.\footnote{See Table XIV, p. 45, and Table XVI, p. 50, both in \textit{Census of 1922}.} Arguably then, they held considerable sway within the overall Christian community. There was some historical precedence for this—in the mid-fifteenth century,
the ‘Greek’ Orthodox were the first Christians to be recognised by the Ottoman Sultan as constituting a semi-autonomous millet. Additionally, the Patriarchate in Istanbul was initially granted authority over all Christians in the Empire, whether Orthodox or not. The Armenians would not be granted status as a separate millet until roughly a century later; the Catholics, not until the late-eighteenth century. 217

As the longest standing Christian communities in Palestine, the Orthodox were also the most well integrated with respect to the larger Muslim community. This was particularly evident in towns where, though having a strong presence, Muslims made up the clear majority—for instance, Jaffa, Ramla, Lydda and Acre. As noted above, Orthodox Arabs were more inclined to adopt Muslim practices. Culturally, they often had more in common with their Muslim neighbours than other Christian Arabs. Moreover, Orthodox had traditionally tended to maintain good relations with the dominant Muslim families. This was reinforced by the fact that Orthodox Arabs were more inclined than other Christians to send their children to Ottoman state schools. 218 Finally, historically speaking, there had for a long time existed a general feeling of hostility towards Western Christendom, one dating back to the schism between the Latin Catholic and Orthodox churches of 1054, and later reinforced by the Crusades, during which time Orthodox had often fared as poorly if not worse than Muslims. 219

As well integrated as they were, Orthodox Arabs were not entirely impervious to foreign influence, and during the latter part of the nineteenth century, they became the target of Russian missionary efforts. In many respects, Russian missionaries operated as agents of the Russian Government—through them, Russia hoped to further its own imperial

217 The Protestant millet, established in 1850, was the last Christian community to be recognised as such by the Ottoman authorities. Shaw and Shaw, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, p. 126.

218 Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 123.

interests in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Russia quickly involved itself in what till then had been a local conflict between the Greek-dominated higher clergy and the Arabic-speaking laity. At heart, the conflict revolved around the question of whether the Orthodox community was ethnically ‘Arab’ or ‘Greek’ (discussed more fully in the next chapter). The laity asserted the former, while the higher clergy maintained the latter. Russia sided with the laity in the belief that if the authority of the ‘Greek’ Patriarch were undermined, the Orthodox community would transfer its loyalty to the Russian branch of the Orthodox faith. This of course would facilitate Russia’s ability to further involve itself in Ottoman internal affairs. The actual effect of such support, however, was more to stir up Arab nationalist passions than to create a correspondence between local Orthodox interests and Russian imperial ones.

Though not as large as the Orthodox community, the Catholic community, made up primarily of Latin and Greek Catholics, was considerable. A large number of these were converts. Over the course of the nineteenth century, roughly a third of the Orthodox community converted to Catholicism, the great majority as Greek Catholics, or Melkites, who, though recognising the authority of the Papacy, maintained their Eastern rites. The Greek Catholic community was recognised as a separate millet in

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221 Ibid, pp. 165, 170.


223 By the time of the Mandate, roughly a quarter of Orthodox Arabs in Palestine had become Greek Catholic. Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 66.

224 The term, meaning ‘Emperor’s men,’ was originally used to designate Greek Orthodox in recognition of their fidelity to the Emperor Marcian in connection with the decision taken at the Council of Chalcedon against the Monophysite doctrine. “The History of the Melkites,” http://www.opuslibani.org.lb/eglieeng/003/histoire.html, 4 March 2002. Though later abandoned by the mainstream Orthodox community, the term was maintained by Greek Catholics. Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 45.
1848, and until now, there has existed a Greek Catholic Patriarch based in Damascus, with bishops representing the various communities throughout the Levant. By the time of the First World War, the largest Greek Catholic communities were to be found in Lebanon, though a fair number could also be found in Palestine. As of the 1922 census, Greek Catholics in Palestine numbered close to 11,200, the great majority of them (a little over 9,800) residing in the northern part of the country. They were particularly well represented in the Galilee region and constituted roughly half the Christian population in Haifa, likewise those in the medium-size towns of Shafa Amr (near Haifa) and Mughar (near Tiberias). In the Christian villages of Ma'alia, Fassuta, Iqrit, Bassa and 'Aylabun (all in the Acre sub-district), they made up clear majorities. Additionally, they formed a sizeable minority in Nazareth, where they made up roughly 20 percent of the overall Christian population. In Jerusalem, their numbers were quite small, and during the mandate period, only a little over 200 resided there.

At the time of the 1922 census, Latin Catholics in Palestine numbered over 14,000. By 1931, their numbers would approach 19,000. A good number of these, however—roughly 2,500—would be non-Arab, coming primarily from Europe. The great

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225 “The History of the Melkites” (website).

226 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 36.

227 From Table XII, p. 43 in Census of 1922.

228 See Table XVI, p. 50 in ibid.

229 From Table VII, pp. 29-43 in Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II.

230 From Table XII, p. 43 in Census of 1922.

231 See Table VII, Part III, pp. 29-43 in Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II.

232 Ibid.
majority of Latin Catholics resided in and around Jerusalem and Bethlehem, close to 10,000 altogether.\textsuperscript{233} The northern part of Palestine accounted for most of the rest, the greater part residing in Haifa, Acre and Nazareth.\textsuperscript{234} Smaller concentrations of Latin Catholics could also be found in Jaffa, and in such rural communities as 'Ain Karim and Zababdeh. The Latin Catholic Patriarchate was first established in Jerusalem in 1099, with that city’s capture by the Crusaders. With their departure at the end of the thirteenth century, the Patriarchate ceased to exist. It would not be revived until 1847, largely by the efforts of Pope Pius IX, though in the interim, Latin Catholics would maintain a presence in Palestine through their various religious orders.\textsuperscript{235} The most important of these was the Franciscan order, which, through the Latin Order of the Holy Sepulchre, or Custodia Terrae Sanctae, was made responsible by the Pope for the holy shrines and the religious welfare of Catholic pilgrims.\textsuperscript{236}

Regarding the lay community, with the notable exception of the Latin Catholic community in Bethlehem, held by some to be a remnant of the original Medieval Latin community established there by the Crusaders,\textsuperscript{237} the great majority were made up of converts, many of whom were attracted by the educational opportunities afforded them by Catholic missionary schools.\textsuperscript{238} Not unrelatedly, many of them tended to be urban,

\textsuperscript{233} See Table XII, p. 43 in Census of 1922.

\textsuperscript{234} In 1922, this amounted to roughly 4,000 Latin Catholics. See ibid.

\textsuperscript{235} Pedersen, The Holy Land Christians, p. 84; also Finn, Stirring Times, p. 44.


well-educated, and Western-oriented. During the late-Ottoman period, unlike what was the case with most of the other Christian communities—including Greek, Syrian and Armenian Catholics—the Latin Catholics were not considered as constituting a *millet*, largely because they were not considered an indigenous community. Instead, they were represented by a special agent and granted special rights with respect to judicial matters and internal administration.\(^{239}\) Their Western orientation remained quite evident during the Mandate, something reflected in part by the large non-Arab Latin Catholic community residing in Palestine. Though mostly there in connection with the various religious orders,\(^{240}\) they nevertheless tended to be well integrated with the indigenous Catholic community. A few other smaller Catholic communities existed in Palestine at the time of the Mandate. Most prominent among these were the Armenian Catholics, the Syrian Catholics, and the Assyrian Catholics, numbering as of the 1931 census roughly 330, 170, and 100, respectively. Almost all of these resided in Jerusalem and the immediate surrounding area.\(^{241}\)

Protestant Arabs, though not constituting a unified community in the same sense as the Orthodox and Catholic communities, did share certain features in common. Hence, O’Mahony refers to them as having constituted a quasi-*millet*.\(^{242}\) They tended to be the best educated in the secular sense—correspondingly, they were also the most liberal and progressive of all the Christian Arab communities, and thus the most open to European notions.\(^{243}\) At the beginning of the Mandate, Protestants in Palestine numbered less than

\(^{239}\) O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 21.


\(^{241}\) From Table VII, Part III, pp. 29-43 in *Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II*.

\(^{242}\) O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” pp. 21, 23.

\(^{243}\) Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, p. 58.
Mostly they were concentrated in Jerusalem, Ramleh, Nazareth, Lydda and Haifa, as well as some of the Arab villages in Judea and the Galilee region. Notable among the latter were Bir Zayt, Zababdeh, Rafidiya, and Kafr Yasif. A sizeable community existed in Amman in neighbouring Trans-Jordan as well. Although Protestant Arabs tended to associate themselves with the West to a greater degree than did other Christians Arabs, they were also among the most ardent of nationalists.

In large part, their strong commitment to Arab nationalism reflected the fact that, well up through the end of the Mandate, the heads of most of the Protestant churches remained European, often as not English, Scottish, or German, depending on the church in question. Most of the Protestant churches in Palestine had strong connections with their respective mother churches in Europe and North America; moreover, large parts of their congregations consisted of resident Europeans and North Americans. Both factors reflected the relative youth and small size of the respective church communities. Nonetheless, it was not long before Protestant Arabs were demanding that positions within the church leadership be filled by their own (see below). Sensitivities over what for many seemed a manifestation of European colonialism within their own church hierarchies had a similar effect on Protestant Arabs as that engendered among Orthodox Arabs by the Orthodox clergy-laity conflict.

244 Table XII, p. 43 in Census of 1922.

245 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, pp. 16-17, 29-30; O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 39.

246 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 67.

247 Ibid, p. 58.

248 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 20.
As noted, the largest Protestant community in Palestine (as well as in Trans-Jordan) during the Mandate was the Anglican one.\textsuperscript{249} Given the predominance of British influence (and British missionaries), this is perhaps not surprising. It was represented not only in the Bishopric in Jerusalem, established since 1841, but also by several Anglican-based educational institutions\textsuperscript{250} (of which many Arabs, Muslims as well as Christians, took advantage\textsuperscript{251}). Presbyterian, Lutheran and Templar communities could also be found in Palestine.\textsuperscript{252} Though not constituting a unified community, ties did exist between the various Protestant churches. Often enough these reflected efforts at ecumenicism, though sometimes, they reflected broader political considerations and came at the prompting of respective ‘home countries.’ Thus, for example, the aforementioned Anglican Bishopric was originally founded as a joint Anglican-German Lutheran enterprise. It was only in 1881, that the Bishopric became solely Anglican, the resident bishop thereafter bearing the title Bishop of the Church of England in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{253}

Two other Christian communities existing in Palestine during the Mandate warrant mention here, which, though small, had some bearing on Muslim-Christian relations. These were the Armenian and Maronite communities. In many ways, the experience of the Armenians paralleled that of the Orthodox Arabs; like them, they had, beginning in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{249} By 1931, it constituted roughly 5.3 per cent of the overall Christian population. O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 38. See also Betts, \textit{Christians in the Arab East}, p. 58.
\item \textsuperscript{250} The most prominent being St. George’s Primary and Secondary School in Jerusalem, established in 1842. Tsimhoni, “The Anglican Community,” p. 253.
\item \textsuperscript{251} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{252} As of 1922, of the close to 7,000 Protestants residing in Palestine, roughly 4,500 were Anglican; 350 Presbyterian and 430 Lutheran. See Table XII, p. 43 in \textit{Census of 1922}. See also Tsimhoni, \textit{The British Mandate}, p. 30.
\end{itemize}
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the early nineteenth century, looked to Russia for support in the fulfilment of nationalist aspirations. Unlike the case with the former, it had not translated into a sense of shared identity with their Muslim neighbours. Though their numbers were fairly large with respect to the Ottoman Empire as a whole, in Palestine, they were quite small. Prior to 1914, the Armenian community in Palestine was largely a monastic one. It was made up almost entirely of Armenian Orthodox, or Gregorians, and was mostly concentrated in Jerusalem around the Monastery of Saint James. An Armenian patriarch had resided in Jerusalem since at least the early fourteenth century, and by the time of the Mandate, Armenian patriarchal property had come to occupy so much of the southwest corner of the Old City that it had become known as the Armenian Quarter. During the First World War, Palestine was flooded with Armenian refugees, such that by the time of the 1922 Census, they numbered roughly 3,200. The great majority of Armenians continued to reside in Jerusalem or in the immediate surrounding area (roughly 2,000). The rest were split fairly evenly between the north and south. Though generally fluent in Arabic, they were the least Arabicised of all the Christian communities in Palestine. The Armenian community remained mostly on the sidelines of the nationalist struggle, and while the notion that they constituted a people apart from the Arabs generally went

\[\text{254 See, for instance, Pedersen, *The Holy Land Christians*, pp. 115-116.} \]

\[\text{255 Ibid, pp. 118-124.} \]

\[\text{256 Andrews, *The Holy Land*, pp. 160-161.} \]

\[\text{257 Table XII, p. 43 in *Census of 1922*. They numbered about 3,500 as of the 1931 census. From Table VII, Part III, pp. 29-43 in *Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II*. In both cases, the figure is inclusive of not only Gregorian Armenians, but of Catholic (that is, Uniate) and Protestant Armenians as well.} \]

\[\text{258 From Table VII, Part III, pp. 29-43 in *Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II*.} \]

\[\text{259 See, for instance, Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, p. 56.} \]
unchallenged, it could be argued that they served as a constant reminder for many Muslims that Christian loyalty to the movement in general was never entirely secure.260

As of the 1922 census, the Maronites in Palestine numbered close to 2,400.261 Almost all of them resided in the northern part of the country, primarily in Haifa and certain northern border towns, such as Bir‘im, which was exclusively Maronite, and Jish, where they made up the majority. Small communities of Maronites might also be found in Nazareth, Acre, Jaffa, and, of course, Jerusalem.262 Like the Armenians, the Maronites tended to assert a nationalist identity apart from the larger Arab one—that is, Lebanese identity.263 Unlike the case with the Armenians, however, it was not an identity recognised by most Arabs, whether Muslim or Christian.264 The Maronites were largely


261 From Table XII, p. 43 in *Census of 1922*. By the time of the 1931 census, their numbers had risen by roughly a thousand. Table VII, Part III, pp. 29-43 in *Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II*.

262 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 38.


concentrated in the area around Mount Lebanon, and for the greater part of their history, had maintained a strong sense of themselves as constituting a unique religious community. Recognising as they did the authority of the Papacy in Rome, they enjoyed strong outside support, not only from the Vatican, but from the French (the ‘protectors’ of Catholics) as well. Since its designation as a semi-autonomous province in 1860, Lebanon had remained somewhat isolated from broader developments in the Ottoman Empire, not least those related to Arab nationalism. This sense of constituting a community apart from the larger Arab one would become formalised and politicised under the French Mandate.

For the most part, this was a sensibility shared by Maronites residing outside of Lebanon, including those in mandate Palestine. Many of the latter were, in fact, refugees from Lebanon who had fled during the First World War. It is not surprising then that they felt a strong affiliation with the larger Maronite community in Lebanon. Most

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265 On the eve of the First World War, Christians made up 79 per cent of the population on Mount Lebanon. Of these, 84 per cent were Catholics (inclusive of Maronites, Greek Catholics and Latin Catholics). Ahmad Beydoun, “Lebanon’s Sects.”

266 Toynbee, “The Administration of the French Mandate,” p. 152; Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 23.


269 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 25.

270 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 38.
Maronites were not especially sympathetic to the Palestinian nationalist cause; neither to the idea of a pan-Arab state.\textsuperscript{271} During the latter part of the Mandate, in fact, many Zionists came to consider the Maronites their natural allies.\textsuperscript{272} From the perspective of Muslim-Christian relations, this raised uncomfortable questions concerning the basis of Christian loyalty. In the one place where they made up the vast majority and the population was relatively homogenous, Christians had all too quickly called for their own state. An obvious implication of this was that Christian loyalty was entirely dependent on there being a lack of any viable alternative.

**Sultan 'Abdulhamīd**

Islam as a defining component of Ottomanism received renewed emphasis with the succession of 'Abdulhamīd II as Sultan in 1876.\textsuperscript{273} With his accession, the period of the Tanzimat reforms effectively came to a close. While in many respects as much a moderniser as his predecessors, 'Abdulhamīd had much stronger autocratic tendencies, and quickly moved to stifle any potential opposition. Among other things, this meant effectively shutting down the Parliament only one year after its establishment. The renewed emphasis given Islam served first and foremost to bolster the legitimacy of 'Abdulhamīd's rule as sultan-caliph.\textsuperscript{274} It also served to alleviate what had been a backlash among Muslims against the Tanzimat reforms. Many responded favourably to a return to Islamic orthodoxy, finding it much easier to support a state based on Islamic

\textsuperscript{271} Concerning their resistance to a pan-Arab state, see Toynbee, "The Administration of the French Mandate," pp. 359, 360.


\textsuperscript{273} Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{274} Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 208.
principles than one based on secular ones. Abdulhamid’s Islamism neither negated nor superseded Ottomanism. Under Abdulhamid, Ottomanism was, as Kayali puts it, “equipped with [an] ideological embellishment deriving from Islam,” wherein the figure of the Sultan became its embodiment. While functioning to justify his autocratic rule, Abdulhamid’s brand of Ottomanism was also useful in the area of foreign policy; thus, he often used the threat of a united Muslim uprising—one hypothetically extending well beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire—to respond to perceived foreign aggression. This was a threat taken quite seriously by the European powers, particularly Britain and France whose empires included large numbers of Muslim subjects.

This did not mean that under Abdulhamid, non-Muslims in the Empire suffered persecution or were discriminated against in any systematic sense. Many, in fact, held important administrative posts in the Empire. Such employment, however, seemed more symbolic than anything else, meant to demonstrate that, in spite of his emphasis on Islam, Abdulhamid had not forsaken the Empire’s non-Muslim population. For the most part, there seems little question that under him, the relative position of Muslims was greatly enhanced. Among the Arabs in particular, notables with strong Islamic backgrounds were favoured for influential administrative positions, and many rose to high positions

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275 This had been particularly evident in the Fertile Crescent area. Porath, *The Emergence*, pp. 22-23.

276 Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 31.

277 Ibid, p. 35.

278 With the notable exception of the Armenian community. It was during Abdelhammid’s reign that persecution of them first began in earnest. While not necessarily reflective of state policy, other Christian communities were also occasionally mistreated, for instance, Syrian Christians in Anatolia, in 1894-96. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen, *The Holy Land Christians*, p. 160.

279 Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 44.

280 Ibid, p. 44. See also Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pp. 61, 86; and Porath, *The Emergence*, p. 23.
within the Hamidian bureaucracy. In Palestine, support for ‘Abdulhamid was strongest in Nablus, the country’s most homogenously Muslim town. Such support did not go unrewarded, and ‘Abdulhamid did much to encourage Nablusite industries and granted scholarships to members of its leading families for study in Istanbul. For those whose economic success was derived from an elite status determined as much by their reputations as pious Muslims and their holding of important positions within Islamic institutions as by their control of the majlīs al-īdārā, ‘Abdulhamid’s brand of Ottomanism-Islamism struck a nice balance between progressiveness and conservatism. It was exactly such a characterisation that defined the traditional notable elite during this period. Not surprisingly, under ‘Abdulhamid, they proved strong supporters of Ottomanism.

At the beginning of ‘Abdulhamid’s reign, there is little evidence of any serious support for Arab nationalism among the Arab population at large, or even among the notable class. Opposition to the Hamidian regime generally focused on the issue of reinstituting the constitution, and cut across ethnic as well as religious lines. Protests relating to distinctly ‘Arab’ issues primarily concerned perceived biases in Ottoman

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281 Ibid., p. 23; Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 86.


283 As discussed more fully above.


286 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, pp. 42-43, 208.
institutions in favour of Turks. 287 What little support there was for Arab nationalism was to be found primarily among Christian Arabs, and even there, largely only among those living abroad, either in Europe or in Egypt. 288 Moreover, while it is true that Christian intellectuals in the Empire were disproportionately represented in organisations emphasising Arab identity and culture, this did not inherently mean that they were opposed to Ottomanism. 289

The Committee of Union and Progress

In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), a secret society aimed at restoring the parliament and constitution of 1876, came to power. 290 Almost immediately, it embarked on an ambitious programme of reform. The reaction of Arabs to the CUP's programme was decidedly mixed. The more conservative—among them, many of the notable class—generally responded negatively. 291 More reform-minded Muslims, by contrast, tended to support the CUP, and initially at least, relations between Arab reformists and the CUP were amiable. Among such supporters, a fair number were the aforementioned second-rank notables—the junior members of notable families or ‘almost haves’ who under the old system had been effectively blocked by their elder kinsmen from achieving positions of prominence. 292 As with the Tanzimat, many hoped that the

287 See, for instance, ibid, p. 34.

288 Many of whom had, in fact, been exiled for nationalist agitation in the press. Ibid, pp. 39, 208.


290 Some might say, stumbled into power. Shaw and Shaw, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, pp. 266-267.

291 See, for instance, FO 618/3, Report on the State of Affairs in Damascus sent to Lowther, dispatches to Constantinople, 4 September 1908.

292 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 49; also Rashid Khalidi “Society and Ideology,” pp. 123, 129.
CUP's programme of reform would create opportunities for advancement that circumvented the traditional hierarchal structure. The CUP's programme of reform was equally supported by the growing professional class, many of which also saw in it new possibilities for social and economic advancement. Both groups would be disappointed.293

Underlying much of the support enjoyed by the CUP, was its professed constitutionalism. This was particularly relevant to merchants and professionals, many of whom were Christian.294 Thus, for instance, the prominent Christian intellectual, Khalīl al-Sakākīnī was a strong supporter of the coup and the CUP's programme of constitutional reform.295 Support for reform during this period would form a basis for a certain level of cooperation between Christian and Muslim merchant elite. This was evident, for instance, in the formation of the Beirut Reform Committee in 1913, in effect, to act as mediating body between that city's merchant community and the Ottoman government around the question of reform. Significantly, it was a self-appointed committee and was composed of an equal number of Muslims and Christians. That the basis of this cooperation was shared economic interests went without question.296

Arab support for the CUP would eventually erode, largely because of its tendency towards centralisation. This was particularly the case with the aforementioned members


294 FO 618/3, Report on the State of Affairs in Damascus sent to Lowther, file no. 39, dispatches to Constantinople, 4 September 1908.


296 Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks, p. 128.
of the professional class and second-rank notables, many of whom were becoming increasingly attracted to *salafi* Arabism.\textsuperscript{297} Christian reaction was decidedly mixed. Those living in areas where they constituted relatively homogenous populations\textsuperscript{298} (and in some cases already enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy, such as in Lebanon) tended to favour decentralisation.\textsuperscript{299} On the other hand, those Christians living in areas where they constituted a minority tended to oppose decentralisation, mostly for fear of what might happen if there was no longer a strong Ottoman presence—often this had acted as a check against religiously fuelled persecution.\textsuperscript{300} The constitutional reforms proposed by the CUP were problematic for Christians in another sense, as they threatened to abolish proportional representation on the basis of religion. In mixed communities where they made up a minority, the danger was that they might end up having no representation at all on governing bodies.\textsuperscript{301}

Arab support for the CUP was also eroded by what was a growing association between centralisation and a perceived policy of ‘Turkification,’ mostly as evidenced in the imposition of the Turkish language in administrative and educational institutions.\textsuperscript{302} Reformist and conservative Arabs alike were soon calling for the reinstitution of the Arabic language in regional government schools, in the courts, and in the local

\textsuperscript{297} Ibid, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid, pp. 119, 208.

\textsuperscript{299} Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{300} See, for instance, Finn, *Stirring Times*, p. 58; see also FO 618/3, Report on the State of Affairs in Damascus sent to Lowther, dispatches to Constantinople, 12 August 1908.

\textsuperscript{301} See, for instance, ibid, 8 September 1908. Also Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 82.

administration. This did not necessarily reflect a desire to break away from the Empire. Expressions of Arab dissatisfaction with the CUP's policies were largely limited to calls for greater Arab autonomy, and most of the political organisations that sprang up around this time advocated exactly that. For the most part, their memberships were overwhelmingly Muslim, though there were some Christians among them. There was also some organisational activity aimed at achieving Arab independence, but nothing even remotely representative of majority opinion, whether Christian or Muslim. It was not even regionally based, in fact, but rather had its centre in Paris, in connection with Muslim and Christian Arabs studying there. Though Christians featured quite prominently in the movement, it was a purely Muslim organisation, al-Fatāt, which most strongly represented it. Al-Fatāt, or the 'Young Arab Society,' was founded in 1911, and though initially only seeking 'administrative' autonomy, it was not too long before it began calling for complete independence. The level of cooperation between Muslims and Christians in the movement was high, something perhaps best evidenced in the Arab Congress, convened in Paris (at the initiation of al-Fatāt) in June 1913. Of the roughly twenty-five delegates attending, almost half were Christian. At the same time, many Muslim Arab nationalists were sceptical of Christian intentions. Thus, one of the delegates contended that the Christians delegates were lacking in a proper commitment to

303 For example, the Christian, Iskandar 'Amun of Lebanon, was among the founders of the Decentralisation Party, or al-Lāmarkaziyya (literally meaning de-centralisation).

304 Zeine, The Emergence, p. 83.

305 In Arabic, al-Jam'īyyah al-'Arabiyyah al-Fatāt.

306 Zeine, The Emergence, p. 83.

307 Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 284.

308 Hopwood, The Russian Presence, p. 176.
the Arab cause. As he expressed it, "not once [had they] sipped from the fountain of Arab unity."309

While the more reform-minded may have felt increasingly alienated by the CUP, most Muslim Arabs had not yet arrived at the point of actively opposing them. In part, this reflected the CUP's growing tendency, in a manner not unlike what had been the case under 'Abdulhamid, of trying to legitimise its rule on the basis of Islam. Particularly given that by now most of the Empire’s European territories had been lost and what remained was predominantly Muslim, this made some sense.310 For Christian Arabs—and not just the more intellectually minded—this represented a disturbing trend that only served to further alienate them from the CUP. This is not to say that at this point, Christians were of one mind with respect to the CUP or even that most were opposed to them; for many, it was still a question of whether or not they supported decentralisation.311 Nevertheless, the fact that the CUP—an organisation which had defined itself in largely secular terms and its programme almost entirely around constitutional and administrative issues—should fall back so quickly on Islam as a political expedient was worrying.312

Zionism

A factor unique to Palestine and its political development during this period was Zionism, a Jewish nationalist movement, which in its more extreme form, aimed at the creation in Palestine of a Jewish state on the basis of that people’s ancient religious and historical

309 Haim, Arab Nationalism, p. 33, quoting from a letter written to Rashid Rida from one of the participants.

310 Shaw and Shaw, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, p. 304.

311 See, for instance, O'Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 46.

connections. In practical terms, this meant the immigration of European Jews to Palestine and the acquisition of land through purchase. While at first, many Palestinian Arabs were not overly alarmed about the long-term political implications of early Zionist activity, the acquisition of large tracts of land for agricultural use soon brought the Jewish settlers into conflict with Arab peasants. 313 As the number of dispossessed Arab peasants increased, the urban notables began to take greater notice of the Zionist threat, even if till then, it had not directly impacted on their own economic situation. 314 Initially, Palestine’s Arabs looked to the Ottoman Government to combat Zionism, though in this, they were disappointed—both 'Abdulhamîd and the CUP did little to prevent land sales. 315 Consequently, an association developed in Palestine between anti-Zionism and anti-Ottomanism, particularly with respect to the CUP. 316 Zionism came to be perceived as a specifically ‘Arab’ problem, and as such, helped to foster a sense of Arab identity. 317

Almost from the start, Christians played a prominent role in combating Zionism, first and foremost through the Arab press. 318 This was particularly evident in the Palestinian press; the vast majority of newspapers in Palestine were owned and run by Christians, and almost all were stridently anti-Zionist. Typical was the position adopted by the newspaper Filastin, founded in Jaffa in 1911 by the brothers 'Īsâ and Yûsuf al-‘Īsâ, both Orthodox Christian and strongly anti-Zionist. Filastin was one of the most widely read

313 Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, pp. 99-100.

314 Ibid, pp. 94, 110

315 Ibid, pp. 103-104, 111.


317 Likewise, Zionism as a specifically ‘Palestinian’ problem fostered a sense of a purely Palestinian identity. See Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 111.

318 See, for instance, ibid, p. 110.
newspapers during this period, and one of the few to survive the First World War intact. Another important Christian-run paper was *al-Dustûr*, founded by the aforementioned Khalîl al-Sakâkînî, also Orthodox, in Jerusalem in 1910. As with the ‘İsâ brothers, Sakâkînî was strongly anti-Zionist and a staunch Arab nationalist. During this period, Christians were, in many respects, more vehement than Muslims in their opposition to Zionism; early on in fact, many Zionists were convinced that opposition to Zionism was limited almost entirely to Christian Arabs.\(^{319}\) One of the earliest organised efforts against Zionism was initiated by Christians in 1891—an official protest against Jewish immigration directed at the Ottoman Government.\(^{320}\) Christians would remain at the forefront in the struggle against Zionism well into the twentieth century. Thus, it was the Protestant Christian editor of the newspaper *al-Karmil*,\(^{321}\) Najîb Nassâr, who in 1910 organised the first association aimed at persuading the Government to prohibit the sale of land to Jews.\(^{322}\) He also was the first Arab to publish a book on Zionism.\(^{323}\)

Another factor underlying Christian opposition to Zionism was the perception that Jewish immigration threatened their economic interests—specifically, there was a concern among urban-based Christians (76 per cent of all Christians\(^{324}\)) that an increased Jewish


\(^{320}\) O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 45.

\(^{321}\) Founded in Haifa by Najîb Nassâr, an Orthodox from Lebanon who later converted to Protestantism, *al-Karmil* was first published in December 1908. It took a strongly hostile position to Zionism from the start, and was probably the leading publication in the campaign against Zionism through 1914. Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p. 125.

\(^{322}\) O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 46; also Porath, *The Emergence*, pp. 28-29.


\(^{324}\) Based on the 1931 Census. Ibid, p. 36.
presence would lead to unwanted economic competition.\footnote{See, for instance, ISA, AE, 1026, ‘Report on the Situation in Palestine,’ submitted to Churchill, 29 March 1921; also O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 45; Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 79; and David Gilmour, Dispossessed: the Ordeal of the Palestinians, 1917-1980 (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980), p. 51. Such concerns existed among the Muslim bourgeoisie as well. Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” p. 178; } There was some basis for this. Most Jews immigrating to Palestine preferred to settle in urban centres such as Jerusalem, Safed, or the new Jewish city of Tel Aviv (located next to Jaffa) rather than in agricultural settlements. Added to this was the fact that most of Palestine’s rural Christian population was based in the Galilee,\footnote{See, for instance, Table XI, pp. 36-37, and Table XI, p. 39, both in Census of 1922. } an area targeted early on for Jewish agricultural settlement.\footnote{Gilmour, Dispossessed, p. 51. } Feelings against Zionism were further fuelled by anti-Semitism, something that, initially at least, was considerably more evident among Christians—particularly Latin Catholics—than Muslims.\footnote{See, for instance, David K. Shipler, Arab and Jew, Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 165. Concerning Christian Arab anti-Semitism, see also Rogers, Domestic Life, p. 359. } Primarily, it was a theologically-based anti-Semitism,\footnote{Something still evident today. See Shipler, Arab and Jew, p. 161. } one which in many respects reflected the closer relations Christians had with Europeans. This was particularly evident with the blood libel, most likely imported from Europe, and mostly unknown in the Ottoman Empire before the nineteenth century. Certainly it was little known among Muslims before then.\footnote{See, for instance, ibid, pp. 317-318. Concerning the incident in Damascus, see Finn, Stirring Times, pp. 106-111. } At the same time, Jews had
never enjoyed a particularly positive image in the Muslim world, and many passages in the Qur'ān cast the Jews in a negative light, significantly, some in a manner that found concurrence with Christian-inspired anti-Semitism, such as the allegation that the Jews had attempted to crucify Jesus. As the nationalist struggle evolved, Muslims would stress the Jews’ rejection of Jesus and supposed culpability in his crucifixion. Given the centrality of Zionism with respect to the nationalist movement, it is perhaps not surprising that anti-Semitic notions so quickly came to constitute a point around which both Muslim and Christian Arabs could readily find agreement. As one prominent Muslim nationalist put it during the early part of the Mandate when addressing the problem of Zionism, “the Muslims and Christians know the Jews well from the verses of the Koran and the stories of the hadith which tell of their deceit, cunning, selfishness and corruption.”

331 Thus, it was not uncommon during the Mandate to see at Arab demonstrations such mottos as ‘Palestine is our land and the Jews are our dogs.” See, for instance, CO 733/44 ‘Report of the Political Situation in Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Month of March 1923,’ p. 3. Also Porath, The Emergence, p. 62.

332 See, for instance, Shipler, Arab and Jew, pp. 172-173.

333 Arguably, Muslims and Christians had a shared aversion towards Jews from an early point. Thus, for instance, Mary Eliza Rogers, the aforementioned sister of the British vice-Consul, during her stay in Palestine in the mid-nineteenth century, noted that Muslim and Christian children rarely played with one another, and would “only unite to persecute the poor little Jews.” Rogers, Domestic Life in Palestine, p. 189. See also Porath, The Emergence, p. 59.

334 ISA, AE, 1072, ’Izzat Darwaza to the Arab Executive, 3 August 1922.
Chapter II, National Unity

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire

The period immediately prior to the First World War saw a worsening of the situation of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. In many respects, this reflected what was an intensification of Islamic sentiment, much of it in reaction to the loss of the greater part of the Empire’s European (that is, Christian) territories. More specifically, many Muslims were sceptical regarding where the loyalty of the Empire’s Christians truly lay. This was not without some basis. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, for instance, most Orthodox Arabs sided strongly with the Empire’s long time enemy, Russia. As noted in a British report from 1904, “the Christians with very few exceptions [were] fervently praying for the success of Russia.” The same report noted that “[b]y contrast, the sympathies of most Muslims, inclusive of Arabs, were with Japan.”¹ Tensions between Muslims and Christians became particularly acute during the Balkan Wars and the war against Italy. Both were represented as a religious war of Muslims against Christians, and many Muslims identified local Christians with the Empire’s enemies.² In part, this reflected the tendency of Christians to avoid military service, something greatly resented by most Muslims.³

During this period, the situation of Christians declined from the standpoint of political representation as well. In 1913, the Ottoman Government amended the Vilayet Law;

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³ See, for instance, FO 618/3, Damascus 1912, General Report for the vilayet of Syria, 1 July 1912.
whereas half of the seats of the provincial councils had until then been reserved for non-Muslims, all were now to be freely contested. The result was that in many towns, Christians were under-represented. This was a particularly acute problem in Palestine, where many Christians lived in mixed communities. In the elections held in Jaffa that year, not a single Christian was elected. 'İsā al-İsā, the editor of Filastîn, criticised the change as discriminatory, and was hardly appeased when the mayor and muftî in Gaza responded by ordering the secondary electors there—all of whom were Muslim—to elect one (pre-selected) Christian. It was a move Filastîn found patronising at best. Another article appearing in Filastîn accused Muslims of religious fanaticism and of behaving in a hostile manner towards non-Muslims, an attitude stemming in large part apparently from a belief that Christians were not loyal Ottoman citizens. Overall, relations between the two communities in Palestine were tense, something evident even among the children. Thus, it was commented by one visiting European that in mixed towns Muslim and Christian children rarely befriended each other, and it was not uncommon to hear Muslim children singing disparagingly of the Christian faith.

On 29 October 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of Germany; the European powers, anticipating the Empire's break-up, began making plans for its division between them. Most notable in this respect was the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided the Empire's Arab provinces between Britain and France, the

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4 Filastîn, 28 May 1913.

5 Ibid, 29 May 1913.

6 Ibid, 15 May 1913.

greater part of Iraq being allotted to Britain, and Syria, inclusive of Lebanon, to France.\textsuperscript{8} Whether Palestine was to be included as part of Syria would prove the subject of much contention following the war.\textsuperscript{9} In any case, the Agreement arguably marked the beginning of a process that would eventually see Palestine created a separate political entity. At the same time, Britain sought to promote an Arab nationalist uprising under Sherif Husayn Ibn \'Alî of Mecca.\textsuperscript{10} Following lengthy negotiations, the Sherif agreed on the condition that Britain recognise Arab independence within certain designated territories. Which territories were to be included would likewise prove a point of contention, particularly with respect to Palestine.\textsuperscript{11} What came to be known as the Arab Revolt was finally launched on 5 June 1916.

How deeply rooted Arab nationalist sentiment was at the time of the Revolt is open to question. Beyond a small intellectual elite (made up of notables and a growing professional class), the greater part of the Arab population was till then uneducated and lacked any real political consciousness. It is difficult then to speak of Arab nationalism as something enjoying strong support at the grass-roots level.\textsuperscript{12} According to Porath, the


\textsuperscript{9} Susan Silsby Boyle, \textit{Betrayal of Palestine: The Story of George Antonius} (Oxford: Westview Press, 2001), pp. 7-10; also, for instance, CO 733/8, draft reply from Deedes to Churchill, 22 December 1921.

\textsuperscript{10} At the onset of the First World War, Sherif Husayn was ‘ruler’ of the Holy Cities as an autonomous vassal of the Ottoman Sultan.

\textsuperscript{11} Certainly the area around Jerusalem, in recognition of that city’s broader religious significance, was never intended as part of ‘French’ Syria, and in fact, was designated an international zone. ‘Sykes-Picot Agreement’ in \textit{The Israel-Arab Reader}, pp. 12-15.

combined membership of all existing Arab nationalist societies on the eve of the First World War numbered no more than 126, with only an additional 30 joining over the course of the war. The prevailing attitude among the vast majority of Arabs at the start of the war was one of religious conservatism and loyalty to the Ottoman state. Arguably, this would change as the war progressed, in part due to Jamāl Pasha’s repressive policies while military governor of Syria, and many Arabs in Syria and Palestine—most significantly, those of the notable class—would become increasingly ambivalent in their commitment to the Ottoman Empire and its social, political and economic structures.

The First World War was a particularly difficult time for Christians. In a manner reminiscent of ʻAbdulhamīd, the Young Turks had, in the period leading up to the war, begun to encourage feelings of loyalty towards the Ottoman Empire among its Muslim subjects by appealing to religious sentiment. Thus for example, the Islamic significance of the Hijaz railway—only recently constructed, and linking the Empire with Mecca and Medina—was greatly stressed. This was something strongly resisted by Christian deputies in the Parliament. As noted by two of them, the railway was a vital economic

early on, see also Hasan Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 8; and Boyle, Betrayal of Palestine, p. 37.


15 Concerning the impact he had in generating support for Arab nationalism, see Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 160.

16 See, for example, Porath, The Emergence, p. 24; also Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 161.
institution and should belong to all Ottomans.\textsuperscript{17} During the same period, the Young Turks sought to discredit reformists by characterizing them as agents of Christian powers. Thus, for example, it was reported in 1913 in an Egyptian paper that an Arabic-language pamphlet entitled ‘al-Haqq ya’alū’ (‘Truth [God] Will Triumph’) was being circulated in Syria with the aim “to stir up Moslem fanaticism by stigmatising all the Christians of Turkey as secret agents of Europe and the betrayers of the Moslem fatherland.”\textsuperscript{18} There was some truth to this—a number of Christian reformists did in fact have separatist aims as well as secret links with European countries, France in particular. Thus, for instance, Christians from Beirut attending the Arab Congress in Paris in 1913 held prior meetings with French officials, something that sat uneasily with Beirut’s Muslim attendees, and led them to decide to settle the question of reform with the Ottoman government.\textsuperscript{19} In the end, the CUP was largely able to discredit the reform movement by depicting it as a Christian conspiracy.\textsuperscript{20}

The advent of the First World War, one in which all the belligerents were Christian powers, saw this tendency even further accentuated, and the Ottoman government quickly characterising the war as one of Islamic jihad. To many Christians, it appeared as if the Young Turks were seeking to resurrect the Empire’s original \textit{raison d’être} as the defender of Islam. Christians in the Empire found themselves increasingly subjected to harassment and even violence. Armenians were especially targeted, but not only them. Syrian Orthodox in Anatolia, for instance, were also heavily persecuted.\textsuperscript{21} Lebanon was

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\textsuperscript{17} Hasan Kayali, \textit{Arabs and Young Turks}, p. 157.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p. 156, appearing in the \textit{Egyptian Gazette}, 25 April 1913.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, p. 156.

\end{flushleft}
particularly hard hit—its semi-autonomous status was abolished shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, and replaced by a repressive wartime government. During the next three years, roughly 100,000 Lebanese, the great majority of whom were Christian (almost 25 percent of the total population) died of disease, starvation and execution. In some parts of the Empire, there is evidence that Christian children were subjected to forced conversion. Within the Arab provinces, the cumulative effect of these developments was to drive Christians further into the nationalist camp. Typical in this respect was Khalil al-Sakakini, who when approached by a delegation of Orthodox clergy and laity arriving from Jaffa in March 1914, with the purpose of forming a political party that would look after Christian interests, responded that,

[i]f your aim is political, then I do not approve it, because I am an Arab first of all, and I think it preferable that we should form a national party to unite all the sons of the Arab Nation, regardless of religion and sects, to awaken national feelings and become imbued with a new spirit.

Most Muslim Arabs still saw their identity primarily in religious terms, and were not so inclined to support Arab nationalism. At the same time, many were quite sceptical


23 As asserted, for instance, by the Chaldean Patriarch in Iraq. See FO 371/5191, ‘Losses suffered by Chaldean community,’ signed by Young, 24 February 1920.


regarding what seemed the CUP's cynical exploitation of Islam so late in the game.\textsuperscript{26} For too many years, their reform efforts had worked to undermine religion as a governing principle; as such, they had lost a great deal of credibility among Muslims.\textsuperscript{27} All of this did not necessarily translate into support for Arab nationalism. Nonetheless, it could be argued that, as a result, many Muslims were more susceptible to the idea, and indeed, from about 1908, there exists evidence of increased Muslim involvement in the nationalist movement at the organisational level.\textsuperscript{28} Correspondingly, the Arab nationalist movement began to take on an increasingly Islamic character along the \textit{salafi} lines advocated by such individuals as Rashid Rida. This was particularly evident in the emphasis given the idea of resurrecting an Arab caliphate. Arguably, for many Muslims, it was a frustration with the Young Turk's secularising tendencies that had led them to become Arab nationalists.\textsuperscript{29}

The Arab army, under the leadership of Husayn's son Faysal (and with strong British support), entered Damascus in early October 1918. Almost immediately, an 'Arab' administration was established with Faysal at its head. Though in fact subordinate to the Supreme Commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, General Edmund Allenby, many Arabs saw this as the laying of the foundation of a future independent Arab state, and flocked to Damascus. A fair number of these were what might be termed second-rank notables, what Muslih refers to as 'Younger Politicians'—the younger members of elite

\textsuperscript{26} Kayali, \textit{Arabs and Young Turks}, pp. 95-96.

\textsuperscript{27} Khalidi, \textit{Palestinian Identity}, p. 157.


notable families who under the till then existing order had found little possibility of advancement. The Arab nationalist movement presented an opportunity for them to circumvent the traditional hierarchy, and many quickly attached themselves to the nationalist cause. Among them were a large number of Palestinians, many of whom soon saw in Arab unity the best possible defence against Zionism. Against these were the older notables—what Muslih refers to as the ‘Older Politicians’—the great majority of whom were not enthused with the nationalist cause, nor with the idea of being under the authority of Faysal’s administration in Damascus as part of a united Arab state. These had earlier been the strongest supporters of Ottomanism, and now hoped to preserve their positions of influence by keeping Palestine autonomous. The establishment of a separate Palestinian government, even if ultimately under European rule, would see them occupying the highest levels of administration. Significantly, this division would lay the foundation for the political rivalry that would come to dominate the nationalist movement in Palestine throughout the mandate period—that between the Muʿāridīn and the Majlisīn, centred around Rāghib al-Nashāshībī and Hajj Amin al-Husaynī respectively.


32 Ibid, pp. 160, 162.

33 Ibid, p. 160. See also Porath, The Emergence, p. 84.

34 Nassr Iddin al-Nashashibi, in his biography of his uncle Râghib al-Nashâshûbi, perhaps summed it up best. He characterised al-Husayni’s leadership as “pan-Arabist in nature [and] Ragheb’s leadership [as] genuinely Palestinian in character and orientation... It is in this crucial sense that Ragheb’s party was the only party of the Palestinian nation.” Nasser Eddin Nashashibi, Jerusalem’s Other Voice: Ragheb Nashashibi and Moderation in Palestinian Politics, 1920-1948 (Exeter: Ithaca Press, 1990), p. 61.
By December 1917, the greater part of Palestine had been ‘liberated’ from the Turks. Almost immediately, a British military regime was set up by General Allenby for its administration. In keeping with the Hague Convention of 1908, which called for the upholding of the existing status quo, the Turkish administrative system was maintained, and clerical and manual employees were recruited locally. Most of these were Christian Arabs.\footnote{Ylana Miller, \textit{Government and Society in Rural Palestine, 1920-1948} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 37.} Almost simultaneous with Britain’s occupation of Palestine was the proclamation on 2 November 1917 of the Balfour Declaration, which called for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” Support for Zionism was no doubt motivated in part by a desire to provide a pretext for maintaining a British presence in Palestine.\footnote{Boyle, \textit{Betrayal of Palestine}, pp. 8-9.} Arguably, however, it also reflected what was a sincere belief that the Jews had a special claim there.\footnote{See, for instance, David Lloyd George, \textit{Memoirs of the Peace Conference} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), vol. II, p. 720.} On 30 October 1918, the campaign in the Middle East officially came to an end. The till then existing political and social framework, Ottomanism, had collapsed,\footnote{Khalidi, \textit{Palestinian Identity}, p. 86.} and the one many supposed would supersede it, Arab nationalism, had yet to be fully formulated. Until then, Arab nationalism had existed, as it were, largely only on paper. It was now to form the basis of a new impending political reality, the blueprint for an Arab state. The details had yet to be worked out, however, and Christians might yet see for themselves a role in determining the actual character of such a state. To use Haddad’s terminology when considering the role of Christians in shaping Syrian society at the turn of the century, the situation was one of ‘formation’ and ‘radical modification,’ and it was under just such circumstances
that "a marginal community's power to influence and shape the dominant community [was] greatest."39

Added to this was the fact that Palestine's Muslims and Christians had first to contend with the more immediate threat of Zionism. It quickly became apparent that the British were serious about supporting Zionism, and it was not long before opposition to Zionism came to constitute a defining feature of the nationalist cause. In the meantime, at the Peace Conference in Versailles, it was determined that the former Ottoman Arab provinces would be placed under the supervision of one or another of the Western powers as 'mandates' until such time it was deemed they were ready to become fully sovereign nations. France was to be given Syria (inclusive of Lebanon); Britain, Iraq and Palestine. Most Arabs, Muslims in particular, were extremely dissatisfied with this arrangement, and called for a pan-Arab state inclusive of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The American President Woodrow Wilson advocated the creation of an inter-allied commission to ascertain the wishes of the peoples of Syria-Lebanon-Palestine in connection with the proposed mandates. This was the impetus behind the formation of what came to be known as the King-Crane Commission.40

The Commission arrived in Jaffa on 10 June 1919. Over the next several weeks, it travelled throughout Syria and Palestine in order to ascertain the feelings of the native inhabitants. In Palestine, the one point on which all could agree was their opposition to Zionism.41 On union with Syria, both Muslims and Latin Catholics tended to come out in


40 Concerning the history and activities of the King-Crane Commission, see Harry N. Howard, *An American Inquiry in the Middle East, The King-Crane Commission* (Beirut: Khayats, 1963).

41 Ibid, p. 93.
favour, though for different reasons. Latin Catholics favoured union with Syria in connection with the latter being awarded as a mandate to France; Muslims more on the basis of pan-Arabism, and with the hope of achieving complete independence. Interestingly, it was commented by one British officer that support for complete independence was strongest among “extreme and more fanatical Moslems.” Of those Muslims in Palestine willing to accept mandatory control, most preferred an American mandate, or at the very least, a British one. In any case, they were adamantly opposed to a French one. Orthodox representatives, while generally opposed to a French mandate, were split over the question of union, and quite a few came out in favour of Palestinian autonomy under a British mandate. Many of these were members of the merchant elite. Some of the Muslim heads of the Muslim-Christian Associations (concerning the MCAs, see below)—in most cases, also members of the merchant elite—came out in favour of Palestinian autonomy as well. What was a convergence of interests was particularly evident in the Jaffa Muslim-Christian Association, where both Muslims and Christians (Protestants as well as Orthodox) specifically requested British protection. As put by one British official, a “strong combination of Christian and enlightened Moslems [called] for local autonomy under the guidance of one of the great Powers with a view to future independence as soon as the country [was] able to stand alone.” This was perhaps not

42 FO 371/4179, telegram from Clayton to the Foreign Office, 28 February 1919.

43 Ibid. Also Muslih, The Origins, p. 181.

44 Porath, The Emergence, p. 296.

45 Howard, An American Inquiry, p. 91.


surprising. The MCA in Jaffa was made up largely of merchants, many of them Christians, and would over the course of the Mandate tend to give considerable weight to strictly economic considerations. Overall, Christians were more inclined than Muslims to support the idea of some form of mandatory control over complete independence.

**Christians and the nationalist movement**

At this point, it is worth considering more closely the positions adopted by the different Christian communities in Palestine with respect to union with Syria and Arab independence. Christian Arabs were confronted with a range of possible outcomes—on the one extreme, the possibility of living in an independent Arab state where Muslims made up the clear majority; on the other, of living under a colonial regime that was nominally ‘Christian.’ With respect to the latter, there was also the question of which country would be the mandatory power, Britain or France. A general perception existed among Christian Arabs that the British were pro-Muslim, and the French, pro-Christian. Correspondingly, the decision taken at the San Remo Conference in April 1920 to grant France the mandate for Syria (inclusive of Lebanon) was supported by a large number of Arab Christians living in Syria and Lebanon. This was particularly true of Catholics, most of whom were also opposed to Lebanese union with Syria. Orthodox

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49 ISA 7/12-2, Money, to the Chief Political Officer in Cairo, 28 May 1919.

50 Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, pp. 27, 34.

51 Ibid, p. 27.

52 Ibid, p. 22.
Arabs in Syria and Lebanon were, for their part, split between their antipathy towards living in a French-controlled state where Catholics would enjoy a privileged position, and their fear of living in an independent Arab state dominated by Muslims. As reported by the King-Crane Commission, in spite of the nationalist language employed by Faysal and his followers, his political base was largely Islamic-religious. Many did favour a pan-Arab state, but with either a British or American mandate.

In Palestine, Christian Arabs often found themselves united with Muslims regarding union with Syria, but at odds regarding the acceptance of mandate-status. Catholics, whether Latin or Uniate, generally favoured union, though largely in the expectation that Syria should become a French mandate. Thus, at the All-Palestine Congress (held in

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53 See, for instance, FO 371/4178, interview with Count de Zogheb, the Foreign Office, 4 January 1919.

54 See, for instance, Zeine N. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal’s Kingdom in Syria (Beirut: Khayat’s, 1960), p. 35.

55 In an attempt to win Christian confidence, Faysal promised to put “religious separation out of sight.” Howard, An American Inquiry, pp. 181. He also promised to maintain Lebanon’s pre-war semi-autonomous status. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, p. 138. See also Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 30.


57 FO 371/4178, telegram from Wingate to the Foreign Office, 13 January 1919. See also Beydoun, “Lebanon’s Sects.”

58 See, for instance, CO 733/1, ‘Report on the Political Situation for the Month of February 1921.’

59 Howard, An American Inquiry, pp. 93, 98-100; also Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 31. The one exception to this seemed to be the Latin Catholics in Tiberias and Haifa, who expressed a preference for union with an independent Syria. Howard, An American Inquiry, p. 102. Tsimhoni attributes this to the fact
February 1919), the Latin Catholic Shukrî al-Kârmî, attending as a representative of the Jerusalem MCA, was willing to sign a resolution in favour of union with Syria, but not one opposing a French mandate. That Palestine’s Latin Catholics looked favourably upon a French mandate was motivated by a number of factors, not the least being that under such a mandate, they might anticipate a privileged status, not only vis-à-vis Muslims, but with respect to other Christians as well. There were also those who had reservations about living in an independent Arab state dominated by Muslims. Most Muslims, certain elements among the notable class excepted, also favoured union with Syria. Thus, around the question of union, Latin Catholics found themselves in alliance with the great majority of Muslims. The latter, however, were strongly opposed to a French mandate or, for that matter, to a mandate of any kind. Nonetheless, Latin Catholics and Muslims were able to overlook differences with respect to long-term objectives and focus on the task at hand—namely, the achievement of Syrian-Palestinian union. Thus, for instance, the strongly nationalist al-Muntadâ al-Adabî initially had close ties with the indigenous Association of Catholic Youth.

Many in the Orthodox community favoured union and complete independence; a sizeable number however called for an autonomous Palestine under a British mandate. To some extent, this reflected the fact that, as a community, the Orthodox Arabs tended to be

that many of these were rural Christians and therefore were more socially assimilated with the larger Muslim community. Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 227.


61 See, for example, FO 800/221, Secret Political Report No. 17, Albina to Sykes, 10 October 1918; also Howard, An American Inquiry, p. 116.

62 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, p. 32.

63 See, for example, ZA, L/4, 276lib, concerning ties between al-Muntada al-Adabi and the Catholic Association; also Porath, The Emergence, pp. 75, 295.
politically moderate. It also reflected the fact that, as with Latin Catholics, many had reservations about living in an independent ‘Arab’ state dominated by Muslims. This became immediately evident during a special meeting of the Jerusalem MCA, convened in early 1919, for the purpose of putting together a delegation to represent them at the First Syrian Congress. The Orthodox representatives were initially so opposed to an independent Arab government that they refused to send any delegates at all, and only agreed in the end in order to avoid friction between the two communities. Even among those who professed support for an independent pan-Arab state, one has the impression that this was more out of a consideration that such an outcome might come to pass whether they wanted it or not. Thus, one Syrian Christian indicated that, while preferring a French presence in Syria, he had come to the conclusion that Faysal would succeed in the general lines of his policy and establish a great Arab state [and that under] these circumstances... the [Syrian Christians] would be ill-advised to put themselves in opposition to [him] and... would do better to work with him, and so secure a position which would enable them to defend their essential interests. 

64 ISA 5016/24-2, Popham to OETA Headquarters, 21 June 1919. Such concerns would remain evident over the course of the Mandate. See, for instance, ISA 2/128/129, District Governor of Samaria to the Assistant Chief Secretary, 19 May 1923.

65 FO 371/4178, interview with Count de Zogheb, the Foreign Office, 4 January 1919. See also FO 371/4178, telegram from Wingate to the Foreign Office, 13 January 1919, where it was noted that many Syrian Christians living in Egypt were anxious that their ‘aloofness’ regarding French actions in Syria “should not be interpreted as favourable to French aims.” This outlook would shape Christian attitudes the duration of the Mandate. See, for instance, CO 733/38, file 48206, confidential letter from Deedes to Shuckburgh, 15 September 1922; and CO 733/38, file, 51486, letter from Deedes to District Governors, 6 October 1923, based on talks with Christian leaders.
In Palestine, Christians and Muslims could agree on at least one thing—they were all equally opposed to Zionism and saw it as an immediate threat. In connection with this, the nationalist movement was characterised right from the start by a strong sense of unity between Muslims and Christians. This was most pronounced in the formation of the Muslim-Christian Associations (MCAs), the first of which was established in Jaffa in March 1918. A few months later, what would become the largest and best-organised MCA was established in Jerusalem. Though not, in principle, political organizations, they did articulate the political demands of the Palestinian Arabs—their opposition to the Jewish ‘National Home’ and Jewish immigration, and the principle of Palestinian independence, at least with respect to internal affairs. Branches were quickly established throughout the country, the one in Jerusalem eventually becoming something of a headquarters. The MCAs would form the organisational basis of the various national congresses and their resultant executive committees, the permanent body of which came to be known as the Arab Executive (see below). This body would take on something of a leadership role with respect to the nationalist movement.

The MCAs’ top leadership was drawn primarily from the older generation of urban notables, individuals who viewed themselves as the natural leaders of the community and, moreover, wished to maintain their traditional role from Ottoman times—that is, as intermediaries vis-à-vis the higher authorities. As such, they tended to shy away from open confrontation with the British, as this would have undermined the basis of their own

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66 See FO 800/221, Political Report No. 15, Albina to Sykes, 15 June 1918.

67 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 47.

68 Concerning the organisation of the Jerusalem MCA, which was largely along sectarian lines, see ibid, p. 48.

69 Porath, *The Emergence*, p. 93.

70 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 47.
authority. From the British point-of-view, the MCAs served a useful function, acting as bridge between them and the larger population. Additionally, they were fairly moderate, confining as they did their political activities to petitions and relatively peaceful demonstrations. In theory, they were organisations with which the British could work.\(^7\)

For the most part then, while in many respects genuinely representative of broader sentiment in their articulation of nationalist demands and their opposition to Zionism, their legitimacy and support was at the end of the day based primarily on the social status of their leaders, together with the tacit support they received from British officials.

Christian Arabs were well represented within the MCAs, and it was even suggested in some quarters that it was they who had prompted their establishment.\(^7\)\(^2\) For the majority of Palestine’s Arabs, this was the first experience of political collaboration between Christians and Muslims.\(^7\)\(^3\) Overall, Christian representation exceeded their proportional numbers in Palestine. According to Muslih, one reason for this over-representation was the fact that commerce and education, and hence politics, attracted a disproportionate number of the relatively more urbanized and educated Arab Christian community.\(^7\)\(^4\) Certainly, it is fair to say that the majority of those politically active at the beginning of the Mandate came from the educated strata, where, again, Christians were disproportionately represented.\(^7\)\(^5\) That Christians were so active among the leadership

\(^7\)\(^1\) See, for instance, ISA 3939/64, Watson’s report, 26 September 1919. See also Muslih, The Origin, pp. 161-162, concerning assertions that the British supported the MCAs because of anti-Jewish feelings.

\(^7\)\(^2\) Porath, The Emergence, p. 32.


\(^7\)\(^4\) Muhammad Y. Muslih, The Origins, p. 158.

early on reflected other factors as well. At the beginning of the Mandate at least, Christians arguably felt more strongly than Muslims about Zionism (see above).  

Christians were particularly active on the economic front, in part because it was in the economic sphere that they felt most threatened by Jews (see above). There was arguably some basis for this perception, and not just among moderately successful merchants and small shop owners. Thus, for instance, an Arab Christian from Bethlehem, Sulaymān Rabbub, was denied by the Administration the concession to the rights to utilise the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers for generating electricity in favour of a Jew, Pinhas Rutenberg, in spite of having good financial backing and having applied first. Christians played a prominent role in the campaign against the sale of land to Jews, especially in the north, where they made up many of the landowners, contractors and agents, and thus were directly affected by Jewish land purchases. A notable example of this centred round contested lands in the area of Beisan. On the basis of their supposed status under the Ottomans as state lands, they were targeted early on for Jewish settlement. Questionable was whether under the Ottomans they had in fact been state lands, something Beisan’s Arab tenants challenged. Christians figured prominently among their supporters. Jubrān

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80 See, for instance, CO 733/4, dispatch from Samuel to Churchill, 23 July 1921.
Iskandar Kazmä, an agronomist who owned a farm in the Jordan valley, championed their cause during the High Commissioner's visit to Beisan in April 1921. Shortly thereafter, George Farazliyah, who during the Ottoman period had leased a tract of land in Beisan for cotton cultivation, brought the case before the Arab Executive (concerning the AE, see below). Finally, there was Wadi' al-Bästanī, a Maronite from Haifa, who represented (successfully) Beisan's Arab tenants in court. Another figure active in fighting against land sales to Jews was al-Karmil's proprietor, Najīb Nassār. In 1922, he established the Arab Economic Development Association, an organisation that sought to improve the lot of Arab peasants through the formation of cooperative companies and the establishment of a national bank, the majority of whose members were Christian.

Christians served a particularly valuable function in representing the movement abroad, specifically in Europe and America. Even during periods of tension between Muslims and Christians, it was often considered imperative by both that they present a united front before the international community. This was particularly evident in delegations sent abroad, which generally had a disproportionate number of Christians. Specifically, their

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81 CO 733/3, 'Report on the Political Situation for the Month of April, 1921,' attached to dispatch from Deedes to Churchill, 9 May 1921.


83 ISA 4/2-2 Cox's reports to the Chief Secretary, 30 January 1923, 6 February 1923. See also CO 733/54, correspondence from Samuel to Ormsby-Gore, 19 July 1923; and CO 733/62, draft report on the situation in Palestine by Weizmann, attached to a letter from Weizmann to Schuckburgh, 15 February 1925.

84 ISA 3939/64, Saig to the CID's central office, 10 August 1921 concerning its registration; ISA 4/4-2, Symes to the Civil Secretary, 25 January 1922, concerning its programme.


86 For example, three of the eight member delegation sent to London in June 1921 were Christian.
purpose was to make the case for Arab nationalism in terms amenable to the ‘West.’ This is perhaps best typified by the Orthodox George Antonius, who, in his extremely popular book *The Arab Awakening*, described the Arab Revolt in overtly secular nationalistic terms. Antonius was a native of Lebanon who later came to serve in the British administration in Palestine. An ardent Arab nationalist, Antonius would become active in representing the cause of Palestine’s Arabs before British audiences, again in what were largely secular nationalist terms. Similar in this sense was the Christian Arab Amín Rihānī, also of Lebanese origin, who, like Antonius, promoted Arab nationalism among Westerners as something largely secular. Whether such a representation, either of the Arab cause or the Palestinian one, was accurate is certainly debatable—arguably though, this was how Westerners sympathetic to the Arabs liked to see it, and in this respect, Christians filled an important niche.

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87 George Antonius’s *The Arab Awakening, the Story of the Arab Nationalist Movement*, was published in 1938, close to the end of his life. Concerning Antonius, see Boyle, *Betrayal of Palestine*.


90 Certainly there have been many who have questioned the accuracy of his depiction, particularly its secular character, among them Zeine (*The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, 1958), Hourani (“*The Arab Awakening: Forty Years After*” in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 1981), and Tibawi (*A Modern History of Syria*, 1969). Boyle, *Betrayal of Palestine*, pp. 27-33.

Individuals such as Antonius and al-Sakākīnī were most likely sincere in depicting the Arab and Palestinian causes in such terms; certainly this reflected how they wanted to see it. This does not mean, however, that they were unaware of the language often employed by Muslim leaders who, when appealing to fellow Muslims, tended to characterise the cause of Palestine as something akin to an Islamic holy war. This could be easily rationalised, however, as simply a matter of expediency—of consciously expressing the cause in terms most likely to generate sympathy from Muslim audiences, just as they sought to do with respect to Western Christian ones. It was no accident, for example, that the first Palestinian Arab delegation to London, when issuing a pamphlet designed to present their case to the British public at large, entitled it 'The Holy Land.'

In a similar vein, Najīb Nassār, in a series of articles appearing in al-Karmil in November 1924, and addressed to the Pope, sought to draw the attention of ‘Christian Europe’ to the danger of Jewish immigration and the extensive land purchase that had led to an increase in the level of Christian emigration from Palestine. He ended his letter by calling on Western Christendom to come to the rescue of Eastern Christendom, to save the Christian character of Palestine.

It was one thing, however, to be addressing Europe and quite another to be addressing fellow Arabs. One might ask why it should be necessary to use religious terminology at all in order to motivate the latter on behalf of a ‘nationalist’ cause. Moreover, even when appealing to the religious sensibilities of ‘Christian Europe,’ great care was taken to

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92 Esco Foundation, Palestine, A Study, p. 552.


94 See CO 733/8, draft reply from Deedes to Churchill, 22 December 1921. See also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, pp. 238-239.

95 Al-Karmil, 12, 15, 19 November 1924. Concerning the emphasis given Palestine’s Christian significance in order to garner Western support for the nationalist movement, see also Porath, The Emergence, p. 42.
acknowledge the overall 'Muslim' character of Palestine. In the aforementioned series of articles, for example, Najib Nassar emphasised Palestine's importance to Muslims and the need to safeguard their interests.\(^96\) It was rare that Muslims took equal pains when discussing Palestine's Islamic significance to make note of its importance to Christians.\(^97\) This was not something lost on Christian Arabs, and there were many who were sceptical regarding Muslim-Christian unity, and who felt that Christian interests would best be safeguarded if they represented themselves politically as an independent community.\(^98\) During the early part of the Mandate, however, these represented a minority, and the prevailing sentiment, at least among the leadership, was one of national unity. The prevailing mood was perhaps best expressed in an article appearing in Süriya al-Janubiyya—a Muslim-owned and edited newspaper—concerning the Muslim-Christian Association in Gaza, only then recently established. The article hailed the new Association as indicative of the strong solidarity that existed between Muslims and Christians. Furthermore, it was described as being aimed at creating a united front against Zionism, as well as against attempts by the British and the Zionists to divide the Arabs along religious lines. The article went on to state that "old sensitivities and frictions [had] been removed from [Christian and Muslim] spirits and hearts."\(^99\)

That Muslim and Christian notables were strongly united was certainly evident. As members of a recently evolved merchant class with shared interests, however, this was

\(^{96}\) Al-Karmil, 12, 15, 19 November 1924.

\(^{97}\) One might, for instance, contrast attitudes evidenced at the Fourth National Congress concerning delegations intended for the Hijaz and for the Vatican. Not only was the former considerably larger, it was determined that related expenses should be paid, at least in part, by the MCAs. By contrast, expenses for the latter were to be covered entirely by the delegates themselves. Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 232-233; see also Porath, The Emergence, p. 42.

\(^{98}\) See, for instance, Al-Karmil, 9 February 1924; also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 293.

perhaps not altogether surprising. Questionable is just how representative the traditional
elite was of the rest of Palestine's Arabs. Important when examining this question is a
consideration of the relationship between the traditional leadership and the broader
society at the time. The great majority of Palestine's Arabs had not yet developed a
strong political consciousness, and were inclined to follow the lead taken by the
traditional leadership. For the most part, they still trusted the notable class to represent
their interests at the national level. The MCAs were the embodiment of this notable
class, and in this respect, might be considered as representative of the broader society.
This would change, however, as Palestine's Arabs became increasingly politicised. The
MCAs constituted little more than a loose alliance of notables, and thus had no
political structures by which they might penetrate society and incorporate members of the
lower strata. Additionally, as the Mandate wore on, too often the traditional leadership
would show itself willing to compromise nationalist goals whenever they conflicted with
their own more narrowly defined interests. Over time, this would serve to undermine
their position with the great majority of Palestine's Arabs.

Such tendencies were evident early on—for instance, when many among the notable
class came out against union with Syria. As part of a united Syria, they would be
subordinate to the notables in Damascus, both politically and economically, and it was
with an eye towards keeping Palestine separate from Syria that many notables came out
in favour of a British mandate, even if it meant accepting the terms of the Balfour
Declaration. Thus for instance, even when the All-Palestine Congress, convened in late
January 1919 by the various MCAs in response to the Paris Peace Conference, declared

100 As evidenced by the fact that the MCAs, and not the more radical groups such as al-Nadi al-'Arab, controlled the first All-Palestine Congress. Porath, *The Emergence*, pp. 79-80.


103 Porath, *The Emergence*, p. 93.
in favour of union with Syria, the representatives of the Jerusalem MCA remained opposed, and it was only after its leadership role became threatened that the Jerusalem delegates reversed their position. It was not by chance that Nablus was proposed as an alternative venue for the next Congress.\textsuperscript{104} The incident marked what would come to be a strong rivalry between Jerusalem and Nablus, one that in many ways reflected the relationship between the traditional leadership and those elements within the larger Arab community that would come to challenge it. In many respects, Jerusalem was representative of the traditional leadership—since the nineteenth century, the city and its notable families had enjoyed a special status within the traditional framework of leadership.\textsuperscript{105} Nablus, by contrast, would come to represent those dissatisfied with the traditional leadership and the moderate politics it favoured—those more inclined towards radicalism. Notably, it would be a radicalism with a strong Islamic colour.

Catholics and Syrian unity

Generally speaking, Palestine’s indigenous Latin Catholics did support Arab nationalism, though their level of commitment always had a certain ambiguity to it. It was not a question of whether their commitment was genuine; rather it was a problem of being pulled in opposite directions by two very different communal affiliations—on the one hand, they were part of the ‘Arab’ community, on the other, the Roman Catholic one. Support for a French mandate might be understood as an attempt to reconcile what were too often two incompatible affiliations. Arguably, Zionism served a similar function. Thus, it was not always clear whether Latin Catholic support for Arab nationalism was motivated by anti-Zionism or the other way around; Catholic protestations often came across more as an extension of the Vatican’s anti-Zionist position than as something

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, pp. 83-84.

derived of strong nationalistic sentiment.\textsuperscript{106} (For most Muslim Arabs, by contrast, opposition to Zionism was motivated first and foremost by the fact that it was what was preventing them from realising nationalist aspirations.) When the local Latin Catholic community, for example, adopted a policy of non-cooperation with respect to government educational schemes—on the grounds that they were pro-Zionist—it was largely at the instigation of the Latin Patriarch Barlassina.\textsuperscript{107} While somewhat inclined to participate in nationalist activities, Latin Catholics were poorly represented in nationalist organisations; indeed, their participation in the latter was generally discouraged by the Latin Patriarch.\textsuperscript{108} Certainly it was rare that Latin Catholics took part in more violent demonstrations. The one notable exception was their involvement in the Jerusalem riots of 2 November 1921, the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, though this seemed largely only because of that date’s coincidence with the Catholic celebration of All Souls’ Day.\textsuperscript{109} Once relations between Britain and the Vatican improved, Latin Catholic involvement in the nationalist movement diminished even further.\textsuperscript{110}

Much of this reflected the strong relationship Latin Catholics had with their coreligionists worldwide.\textsuperscript{111} Among Orthodox Arabs, for example, there was nothing equivalent to a

\textsuperscript{106} Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 84; also O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 48.

\textsuperscript{107} CO 733/5, ‘Report on the Political Situation for the Month of July 1921’; also Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 85.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, p. 86.

\textsuperscript{109} ISA 4/3-\textsuperscript{D}, report from the Director of Public Security to Deedes, [no date].

\textsuperscript{110} Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 84; also Tsimhoni, \textit{The British Mandate}, p. 334.

\textsuperscript{111} Something often experienced quite directly given the large number of foreign Latin Catholics residing in Palestine during the Mandate. Ibid, p. 334.
Vatican' that might tie them more closely with the wider Orthodox community. Correspondingly, Latin Catholics were much more comfortable with the idea of living under European, particularly French, rule. Almost immediately after the war, the French had, in fact, laid claim to Palestine as part of the Syrian mandate. Among other things, they demanded recognition of their traditional rights to the liturgical honours in the Holy Places, and insisted that they still should enjoy their rights as 'protectors' of the Latin Catholic community there. The French did all they could to encourage those in Palestine desiring union with Syria, and in this respect, Latin Catholic Arabs proved all too willing agents. Thus, for instance, the dragomans of both the French and Italian consulates in Jerusalem arrived at the All-Palestine Congress with pre-drafted resolutions accentuating the connection between Palestine and Syria. For the most part, the French did not engage directly in Palestinian politics, but rather worked through French agents, local Arab Catholics, French religious orders and pro-French newspapers. The French were particularly active in connection with the Jerusalem Catholic Society, three of

112 Though prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russian Tsar had come close to filling this role. Hopwood, The Russian Presence, p. 126.


115 Porath, The Emergence, pp. 73-74.


whose members were also in the Jerusalem branch of the Muslim-Christian Association.\footnote{ISA 7/12-2, Camp's report, 15 February 1919.} It was not Christian support that the French sought in the end, however, but that of the Muslim majority; this they hoped to gain by appealing to the Muslim desire for a pan-Arab state.\footnote{Tsimhoni, "The Arab Christians and the National Movement," pp. 82-84.} Catholics were to provide the means by which Muslims might be incited to rise up against the British.\footnote{See, for instance, FO 371/5200, letter from Meinertzhagen to Curzon, 2 March 1920; also Tsimhoni, "The Arab Christians and the National Movement," footnote 64.} Likewise, the French emphasised their opposition to the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.\footnote{See for instance, ibid; FO 371/3391, General Report from Clayton, 9 March 1918; and ISA 4/8-2, ICID report, 21 October 1920.} French propaganda would eventually cease with the ratification of the British mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations in July 1922.\footnote{Tsimhoni, "The Arab Christians and the National Movement," p. 84.} 

Like most Arabs in Palestine, Latin Catholics were vehemently opposed to Zionism. As noted above, however, in this, they seemed to take their cue largely from the Vatican. From the day of its announcement, the Vatican had adopted a strong position against the Balfour Declaration, on the basis of which, it expressed grave concerns about Britain receiving the mandate.\footnote{Minerbi, The Vatican and Zionism, p. 21.} The Vatican would continue to express an anti-British and anti-Zionist attitude over the course of the Mandate, both directly as well as through the activities of Jerusalem’s Latin Patriarch, Monsignor Louis Barlassina. The Vatican expressed a number of concerns with respect to Zionism, not the least being that the Christian presence in Palestine would suffer as a result of increased Jewish immigration.
due to economic competition. Such views were often expressed in the world-Catholic press. Thus, for example, the New York-based Catholic journal, *The Tablet*, ran a report under the heading “Christians are Menaced by Jews,” which cited emigration statistics proving that Christians were leaving Palestine because they were “tired of Jewish interference.” The Vatican’s official position with respect to Zionism became clear with the Papal allocution of 14 June 1921, in which the Pope declared the Vatican’s opposition to Zionism and claimed that “the new civil arrangements [in Palestine] aim[ed]... at ousting Christianity from its previous position to put the Jews in its place.” The Latin Patriarch Barlassina, appointed on 8 March 1920, was equally zealous in his attacks on Zionism and the British, both within and outside of Palestine, though he would become considerably more reticent once relations between Britain and the Vatican improved.

At its core, the Vatican’s position on Zionism was very much shaped by what might be termed a theologically-based anti-Semitism—the Jews had been dispersed as punishment for their having rejected the Messiah, and bore collective responsibility for His crucifixion. That they might become reconstituted as a nation without having accepted Jesus as the Messiah was considered theologically untenable. Indicative of the attitude

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127 See, for instance, CO 733/30, letter from de Salis, to Curzon, 21 May 1922.

128 CO 733/72, ‘Secret Political Resume for Jerusalem-Jaffa District for Period ended July 31st, 1924,’ 4 August 1924.

129 See, for instance, FO 371/4179, minutes to discussion headed ‘Vatican’s attitude that Christians may receive treatment less favourable than that meted out to Zionists,’ 15 March 1919; and Bourne to the Prime
of the Catholic Church was an article appearing in the Catholic newspaper, *Civilità Cattolica*, in 1887, the same year as the first Zionist Congress:

As for a rebuilt Jerusalem, which might become the centre of a reconstituted state of Israel, we must add that this is contrary to the predictions of Christ himself who foretold that 'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled' (Luke 21:24), that is...until the end of the world.\(^{130}\)

Apart from business contacts, Latin Catholic Arabs generally had little to do with Muslims,\(^{131}\) and collectively, seemed most concerned with their status as a separate community. This was particularly evident in the activities of the Latin Patriarch Barlassina, who often petitioned the Government concerning the status of his community as a religious body; likewise, concerning their rights in local affairs.\(^{132}\) A memorandum presented by Barlassina to the Foreign Office in May 1920, for instance, was concerned not only with issues directly related to the Patriarchate, for which he claimed tax exemption, but also those pertaining to the community as a whole—namely, that Latin Catholics be granted adequate representation in the municipalities and full autonomy with respect to religious law courts and education.\(^{133}\)

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\(^{130}\) Feldblum, *The American Catholic Press*, p. 15, original appearing in *Civilità Cattolica*, 1 May 1897.

\(^{131}\) Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, p. 334.


\(^{133}\) FO 371/5191, Memorandum of the Patriarch under the file 'Rights of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem,' 27 May 1920.
Catholic criticism outside of Palestine, generally made a strong effort to accommodate Latin Catholics.  

A question one might ask is whether the Latin Catholic Arab community saw Barlassina as representative of them. Certainly Barlassina saw himself in this light. When speaking before the community on the question of Catholic representation in the municipalities, for instance, he asked that whatever the outcome, they should refrain from violence, as “our action ought not to be aggressive but limited to defending our rights alone… [No one should] act on his own initiative or listen to the suggestions of inconsiderate persons; you have a pastor, draw close to him.” The pastor in question, of course, was Barlassina. To some extent, he presented himself as representative of the Arabs as a whole, in connection with which, he often found it necessary to be more extreme than the most ‘fanatical local Muslim.’ As commented by the German ambassador at the Holy See, Barlassina did “not miss any opportunity to speak out against the Jewish settlements and openly support the Arabs.” There would seem to be some evidence that local Latin Catholics accepted his lead. Thus, an Italian diplomat in Damascus reported that, while Catholics were involved to some extent in nationalist and anti-Zionist activities, “unlike the Arabs [emphasis mine] they could not always rely on the willingness of local governments to assist them [and thus] their hopes were pinned primarily on the Holy See.” In the above-mentioned memorandum presented to the Foreign Office, when

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138 Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism*, p. 141; see also al-Karmil, 26 October 1929.
pressing his case, Barlassina strongly suggested that it was largely due to the Patriarchate's efforts that Latin Catholic Arabs had refrained from taking part in political activities. 139

Well until the end of the Mandate, Latin Catholic Arabs would have a reputation of being overly dependent on their ecclesiastical body, and of lacking a sufficiently strong commitment to the nationalist cause. This was particularly irksome to those in the community who were more nationalistic. Interesting in this respect is an article entitled 'When You Respect Yourself, People Will Respect You,' appearing in Filastin in November 1936. In it, the author, a Latin Catholic, bemoaned the fact that the Latin community was "still depending on their Patriarch while we see that all the other Arab communities depend on themselves and want to get free from every kind of foreign influence." 140 A second article written in response, also by a Latin Catholic, accused the Latin Catholic community of behaving as "slaves under the hands of foreigners." The author was particularly incensed by the Arab priests, who he likened to "machines in the hands of foreigners." 141 There were occasional half-hearted attempts at taking an independent line. Thus, for instance, following a dispute over the excavation of a graveyard, several Arab members of the Franciscan monastery in Nazareth sought to break away and found an independent order where, among other things, prayers would be done in Arabic. 142 Whether this particular incident reflected on Barlassina's position with respect to the Latin Catholic community is questionable given that relations between the

139 FO 371/5191, Memorandum of the Patriarch of Jerusalem (handwritten), under the file 'Rights of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 27 May 1920.

140 Filastin, 12 November 1936.

141 Filastin, 13 November 1936.

142 Filastin, 24 April 1928. See also al-Karmil, 13 February 1928.
Franciscans and Barlassina were often tense. On the other hand, there is evidence that by 1923, there were in some corners demands for an Arab Patriarch.

Barlassina and the larger Latin Catholic community certainly shared one thing in common—for both, opposition to Zionism was founded in large part on strong feelings of anti-Semitism. More than most other Arabs, Latin Catholics showed strong anti-Semitic tendencies, and their opposition to Zionism often seemed more due to their disdain for Jews than the fact that it posed an obstacle to achieving nationalist aims. It was arguably through Latin Catholics that anti-Semitism entered the Arab world, though certainly it did not take long for it to spread among other Christians, and later among Muslims. In 1921, for example, the Orthodox-run newspaper Filastīn published in translated form the infamous anti-Semitic tract, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.* Negative attitudes towards Jews were soon evident among Muslims as well. In 1922, for instance, when addressing the Arab Executive, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza noted that it was forbidden to believe the Jews since “they are scoundrels and the Qur’ān itself is full of stories of the Jews’ fraudulent acts.” Often, Muslims sought to promote anti-Semitic attitudes among Christians, in particular, foreign ones. While visiting Palestine, one Englishwoman reported being told by a ‘highly-placed Muslim’ that, “if we were good

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143 See Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism,* p. 35.

144 See, for instance, CO 733/56, letter from Dormer to Curzon, 17 August 1923.


146 Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 79.


148 In Porath, *The Emergence,* p. 60.
Christians we should wish to kill all the Jews in order to avenge the death of our Saviour.”

Most of Palestine’s other Christians did not affiliate so strongly with their respective worldwide communities, and tended to accentuate their Arab identity over their religious one. This was certainly true of most Greek Catholics, not surprisingly perhaps, given that, though recognising Papal authority, they still retained their Eastern rites and traditions. Indeed, most Greek Catholics were converts from Orthodoxy, and arguably, many of them had accepted Catholicism more as a protest against the abuses of the ‘Greek’ Orthodox clergy than because of any strong theological commitment; certainly they had not done so out of a desire to become more strongly affiliated with the ‘West.’ To the extent that it was a reaction against the ‘Greek’ Orthodox clergy, their ‘Catholicism’ was already an assertion of their Arab identity. The Greek Catholics claimed to be the only wholly Arab Christian community in Palestine, one whose entire hierarchy and lay community was and had always been ethnically and linguistically Arab. At the same time, it was the ongoing conflict between the Orthodox clergy and laity that underlay the latter’s commitment to the nationalist cause. This was an element that was decidedly missing from the Greek Catholic community.

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149 Fawcett, Easter, p. 65. See also Porath, The Emergence, p. 42.

150 Something true of Palestine’s Protestant Arabs as well, despite the fact that, much as with Latin Catholics, they had strong relations with their respective mother-churches in Europe and in America.

151 See, for instance, Hopwood, The Russian Presence, p. 69.

152 See ibid, p. 69.

153 Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 84; also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 319.
Relative to the Latin community, Greek Catholics were fairly active in the nationalist movement. Their leading figure in the nationalist movement was the Archbishop Yūsuf Gregorius Hājjar, the highest-ranking Greek Catholic clerical figure in Palestine. Notably, he was the only prelate of any faith to take an active part in the nationalist movement right from the start. From the beginning, Hājjar was strongly pro-French. Thus, for instance, during the King-Crane Commission’s visit to Palestine, he exhorted the lay community to demonstrate strong support for a French mandate. Hājjar tried to influence the Orthodox community as well. Most notable in this respect was his incitement of the Orthodox community in Acre against the Greek higher clergy, which was pro-British, in the hopes of weakening the latter’s influence. Similarly, he tried to influence Muslims to demand French protection through the formation of a joint Muslim-Greek Catholic committee.

Though Greek Catholic support for the nationalist cause was determined in large part by a genuine sense of being ‘Arab,’ as with Latin Catholics, it was also shaped by an antipathy towards Zionism. In this, their strong ties with the Vatican were evident. Likewise, as with their Latin co-religionists, Greek Catholics were open to being utilised by the French for the spreading of pro-French propaganda and the incitement of anti-

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154 The Greek Catholic Patriarch was based in Damascus.

155 Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 84; also O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 48.

156 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 320.

157 Ibid; also Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 84.

158 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 320.

159 Ibid; also Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 84.

British agitation. On the basis of their relations with the Vatican, the clergy enjoyed semi-diplomatic status and thus had free access to their churches in Syria and Lebanon, something that facilitated the maintenance of contacts between the French based in Syria and pro-French circles in Palestine.\footnote{ISA 3/6-2, Waggett to OETA Headquarters, 30 April 1919; and ISA 4/8-2, CID report to the Civil Secretary, 21 October 1920.} Their strong ties with the Vatican also gave the Greek Catholic clergy a certain amount of leverage \textit{vis-à-vis} the British administration.\footnote{ISA 3/6-i, Waggett to OETA Headquarters, 30 April 1919.} Thus, for example, when Hajjar alleged that the governor of Haifa was anti-Catholic, his claims were given wide circulation by the international Catholic press, forcing the British to invite the British cardinal Bourne to visit Palestine and observe that such claims were without base.\footnote{Tsimhoni, \textit{The British Mandate}, p. 320.} Other important Greek Catholic nationalists included Fu‘ād Sa‘d, who represented Haifa at the Fourth Palestinian National Congress and was part of the delegation sent to London in 1921 to represent the Arab cause there; and Alfred Rok, a lawyer from Jerusalem of mixed Arab and European ancestry, who was a strong supporter of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, and would during the latter part of the Mandate become Vice-President of his Palestine Arab Party.

\textbf{The ‘Arab’ Orthodox}

Generally speaking, Orthodox Arabs were the most fervent of Palestine’s Christians in supporting the nationalist cause.\footnote{See, for instance, CO 733/139/1, Report of the Commission on the Controversies in the Orthodox Patriarchate, 26 June 1925, Bertram and Young, pp. 89-90.} Among the leading figures of the nationalist movement were a fair number of Orthodox Arabs, the four most prominent arguably being George Antonius, Khalīl al-Sakākīnī, Ya‘qūb Farrāj and ‘Īsā al-‘Īsā. The most well-known in the West, on account of his book about the Arab Revolt, \textit{The Arab...}
Awakening, was George Antonius. As Assistant Director of Education for the Palestine Government, Antonius sought to use his position to promote the nationalist cause. As Assistant Director of Education for the Palestine Government, Antonius sought to use his position to promote the nationalist cause. He later took part in the 1939 Round-Table Conference in London, serving as secretary of the Palestinian Arab delegation, as well as that of the united delegation of the six Arab countries attending. Khalil al-Sakākīnī, a highly respected individual, was a particularly outspoken critic of Britain’s pro-Zionist policies. In addition to being affiliated with numerous nationalist bodies, he was strongly active in the area of education. Yaʿqūb Farrāj, a cousin of al-Sakākīnī’s and later a Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, was one of the founding members of the Jerusalem Muslim-Christian Association. Following the Seventh Palestinian Arab Congress in 1928, he was also one of the two vice-Presidents on the Arab Executive (concerning the AE, see below). ‘Isā al-‘Īsā, through his newspaper Filastīn, was a particularly vocal opponent of Zionism and a strong supporter of Arab nationalism. During the latter part of the 1920s, he would become more directly involved in politics through his affiliation with the Liberal Party. Other prominent Orthodox figures in the nationalist movement included ʿIsā al-Bandak, the editor of the Bethlehem-based newspaper, Sawt al-Shaʿb, Sulaymān Nāsif, a prominent landowner from Haifa who served on the provisional advisory council established by the High Commissioner in October 1920, and Khalil Baydas, a teacher of Arabic at the School of St. George. Others included Ibrāhīm Shammās, Ilyās Mashabbik, Anthony al-Ghurī, and Yūsuf Qurt.

165 See Boyle, Betrayal of Palestine.

166 See, for instance, Kedourie, “Religion and Politics.”


168 Ibid, p. 42.

169 All founding members of the Jerusalem Muslim-Christian Association.
The majority of Christians attending the All-Palestine Congress were Orthodox,\textsuperscript{170} and while their position regarding union with Syria was mixed (see above), almost all were opposed if it meant coming under a French mandate. As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, Orthodox commitment to the nationalist cause stemmed largely from their own internal conflict, between the higher clergy and laity. While the dispute was ostensibly about issues related to local communal representation and the financial control of church properties, it also touched on the much larger question of who Orthodox Arabs were. Were they essentially Greeks who, following the Arab Conquest of the Levant, had been Arabicised, or Arabs who had been Hellenised? Certainly Greek was the language of the higher clergy, more specifically, the monastic order, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, from which not only the Jerusalem Patriarch, but also the metropolitans, bishops and archimandrites were recruited.\textsuperscript{171} The Patriarch was, in fact, \textit{ex-officio} President of the Brotherhood,\textsuperscript{172} and only ‘Greeks’ were admitted to the Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{173} Arguably, well into the nineteenth century, before it came to have any nationalistic connotations, ‘Greekness’ or Hellenism had a similar relationship with Orthodoxy as Arabic with Islam.\textsuperscript{174} Yet the everyday language of the laity and village priests was Arabic, and this had certainly been the case since at least the Medieval period. The higher

\textsuperscript{170} ISA 7/12-2, report by Camp, 15 February 1919, and report by Waters-Taylor, 3 February 1919, both to OETA Headquarters.

\textsuperscript{171} The Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre was the chief body of the Patriarchate. While its official task was to look after the Holy Sites, it also administered the Patriarchate, as well as the Holy Synod. By the time of the Mandate, the clergy as well as the Brotherhood were entirely Greek. Runciman, \textit{The Historic Role}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{172} Elie Kedourie, “Religion and Politics,” p. 81.

\textsuperscript{173} Finn, \textit{Stirring Times}, p. 30.

clergy nonetheless maintained that, whatever language the laity spoke now, they had originally spoken Greek. Likewise, they maintained that the laity was ethnically Greek; it was simply that they had forgotten who they were.

The laity, by contrast, maintained that they were ethnically and culturally 'Arab.' They argued that Palestine had never really been Hellenised; that even before the Arab Conquest, it had had a large Arabic element, and that it was not until the sixteenth century that Greeks had become predominant in the Patriarchate. With the rise of Greek nationalism in the eighteenth century, Greek control of the Jerusalem Patriarchate became even stronger; likewise the emphasis given its Greek character. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Arabic-speaking laity increasingly began to think of itself as 'Arab.' A major factor in this was what was a growing Russian missionary presence in Palestine. This began in 1843, with the arrival of the Archimandrite Porfiri Uspenski of the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, and would continue to grow over the course of the century. Russian influence was felt materially, particularly in the area of education, as more than a hundred schools were built. Such efforts were greatly facilitated by the establishment in May 1882 of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine

175 Hopwood, The Russian Presence, p. 196.

176 CO 733/139/I, Report of the Commission on the Orthodox Patriarchate, 26 June 1925, Bertram and Young, pp. 31-32.


Society. Whatever political interests they may have represented, almost all of the Russian missionaries took a sincere interest in the welfare of the Arabic-speaking community, and many Orthodox Arabs soon came to see Russia as their protector, not so much against Ottoman authority, but against the Greek-dominated higher clergy.

In large part it was because of Russian influence that the Arabic-speaking laity became conscious of itself as a discrete community, one distinct from the higher clergy, which it saw increasingly as alien. The laity soon began calling for recognition of the ‘Arab’ character of the Patriarchate, for the institution of the Arabic language, the right of Arab monks to enter the Brotherhood, and so forth. The matter came to a head in 1872, when the Jerusalem Patriarch, Cyril, refused to sign a protocol declaring Bulgaria schismatic on account of its having rejected Constantinople’s authority. His peers immediately called for his removal, something many in the laity saw as an attempt by the Greek element to undermine the independence of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. The reaction of the Orthodox laity was strong; many refused to attend services in Greek, and some even occupied monasteries. They petitioned the Ottoman Government, which, though initially resisting their demands, finally relented under Russian pressure—thus, a new constitution was fashioned in 1875, granting the local community more authority in matters related to the Patriarchate.

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181 Kedourie, “Religion and Politics,” p. 83. See also Hopwood, The Russian Presence.


184 Ibid, pp. 190-191.
Little really changed in fact, much to the distress of the Arab laity. In 1908, in connection with the new Ottoman constitution, a delegation of priests and laymen demanded the formation of a communal council consisting of both laymen and clergy, which, among other things, would be responsible for administering the rather considerable properties of the Patriarchate. When the Patriarch at the time, Damianos, was dismissed by the Synod for actually considering their demands, the reaction in Palestine was so violent that the Ottoman Government, again under pressure from Russia, had him forcibly reconfirmed. Additionally, the Patriarchate was forced to make a number of concessions, among them the formation of a mixed council consisting of six lay members (together with six members of the clergy), and the opening up of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre to ‘Arab’ Orthodox monks.

Damianos turned out to be as much a Hellenist as anyone else in the Synod, and by the time of the First World War, little had happened as far as implementing the called for reforms. During the First World War, the Synod attempted to carry out its earlier decision to dismiss him, largely on the argument that he had mismanaged the Patriarchate’s revenues, and in a move indicative of the extent to which the Greek hierarchy of the Jerusalem Patriarchate had become Hellenised, the Synod turned to the


186 Hopwood, The Russian Presence, p. 197-199.


Greek Government for support. The lay community, for its part, turned to the British authorities, only then newly established in Palestine. They responded by forming a commission—the Bertram-Luke Commission. On the basis of their recommendations, Patriarch Damianos was reaffirmed as Patriarch, and a financial commission was set-up for the purpose of examining and controlling the finances of the Patriarchate. Damianos would retain his position until his death in 1931.

The conflict between lay community and clergy would outlast the Mandate, and indeed, has not found a satisfactory resolution to this day. Arguably, the end of Russian influence following the Bolshevik Revolution saw the removal of what for many Orthodox Arabs was the last barrier to achieving full Arab nationalist consciousness. Till then, there had still been many Orthodox Arabs who, while increasingly aware of themselves as being 'Arab' in the sense of not being 'Greek,' still looked upon Russia as their protector. Such ties accentuated the feeling of being part of a distinctly Orthodox community apart from the larger Muslim 'Arab' one. Many early Orthodox nationalists had till then recognised the need to redefine their sense of community; likewise, that too close an association with a European power would make it difficult for Muslims to accept them as equals. In any event, the loss of Russian support would strengthen the reliance

190 Ibid, p. 97; also Hopwood, *The Russian Presence*, pp. 185, 202, 261.

191 Concerning the Commission’s formation, see CO 733/139/1, Report of the Commission on the Orthodox Patriarchate, 26 June 1925, Bertram and Young, p. 6.


194 Concerning the situation until now, see ibid, pp. 99-103.

of the Orthodox Arab community on Arab national institutions, particularly in light of their ongoing internal struggle.\textsuperscript{196}

The emphasis given language and culture helped to foster a sense of Arab identity, one, moreover, that had strong nationalist overtones. As such, it helped generate a sense of shared identity with Palestine's Muslims. Added to this was the fact that, as discussed in the preceding chapter, the Orthodox Arabs tended to be well integrated with the larger Muslim community. During the mandate period, they formed the largest group of Christians attending government schools as opposed to Christian ones. Orthodox students thus often sat side-by-side with Muslim students. Significantly, the government schools were famous for inculcating within their pupils strong nationalist feelings (as discussed in the next chapter).\textsuperscript{197} Orthodox Arabs regarded themselves as the Christian community closest to the Muslims, and in many respects, this perception was reciprocated.\textsuperscript{198} Thus, for instance, when the aforementioned Damianos was disposed, Palestine's Muslims came out strongly in support of the Orthodox community.\textsuperscript{199}

For many Orthodox Arabs, the 'Arab Orthodox' cause, the nationalist cause, and the fight against Zionism were all part of the same struggle.\textsuperscript{200} Many Orthodox Arabs saw their struggle for the Arabisation of the Patriarchate as only one part of the larger struggle for Arab independence, and believed that in fulfilling Arab nationalist aspirations, they

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  \item \textsuperscript{196} Tsimhoni, "The Arab Christians and the National Movement," p. 82.
  \item \textsuperscript{198} Many Orthodox, for instance, saw their community as being descended from the Arab Christian tribe of Ghasan. Ibid, p. 83, footnote 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{199} Hopwood, The Russian Presence, p. 198.
  \item \textsuperscript{200} Ibid, pp. 200-201.
\end{itemize}
would realise their own communal goals.\textsuperscript{201} It was not accidental that the Orthodox Arab struggle was designated by its leaders \textit{al-nahdah al-urthūdhusiyah}—the ‘Orthodox Awakening.’\textsuperscript{202} Such a designation was indicative of the national character of the struggle.\textsuperscript{203} Correspondingly, relations between the Palestinian nationalist and Arab Orthodox congresses tended to be quite close, with each expressing strong support for the other—the former by verbally backing the Orthodox Arabs in their struggle to overthrow the Greek upper hierarchy; the latter by adopting nationalist goals as part of their resolutions.\textsuperscript{204} ‘Īsā al-‘Īsā, speaking many years later at the Arab Orthodox Club in Jerusalem noted that, while at the outset, his main objective had been to defend the Orthodox cause, he had soon found himself in the midst of a national conflict on two fronts, the one Arab-Turkish and the other Arab-Jewish. He joined both without ever abandoning the Orthodox cause.\textsuperscript{205} Indeed, for him, the latter two were simply extensions of the first. As Khalidi notes, “for an individual such as ‘Īsā al-‘Īsā, all of these loyalties were fully compatible with one another.”\textsuperscript{206}

\textbf{The Protestants}

Generally speaking, Protestant Arabs associated with Europeans a good deal more than other Arabs. Most of their respective lay communities were quite mixed in fact,

\textsuperscript{201} Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 82.

\textsuperscript{202} Among its leaders were Khalīl al-Sakānī, ‘Īsā al-‘Īsā and Yūsūf al-‘Īsā (‘Īsā al-‘Īsā brother and cofounder of the newspaper \textit{Filastīn}).

\textsuperscript{203} See ibid, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{204} ISA 4/16–2, report from Storrs on a meeting with Shammas, 23 September 1922.


\textsuperscript{206} Ibid, pp. 156-157.
containing both Arabs and Europeans. They thus tended to be the most Westernised. At the same time, as a community, they often adopted positions quite at odds with their ‘mother churches.’ This was nowhere more evident than with respect to Zionism, the aims with which many Protestants worldwide were sympathetic, and which Protestant Arabs adamantly opposed. Though their communities were in many respects dominated by Westerners, unlike the case with Latin Catholics, there was no central governing body analogous to the Vatican. Individual churches were fairly independent, both with respect to hierarchy and in how they practised and interpreted the tenets of their faith. Protestant lay members, moreover, often had considerably more influence in their churches than Catholic lay members did in theirs. That said, the vast majority of church officials and congregations were European and American. Moreover, though not strictly hierarchal, local Protestant churches tended to have strong relationships with their corresponding ‘mother churches’ in Europe and America. One might have anticipated, therefore, that Protestant Arabs would be more amenable towards Zionism in keeping with the pro-Zionist tendencies of their broader Protestant communities. Quite the opposite was in fact the case.

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207 As of the 1931 census, only 38 per cent of Anglicans residing in Palestine were actually Arab. This might be compared with 83 per cent for Latin Catholics, and 95 per cent for Orthodox and Uniate Christians. Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, p. 20.


210 On the basis of Protestant tenets concerning the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. See, for instance, Segev, *One Palestine*, pp. 36-37.

211 Thus, as the 1931 Census, out of a total of 4,799 Anglicans residing in Palestine, only 1,810 could claim Palestinian citizenship. Table VII, Part III, pages 29-43, in *Census of Palestine 1931, Volume II, Part II, Tables*, by E. Mills, B.A., O.B.E., Assistant Chief Secretary, Superintendent of Census, by Authority, Printed for the Government of Palestine, by Messrs. Whitehead Morris Limited, Alexandria, 1933.
Being the most Westernised, Protestant Arabs tended to be the most exposed to Western ideas related to secular nationalism. In this respect, the presence of foreign clergies in their churches probably did more to foster national consciousness than diminish it.\(^{213}\) Much like the case with Orthodox Arabs, their understanding of the nationalist movement was shaped in large part by their situation vis-à-vis their own church hierarchies, hierarchies that, as noted, tended to be dominated by foreigners. Their heads were generally either European or American, something most Protestant Arabs greatly desired to see changed.\(^{214}\) Likewise, just as they hoped to see the top positions in their respective church hierarchies eventually filled by members of their own communities, they aspired as a people to achieve an independent secular state. Few were prepared to sacrifice their nationalist aspirations in order that Biblical prophecies concerning the ‘homecoming’ of the Jews might be fulfilled (see below).

The nationalist tendencies of Protestant Arabs were particularly evident within the Anglican community, which even went so far as to reject the designation ‘Anglican’ in favour of the title ‘Evangelical Episcopal Arab Community.’\(^{215}\) Much of its early efforts as a community were concentrated on building its own communal organisation, one that would be fully autonomous and would recognise the authority of the bishop in spiritual matters only. This, in fact, caused a fair amount of friction with the Anglican Bishop and,

\(^{212}\) Many European (and to some extent, American) Protestants in Palestine, including certain British personnel, had been motivated in part to come there by their support of Zionism. A good example of this was Sir Wyndham Deedes, the High Commissioner’s principal advisor on administrative matters. Tom Segev, *One Palestine*, pp. 89-90.


According to Tsimhoni, may have been the main reason why the Anglican Church was not recognised by the mandate government as officially constituting a religious community.\textsuperscript{216} A concern for communal organisation was evident among Protestants as a whole. During the Mandate, they were the only Christian community to fully put into practice the terms of the Religious Communities Ordinance of 1926 calling for the creation of religious and cultural councils as the basis of communal organisation—this through the Protestant Palestine Church Council (actually established in 1905), which acted as an organising and directing body inclusive of Arab clergy and lay members from the various Protestant congregations.\textsuperscript{217}

Quite a few Protestant Arabs were to be found among the leadership of the nationalist movement, among them the advocate Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam from Ramallah who was strongly affiliated with Rāghib al-Nashāshibī, his wife Matiel, who was a key figure with respect to women’s political efforts, Najīb Nassār, the editor of the Haifa-based newspaper, \textit{al-Karmil}, Bulūs Shahāda, the editor of the Jerusalem-based newspaper \textit{Mīrāt al-Sharg}, Dr. Habīb Salīm, a prominent physician from Nablus who served on the Arab Executive, and Shiblāl al-Jamāl, a teacher from the St. George School who accompanied the Arab delegation sent to London in 1921, and during the 1930s, served as a secretary in the Khālidī-founded Reform Party. Protestant Arabs tended to be highly fluent in English and well acquainted with sections of the British public, on account of which, they were often strongly represented in delegations sent to London for the purpose of representing the Arab cause before the British public and government.\textsuperscript{218}

On the question of union with Syria, two tendencies existed within the Protestant community. On the one hand, they often inclined towards a pan-Arabist position along

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, p. 252.


\textsuperscript{218} Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” pp 86-87.
strongly secular lines. On the other, given that almost all the events portrayed in the Gospels took place within mandate-Palestine’s borders, many Protestant Arabs were quite able to conceive of their nationalist identity in regional terms, and thus were comfortable with the idea of Palestine constituting a distinct geographical entity. With respect to anti-Semitism, Protestant Arabs tended to go against the grain of their Western counterparts. The latter tended to support Zionism in connection with Biblical prophecies concerning the eventual ‘homecoming’ of the Jews to Palestine, and their acceptance of Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah as a necessary precondition to his return. In large part, this had been the impetus behind one of the more prominent Protestant missionary organisations operating in Palestine, the London Mission Society, which specifically targeted Jews for conversion. At least initially, the same held true of the Anglican Church, which following its establishment in Palestine, had concentrated its evangelical efforts on Jews. Though by the time of the Mandate this would change somewhat, it was unusual to hear strong expressions of anti-Semitism among Western Protestants. The same did not hold true for Protestant Arabs. During a nationalist gathering in Nazareth held in March 1920, for example, the resident Anglican priest, As‘ad Mansūr, gave a speech in which he explained that the Jews had no right to Palestine as it had been taken from them on account of their having rejected the Messiah.

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219 Porath, The Emergence, p. 7.

220 Its fully name was the London Mission Society for Propagating Christianity among the Jews. Pedersen, The Holy Land Christians, p. 78.

221 Finn, Stirring Times, pp. 138-139; also Tsimhoni, “The Anglican Community,” p. 251.


223 Porath, The Emergence, p. 62. A few years later, the Evangelical Youth Club in Haifa would invite a Muslim speaker to deliver a talk along the same lines. Al-Karmil, 25 September 1927.
The other Christian communities

For reasons already discussed above, Armenians were less inclined to support the nationalist cause. They saw themselves as part of the larger Armenian nation and were generally more concerned with the Armenian nationalist movement centred round their historic homeland in the Caucasus region. An additional factor was that Armenians, much like Latin Catholics and Protestant Arabs, tended to affiliate more strongly with the West. They did at times make common cause with the larger Christian community in their opposition to Zionism, which they saw as a threat to more narrowly defined interests. Arguably, it was a concern about Zionism that prevented Palestine’s Armenians from cooperating more effectively with the British authorities. Much of the above applied equally to Palestine’s Maronites, the main difference being that the question of whether or not they constituted a people apart from the Arabs was still subject to debate. Their tendency to dissociate from the larger Arab community arguably reflected a great deal more on the larger Christian community and its overall commitment to the nationalist cause. There were exceptions of course. The Christian Maronite lawyer Wadīʿ al-Bāṣṭanī, from Haifa, for example, was fairly active in the nationalist movement, though this seemed motivated primarily by what were strong anti-Jewish


226 That is, the safeguarding of church properties or their own economic situation. Ibid, p. 128.

227 Unlike, for instance, what was the case in Syria with respect to the French. See Jukka Nevakivi, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920, Historical Studies, University of London, No. 23 (London: Athlone, 1969), p. 113.

228 Wadīʿ al-Bāṣṭanī was a member of the Arab Executive, of the delegation sent to London following the Sixth Palestinian National Congress, and of the Arab Economic Development Society, formed in 1922, to promote the educational and health needs of Palestinian Arab villagers.
feelings.\textsuperscript{229} As far as the remaining Christian communities were concerned—most of which were quite small and monastic in character—their position with respect to the nationalist movement and the cause of ‘Arab’ Palestine was determined largely by two factors: a concern about Zionism—specifically, whether Zionists had designs on church-owned properties and what impact the implementation of a Jewish state might have on Christian rights in the Holy Land in general; and external events related to the larger communities with which they were affiliated.\textsuperscript{230}

\textbf{Moderation versus extremism}

The first few months of 1920 saw a surge in militant activity. In April 1920, during the Nabi Mūsā celebrations in Jerusalem, riots broke out following inflammatory speeches by Jerusalem’s mayor, Mūsā Kāzīm al-Husaynī,\textsuperscript{231} and members of the strongly Islamic nationalist group, al-Nādī al-’Arabī (see below). For many Muslims, nationalist sentiment often found its strongest expression during Islamic religious festivals. The April riots were largely a Muslim affair,\textsuperscript{232} though there were some Christians involved. (Among the casualties were three wounded Christian Arabs.)\textsuperscript{233} Particularly during the early part of the Mandate, when Muslim-Christian solidarity was still strong, Christians were inclined to participate in the Nabi Mūsā celebration. Though ostensibly a religious festival, it

\textsuperscript{229} CO 733/62, draft report on situation in Palestine, by Weizmann, 15 February 1923.

\textsuperscript{230} Thus, for instance, the attitude of the Nestorians or Assyrians towards the national movement in Palestine in many ways reflected the situation of Nestorians and Assyrians in Iraq.

\textsuperscript{231} Something which saw his replacement as mayor by the more moderate Rāghib al-Nashāshibī.

\textsuperscript{232} Tsimhoni, \textit{The British Mandate}, p. 254, original in the \textit{Daily Mirror}, 9 April 1920.

quickly came to serve as a symbol of Muslim-Christian solidarity. 234 In part, this reflected the fact that it took place at roughly the same time as the Christian Easter celebrations 235 and the Jewish Passover; also the fact that the festival’s importance was largely confined to Palestine. It thus had about it the air of a national holiday, and this is in fact how many Christians saw it. 236 Christian Arabs generally came out to watch the festival’s conclusion in Jerusalem. In her memoirs, Halâ al-Sakâkînî, Khalîl al-Sakâkînî’s daughter, recalled with great fondness sitting by St. Stephen’s Gate to welcome the procession. She characterised the event largely in nationalistic terms:

Everywhere you could see the Arab flag with its green, red, white and black colours fluttering high above the heads. The scene filled us with enthusiasm and national pride. Every now and then strong young men would link their arms together and, forming circles, would start dancing the dabkeh and singing. It was thrilling to watch and wonderful for the spirit. Although the Nabi Musa feast was supposed to be a religious occasion, it was in fact a national day in which all the Arabs of Palestine, Christians and Muslims alike, shared. 237


235 The Nabi Musa festival lasted seven days, and roughly corresponded to the Orthodox Holy Week.

236 See, for instance, CO 733/44 ‘Report of the Political Situation in Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Month of March 1923,’ pp. 6-7; and CO 733/93, Secret Political Resume for the Jerusalem-Jaffa District, for the Period by Ronald Storr, 16 May 1923. Also Daphne Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 74.

Over the course of the Mandate, Christian involvement in more radical activities would prove limited.\textsuperscript{238} During the early going, however, the nationalist movement was, as a whole, politically moderate.\textsuperscript{239} Arab efforts at achieving nationalist objectives during this period were largely led by the MCAs, which mostly organised demonstrations and congresses, submitted appeals and petitions, and sent delegations to plead the Arab case before the League of Nations and European governments. Following the establishment of civil administration in the summer of 1920, the various MCAs began making preparations for the Third Palestinian Arab Congress.\textsuperscript{240} It eventually convened in December of that year in Haifa, and concluded with the election of a permanent executive committee. This body, which came to be known as the Arab Executive, would come to dominate the nationalist movement for the rest of the decade. Mūsā Kāzīm al-Husaynī, who presided over the Congress, was made its president. Of its nine initial members, two were Christians—Irbrāhīm Shammās and Dr. Ya‘qūb Burtqush.

Though the nationalist movement would maintain a moderate temperament throughout most of the 1920s, this by no means meant that Palestine’s Arabs had acquiesced to Zionism. This was certainly apparent in early May 1921, when riots broke out in Jaffa, only half a year after the Third Palestinian National Congress. What would distinguish this early episode of violence from the anti-Jewish violence of the latter part of the mandate period—beginning with the Wailing Wall disturbances of 1929—was its relatively secular character. Later violence would often have an obvious quality of religious fanaticism about it, a development that in many respects corresponded to what would be a growing tendency to redefine the nationalist cause in religious terms (as discussed further below). The riots, incited by a Jewish May Day Demonstration in

\textsuperscript{238} Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 78.


\textsuperscript{240} Porath, \textit{The Emergence}, p. 108.
Tel Aviv, carried on for almost a week, not only in Jaffa, but in other parts of the country as well. The final tally was 47 Jews and 48 Arabs dead, 146 Jews and 75 Arabs wounded.\footnote{Abdul Wahhab Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1978). See also Command Paper Number 1499, An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, during the period 1\textsuperscript{st} July, 1920—30\textsuperscript{th} June, 1921, Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, August, 1921, p. 9. A full account of the ‘May 1921 Disturbances’ can be found in Command Paper Number 1540, Palestine, Disturbances in May, 1921, Reports of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto, Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, October, 1921.}

In spite of the fact of Jaffa having a substantial Christian community,\footnote{Roughly a quarter of the overall population of 45,000 were Christian, mostly Orthodox, though with a fair number of Catholics. Ibid, p. 18.} hardly any Christians were involved directly in the rioting, something perhaps best evidenced by the relatively small number of Christian casualties—compared to 11 Muslims killed and 41 wounded, Christian casualties amounted to 2 dead and 2 wounded.\footnote{CO 733/3, despatch from Samuel to Churchill, 15 May 1921.} Christian involvement in the incident in fact seemed mostly limited to the refusal of Christian Arab police officers to assert their authority in order to prevent bloodshed.\footnote{Daphne Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 255, original in Haycraft’s report, pp. 22, 45.} The three main incidents of Arab attacks on Jews in Palestine aside from the disturbances in Jaffa—those against the Jewish settlements in Khedera, Petach Tikvah and Rehoboth—again seemed largely Muslim affairs\footnote{Command Paper Number 1540, pp. 5-16, 38-41.}; that in Rehoboth, interestingly enough, coincided with a festival honouring a local Muslim saint, and arguably, the festival constituted a factor in inciting the attack.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 41-43; see also Daphne Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 256.} Though not actively involved, Christians generally condoned the
riots, something perhaps not surprising given that feelings of unity between Muslims and Christians were at this time still strong.

While the riots were not motivated by religious sentiment per se, such sentiment was not entirely absent. There was a strong perception that a link existed between Zionism and Bolshevism—a movement that was decidedly anti-religious—and indeed, it was the presence of an overtly Bolshevik group in the May Day Demonstration that had set off the riots. Both Muslims and Christians were equally opposed to Bolshevism, and, particularly during the early days of the Mandate, made much of Zionism’s supposed Bolshevik tendencies. Thus, for instance, in an editorial, al-Karmil argued that “Bolshevism and Zionism are the same even if they look different.” This tendency would never fully disappear during the Mandate; during the Islamic Conference of 1931, for example, one participant argued that the Jews were responsible for the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and that “if the Zionists conquered al-Aqsa mosque, they [would] hang in it pictures of Trotsky and of the Russian ambassador in Ankara!” Such emphasis was partly strategic. At the time, the British were greatly concerned with what they perceived to be Soviet-inspired threats to their interests in the region, and hence it

247 Command Paper Number 1540, pp. 35, 59. See also CO 733/4, correspondence from Shuckburgh to the Duke of Sutherland, 12 July 1921.

248 See Command Paper Number 1540, p. 18.

249 See also ibid, p. 12.

250 Thus it was noted by the Commission investigating the riots that, if it had not been for this group’s presence, the demonstration would most likely have passed largely unnoticed. Ibid, pp. 22-23.

251 Al-Karmil, 21 September 1929. See also see also ibid, 26 October 1929, 1 March 1930, and 9 May 1931; also FO 800/221, Secret Political Report No. 15, Albina to Sykes, 15 June 1918.

252 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 34, from Filastin, 6-18 December 1931.

253 Minerbi, The Vatican and Zionism, p. 147.
was felt that such arguments might resonate more strongly with them. At the same time, such sentiments reflected genuine concerns. The overall 'progressive' attitude and correspondingly 'immodest' behaviour of the early Zionists was offensive to local sensibilities, Christians and Muslims alike. While the great majority of Zionists were not Bolshevik in the strictest sense of the term, for many Arabs, 'Bolshevism' had a fairly broad meaning encompassing all behaviour perceived as irreligious and disrespectful of traditional and conservative values. Such sentiments were particularly strong among Christians, particularly those that had strong affiliations with their respective worldwide communities. This was nowhere more evident than with Latin Catholics, the attitude of whom in many ways reflected that of the Vatican. 254

A legislative council

In June 1922, Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, published a statement of British policy, what came to be known as the Palestine White Paper or 'Churchill White Paper.' Among other things, it called for "the establishment of a Legislative Council containing a large proportion of members elected on a wide franchise." 255 Since October 1920, an advisory council had been in place; its non-official members, however, had been nominated by the Commissioner. 256 In the new body, the non-official members were to be elected. Moreover, whereas previously there had been an equal number of official and non-official members (ten of each), the non-official


256 Of the ten unofficial members, four were Muslim, three Christian, and three Jews. Command Paper Number 1499, An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, during the period 1st July, 1920—30th June, 1921, p. 10. Concerning its Christian representatives, see Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 144.
members would now outnumber the official members twelve to ten. As was the case with the Advisory Council, the non-official component was to break down along religious lines—of the non-official members, eight would be Muslim, two Jewish, and two Christian.

The Arabs rejected the proposed legislative council, as it was considered that its acceptance would constitute a tacit acceptance of Zionism. The Palestine Government opted to go forward with the elections anyway, to which the Arabs responded with a boycott. Overall, the boycott proved quite effective, and was marked by a high degree of Muslim-Christian solidarity. Only 18 per cent of qualified Muslims voted, and 5.5 per cent of qualified Christians (contrasted with a roughly 50 per cent turnout among Jewish voters). Following the election, six of the Arabs who were elected were compelled to withdraw, and in the end, the plan for implementing a legislative council was abandoned. In its place, an advisory council was established, the nominated unofficial element of which corresponded to that of the proposed elective element in the Legislative Council.

Concerning the various schemes proposed and the basis for the final decision, see Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, pp. 146-151.

Colonial No. 15, *Palestine, Report of the High Commissioner on the Administration of Palestine, 1920-1925*, London, HMSO, 1925, pp. 44-45. Additionally, the country was to be divided into 436 voting areas with the number of secondary electors fixed at 670 Muslims, 59 Christians, 79 Jews and 15 Druzes, according to the proportional strength of each community. CO 733/43, telegram from Samuel to the Colonial Secretary, 17 March 1923.


CO 733/43, correspondence from the Duke of Devonshire to Samuel, 29 March 1923.
Council—eight Muslims, two Jews, and two Christians. Both Muslims and Christians refused to comply even with this, and in the end, the advisory council consisted of only official members. 263

In many respects, the solidarity evident in the Arab response to the elections marked the high watermark of Muslim-Christian unity. Though Christian participation in terms of the actual number of secondary electors nominated was greater than that of Muslims—Christians filled 19 of 59 potential spots, about one-third of the total number, against 107 of 670 potential spots for Muslims, less than one-sixth the total number—it was actually less at the polls. 264 In Haifa and Jaffa, two cities with substantial Christian populations, their attitude towards the elections was more extreme than that of Muslims; there, no Christian secondary electors were nominated at all. 265 Christians were also fairly active in campaigning for the boycott, particularly as evidenced by the newspapers Filastin and al-Karmil. 266 Government policy in the immediate aftermath of the boycott reflected the high degree of solidarity that had been displayed by Muslims and Christians, and future proposals for representative bodies would call for a division of the population into Arabs and Jews, as opposed to Muslims, Christians and Jews. 267 Thus, for instance, Arab

263 CO 733/45, telegram from Samuel to the Duke of Devonshire, 13 June 1923; and CO 733/51, telegram from Samuel to the Duke of Devonshire, 19 November 1923; also Fawcett, Easter in Palestine, p. 179. Concerning the resignation of the Christian nominations, see CO 733/48, Clayton to the Colonial Secretary, 1 August 1923.


265 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 283. Interestingly, Tsimhoni suggests that this might have reflected the fact that both cities had substantial Jewish communities, and that local Christians there were reacting primarily to Jewish economic competition. Ibid, p. 283.

266 For example, in Al-Karmil, 9 December 1922, 10, 28 February, 3, 7 March, 7 April 1923. See also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 279

notables invited to participate in a proposed Arab Agency—in four of whom were Christian—were designated only by their political position and place of residency, with no reference being made to their religious affiliation.

**Muslim-Christian unity**

Over the next few years, things would remain relatively calm. There was a strike, held in March 1925, on the occasion of Lord Balfour's visit to Jerusalem for the opening of the Hebrew University; also an incident that same year at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, when Muslims took issue with what they considered to be innovations in Jewish worship there. Finally, the following spring saw a demonstration of solidarity with the Arabs in Syria in the form of a general strike, called on the occasion of the French High Commissioner, M. de Jouvenel's visit to Jerusalem. All of these took place peacefully enough, and moreover, saw equal involvement by Muslims and Christians. Arab activism was particularly evident during this period in the economic sphere, in connection with what was a fast-growing Arab proletariat. With the beginnings of industrialisation and the continued expropriation of Arab lands, many Arab peasants began moving to the larger towns and cities in search of employment opportunities. During this period, Arab women also became increasingly active in the nationalist movement. As discussed more fully in

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268 To act as a counter-balance to the Jewish Agency. In the end, it too was rejected. Command Paper Number 1989, *Palestine, Proposed Formation of an Arab Agency: Correspondence with the High Commissioner for Palestine*, Presented by command of His Majesty, London, HMSO, 1923.


270 CO 733/50, 'List of Arab Notables Present at the Meeting,' attached to dispatch from the Samuel to the Duke of Devonshire, 12 October 1923. See also Command Paper Number 1989, p. 8.

271 More specifically, they had brought chairs and benches to the Wall on the Jewish Day of Atonement, something many Muslims saw as going against the status quo and therefore as posing a threat to their control of the adjoining Haram al-Sharif. Command Paper Number 3530, *Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929*, p. 34.
the final chapter, Christian women would play a disproportionately large role in the various women’s organisations that began forming around this time. For the most part, Muslim-Christian solidarity remained relatively strong during this period.

Muslim-Christian unity manifested itself not only in the newspapers, but also in practice. During the early part of the Mandate, Christians were more apt to participate in nationalist demonstrations than would later be the case; Christian participation was, in fact, actively promoted through the MCAs.272 Other displays of solidarity were more spontaneous in nature. Following the deaths of a Muslim and Christian during disturbances in 1921, for instance, it was agreed between the two communities that “they should have a joint funeral, [whereby] the Mufti [would go] into the Greek Church and the Greek priest...into the mosque.”273 Likewise, with the death of a Christian boy and Muslim boy in Haifa that same year—there, “the parents of the Christian boy who was killed received 20 pounds from the Moslem community and those of the Moslem who died of his wounds received a similar sum from the Christian community.” The official reporting this event went on to note that while “[o]pinions differ as to whether these events have decreased or increased unity between Christians and Moslems...on the whole, evidence seems to point to firmer union.”274 Likewise, during the aforementioned visit of the High Commissioner to Beisan, a large crowd gathered carrying black banners with, among other slogans, one proclaiming that ‘Moslems and Christians are brothers.’275

272 See, for example, Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 248.

273 CO 733/4, correspondence from Shuckburgh to the Duke of Sutherland, 12 July 1921.

274 CO 733/3, Report on the Political Situation in Palestine and Transjordania for the Month of April, 1921, attached to dispatch from Deedes to Churchill, 9 May 1921.

275 Ibid.
A significant factor underlying Muslim-Christian unity was Zionism, which, in creating a common cause, helped bridge differences between the two communities; for some observers, the mere fact of Muslim-Christian unity was a measure of just how serious a danger both considered Zionism. As one visiting European commented, “[t]he fact that Moslems and Christians were working together for a common cause was a sign that the nation was roused by what was felt to be a common danger, and that there were men ready to sink all differences of outlook in the effort to win through.”276 In similar fashion, Lord Sydenham of the House of Lords characterised the above-mentioned joint funeral as something “absolutely unique in a country which saw the Crusades.”277 As noted above, early on at least, Christians were much more vigorous in their opposition to Zionism than Muslims. One commentator at the time went so far as to say that Christians were “even prepared to slaughter the Jews.”278

Given the extent to which the nationalist cause defined itself as a movement of opposition to Zionism, it is not surprising that Christians were so active on its behalf. Many Christian Arabs were, of course, also opposed to Zionism for nationalistic reasons. Thus, for example, al-Sakākīnī remarked that he “hated Zionism because it tried to build itself on the ruins of others; in conquering Palestine, [he] felt as if Zionism were trampling the heart of the Arab nation.”279 Nonetheless, there is some evidence to suggest that for most Christians, the main impetus underlying their involvement in the nationalist movement was their opposition to Zionism. Thus, for instance, it was remarked in a speech made by the aforementioned As’ad Mansūr in 1920, that the reason why Nazareth’s Christians had not been active in the nationalist movement till then was that there were no Jews living

276 Erskine, Palestine, p. 80. See also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 206.

277 CO 733/4, correspondence from Shuckburgh to the Duke of Sutherland, 12 July 1921.

278 Minerbi, The Vatican and Zionism, p. 137, original from a report by an Italian minister, 20 December 1919.

279 In Segev, One Palestine, p. 29.
among them.\textsuperscript{280} If some Christians were fearful of living in a ‘Muslim’ state, they certainly had no desire to live in a Jewish one.

In any case, as long as there was the obstacle of Zionism to overcome, there was little point in dwelling at length on what an independent Arab state might look like; likewise, what might be the place of non-Muslims in it. This is not to say that Christian support for the nationalist cause was predicated on a belief that an independent Arab Palestine would never actually materialise. There was a strong belief during the early part of the Mandate that it was something achievable—that it was mostly a matter of convincing the British of the justice of their cause.\textsuperscript{281} Added to that, the actual number of Jews that had immigrated to Palestine by that point was fairly small. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that, so long as an independent Arab Palestine remained something strictly hypothetical, Christians did not have to worry about what might be their own position in it. In addition, given their prominent role early on in the nationalist movement, Christians were, at least initially, optimistic that they would have a considerable say in determining the nature of any future Arab state. Most Christians in Palestine did indeed favour an independent Arab Palestine—their only concern was that it should be a state largely based on the European secular model, and thus one within which Christians would be politically equal to Muslims.

At the same time, many Christians were anxious concerning what a future independent Palestine might actually look like, something perhaps most evident in the fact that when Palestine first came under British authority and Britain’s long-term intentions were not yet entirely clear, many indicated a preference for indefinite British rule rather than

\textsuperscript{280} ISA 2/30-\textsuperscript{2}, address made by As’ad Mansur, 20 March 1920, attached to report by the Military Governor of Galilee, 24 March 1920.

\textsuperscript{281} See, for instance, CO 733/48, letter from the Acting High Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary, 24 August 1923.
independence. \(^{282}\) Once it became clear that British rule also entailed Zionism, Christian support for an independent Palestine became much less ambiguous. Much of their concern stemmed from the fact that, among rank-and-file Muslims, support for the 'nationalist' cause was often expressed in Islamic terms, particularly in connection with the Haram al-Sharif, or 'Dome of the Rock.' Initially, in the spirit of unity, Palestine's religious significance was defined more broadly to encompass its religious significance to both Muslims and Christians. Over time, however, the focus shifted to Islam alone, in part, due to a growing conception of the nationalist struggle among Muslims as a case of 'defending Islam against the West.' Some emphasis was still placed on its Christian significance, though increasingly, this seemed more a tactical consideration, inasmuch as it was perceived as useful as far as generating sympathy for the nationalist cause among Europeans. \(^{283}\)

A certain Islamic leaning on the part of Muslims involved in the nationalist movement was evident from the start. \(^{284}\) One of the earliest Arab nationalist organisations in Palestine, the Husaynī-dominated al-Nādī al-'Arabī, \(^{285}\) for example, strongly emphasised the ties between the Arabs and Islam, and often sought to draw a link between Arab nationalism and Muslim festivals and holidays. \(^{286}\) One of its earliest resolutions was that the Sherif of Mecca should be proclaimed caliph, this in spite of its Christian members having expressed their disapproval of giving the nationalist movement an Islamic emphasis. \(^{287}\) Though open to non-Muslims, al-Nādī al-'Arabī in fact had very few

\(^{282}\) Porath, *The Emergence*, p. 296.

\(^{283}\) Ibid, pp. 42, 296.


\(^{285}\) Literally translated as 'Arab Club.'


\(^{287}\) FO 371/3386, report by Storrs, 21 November 1918.
Christian members, and with the exception of Khalil al-Sakākīnī’s tenure as Secretary from 1922 till 1924, no Christian ever served on its Executive Committee. Even in the more politically moderate MCAs—initially at least, representative of the nationalist movement’s mainstream—Muslims as well as Christians were required to take an oath on the Qur’ān in addition to the one made on the national covenant.

It is perhaps not surprising then that cracks did occasionally appear with respect to Muslim-Christian unity, even early on. Thus, for example, between late 1919 and early 1920, nationalist activity within the MCAs was temporarily stifled because of dissension between Muslims and Christians, to the extent that Ya‘qūb Farrāj felt compelled to resign. Anti-Christian sentiment was also evident when the early nationalist organisation, al-Muntadā al-Adabī—noted both for its moderate political attitude and for its relatively large Christian component—went into decline in 1920. Jamīl al-Husaynī suggested that its branches be incorporated into distinctly Muslim organisations, and that “all [its] Christian members... be expelled.” By the time of the Fifth Palestinian National Congress, held in 1922, things had gotten bad enough that it was considered necessary to pass a resolution empowering the Executive Committee to form temporary arbitration committees for settling disputes between the Muslim and Christian communities. Not surprisingly perhaps, tensions between the two communities were more evident in the villages, particularly where Christians constituted minorities, than in the larger towns; from 1922 onwards, complaints of harassment from Christians in the

288 ISA 4/18-2, CID report, 8 September 1922.

289 ISA 3939/64, CID report, 30 August 1922.

290 Ibid, letter from the Military Governor to OETA Headquarters, 30 June 1920.

291 ISA 2/157, Lingley’s report, 15 February 1921.

292 ISA 4/16-2, report on the proceedings of the Fifth National Congress, 29 August 1922.
The overriding concern of Christians was that Muslims might develop too strong a sense of religious solidarity, and this was in fact one of the reasons cited by Shammās in expressing a willingness to cooperate with the Government with respect to the aforementioned proposed Legislative Council.

Tensions were also often evident in connection with external events. One such event was the unexpected resistance put up by the Turks under Mustafa Kemal against the European powers. On 10 August 1920, the Ottoman Empire was compelled to sign the Treaty of Sèvres, stipulating among other things that it renounce all sovereignty over Palestine and the other Arab territories. It also called for a much truncated Ottoman state, bereft even of parts of Anatolia, in particular, the area around Izmir, which immediately after the war had been occupied by Greek troops. Mustafa Kemal had been able to rally the Turks, and eventually the Greeks as well as other foreign troops were forced to leave Turkey. More importantly, he was able to force the European powers to renegotiate the final settlement in what came to be known as the Treaty of Lausanne. As a result, Mustafa Kemal came to be seen by Muslims throughout the Arab territories as a hero for having effectively resisted the European ‘Christian’ powers.

Significantly, Muslim support for Mustafa Kemal was expressed largely in religious terms. He was perceived as a warrior on behalf of Islam (against the Christian West), not on behalf of Turkish nationalism. Thus, an article appearing in the newspaper Lisan al-

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293 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 269.

294 ISA 4/16-2, Storrs’ report to the Assistant Chief Secretary on a conversation with Shammas, 23 September 1922.

295 Shaw and Shaw, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, pp. 365-369.

296 See, for example, CO 733/26, ‘Report on the Political Situation in Palestine during the Month of September 1922’; and CO 733/27, ‘Report on the Political Situation in Palestine and Trans-Jordania during the Month of October, 1922.’
Arab noted that when Muslims were asked why they supported Mustafa Kemal and the Turks, "they shout[ed] at the top of their voices 'they are the defenders of Islam.'" Likewise, it was noted by one British official that "[n]ews of the [Lausanne] treaty was received with the utmost pleasure by Moslems." The decision of the Arab Executive to send a delegation to Turkey in the hopes of persuading the Turks to press the European powers for a revision of those articles in the Treaty of Sèvres dealing specifically with Palestine (that is, the terms of the Balfour Declaration) was the source of some concern for Christians. Many were uncomfortable with the idea of appealing to a power that had ill-treated Christians in Anatolia; likewise there was concern that events in Turkey might incite Muslim violence against Christians in Palestine, as apparently had been the case in Syria. Correspondingly, those Christians selected for the delegation managed, in the end, to excuse themselves from taking part, one of them on the pretext of having more pressing engagements elsewhere.

In many respects, Muslim scepticism regarding Christian loyalty was always lurking just beneath the surface. Thus, for instance, 'Arif al-'Arif, a prominent Muslim nationalist, when recalling the early days of the movement many years later, indicated that, in his view, the so-called unity with Christians had had no practical foundation; moreover, that the Christians had preferred to cooperate with the British, who were Christian like

297 CO 733/43, translation of article appearing in Lisan al-Arab, 27 February 1923, in Political Report for the Month of February 1923.

298 CO 733/48, Report on the Political Situation in Palestine for the Month of July 1923.

299 ISA 4/16-2, CID report, 7 November 1922.

300 CO 733/38, confidential letter from Deedes to Shuckburgh, 15 September 1922; also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 267.

them. In another instance, during a ‘Muslims only’ meeting of the Jaffa MCA, suspicions were voiced that several of its Christian members were being employed as government agents. Even when affirming Muslim-Christian unity, Muslims often called on Christians to uphold the nationalist cause in a manner that suggested that such support could not be taken for granted. One might very easily construe as such the Muslim nationalist Abd al-Qadir al-Muzaffar’s appeal to Christians to boycott the 1923 elections for the proposed legislative council: “I believe in the religion of Christ, I respect it and I hope for the help of the Christians who are of our race, speak the same language, follow the same customs.”

Developments in Turkey were also suggestive of what Christian Arab reaction might be if Arab independence were ever actually achieved. In this respect, one might consider the Franco-Turkish Pact of 1921, whereby France turned over Alexandretta (until then under French control on the basis of the 1920 armistice) to Turkey. As it turned out, the Christians living there were strongly opposed to this. While this might to some degree have reflected nationalist sentiment—a desire to remain in an ‘Arab’ state as opposed to a ‘Turkish’ one—more likely it was out of a concern about living under some form of ‘Muslim’ government. By contrast, Muslims living there “welcome[d] this further re-encroachment of Moslem rule into Syria and [were] hoping for the day when the whole

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303 ISA 2/157, Jaffa Governor’s report, attached to CID report, 19 July 1921.


305 FO 618/3, correspondence from Morgan to the Foreign Secretary, 24 November 1921; Ibid, correspondence from the British Liaison Officer to the General Staff Intelligence in Cairo, 18 November 1921.

306 See ibid, correspondence from Morgan to Foreign Secretary, 24 November 1921; ibid, correspondence from the British Liaison Officer to the General Staff Intelligence in Cairo, 9 November 1921; also ibid, 18 November 1921.
of Syria [would] be given back to Turkey.\textsuperscript{307} One might question whether, were it not for the common threat of Zionism, Muslims and Christians in Palestine would be united at all. Sir Mark Syke’s Arab Latin Catholic advisor, Yūsuf Albīnā (himself a resident of Jerusalem), described the situation in Palestine at the beginning of the British military administration as “a pot-pourri of sects and heterogeneous elements bearing an innate hatred against each other and in perpetual conflict against themselves.” Commenting further, he noted “[t]he evil influence and under-handed intrigues of some heads of communities who... foster dissension between the communities and... widen the breach already existing instead of conciliating the spirits and preaching union and forbearance.”\textsuperscript{308} Specifically, Christians were (and would remain) concerned that the nationalist movement should take on too strong a religious character. Thus, for example, many opposed the establishment of a distinctly ‘Muslim’ university in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{309}

Moderates versus extremists

From the beginning of the Mandate, the traditional leadership was divided into two factions, the one more moderate and the other tending towards extremism. The first—often referred to as the ‘Opposition,’ or \textit{Mu’āridīn}, for reasons already noted in the introduction and discussed more fully below—was represented most strongly by the Nashāshībī family, first and foremost its head, Rāghib al-Nashāshībī, the mayor of Jerusalem from 1921.\textsuperscript{310} Rāghib al-Nashāshībī was often described as being ‘European-minded’; both his first and second wives were non-Muslims, the first being French and

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid, 9 November 1921.

\textsuperscript{308} See also FO 800/221, Secret Political Report No. 15, Albīna to Sykes, 15 June 1918.

\textsuperscript{309} ISA 4/16-2, Storrs’ report to the Assistant Chief Secretary on a conversation with Shammas, 23 September 1922.

\textsuperscript{310} Initially by appointment, following the removal of Mūsā Kāzīm al-Husaynī for his supposed role in the Nabī Mūsā riots.
the latter Turkish Catholic. In general, he was quite comfortable associating with Christians— one of his closest associates was Ya‘qūb Farrāj, one of the leading figures in Jerusalem’s Orthodox community—and he did not hesitate to have his sons educated in Christian schools, as noted by his nephew Nassār Iddīn in his biography of his uncle. The Nashāshībi family as a whole were strongly associated with the commercial interests of the merchant elite in connection with which they tended to favour political moderation. In part, this also reflected the fact that the base of their support came from the towns where, among other things, a large number of Christians were based. Though in principle demanding complete independence for Palestine’s Arabs and an end to Zionism, the moderate camp showed a greater willingness to compromise, both with the British and with the Jews. More than simply constituting an aversion towards doing anything that might adversely impact on their commercial interests, this also reflected a more pragmatic approach with respect to nationalist aims. Nevertheless, what would be a growing perception among the rank-and-file as the nationalist movement progressed—that the moderates were willing to compromise nationalist objectives in order to safeguard their own interests—had some basis in fact.

Leading the faction tending towards extremism was the Husaynī family—more specifically, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī. As noted in the introduction, this faction was often

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311 Nashashibi, in fact, was one of the few Muslim leaders to associate with Christians socially and not just in political organisations. Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 289.

312 Nassār Iddīn himself attended the St. George’s School and the Bishop Gobat School, and noted in both cases that a good proportion of the student body was in fact Muslim. Nashashibi, Jerusalem’s Other Voice, p. 4.


314 Al-Nashāshībi, in fact, was one of the few Muslim leaders to associate with Christians socially and not just in political organisations. Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 289.

referred to as the *Majlisin* in connection with Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī’s position as President of the Supreme Muslim Council. Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī was one of the more pivotal Arab figures in Palestine during the mandate period. Having studied the *shari‘a* extensively, first in Jerusalem and then later in Cairo, Hajj Amīn was first and foremost, a man of religion.\(^\text{316}\) From an early point, however, he had become politically active on behalf of the nationalist cause. Following the Nabi Mūsā riots of 1920, he was forced to flee into exile after being sentenced to ten years for his supposed role in inciting the crowd. He was later pardoned from this sentence, largely in connection with his appointment by the British as Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.\(^\text{317}\) In this capacity, as well as that of President of the Supreme Muslim Council (see below), he would go on to exert a great deal of political influence, particularly around issues of a more definably religious nature. Following the demise of the Arab Executive during the early-1930s, he would become the pre-eminent political figure among Palestine’s Arabs.

In addition to tending towards radicalism, the Husaynī faction also tended to emphasise the Islamic character of Palestine and the nationalist movement. The concurrence of radicalism and Islamisation was hardly coincidental, as is discussed more fully below. For now, it is sufficient to note that one factor underlying this tendency was the internal struggle for control of the traditional leadership between the two factions. Given Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī’s positions as Grand Mufti and President of the Supreme Muslim Council, it generally served his own political ambitions to appeal to Islamic sentiment; such sentiment still had a strong appeal, particularly among the largely Muslim peasantry, the great majority of whom, at the beginning of the Mandate at least, were relatively uneducated and were unfamiliar with notions related to secular nationalism. While such emphasis was not entirely insincere—since at least the mid-nineteenth century, the Husaynīs had tended to see themselves as guardians of traditional socio-political


values—it was also something tactical. Thus, it should not be understood as necessarily reflecting a broader agenda, for example, the establishment of some kind of ideologically defined ‘Islamic’ state. Most of the leadership of the extremist faction, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī included, were part of the same merchant class as those notables constituting the moderate faction, and were equally concerned with safeguarding their interests. Such tactics, generally in response to the circumstances of the moment, were often aimed at gaining some immediate advantage over their political rivals. It was a dangerous game to play however—as the Mandate progressed and nationalist aspirations remained unfulfilled, the incitement of religious sentiment would often see the rank-and-file turn against the traditional leadership as a whole, Hajj Amīn included.

The Supreme Muslim Council (SMC), established in December 1921, would prove a particularly effective power-base for Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and his supporters, often functioning as a rival to the Arab Executive after it came to be dominated by the moderate faction. The term ‘Opposition’ referred specifically to the latter’s opposition to Hajj Amīn’s domination of the SMC. The term Majlis, of course, referred to ‘those sitting on the Council,’ and indeed, many of his supporters were on its board or held important positions in the various Islamic institutions, both waqfs and Islamic courts, over which the Council held sway. The Supreme Muslim Council was, in fact, a British creation, brought about as part of an effort to establish an Arab body representative of


319 See, for instance, Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 118.

320 See, for instance, Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council, p. 65.

321 Thus, for instance, he was quick to disown any appeal to religious sentiment that was seen as threatening his own status. See, for instance, FO 371/16926, Periodical Appreciation Summary, 28 February 1933.

the Muslim population in a manner analogous to the Jewish Agency with respect to Palestine’s Jewish population. This body was to be responsible for administering the awqāf, or Muslim religious endowments, and the Islamic shari‘a courts.323 In response to criticism from various Muslim religious figures during its creation,324 the Council was granted almost unlimited autonomy in the execution of its duties—for all practical purposes, the Government had no voice whatsoever with respect to the Council’s administration of awqāf and its appointment of qādis and waqf officials.325 Connected with this, supervision of the Islamic shari‘a courts was removed from the jurisdiction of the Legal Department. Of no small significance was the fact that Hajj Amīn’s position as President of the Council was for life.326

Control of the Supreme Muslim Council would prove invaluable to Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, not least in connection with the revenues it afforded him. The assets of the Supreme Muslim Council were considerable,327 as was its budget—during the 1920s, annual revenues, mostly derived from the tithes related to waqf properties, averaged £P 60,000.328 Moreover, the Supreme Muslim Council had almost complete jurisdiction


324 Barron, Mohammedan Wakfs, p. 50.


326 See Ibid, p. 66; also Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council, p. 32. Concerning the circumstances surrounding Hajj Amīn’s election to the Presidency, see ibid, p. 32.

327 See Colonial No. 17, Appendix to the Report on the Administration Under Mandate, p. 26, for a list of institutions affiliated with the Supreme Muslim Council. See also Erskine, Palestine, p. 165.

328 Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council, p. 118, 172, 174-176. Concerning the waqf properties under the control of the SMC, see Ibid, pp. 110-113
with regard to the appointment of qādīs and muftīs, as well as directors of waqfs and other related positions; equally to dismiss waqf and sharī'a officials. Particular with respect to waqf functionaries, episodes of favouritism and nepotism, likewise the creation of sinecures, were not uncommon. The Council also had complete power over all mosque personnel in the country. Thus, Hajj Amīn was able to exert influence through his ability to appoint individuals to (or dismiss them from) waqf administrative positions, to positions in the mosques, and to the courts. Most importantly, in combination with his position as Grand Mufti, he was ideally situated to influence Muslims through an appeal to religious sensibilities whenever it seemed opportune to do so. More importantly perhaps, he was also able to characterise attacks against him and his control of the Supreme Muslim Council as constituting a betrayal of the nationalist cause, given that the Supreme Muslim Council was the only ‘Arab national institution’ in Palestine.

Through the end of 1925, Hajj Amīn and the faction he represented held the upper hand, albeit only slightly, against the moderate faction represented by Rāghib al-Nashāshibī. Beginning in 1926, however, this began to change. Elections that year saw half the seats of the Council’s board—till then dominated by Hajj Amīn—go to the Opposition. The Opposition also proved successful in the municipal elections of 1927—the first held under British rule. The final blow to Hajj Amīn’s faction would come with the

329 Ibid, pp. 149-153; also Barron, Mohammedan Wakfs, p. 67.


331 Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 18.

332 Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council, pp. 81, 73, 149-153.

333 Ibid, pp. 76-77.


335 Not counting that of the presidency, occupied by Hajj Amīn.
convocation of the Seventh Palestinian National Congress in Jerusalem in June 1928, as discussed in the next chapter.

So where did Christians fall with respect to the division between moderates and extremists? One is tempted to say that the great majority favoured moderation and leave it at that, but this would be too simplistic an answer. In the first place, the division between the two camps was not as drastic as it would later become. For one thing, the population as a whole had not yet despaired of the possibility of persuading Britain to change its policy through peaceful means. Secondly, since 1925, for reasons discussed at greater length in the next chapter, Jewish immigration to Palestine had actually begun to slow down—Zionism no longer seemed the threat it once had. The need for radical action did not seem so obvious. Finally, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī’s position as Grand Mufti and President of the Supreme Muslim Council was a double-edged sword. While he enjoyed a certain prestige on the basis of these positions, they were in fact government positions—as such, they made him somewhat dependent on British support. There were some Christians who fell in with Hajj Amīn’s camp, among them, oddly enough, a number of Catholics. Most notable in this respect was Alfred Rok, a Greek Catholic lawyer from Jerusalem of mixed Arab and European ancestry, who would remain a strong supporter of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī throughout the mandate period. To some extent, this reflected historical precedence, whereby Catholics traditionally came under the protective custody of the Husaynī family.

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336 See Palestine, Civil Service List, 1932 (Revised to the 1st of April, 1932), Alexandria: Whitehead Morris Limited, 1932, p. 52; also CO 733/287/2, ‘Letters’ page from extract of The Palestine Post, 19 June 1936; CO 733/310/2, telegram from High Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary, dated 26 May 1936.

337 He would later serve as vice-President of Hajj Amīn’s Palestine Arab Party (Hizb Al-‘Arabī), and represent the Christian community on the Husaynī-dominated Arab Higher Committee formed at the beginning of the national strike in April 1936 (see below).

338 Historically, the more important families of Jerusalem had tended to develop connections with one or another of the Christian communities in Palestine, such that the latter would be considered as coming under their protection. Geoffrey Furlonge, Palestine Is My Country, The Story of Musa Alami, (London: John
That said, the greater number of Christians tended to affiliate with the moderate faction. Many of these have already been mentioned—‘Īsā al-Īsā, Ya’qūb Farrāj, Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam, Shibli al-Jamal—and there is little reason to believe they were not characteristic of the broader Christian sentiment they claimed to represent. In part, the Christian tendency towards moderation also reflected certain realities related to Hajj Amīn’s positions as Grand Mufti and President of the Supreme Muslim Council. However inclusive he might claim to be, there was no escaping the fact that his political authority was rooted in what were Islamic institutions. As such, it was almost impossible that Christians might in connection with him define for themselves a meaningful role with respect to the nationalist movement. Even to the extent that Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and his followers did not actively promote the idea of an Arab identity rooted in Islam, given the basis of Hajj Amīn’s political authority, such a relationship was inevitably implied. As it was, they very often did promote just such a relationship. Thus, for example, Hajj Amīn often sought to characterise the Supreme Muslim Council as a nationalist body representative of the Palestinian Arabs as a whole.

By contrast, the moderate faction was considerably more secular, and hence, more inclusive. This was evident from the start of the Mandate. One might, for instance, compare what were probably two of the more important nationalist organisations early on—al-Muntaddā al-Adabī and al-Nādī al-’Arabī. The latter, as discussed above, tended to emphasise Islam as the basis of Arab nationalism. The former, dominated by the Nashāshībī faction, emphasised the Arabic language as its foundation. Among its

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activities, it sought to establish free libraries, schools and Arabic theatre. Unlike what was the case in al-Nādī al-ʾArabī (and, ironically, the MCAs), its members were not required to take an oath on the Qurʾān. Its secular character was even explicitly noted in its preliminary regulations—that “al-Muntadā al-Adabī [was] Arabic in principle and foundation and [was] not tinged with a religious colour but work[ed] for the benefit of the Arabic nation.” Christian involvement in al-Muntadā al-Adabī was certainly stronger than in al-Nādī al-ʾArabī. One of its four founders was Christian (Kustāndī al-Khūfī); likewise, the initiator of one of its branches (Yūsuf al-ʾIsā). In early 1919, one of its twelve-member Executive Committee and six of its 55 overall members were Christian. Organisations like al-Muntadā al-Adabī left open the question as to the exact nature of the relationship between Arab identity and Islam. As such, they were more inclusive of non-Muslims. Unfortunately for Christians, such organisations would over time prove of limited appeal to the vast majority of Palestine’s Muslims.

341 ISA 3939/98, regulations attached to letter sent to the military governor of Jerusalem, 13 February 1919.

342 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 218.

343 ISA 3939/98, extracts submitted to the military governor of Jerusalem, [no date].

344 ISA 7/12-72, Isa’s letter to the District Officer of Jaffa, 26 May 1919, and his response, 31 May 1919.

345 ISA 3939/98, lists submitted to the governor of Jerusalem, [no date].
Chapter III, The Christian Missionary Conference

Christian versus Muslim Employment

Though the moderates had proven successful in the recent municipal elections, the year 1928 saw a cooling of relations between Christians and Muslims. In part, this reflected the fact that by then Zionism appeared to be in full retreat. Since 1925, Jewish immigration to Palestine had been in a state of decline. In 1927, the number of Jews leaving Palestine had actually surpassed the number of those coming in; correspondingly, Zionism no longer seemed the threat it once had. Prior to that, the level of Jewish immigration had only gone up. Correspondingly, the struggle against Zionism had had about it an air of urgency, and thus had acted as a catalyst in bringing Muslims and Christians together. Suddenly, the ‘struggle’ no longer seemed so imperative, and Muslim attention quickly turned to other concerns.

Topping the list was a generally held belief that Christians were faring much better than Muslims under the Mandate. This feeling was especially acute with respect to jobs, particularly those related to government administration. Right from the start, Christians had, in this respect, been a privileged group. They had, for instance, filled a

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2 Peaking finally in 1925 at 33,801. Ibid.

disproportionate number of posts under the military administration. With the switch to civil administration, the High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel had begun substituting local for British personnel; Christians continued to be disproportionately represented, this in spite of Samuel’s stated intention of trying to incorporate larger numbers of Muslims into the administration. Muslims immediately took issue with this—thus in 1923, Samuel noted that he was “continually receiving representations on the question of the small number of Muslims employed in positions of responsibility.” Such representations would only increase in number and take on a stronger tone as the Mandate wore on.

An interesting observation of the situation at the time is that of Ben-Zvi, who argued that through their positions in the administration, Christians were effectively ruling over Muslims. Though a decidedly Zionist perspective, and thus not a disinterested one, it is worth bearing in mind that Ben-Zvi was an ethnographer of some repute and did have a genuine scholarly interest in the various communities of Palestine. Arguably then, his observation reflected at least a partial truth as far as Muslim-Christian relations were concerned. He contended that there was little real basis for Christian-Muslim unity,

4 Miller, Government and Society, p. 37.

5 See, for example, CO 733/50, minutes under heading ‘Appointment of Arab Sub-District Governors,’ 4 October 1923; CO 733/86, letter from Samuel to Shuckburgh, 11 April 1924; CO 733/24, file 40731, despatch from Samuel to Churchill, 6 August 1922; and CO 733/44, file 23077, letter from Samuel to the Secretary of State, 27 April 1923; also Miller, Government and Society, p. 50.

6 CO 733/44, file 23077, letter from Samuel to the Secretary of State, 27 April 1923.

7 See, for example, CO 733/86, letter from Samuel to Shuckburgh, 11 April 1924.

8 ISA, 1904/33, essay by Ben-Zvi entitled ‘Christians and Muslims in the Land of Israel’ [no date].

9 On the basis of which, he would later found the Institute for the Study of Oriental Jewish Communities (since renamed the Ben-Zvi Institute), which was devoted, among other things, to the study of the various communities and sects of Israel/Palestine.
something he saw as existing only in a superficial manner—what he referred to as a 'thin dusty layer'—noting that they lived communally segregated from one another. More importantly, he noted that they had opposing economic interests, those of the Christians being more related to trade and urban-based activities. He maintained, that Christians, particularly as represented by the Christian-run press, only played at solidarity with Muslims in order to divert attention away from the fact that it was they who were ruling the country! A similar argument was put forward by Gad Frumkin, a former judge. Given that they “were the most highly educated Arabs,” he argued, Christians had been confident that within a Muslim-Christian alliance, “they would have the upper hand.” Related to this, he added, they had taken on the role of “spokesman for the Arabs of Palestine to the British authorities, with whom they shared the kinship of Christianity.”

Indeed, Zvi argued, Christians preferred Christian government, even if it should be British.

At the core of Ben Zvi and Frumkin’s arguments was the idea that Christians were not really Arab, a view shared, in fact, by many outsiders. For example, in the ‘Interim Report on the Civil Administration for 1920-1921,’ the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel, when discussing the character of the indigenous population, noted that the non-Muslim population, “though speak[ing] Arabic and... termed Arabs, [were] largely of mixed race.” Another British official expressed the same sentiment somewhat more crudely perhaps when he characterised an Arab acquaintance of his as “Christian and

10 ISA, 1904/33, essay by Ben-Zvi.


12 ISA, 1904/33, essay by Ben-Zvi.

therefore a white man.\textsuperscript{14} Even Muslim leaders often spoke of Christians as constituting a community apart from Arabs. Thus, for example, during an interview between the visiting Colonial Secretary and the \textit{mufti}s of Jerusalem and Haifa in 1925, it was noted by the latter, in connections with their demands for independence, that there should be a representative council inclusive of "Arabs, Christians and original Jews."\textsuperscript{15}

There was some validity to the perception that the two constituted distinct communities. Certainly during Ottoman times, even when living in mixed communities and though usually having cordial relations, Muslims and Christians had led more or less separate existences. The nationalist movement, and particularly the threat of Zionism, had done much to overcome this feeling of separateness. Nonetheless, as Tibawi put it, "memories of the distant and recent past came not infrequently to the surface on provocative or jocular occasions."\textsuperscript{16} Under the Mandate, the Christian communities continued to live a somewhat separate communal existence, and for the most part were allowed to govern their internal affairs independently according to their own regulations.\textsuperscript{17} This was most evident with respect to the Christian law courts, which were allotted exclusive jurisdiction in matters of personal status—for instance, marriage, divorce, alimony and wills\textsuperscript{18}—as well as over religious \textit{waqfs}.\textsuperscript{19} Unlike the \textit{shari'a} courts, they did not come

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid}, p. 169.
\item \textsuperscript{15} CO 733/102, interview between the Secretary of State and the Muftis of Jerusalem and Haifa, Jerusalem, 21 April 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{17} See Daphne Tsimhoni, "The Status of the Arab Christians under the British Mandate in Palestine" in \textit{Middle Eastern Studies}, 20 iv, 1984, pp. 168, 171-172.
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 173-174.
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid}, p. 174; also J.B. Barron, \textit{Mohammedan Wakfs in Palestine} (Jerusalem: Palestine Government, 1922), pp. 72-73.
\end{itemize}
under the jurisdiction of the mandatory administration. Likewise, Arab Christians were generally guaranteed separate representation in the various schemes for representative and consultative bodies proposed by the mandatory government.  

When considering government policy, another factor was arguably at work as well—that is, it reflected a conscious attempt to divide Christians and Muslims so as to avoid their drawing closer together politically.  

By allocating Christians separate representation, the Palestine Government represented the population as being divided into separate religious communities rather than two national groups. On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that from 1923 onward (as discussed above), the Palestine Government had begun to pursue a policy aimed at representing Christians and Muslims as constituting one community. Thus, for instance, when commenting on the proposal that municipal elections should involve separate registers for Muslims, Christians and Jews—such that each should elect representatives up to a fixed number—the High Commissioner expressed reservations that

\[
\text{[t]his would have the effect of perpetuating existing divisions by preventing a movement, such as is already beginning, towards cooperation between groups of the different communities, and which it is most desirable to promote.}\]

---


21 See, for instance, CO 733/6, ‘Observations of the High Commissioner on the Draft Constitution of Palestine,’ Articles 3, 4 and 5, 5 October 1921.


23 CO 733/1, dispatch from Keith-Roach to Curzon, 14 February 1921.
The Municipal Franchise Ordinance of 1926, which determined the manner in which the above-referred elections of 1927 took place, represented a compromise in the end. Separate electoral registers were prepared for each religious community, and municipal seats were divided in proportion to the number of voters on their registers. At the same time, voters were not restricted from voting for members of other communities, but instead could vote for any individual standing for election. 24

Whatever other considerations informing British policy in this respect, it is fair to say that there did exist a genuine belief that, at least as far as their interests were concerned, Christians constituted a community apart from the larger Muslim one; likewise a concern that in the event that they were grouped together with Muslims, they might not attain any share in political authority. Herbert Samuel, the first High Commissioner expressed it as such:

[It] would be an error politically to force those two sections, which have not in the past been accustomed to combine, into a permanent union... The effect could only be that the Christians, in order to obtain any share of authority at all, would become more pro-Moslem, or at least anti-Jewish than the Moslems themselves... If, at any future time these two sections were to cease to be politically allied, no Christians at all might be elected to the Council, on the account of the overwhelming Moslem vote in every district. 25

Coming back to the issue of employment, there were, of course, some more practical considerations underlying the fact that a disproportionate number of Christians were


25 CO 733/6, Observations of the High Commissioner, 5 October 1921.
represented in the administration (as well as in other areas\textsuperscript{26}). At least during the early days of the Mandate; this was in large part justified by the fact that Christians on average had a substantially higher level of education than Muslims, and were thus better qualified.\textsuperscript{27} Both quantitatively and qualitatively, the education Christians received was, on average, more suited to administrative-type positions.\textsuperscript{28} A Christian education tended to be more secular-oriented and to emphasis foreign languages more. Related to the latter was the fact that, when hiring, the British gave precedence to those Arabs who spoke English.\textsuperscript{29} The educational disparity between Muslims and Christians was most clearly pronounced in their respective literacy rates. On average, during the Mandate period, the male literacy rate for Christians was about three times that for Muslims.\textsuperscript{30} Likewise, the disparity was great with respect to school attendance—according to official figures for 1923, of those children age five through fourteen, only seventeen percent of Muslims versus eighty-one percent of Christians were in school. More important when considering employment prospects perhaps are the figures for those between the ages of fifteen and


\textsuperscript{29} Miller, Government and Society, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{30} The disparity was even greater for women. For an overall discussion on the subject, see Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, the Construction of Modern National Consciousness, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
eighteen—here, only three per cent of Muslims were in school against thirty-seven per cent of Christians.31

By the time of the 1931 Census, the first year for which literacy figures are available,32 we find that a large disparity still existed between Christians and Muslims (see Table 3.1). Nonetheless, the situation had improved, and by the end of the Mandate, nearly half of the Arab school-age population would be enrolled in schools, roughly a third of them in government schools.33 This would mark a tremendous improvement over what had been the situation at the beginning of the Mandate. As of the 1922 census, just a little over 20 per cent of Arab school-aged children were in schools. More striking perhaps would be the change with respect to the countryside. By the end of the Mandate, nearly 65 per cent of boys in the countryside were in school (though only 10 per cent of girls).34 Much of this would be achieved through the efforts of the British in the form of government-provided schools.35 As of 1928, however, a good deal remained to be done. The Palestine Government scheme for providing schools—whereby villages and towns provided buildings, and the government, teachers36—had actually been suspended in


32 Ami Ayalon, Reading Palestine, Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 16.

33 By 1947, approximately 147,000 of an estimated Arab school-age population of 300,000 were in school. The figures for enrolment in government schools are taken for 1947-48; those for private schools for 1945-46. See Appendix C in Tibawi, Arab Education, pp. 270-271.

34 Though how much the British should be credited for the spread of education in rural areas has been the subject of some debate. See, for instance, Miller, Government and Society, pp. 90-118.

35 Of the 147,000 Arabs enrolled in school for the school year 1947-48, roughly 103,000 were in government schools. The rest were in private schools. See Appendix C in Tibawi, Arab Education, pp. 270-271.

36 See, for instance, ibid, pp. 24-25.
Table 3.1. All Palestine: education by religion and age for males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion and age</th>
<th>Male population</th>
<th>Literate</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>352,172</td>
<td>66,711</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>57,770</td>
<td>18,110</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-21</td>
<td>39,791</td>
<td>11,594</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-</td>
<td>164,003</td>
<td>35,906</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>45,896</td>
<td>26,848</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>6,794</td>
<td>4,506</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-21</td>
<td>5,853</td>
<td>4,763</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-</td>
<td>24,123</td>
<td>17,030</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 Taken from the Census of Palestine (London: HMSO, 1932), 2:110, Table IX (B), Part I, Summary. Percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number.

1923 due to a lack of funds. At that point, only 314 government schools had been established. Many of the early government schools, moreover, were converted kuttabs, a kind of religious primary school, a fact of no small consequence with respect to later developments (see below). 37 Added to that was the fact that the Government only targeted villages with populations of 600 or more; thus, many of the smaller villages—arguably half of the entire rural community—did not receive state schools. 38 In addition to the lack of schools, many of the teachers were inadequately trained, particularly in the secondary schools, where the majority only had elementary qualifications. 39


38 Ibid, p. 25.

39 Colonial No. 12, Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government on the Administration Under Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1924, London, HMSO, 1925, pp. 27-28; also Tibawi, Arab Education, p. 55. See Table A.6 in the Appendix concerning the establishment of government schools by the Civil Administration through 1925.
Some efforts were made by Muslims to improve their own situation with respect to
education. Shortly after its creation, for example, the Supreme Muslim Council
established its own education department, through which it absorbed many of the private
Muslim schools, or kuttabs. 40 Additionally, it opened several elementary-secondary
schools, though these generally had a strong religious character. A number of voluntary
organisations—for example, the Haifa Muslim Association and the Jaffa Local
Committee—were also established for the purpose of maintaining schools of an
elementary standard. 41 Several organisations funded students to study abroad, for
instance, the Society for the Promotion of Higher Studies among Muslims, founded in
1925. Conducted entirely by and for Palestine’s Muslims, the Society managed to fund,
wholly or in part, several students to attend the university in Beirut. 42 In like manner, the
Supreme Muslim Council funded several students to attend al-Azhar and other
institutions in Cairo. 43 Generally speaking though, it could be said that Muslim efforts
fell short. 44 As of 1933, the number of specifically Muslim schools was quite small,
particularly secondary schools, of which there were only two—the Rawdat al-Ma’ārif in
Jerusalem and the Najāh School in Nablus, both partially funded by the Supreme Muslim
Council. 45

40 Ibid, pp. 57, 183.

41 Ibid, p. 59.

42 Colonial No. 15, p. 31; also Tibawi, Arab Education, p. 60.

43 Ibid, pp. 59-60.

44 One might compare the amount of grants-in-aid monies allocated non-government Muslim schools
against that allocated Christian ones; in 1924, for instance, £E 1,485 was allocated Christians against only

45 Counting orphanages (which generally provided training in at least trades and handicrafts), the Supreme
p. 253. See also Tibawi, Arab Education, p. 59.
Even if proportionally lagging behind Christians with respect to education, it should be borne in mind that Muslims accounted for roughly 89 percent of the Arab population.\footnote{Based on the 1931 census, \textit{Census of Palestine 1931} (London: HMSO, 1932), 2:110.} Thus, whereas Christian predominance with respect to administrative positions might seem entirely justified when going by the percentages (Table 3.2), a different story emerges if we look at the actual numbers (Table 3.3). Looking at the raw numbers for literacy, for instance, Muslims would actually seem to have an edge over Christians.

Table 3.2. All Palestine: literate Muslim males versus literate Christian males by percentages\textsuperscript{1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Literate Muslims</th>
<th>Literate Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 7-14</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 14-21</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 21-</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 Based on the \textit{Census of Palestine} (London: HMSO, 1932), 2:110, Table IX (B), Part I, Summary.

Table 3.3. All Palestine: literate Muslim males versus literate Christian males by numbers\textsuperscript{1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Literate Muslims</th>
<th>Literate Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66,711</td>
<td>26,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 7-14</td>
<td>18,110</td>
<td>4,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 14-21</td>
<td>11,594</td>
<td>4,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 21-</td>
<td>35,906</td>
<td>17,030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 Derived from the \textit{Census of Palestine} (London: HMSO, 1932), 2:110, Table IX (B), Part I, Summary.
Of course, being literate was not in itself sufficient to qualify for an administrative position. More relevant in this respect would be the actual level of education achieved. Comparing Muslims with Christians on the basis of years of education gives us the figures in Table 3.4. Once again, we find a disparity between Christians and Muslims. Still, it is not as big as we might have anticipated, and once more, a consideration of the raw numbers would seem warranted (Table 3.5). Looking at the actual numbers—particularly those for the 21+ category with 15+ years of schooling, probably the more

Table 3.4. For All Palestine: number of years at an educational institution by age\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion and years at school</th>
<th>14-21 years of age</th>
<th>21 years + of age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of overall population</td>
<td>% of literate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>76,291</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literate</td>
<td>11,594</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years +</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>11,737</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literate</td>
<td>4,763</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years +</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \(^1\) Based on the Census of Palestine (London: HMSO, 1932), 2:124-125, Table IX (B), Part I, Summary.

\(^{47}\) Particularly given the fact that 'state of literacy' as indicated in the 1931 Census was essentially self-assessed—individuals were simply asked whether in fact they were able to read and write. A brief reading/writing test for ascertaining the findings, a procedure sometimes used in such surveys, was not applied. Ami Ayalon, Reading Palestine, p. 17.
Table 3.5. All Palestine: Muslim males versus Christian males with respect to number of years at an educational institution by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years at school</th>
<th>Male population</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14-21 years of age</td>
<td>21 + years of age</td>
<td>14-21 years of age</td>
<td>21 + years of age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literate</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11,594</td>
<td>4,763</td>
<td>35,906</td>
<td>17,030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>1,714</td>
<td>1,845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>404</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 Derived from the *Census of Palestine* (London: HMSO, 1932), 2:124-125, Table IX (B), Part I, Summary.

crucial with respect to government employment—one would expect a ratio of roughly 3:2—that is, three Christians hired for every two Muslims.

What was the actual case then? According to the High Commissioner's 'Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine' for 1920-1921, as of 1921, the Palestine Government employed 1,633 Arabs, 1,049 of which were Christian (see Table 3.6 below). If we discount those employed by the Legal Department (corresponding to the heading 'Law and Justice')—given that many of these worked in the shari'a courts—

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48 Command Paper Number 1499, *An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine*, p. 25. Interestingly enough, in a telegram to the Colonial Secretary dated 29 June 1921, the High Commissioner indicated a breakdown of 1,338 Christians versus 719 Muslims. CO 733/4, telegram from Samuel to the Colonial Secretary, 29 June 1921. Table A.5 in the Appendix provides a complete breakdown of government administrative positions by religion as found in Command Paper Number 1499.

49 See Palestine, *Civil Service List, 1932 (Revised to the 1st of April, 1932)* (Alexandria: Whitehead Morris Limited, 1932), pp. 53-55. These numbers include individuals affiliated with the civil courts as well, inclusive of judges. See ibid, pp. 35-51. In a predominantly Muslim country, it was almost inconceivable that the majority of non-British judges should be anything but Muslim. The department might thus be considered as constituting an exception with respect to overall government hiring practices—hence, my decision to discount it. See Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, pp. 184-187, 193-194.
Table 3.6. Arabs employed by the Palestine Government by religion for the period 1920-1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governate or Department</th>
<th>Senior Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th>Junior Staff</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chr.</td>
<td>Mus.</td>
<td>Chr.</td>
<td>Mus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beersheba Governate</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galilee Governate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza Governate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffa Governate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem Governate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenicia Governate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaria Governate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Administration</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Justice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiquities</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and Travel</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Commission</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Registries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports and Lights</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts and Telegraphs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Custodian</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Security</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine Railway</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 Derived from the table in Appendix II of Command Paper Number 1499, An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, during the period 1st July, 1920—30th June, 1921, presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, August, 1921, p. 25.
the numbers become 1,450 and 891 respectively; that is, of the 1,450 Arabs employed by
the Government, 891 of them were Christian.\textsuperscript{50} This does, in fact, give us a ratio of
roughly 3 Christians for every 2 Muslims, and this at an early point in the Mandate, when
one might have expected hiring practices to be hugely disproportionate in favour of
Christians. With respect to certain categories however, it is difficult to say with any
certainty what was the actual nature of the positions involved. For instance, the great
majority of those under the headings ‘Post and Telegraph’ and ‘Palestine Railway’ were
very likely low-level ones.\textsuperscript{51} If we consider only those categories most likely
representative of high-level positions, we get a different picture. Thus, for instance, if we
consider only those positions related to the governates, the numbers become 89 and
18 respectively—that is, 89 Christians versus 18 Muslims. This gives us a ratio of five
Christians for every one Muslim. A similar picture emerges if we consider only Senior
Staff (again, not counting the Legal Department), which gives us 77 Christians versus
24 Muslims—a ratio of three Christians for every one Muslim.

The disparity between Muslims and Christians was perhaps even more evident in, the
Public Works Department—of the 17 non-Jewish Palestinians employed there in 1921,
15 were Christian—and the High Commissioner was quick to note in an official
correspondence that though many Muslims had “the necessary technical qualifications
and personal character, [very few were] qualified as engineers.”\textsuperscript{52} The High

\textsuperscript{50} Christians under this heading are also discounted for the sake of fairness.

\textsuperscript{51} Hence the large number of positions qualified as ‘Junior Staff.’ Interestingly enough, in an attempt to
refute charges that the Government was discriminating against Muslims, the High Commissioner Herbert
Samuel specifically drew attention to the large numbers of Muslim railway employees. CO 733/78, Middle
East Department memorandum, C.P. 121 (24), February 1924.

\textsuperscript{52} Correspondence to the Colonial Secretary, 25 August 1921, in Command Paper Number 1540, Palestine,
Disturbances in May, 1921, Reports of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto,
Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, October, 1921, p. 63.
Commissioner ran into a similar problem when he attempted to get a Muslim appointed to the position of Assistant Director to the Department of Education; the problem was that there was none qualified for the position, something even Muslims were willing to concede. Efforts at promoting Muslim employment in the district administrations—where qualification requirements were less stringent—proved only partially successful, and a disparity remained there as well. Attempts by the Government to employ Muslims at the higher levels of government administration bore some fruit. The number of Muslims employed at the senior level in the Department of Education and in the Police and Prison Department steadily rose over the course of the Mandate. The problem, however, was still one of Muslims begin under-qualified. Thus, for instance, the number of Muslims employed in the Health Department continued to remain low throughout the Mandate as there were few Muslims qualified as doctors.

We might now consider the situation in 1929. The breakdown by religion with respect to administrative positions, set against that for 1921, is given in Table 3.7. Among the Senior Staff, of the 165 Palestinian Arabs employed, 78 were Christian and 87 Muslim; of the 2,120 Palestinian Arabs employed as Junior Staff members, 1,098 were Christian

53 CO 733/24, file 40731, despatch from Samuel to Churchill, 6 August 1922.

54 Ibid.

55 See, for example, CO 733/50, minutes under heading ‘Appointment of Arab Sub-District Governors,’ 4 October 1923; CO 733/86, letter from Samuel to Shuckburgh, 11 April 1924; and CO 733/44, file 23077, letter from Samuel to the Secretary of State, 27 April 1923.; also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, pp. 178-184.

56 Ibid, p. 194.

57 See, for example, CO 733/44, file 23077, letter from Samuel to the Secretary of State, 27 April 1923; also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, pp. 198-199.

58 Ibid, p. 194.
Table 3.7. Christian versus Muslim employment in the Palestine Administration, 1929 versus 1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff level</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Total Arabs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Staff</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Staff</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>1,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>1,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Senior Staff</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Junior Staff</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Government of Palestine 1929

| Senior Staff         | 239     | 78         | 87      | 165         |
| Junior Staff         | 158     | 1,098      | 1,024   | 2,122       |
| Total                | 397     | 1,176      | 1,111   | 2,287       |
| Percentage Senior Staff | 47.3%   | 52.7%      |         |             |
| Percentage Junior Staff | 51.7%   | 48.3%      |         |             |


and 1,024 Muslims. While Christians were still being represented in numbers disproportionate to their percentage of the overall Arab population, it would seem the situation of Muslims had improved. We might again consider the numbers sans the Legal Department as above. Unfortunately, the figures for 1929 concerning the breakdown of administrative staff are not as detailed as those for 1920-21. However, if we assume that the number of those employed in the Legal Department had not changed\(^59\) (thus setting it

\(^59\) In actual fact, between 1921 and 1926, the number of the shari'a courts expanded (see below), in which case, we might anticipate that the final ratio (that is, sans the Legal Department) should actually be slightly higher in favour of Christians. Ibid, p. 193.
Table 3.8. Christian versus Muslim employment in the Palestine Administration as of 1929 sans the Legal Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muslim versus Christian Employment</th>
<th>Senior Staff</th>
<th>Junior Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official figures</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By percent</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sans Legal Department</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By percent</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At 39 Senior Staff and 119 Junior Staff for Muslims and 5 Senior Staff and 20 Junior Staff for Christians we get the figures in Table 3.8. This gives us 73 Christians versus 48 Muslims for Senior Staff, and 1,078 Christians versus 953 Muslims for Junior Staff, or roughly three Christians for every two Muslim at the senior staff level, and one Christian for every Muslim at the junior staff level. Though Christians still outnumbered Muslims, at least with respect to senior staff positions, the ratio of 3:2 approximates the one anticipated based on the number of years of education for Muslims versus Christians (see Table 3.5).

Before moving on, it is interesting to consider a similar analysis done by Tsimhoni comparing Christian and Muslim employment in government administrative positions. According to his calculations, the percentage of Muslims in junior level positions did increase between 1922 and 1924, something he attributes largely to an expansion of the government’s bureaucracy. After that it pretty much stabilised, however, and Christians continued to be disproportionately represented. Tsimhoni notes a similar phenomenon for senior level positions, though here, he attributes the initial growth of Muslim-filled
Table 3.9. Christian versus Muslim employment by percentage (from Tsimhoni)¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1922</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Junior Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ¹ The above figures are based on calculations made by Daphne Tsimhoni. See Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, pp. 190-193.

positions to an enlargement of the *shari‘a* courts, between 1921 and 1926. The number of *shari‘a* courts was later reduced in 1930. (See Table 3.9.) In both cases, he attributes the fact that Christians remained disproportionately represented in government administration to the simple fact that they remained better qualified.⁶⁰

Whatever the actual case, a perception certainly existed amongst Muslims that the disparity between them and Christians in the area of government employment was unjustified. Many felt that advances made in education had not translated into a corresponding rise in employment opportunities.⁶¹ In any event, if Muslims were under-educated, it was the Government that was held responsible; many felt quite strongly that the Government had not done everything possible to remedy the


⁶¹ *Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*, 16 August 1928; also *al-Ittihād al-‘Arabī*, 27 June 1925; and *al-Karmil*, 17 June 1936.
situation.\textsuperscript{62} As early as 1921, the problem of education was already seen by Muslims as one pertaining specifically to them. As expressed by the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, "[t]he matter is continually referred to as a grievance by the Moslem leaders, who point out that in a country, where their people contribute the greater part of the taxation, their sons should have adequate opportunities of continuing their education beyond the primary stage."\textsuperscript{63}

Added to this was the fact that the holding of such positions might easily be construed as constituting a preparation for the eventual running of an independent Palestinian state. The question of who was actually 'running the country' was a particularly sensitive one given the fact that, with the coming of the Mandate, the Muslim community had effectively been turned into a millet.\textsuperscript{64} In large part, this had reflected a practical necessity, and from an early point, the millet system was consciously adopted as a model for dealing with what Sir Herbert Samuel considered to be the communal national issue in Palestine.\textsuperscript{65} During the Ottoman period, Muslims had made up the ruling class and thus had had no communal organisation of their own inasmuch as their religious courts and \textit{waqfs} had formed a part of the general administration. The reality of British administration had necessitated their being reconstituted on a communal basis; otherwise,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabīyyah, 24 September 1928, 14 August 1930; Filastīn, 24 April 1928. Though it is interesting to note that on occasion, the opposite was argued by Muslims when trying to convince co-religionists not to send their children to missionary schools. Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabīyyah, 16 February 1928.
\item \textsuperscript{63} CO 733/8, correspondence from Sir Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner, to W. Churchill, the Secretary of State, 15 December 1921. This is a theme that would be taken up in earnest at the time of the International Missionary Conference. See for example, Filastīn, 24 April 1928; al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabīyyah, 16 August 1928.
\item \textsuperscript{64} See Tsimhoni, "The Status of the Arab Christians," pp. 171, 173; also O’Mahony, "Palestinian Christians," p. 33.
\end{itemize}
unlike the Christians and Jews, they would have been left without proper representation. For many Muslims, their ‘milletisation’ constituted a humiliation. Correspondingly, the fact that a disproportionate number of administrative posts were held by Christians was of no small consequence. A strong Christian Arab presence was evident, moreover, not only in the administration, but in the police and gendarmerie as well. Christians were actually quite prominent within the officer ranks of the former, and while their numbers in the latter more or less corresponded to their proportion of the overall Arab population, the simple fact of Christians serving in such a force in significant numbers was in and of itself something quite novel.

Muslim efforts at drawing attention to their grievances concerning education and employment were most pronounced in the Young Men’s Muslim Associations (YMMAs). The YMMAs were ostensibly formed as religious, social and cultural organisations for youth beginning in 1927. While in principle restricted from engaging in politics, they would become increasingly active on the issue of Muslim non-employment in the Government. Particularly during the 1930s, they would campaign vigorously for an increase in the proportion of Muslims working in the Government. Attempts at highlighting these grievances were also evident in the press. Typical in this

66 See Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 118; also O'Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 33.

67 See, for instance, CO 733/69, secret ‘Political Report’ from Symes to the Chief Secretary, 29 May 1924.


69 In Arabic, al-Jam’iyat ash-Shuban al-‘Arab.


71 Concerning the resolutions taken at its Fourth Congress, see al-Jāmi’ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 12 July 1932.
respect was an article appearing in *al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*, which noted that of the 12 Muslims who graduated in 1927, only three had found a job in Palestine. The article made clear, moreover, that, while the favouritism earlier shown Christians might have been justified, this was no longer the case. Towards the end of the article, the writer asks rather sarcastically if the “Government was still denying that Muslim youth have earned degrees?” While the article refers to teaching posts as well, it is with respect to government positions that one detects a hint of resentment towards Christian Arabs. Thus, it was noted that appropriate government positions did exist—the problem was that they were already filled, and not by Muslims. As the Mandate progressed, the resentment directed at Christians would become more overt. By the mid-1930s, it was not uncommon to hear statements to the effect that “the Christians [were] robbing the Muslims of their rights to [Government] offices.”

In connection with such grievances, many Muslims would, by the end of the decade, begin tending towards political radicalism—a radicalism, moreover, with a distinctly Islamic character. Quite a few of these were exactly those newly educated Muslim youth being so ‘wrongfully’ deprived of meaningful employment. Others were peasants recently migrated to the cities and larger towns, where they had come seeking employment. Both types of individuals were becoming increasingly affiliated with Islamic institutions, not just the mosques, but also social organisations such as the YMMAs. Significantly, affiliated with both the mosques and the YMMAs were religious reformers preaching Islamic orthodoxy; individuals who sought to cleanse the Islamic faith of superstition and folk practices. As discussed more fully in the fifth chapter, such reformers also tended to be ardent nationalists. Indeed, many would become militantly active, and would seek to instil within their followers a discipline vis-à-vis the nationalist

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72 Ibid, 16 August 1928. See also *Mir‘at al-Shārq*, 14 June 1924, 10 October 1925; *al-Itiḥād al-‘Arabī*, 27 June 1925; and Tsimhoni, *The British Mandate*, p. 274.

73 Porath, *The Emergence*, p. 301.

movement founded on right religious practice and religious piety (see below). As more
and more Muslims became disenchanted with the traditional leadership, such figures
would have an increasing appeal. Growing radicalism among Muslims reflected another
factor as well—namely, their educational experience within government provided
schools. Such schools had a low degree of government supervision.\textsuperscript{75} For the most part,
the Government's only role with respect to government schools was to provide teachers'
salaries along with some basic training. Beyond that, there was little oversight, and in
many respects, they came to act as incubators for nationalist thought, something perhaps
most evident in the degree to which pupils observed both general and partial nationalist
strikes.\textsuperscript{76}

Significantly, these schools were predominantly Muslim. Very few Christians attended
government schools—in 1925, they numbered only 2,285, approximately 12 per cent of
the total number of Arabs attending at the time.\textsuperscript{77} Those few that did were mostly based
in the larger towns and cities, where they formed sizeable communities. This
preponderance of Muslims within the government schools had a determinative effect as
far as the kind of nationalism propagated in them. True, in the larger towns and cities,
where government schools were often enough attended by both Muslims and Christians,\textsuperscript{78}
nationalism tended to take on a more secular character, one that expressed itself primarily
in a concern that Arabic history and geography be given a proper emphasis.\textsuperscript{79} The
situation was quite different, however, in the smaller towns and villages. There, many of

\textsuperscript{75} See, for instance, Tibawi, \textit{Arab Education}, pp. 196-197.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, pp. 196-200.
\textsuperscript{77} O'Mahony, "Palestinian Christians," p. 40. Not surprisingly, the great majority came from the Orthodox
community. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Tibawi, \textit{Arab Education}, pp. 71-73.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, pp. 88, 90.
the government schools were little more than converted *kuttabs*, and continued to maintain a more or less religious curriculum centred largely round the Qurʾān. Many of the teachers—only recently returned from the cities and larger towns where they had completed their training—were soon inculcating within their students ideas about Arab nationalism. Significantly, it was an Arab nationalism that emphasised the relationship between Islam and Arab identity. The influence of such teachers often extended beyond their students to the village community as a whole, inclusive even of those who were illiterate.

In Muslim private schools, the emphasis given the relationship between Islam and Arab nationalism was even more overt. Nationalism was, in many cases, portrayed as simply one aspect of religion. As Tibawi puts it,

> Texts from the Quran or Hadith of the Prophet were expounded in such a way that the outcome might as well be presumed to come from a political treatise. Conversely, political events and current affairs were so subtly represented in a religious garb with an irresistible appeal to the minds of the young, that gave the impression that the outcome was in accord with the wishes of the early caliphs or indeed of Muhammad himself.

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80 Ibid, pp. 74, 78.


When considering the provision of an Islamic-nationalist education, one must also take into account the Young Men’s Muslim Associations (with which, until it became prohibited, many government teachers were affiliated), as well as the various Muslim youth clubs and scouts. Added to this were the efforts of the Supreme Muslim Council in the area of adult education. See collectively, these various developments lay the groundwork for an Islamic-religious militancy. All that was needed was an issue that might sufficiently galvanise Muslim opinion.

The Christian Missionary Conference

At the end of March 1928, an international conference of Protestant missionaries convened in Jerusalem. A specially enlarged ‘meeting’ of the International Missionary Council, the conference stood in session for two weeks. The Conference was highly visible almost from the start as the delegates gathered the second day in the open-air on the Mount of Olives to hear an address by Dr. Rennie MacInnes, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem. About a week later, on Palm Sunday, the participants in the conference made a devotional pilgrimage along the route travelled by Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem.

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87 Most of the factual information provided here on the Christian Missionary Conference is derived from the actual minutes of the conference—Minutes of the International Missionary Council and of the Committee of the Council, (Enlarged Meeting) Jerusalem, March 24-April 8, 1928, (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1928)—as well as articles covering the event appearing in the Palestine Bulletin between 21 March and 12 April 1928.


89 Palestine Bulletin, 26 March 1928.
stopping four times along the way to conduct religious services. A few days later, on the Eve of Good Friday, most of the delegates could be found in the Kedron Valley, either attending a service conducted by Dr. MacInnes, or meditating in the Garden of Gethsemane. Altogether, roughly 240 delegates attended, many of them non-European. The Conference tended to focus on social issues (inclusive of education); also the relationship between what were termed the ‘older’ and ‘younger’ churches—the ‘mother-churches’ based in Europe and North America, and the churches that had taken root in Asia and Africa due to Protestant missionary efforts.

Muslim agitation began even before the Conference had started. Typical was an article appearing in *al-Jāmi‘a‘h al-‘Arabiyyah* on 5 March, deriding the Government’s decision to allow the conference to go through, and calling on Palestine’s Muslims to “stand up like one man who is dedicated to his religion, [and not let] the missionaries achieve [their aim].” Growing Muslim sentiment against the conference was of great concern to those organising it. Shortly before the conference began, a statement was issued by the Anglican Bishop in the Arabic newspaper *Sawt Al-Sh‘ab*. In addition to emphasizing the benefits gained by Palestine’s Arabs as a result of missionary efforts, he noted that Jerusalem had been chosen as “it was gradually becoming a universal geographical centre, and [was] the cradle of Christianity.” Arguably, this was not the best argument to make if the objective was to alleviate Muslim concerns that ‘Christian’ Europe had designs on the Holy Land. MacInnes’ further comment, that “the Caliphate conferences at Mecca and Cairo were met with respect by other [read Christian] people,” probably

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90 Ibid, 3 April 1928.

91 Ibid, 8 April 1928.

92 Concerning the topics discussed at the conference, see Minutes, especially pp. 27-36, 44, 54-55, 58-59.

93 *al-Jāmi‘a‘h al-‘Arabiyyah*, 5 March 1928, 4 May, 3 September 1930

only aggravated the situation given the implied analogy between Mecca and Islam on the one hand, and Jerusalem and Christianity on the other.

In any case, Muslim misgivings remained undiminished, and demonstrations took place throughout Palestine for the duration of the Conference. Various letters of protest were sent to the Supreme Muslim Council, which itself issued a formal protest to the Palestine Government. The Young Men’s Muslim Associations in most of the major towns in Palestine (as well as Transjordan) cabled protests to the High Commissioner. Shortly after the Conference, they convened their first meeting in which they roundly condemned both the Conference and missionary activity in general. At the Nabi Musa pilgrimage, which took place almost concurrently with the Conference, thousands of Muslims chanted ‘down with the Missionary Conference.’ The Mufti in Haifa expressed concern about the Conference, noting that “the present work of missionaries in our country and their open slandering of Islam and the Prophet have caused great irritation amongst the Moslems.” He went on to describe the Palestine Government as one “which tries in the worst manner to abolish our religion and traditions, a thing which no Moslem can forbear.” This conference, now the second of its kind, seemed evidence to many Muslims of what was a more aggressive evangelising than had been the case at the

95 Concerning the various protests, see Khleh, Filastin, p. 437.
96 Palestine Bulletin, 10 April 1928.
97 See resolutions in al-Karmil, 28 April 1928; also Khleh, Filastin, pp. 437-438.
99 CO 733/155/15, telegram from the Mufti to the British Government, sent through Plumer, 4 April 1928.
beginning of the Mandate—as one Muslim described it, an evangelism “of extremely antagonistic spirit.”

On 13 April, shortly after the Conference’s conclusion, a gathering at the Mosque in Gaza, in which numerous speakers delivered addresses against Christian missionary activity in Palestine, quickly degenerated into a riot following rumours that a delegation sent to the District Administration Office had been arrested. Police officers were assaulted, and several Arabs wounded, and it was only after reinforcement troops were called in from Jaffa that order was restored. For the most part, the agitation was confined to Gaza, though protests of one form or another continued for some time afterwards. A week after the conference had concluded, Muslims in Jerusalem were called upon to close their shops in protest against the Conference and missionary activity in general. Protests were cabled not only to the High Commissioner, but also to King George, the Colonial Office, the Governments of France and Italy, and several Muslim rulers. The Young Men’s Muslim Associations cabled the Government a protest against the use of force by the police in the incident in Gaza. They also passed a resolution calling for the dismissal of the Administrative Officer in Gaza. In Nablus and Hebron, demonstrations took place involving teachers and students against the Conference and

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100 CO 733/155/15, telegram from Abdulhadi and Khalili, on behalf of ‘certain advocates,’ to the Colonial Secretary, 11 April 1928.

101 Ibid, dispatch from Plumer, to the Colonial Secretary, 26 April 1928. See also Palestine Bulletin, 15 April 1922; and Khleh, Filastin, p. 437.

102 Palestine Bulletin, 19, 20, 22 April 1922.

103 Khleh, Filastin, p. 437.

104 Palestine Bulletin, 23 April 1922.
what had transpired in Gaza. Particularly targeted were missionary schools, and numerous articles soon began to appear calling on Muslims to stop sending their children to these schools. Indeed, this particular issue became something of a cause celebre among Muslims. Thus, for instance, it was probably the single most important topic covered at the Congress of the Young Men’s Muslim Associations convened later that month. As one British official in Palestine noted in reflecting on the agitation caused by the International Missionary Conference, “there is much explosive material in Palestine, and...the Jewish problem is not our only difficulty here.”

While the Missionary Conference did not overtly state as one of its goals the evangelising of Muslims, it certainly considered that modernisation in the East should be rooted in the Christian faith. Further, it was clear that it saw a role for Eastern Christians in this respect. An important goal of the Conference, noted by Dr. Mott at the opening meeting, was the promotion of greater cooperation between the churches of the East and West, so that the “missionary enthusiasm which characterized the churches of early Christianity [might be] set free.” In many ways, by its very make-up, the Conference seemed to speak of the West’s desire to Christianise the East; of the roughly 240 delegates that were


106 See, for instance, al-Jāmi‘ah al-Arabiyyah, 16 February 1928.

107 See, for instance, Filastīn, 24 April 1928; al-Karmil, 29 April 1928; also Khleih, Filastīn, p. 437.


109 Palestine Bulletin, 26, 30 March 1928 and 1 April 1928. See also Minutes, pp. 29, 34, 36, 56.

110 Palestine Bulletin, 26 March 1928. See also Minutes, p. 49.

111 From a statement adopted by the Council. See ibid.
present, almost half were represented by recently established churches in India, China, Japan, Africa and the Philippines.  

A common theme evident at the Conference, though not explicitly with reference to Palestine or the other Arab countries, was the special role of indigenous churches in promoting Christianity in their home-countries.

Most Christian Arabs in Palestine disparaged the idea that they should act as the handmaiden of Western missionaries, and indeed several articles appeared in Christian-run newspapers equating missionary activity with colonialism. An article appearing in al-Karmil, for instance, argued that even “the good missionaries open the way for colonisation and serve its interests,” this because “in the heart of every missionary was a love of his country and government.”

In many cases, Christian opposition to missionary activity reflected the resentment felt towards evangelical activity directed at them. In this respect, Latin Catholics were targeted as much as Protestants, though more often in connection with Catholic educational institutions. Typical in this respect was a letter written to the Chief Secretary in Jerusalem by Marie Vitalis, an Orthodox Arab, protesting what she claimed to be the forced conversion of her daughter by the sisters of the Seours Franciscaines de Marie, the school she was attending. In it, she noted rather emphatically that “[m]any mothers like me have suffered from these sisters that put intrigues between the daughter and her mother to serve their propaganda.” She ended by expressing her “hope that the Government [would] put an end to these religious questions that serve nothing but to make suffer the mothers.”

On the face of it at least, many Muslim Arabs were also dismissive of the idea that Christians might support missionary activity. Even al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, the

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112 Palestine Bulletin, 26 March 1928.

113 Ibid, 29 March 1928.

114 Al-Karmil, 11 July 1931; also al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 16 February 1928.

115 ISA 13/12, Change of Religion, 1928, letter from Marie Vitalis to the Chief Secretary, 3 August 1928.
mouthpiece of Haj Amīn and a newspaper often given to criticising Christians for not being sufficiently committed to the cause,116 was quick to note that not a single Christian from Palestine had attended the Missionary Conference.117 At the same time, it was certainly not the case that no Arab Christians (that is, from Arab countries other than Palestine) had attended; neither that all Arab Christians were unsympathetic with Western missionary objectives.118 Even in Palestine, when criticising missionary activity, Christian Arabs often qualified their criticism by noting that many missionaries “had a good heart and a good will [and] were worthy of respect”119; equally that they were supportive of them as individuals and counted many of them among their friends.120 They were also quick to point out that the Conference had been unfairly portrayed by most Muslims. In this vein, the Orthodox Youth Club in Jaffa issued a statement that, while sympathetic to Muslim sensibilities, repudiated the accusation that the Conference had been critical of Islam or had expressed a desire to convert Muslims to Christianity, and called on the Government “to put an end to this kind of propaganda in the future.”121

In actual fact, the Conference rarely focused in any overt sense on the subject of evangelism,122 particularly with respect to the Middle East.123 More discussion was given

116 See, for example, al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 24 April, 3 June 1928.


118 Palestine Bulletin, 29 March 1928.

119 Al-Karmil, 11 July 1931.

120 Ibid.

121 Filastīn, 14 April 1928.

122 See Minutes, pp. 30, 32.

to the necessity of resolving differences between the various sects and denominations of Christianity. Nonetheless, the overriding concern in the end was that such divisions created an obstacle to spreading the word—that it “obscure[d] Him in the minds of a perplexed mankind.” While an effort was made to demonstrate some degree of sensitivity with respect to non-Christian faiths—often, it would seem, by employing intentionally ambiguous language regarding any evangelical intentions—the fact of the matter is that proselytising was what missionaries did. An article appearing towards the end of the Conference in the journal Near East and India perhaps summed up the link best when it characterised the Conference as a case of “Protestant Christendom [assembling] in the Holy City for the purpose of so sharpening Protestant missionary effort that the whole impact of the West upon the East, whether in the professional cultural, industrial, or social sphere, should have a Christian character.” One might characterise it as evangelism by the back-door, whatever the case, the desired outcome was the same. Hence, the same article went on to note that, for many, the ultimate purpose of the Conference (as with evangelism in general) was, in fact, the “actual ‘conversion’ of Muslims, Hindus and others.”

124 Ibid, 27 March, 4 April 1928.

125 Ibid, 27 March 1928.

126 See, for instance, ibid, 8 April 1928.

127 Excerpt reprinted in ibid, 9 April 1928.


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While there is no record that the Conference ever directly attacked Islam, it was commonly believed by Palestine's Muslims that this had been its main purpose. In particular, it was held that the Conference had sought to denigrate the good name of the Prophet. That missionaries commonly did so was a widely held truism among Muslims. Thus, for instance, in a letter appearing in *al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*, it was noted that at a missionary conference held two years prior, those participating “had not left any word from the ‘cursing’ dictionary in criticising Muhammad, the son of ‘Abdallah.” Muslims were primarily concerned with Christian evangelism.

Evangelism of course was not something new, and had been practiced before the Mandate. Then, however, it had been directed primarily at Jews and Eastern Christians. Under British rule, however, the conditions on the ground had changed sufficiently so as to greatly facilitate Christian evangelism, and missionaries now began to target Muslims. Apostasy by Muslims, which under Islamic law had been punishable by death during the Ottoman period, was now openly permitted.

130 Relatedly, it was considered that the resolutions that were published by the International Missionary Council were not the real ones, and were only for show. *Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*, 24 May 1928.

131 Ibid, 4 May, 5 June 1928.

132 Referenced in *al-Karmil*, 5 March 1928. See also *al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*, 4, 21 May 1928; and *Filastīn*, 24 April 1928.

133 See, for example, *al-Karmil*, 8 July 1931.

134 As noted in the first chapter, since 1856, apostasy by Muslims had, in theory at least, been permissible. Nonetheless, it was something that continued to be strongly discouraged. See, for instance, Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria, Volume I* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2002 [first published in 1910 by Fleming H. Revell Company, New York]), pp. 267-268, 291.

Seen against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that Christian Arabs were
affected by the backlash caused by the Missionary Conference, even given the fact that
they had not really participated. The Arab countries as a whole were represented by only
nine delegates, many of them not even Arab, and none of them Palestinian.\textsuperscript{136} Several
local ecclesiastical dignitaries were entertained at a reception given by the Missionary
Council at Government House, amongst them the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Damianos,\textsuperscript{137}
though arguably, such attendance constituted little more than a courtesy gesture, not
much different than that extended by the Grand Mufti, when he invited the participants of
the Conference to visit the Haram al-Sharif.\textsuperscript{138} Nonetheless, a few weeks after the
Conference, \textit{al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah} encouraged Muslims to boycott a benefit party at
the St. George’s School, an institution equally affiliated with Palestine’s indigenous
Protestant community as with the British. Ironically, as an ecumenical gesture, the School
had, in connection with the event, requested a musical band from the Islamic orphanage
run by the Supreme Muslim Council.\textsuperscript{139} During the same period, a political demonstration
in Nablus directed against the missionary conference had seen accusations of complicity
levelled against Palestine’s indigenous Christian community. \textit{Filastīn} tried to minimise
the incident by noting that that they were a “small bad group [that] did not represent the
whole nation.”\textsuperscript{140} Nonetheless, it was also noted, with some regret, that those responsible
had succeeded to some degree in their “intentions... to cause a misunderstanding between
Muslims and Christians.”\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{136} Concerning those attending from the Arab countries, see \textit{Minutes}, pp. 6-23.

\textsuperscript{137} See \textit{Palestine Bulletin}, 4 April 1928. See also \textit{Minutes}, pp. 52, 57.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Palestine Bulletin}, 4 April 1928. See also Hocking, \textit{The Spirit of World Politics}, p. 350.

\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah}, 26 April 1928; \textit{Palestine Bulletin}, 10 May 1928.

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Filastīn}, 24 April 1928.
To many of Palestine's Christian Arabs, it seemed that Muslim resentment of Christian missionary activity was beginning to spill over onto them. Such concerns were evident in an article appearing in a local Christian paper indicating that during the rioting in Gaza on 13 April, several missionaries had been murdered. The report in the end proved false—no missionaries had been murdered in Gaza. Nevertheless, it had seemed quite plausible to a fair number of Christians. This was not altogether something new—anger over Christian missionaries had from an early point seen an association between missionary educational activities and Christian Arab teachers in government schools. Thus, it was not uncommon that calls were made for their replacements. Typical in this respect was the demand in Jenin, in 1921, that the Christian schoolmaster be replaced by a Muslim, the former being accused of stirring up trouble between Muslims and Christians. A similar problem developed two years later in a girls' school in Nablus, which, though predominantly Muslim, had a substantial number of Christian teachers.

Of course, there was one way that Christian Arabs might completely dissociate themselves from foreign missionaries. Thus, the Muslim newspaper Sawt al-Haqiq suggested that Arab Christians might best respond to Christian missionary activity by following the example of a recent Christian Arab convert to Islam. Needless to say, this was not the solution most Christian Arabs wanted to hear. Christians who showed any empathy with missionaries, even if only to suggest they were well meaning if

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141 See, for instance, al-Karmil, 1 April 1928; also al-Jami'ah al-'Arabiyah, 3 May, 9 August 1928.
142 Palestine Bulletin, 15 April 1928.
143 ISA 2/157, letter from Richmond to the Sub-Govemor, 2 September 1921, regarding an interview with Muslim notables.
144 CO 733/47, 'Political Report for June 1923.' See also al-Jami'ah al-'Arabiyah, 15 November 1928, concerning a similar incident in Hebron.
145 Referenced in Palestine Bulletin, 19 April 1928. Though ironically, it was a call that would soon be taken up by some of the Christian-run newspapers as well (see below).
misguided, found themselves subjected to closer scrutiny. *Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*,
even while acknowledging that most Christian Arabs were loyal to the nationalist cause,
accused ‘Isā al-‘Īsā, the editor of *Filastīn* (and certainly an individual with a positive
track-record as a nationalist\(^{146}\)), of being sympathetic towards the Missionary Conference
and of supporting the French in Syria against Syrian nationalists.\(^{147}\) Several weeks later, a
proposal was put forward within Muslim circles calling for an all-Palestine Muslim
conference, as a way of responding to the Missionary Conference. Christian Arabs were
intentionally excluded, and several responded by proposing an all-Palestine Christian
conference.\(^{148}\)

The Missionary Conference accentuated what for many Muslims was a core aspect of the
nationalist movement—namely that, at heart, it was a struggle between the Muslim East
and Christian Europe. Underlying the attitude of many Muslims towards the British
Mandate was an inability to reconcile themselves to Christian domination.\(^{149}\) At the same
time, with the possible exception of Orthodox Arabs, Christian commitment to the
nationalist cause had cooled somewhat since the early part of the Mandate.\(^{150}\) Christian
commitment till that point had, to a large extent, reflected the immediacy of the Zionist

\(^{147}\) ‘Isā al-‘Īsā had even joined an extremist association (*al-Fīḍā‘īyyah*) at one point. Sir Anton Bertram and

\(^{148}\) *Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah*, 8, 24 May 1928.

\(^{149}\) Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the Palestinian Arab National Movement during the Formative
Stage,” in *The Palestinians and the Middle East Conflict, An International Conference held at the Institute
of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Haifa, April 1976*, ed., Gabriel Ben-Dor, (Ramat Gan, Israel,

\(^{150}\) Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p. 298.
threat. Helpful also was the fact that during the early years of the Mandate, an independent Palestinian Arab state had remained more or less a hypothetical. Questions concerning its exact nature and the place of non-Muslims in it were issues that could be ignored in the light of more pressing concerns. By 1928, however, the situation had changed. Jewish immigration had tailed off considerably, enough to put the Zionist enterprise in jeopardy, though not enough to ensure its failure. The achievement of nationalist goals, while by no means assured, suddenly seemed plausible, and suddenly Christian concerns about what an actual Arab state might entail with respect to the situation of non-Muslims took on greater urgency. As Hourani expresses it, Christians could never "be certain that Arab nationalism would not turn out to be a new form of Islamic self-assertion." 

The British presence had acted as a kind of insurance with respect to Christian political rights. Thus, for instance, inasmuch as municipalities were appointed by the Palestine Government, Christian representation proportional to their actual numbers was generally ensured, even if it meant in some cases that Muslims constituted a minority on representative bodies. This might be contrasted with their situation during the Ottoman period. Even following the Tanzimat reforms, it had never been permitted that Christian representatives should outnumber Muslim ones, even in towns where they made up the largest single community. Contradictions between what were two very different conceptions of Arab nationalist identity—the one based on a secular model, the other on

151 As discussed above, Christian involvement in the nationalist movement was motivated in large part by strong anti-Zionist feelings.

152 See, for instance, CO 733/73, secret dispatch from the High Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary, 11 September 1924; also Mir'at al-Sharq, 8 December 1923.


the Islamic *umma*—were no longer easily ignored. At the same time, Christians had not yet become as marginalized as they would later become, and might still hope to have some input in shaping what should be the nature of a future Arab state.

Most Muslims were certainly sincere in their commitment to an Arab state inclusive of Christians. More at issue was what should be their place in such a state, and it often seemed that the vast majority of Muslims had not really thought the question through beyond what were often vague assurances that the situation of Christians (as with other 'People of the Book') had always been secure under Islam.  

This was not necessarily the answer Christians were looking for. However positive may have been their situation historically (and indeed, this is debatable), it had, in the end, been dependent on the goodwill of the larger Muslim population. Christians did not want to be in any future state by sufferance, but by right, and as political and social equals. This is not to say that Muslims consciously envisioned the future status of Christians as second-class citizens. Rather it was that they tended to ignore inconsistencies between a national community founded on secular liberal values and one founded on Islam. When confronted with the question of what would be the status of non-Muslims in an Arab state founded on Islamic principles, most proponents simply responded by noting that in the past, Christians as well as other non-Muslims had been treated fairly and had generally gotten along well enough under Islamic rule. The fact that in the past they had largely been excluded from participating in the political rule of the country was studiously avoided.

Many Muslims asserted that Islamic values and secular liberal values were entirely compatible—thus, it was not a matter of not wanting to make compromises with

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156 Thus, for instance, Rashid Rida had actually insisted that the situation of Christians and Jews would be better in an Islamic state than in a secular one. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 244.

respect to Islam; rather it was a case of not recognising that such compromises might be necessary. More to the point, such contradictions simply did not touch Muslims to the same extent that they did non-Muslims. Muslims never had to confront the question of whether they were somehow less ‘Arab’ on account of their faith. As a result, they tended to minimize such contradictions and their implications. Worse, they tended to dismiss Christian concerns along these lines as either being somehow exaggerated or prompted by outsiders. Thus, an article appearing in al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah claimed that the “division [between Muslims and Christians] was brought through Europe’s having entered society.” Christians who complained too much in this respect were also accused of intentionally fostering divisions between Muslims and Christians. Such individuals were usually contrasted with the ‘good’ Christians who knew better then to “try and accuse [Muslims] of behaving with extremism and hatred towards Christians.” Tacit in such contrasts often seemed a warning against making such complaints.

During the early part of the Mandate, Muslim nationalist leaders had tended to avoid defining Arab nationalism in Islamic terms. By the mid-1920s, however, it had become increasingly commonplace, particularly when dealing with the peasantry, to appeal to

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158 A tendency that has continued more or less till the present. Thus, for example, a survey recently taken of Muslim and Christian students at Bethlehem University purporting to demonstrate that the relationship between the two communities is trouble-free, is described as “explod[ing] several myths, propagated by some Western propagandists, concerning the relations between Muslims and Christians.” Michael Prior and William Taylor, “Introduction” in Christians in the Holy Land, eds., Michael Prior and William Taylor (London: The World of Islam Festival Trust, 1995), p. 5. Concerning the actual study, see Jeanne Kattan, “A Study of Muslim and Christian Students’ Attitudes Towards Each Other at Bethlehem University” in Christians in the Holy Land, pp. 89-97.

159 Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 8 May 1928.

160 Ibid, 8, 24 May 1928; al-Karmil, 10 June 1928.

religious sentiment.\textsuperscript{162} Related to this, Christians increasingly found it necessary to accommodate the growing association between Arab nationalist identity and Islam.\textsuperscript{163} Thus, for instance, the Protestant editor of \textit{al-Karmil}, Najib Nassar, in a 1923 editorial, divided the Arab nation into two groups—those who had responded to the Prophet’s call to join the new faith (\textit{farīq al-ijāba}), and those who, though not converting, had “accepted his gospel and biddings in everyday life, good manners and national commands (\textit{farīq al-da ’wa}).” The two were thus “brethren in language, race and habits.”\textsuperscript{164} The Prophet was thus to be understood as the founder of Arab history, the one to whom the Arabs owed their common fate, heritage and culture, and around whose greatness the Arab national emergence had taken place. Oddly enough, in noting that Christian Arabs also celebrated the Prophet’s birthday, Nassar felt compelled to stress their sincerity in doing so, as apparently there had been claims to the contrary.\textsuperscript{165}

**The Seventh Palestinian Arab Congress**

That a rift was developing between Muslims and Christians became evident with the approach of the Seventh Palestinian National Congress, scheduled for June that year. The purpose of the Congress was to elect a new Arab Executive, one many hoped would unite the Nashashibi and Husayni factions\textsuperscript{166}; the schism growing between the two had become a source of great concern to many Arabs. Needless to say, both factions hoped that the new Congress would see their respective position strengthened. The Opposition was particularly hopeful in this respect. With the waning of Zionism as an immediate threat,

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\textsuperscript{162} Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 74.

\textsuperscript{163} See for instance, O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 41.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Al-Karmil}, 21 October 1923.

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{166} Betts, \textit{Christians in the Arab East}, p. 211.
moderation had become more acceptable as the basis of political action, something evidenced in the growing willingness of many Palestinian Arabs to reconsider the earlier proposed legislative council. The Opposition hoped that the new Arab Executive would not be dominated by Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and his supporters, and even threatened to boycott the Congress when it appeared the latter might effectively block such an outcome. 167

At issue was who would actually attend the Congress—that is, how was representation to be determined. Concerns were expressed at three different levels. The Nashāshībī faction and other Jerusalem-based elite were concerned that the Majlisīn would, because of their dominant position in the current Arab Executive as well as the Supreme Muslim Council, be disproportionately represented. 168 Non-elite Arabs were concerned that Jerusalem, regardless of whether represented by the Husaynī or Nashāshībī, should not dominate the Congress. Such concerns were particularly pronounced in the Northern District, where, not coincidentally, many Christians resided. Representative in this respect was the Christian newspaper *Mirāt al-Shārq*, which warned: “Let the organizers of this Congress know that the country is not the private property of a few Jerusalemite families.” 169 Finally, Christians were concerned with their own representation as a community, and demanded that a pre-determined number of places be reserved for them at the Congress. 170 They were careful to frame their demands as part of the broader issue of representation per se; 171 thus, they noted that it was not just Christians who were unfairly represented, but certain districts as well. At the same time, they specifically demanded

167 *Palestine Bulletin*, 30 May 1928, from an article appearing in *Filastīn*.


171 Ibid, 10 June 1928; also 11 March 1928; *Filastīn*, 10 April 1928.
that invitations to the Congress should be “under the name of a mixed committee of Muslims and Christians.” 172

Christian concerns about representation reflected the charged atmosphere in the aftermath of the Missionary Conference. In particular, many Christians were disconcerted by the decision taken by the Young Men’s Muslim Associations to convene a congress in late April in response to the Conference. They feared that this “would deepen the differences between [Christians and Muslims].” 173 In large part, these associations had been formed in reaction to what had been a proliferation of Christian organisations since the beginning of the Mandate. Many Muslims considered these organisations to be British-funded, 174 in particular, the Young Men’s Christian Associations (YMCAs). 175 For many Muslims, Christian affiliation with such organisations raised concerns about the depth of their loyalty to the nationalist cause. By contrast, it was noted that the YMMAS had no European affiliation whatsoever, but rather served only the ‘Arab cause.’ 176 Additionally, it was asserted that Christian organisations were exclusionary, and indeed, their memberships were almost exclusively Christian. 177 The YMMA Congress bemoaned the fact that there should be ‘Orthodox’ and ‘Islamic’ clubs rather than ‘Arab’ clubs, though for this, they held the Christians chiefly to blame. 178

172 Al-Karmil, 10 June 1928.

173 Ibid, 22 April 1928. See also Khleh, Filastin, p. 437; al-Mawsā‘a al-Filastiniyya, p. 554; and Porath, The Emergence, p. 300.

174 Khleh, Filastin, p. 438.

175 Tibawi, Arab Education, p. 185.

176 From a letter appearing in al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 5 March 1928.

177 Khleh, Filastin, p. 438.

178 Albeit in a rather roundabout way. Thus, it was noted that “these sectarian clubs will not accept us because we are not agreeing with them regarding the participation of women.” Filastin, 20 April 1928.
Initially, the YMMAs took great pains to stress that they were not set in opposition to Christian Arabs. It was noted during the Congress that it should be “clear to all Christian factors that the formation of the Young Men’s Muslim Associations [was] a new empowerment for the national movement and did not constitute a split of the national front.” Likewise, it was noted that the YMMAs intended to “keep the Muslim-Christian national front strong and unified.” Nonetheless, some Christians felt uneasy about the way in which the Congress tended to define the nationalist cause in Islamic terms. Interesting in this respect was a letter sent to Filastin by ‘A Good Muslim’ who supposedly had attended the YMMA Congress, and who claimed that it had actively called for a division between Muslims and Christians. It was also asserted that the Congress had been disseminating a paper in which Christians were condemned as disbelievers. Likewise that, unlike what was the usual custom, the Congress had failed to issue a ‘courtesy greeting’ to Palestine’s Christians. Whether any of this actually happened is questionable; nonetheless, the fact of such incidents being recorded in the Christian press was indicative of what was a genuine concern on the part of Christians. As it was, the Young Men’s Muslim Associations would take on an increasingly anti-

179 Khleh, Filastin, pp. 438.

180 Ibid, pp. 437-438; see also Filastin, 20 April 1928.

181 Ibid.

182 Al-Jami‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 8 May 1928, referring to a letter appearing in Filastin, 1 May 1928.

183 Ibid, referring to an article appearing in Filastin.

184 Ibid, 8, 24 May 1928, referring to an article appearing in Filastin.

185 Ibid, 8, 24 May 1928. All of the accusations were denied in the articles appearing in al-Jami‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah.
Christian tone as the Mandate progressed, particularly in connection with the supposed favouritism shown Christians in government employment. 186

In the days leading up to the Seventh National Palestinian Congress, Christian Arab leaders met in Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem. It was decided to organise a separate Christian conference in order to determine the nature of Christian participation (if any) in the larger National Congress. 187 Taking the lead were such figures as Ya‘qūb Farrāj, Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam, and ‘Īsā al-‘Isā. 188 Significantly, this was the first time since the Mandate had begun that Palestine’s Christian Arabs had organised politically as a distinctly ‘Christian’ community, one cutting across the different denominations and set in opposition to the Muslim majority. In the end, it was determined that the Christians should try to work with the more moderate factions of the Opposition with an aim towards restoring national unity. At the same time, it was felt that a separate organisation should be founded that would be representative of specifically Christian interests. 189 Initially, Christian demands for ‘adequate’ representation at the National Congress remained unaddressed, and it was even necessary at one point to postpone the Congress for fear of a Christian boycott. 190 Their demands were eventually met, however, and Christians were able to secure a guaranteed number of places in advance of the Congress. 191 Many Muslims were strongly chagrined with the Christians’ attitude towards the Congress, and accused them “of working with the Government and of being

186 Porath, The Emergence, pp. 300-301.


188 Ibid; al-Karmil, 10 June 1928.

189 Al-Karmil, 10 June 1928.

190 Palestine Bulletin, 13 and 18 June 1928.

191 Porath, The Emergence, p. 252.

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happy with what the Government [was] doing because it was a ‘Christian’ Government." Christians for their part attributed such ‘rumours’ to the machinations of Hajj Amīn and his supporters, who, “when people don’t agree with them and come to them with their heads bowed...take their revenge on them and accuse them as they want.” It was additionally asserted that Hajj Amīn’s “nationalist claims were fake and his mixing of religion and nationalism just a way of hiding his true intentions.”

The Seventh Palestinian Arab Congress finally convened on 20 June 1928. Of the 210 delegates attending, 48 were Christian. Overall, the Congress was dominated by the more moderate Opposition. This was particularly evident in the composition of the newly elected Arab Executive, one moreover highly representative of Palestine’s Christian Arabs. Twelve of its new members, out a total of 48, were Christian—one out of every four. Two of these, Yaʿqūb Fārāj and Mughannam Iylās Mughannam, were part of the Executive’s upper committee, the overall makeup of which represented a victory for the Opposition. Mūsā Kāzīm al-Husaynī—a moderate in spite being a member of the Husayni family—retained the presidency. The two vice-presidents, Tawfīq Haqqī al-ʿAbdullāh and Yaʿqūb Fārāj, were both representative of the Opposition. The Husaynī faction was represented in the person of Jamāl al-Husaynī, one of the three joint secretaries. The two other secretaries were Mughannam Iylās Mughannam and ʿAwīnī

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192 Al-Karmil, 10 June 1928; see also ibid, 28 June 1928.

193 Ibid, 10 June 1928.


196 For a list of the names of all the Christian Arabs elected to the Executive Committee, see Palestine Bulletin, 22 June 1928.
'Abd al-Hādī. The former was a moderate. The latter, though inclined towards radicalism, was no friend of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī.\textsuperscript{197}

The new Arab Executive quickly proclaimed its willingness to seek a negotiated solution with the Government in the hopes of achieving some degree of self-government.\textsuperscript{198} Specifically, they wished to revisit the possibility of establishing a legislative council; overall, they pursued a policy of moderation. On the face of it, this was an outcome with which most Christian Arabs could be satisfied. Yet the campaign for control of the Arab Executive had seen accusations levelled against the other by both factions of undue Christian influence. Even members of the Opposition had too often felt compelled to emphasize their ‘Islamic’ credentials.\textsuperscript{199} The new Arab Executive was almost immediately looked upon disfavourably by those more radically minded. Much was made, for instance, of the fact that not a single resolution had been passed at the Congress opposing Zionism.\textsuperscript{200} Many of the members of the Young Men’s Muslim Associations were particularly dissatisfied. Thus, Muhammad ‘Izzat Darwazah, who had organised their first Congress described the new Arab Executive as divided, weak, and lacking in enthusiasm, and characterised many of its members as little more than ‘collaborators’ and ‘spies’.\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{197} During the 1930s, al-Hādī would head the radical Istiqlal Party. (See below.)

\textsuperscript{198} Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{199} See, for example, al-Kārmīl, 17 June 1928; Sawt al-Shā‘īb, 9 June 1928. In similar fashion, Rāghib al-Nāshāshibī and other Muslim members of the Opposition would later seek to challenge Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī’s leadership in connection with the 1931 Islamic Conference—which he organised—by sponsoring a rival conference, the Congress of the Palestinian Muslim Nation (see below).

\textsuperscript{200} Khleh, Filastīn, p. 439.

Underlying the growing tension between Christians and Muslims was a divergence between what were two very different conceptions of Arab nationalist identity. As discussed earlier, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the question of what made one an Arab was still very much an open one. Christian Arabs generally conceived of Arab identity in secular terms—on the basis of a shared language and culture. Muslims, by contrast, tended to define it on the basis of Islam. The immediate threat of Zionism had allowed both Christians and Muslims to avoid dealing with what were conflicting understandings of Arab identity. By 1928, however, Zionism no longer seemed the threat it once had. Nonetheless, no strong movement developed seeking to define the nationalist cause in overtly Islamic terms. The leadership in Palestine, while dominated by individuals often happy to justify their positions on the basis of religion, was rooted more in tradition than Islam per se. Unlike the situation in most of the other Arab countries—where notable authority was quickly being eroded by newly created self-governing institutions—202—the traditional social structures had been maintained in Palestine. Politics in Palestine remained largely the domain of the old notable families, who would not be displaced until after the war in 1948-1949. 203 While individual notables might sometimes find it useful to emphasise the Islamic character of the nationalist struggle, none of them desired that it should be defined in strictly Islamic terms. Neither did they desire a state founded strictly on Islamic precepts in any radical sense. Such a state was hardly likely to maintain a system of authority founded on tradition. In a very real sense, Muslim notables had as great a stake as Christians in not over-emphasising Palestine’s Islamic character. To the extent that they did, it was generally for tactical reasons, and aimed at bolstering one’s own political status. 204


203 See ibid, p. 299; also Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, p. 21.

204 Something of which Hajj Amin was often accused. See, for instance, Al Karmil, 10 June 1928.
On the other hand, the status of Muslim notables was dependent in large part on their being perceived as good Muslims. If sometimes this meant partially alienating Palestine's Christians, most Muslims were quite prepared to do so. In truth, Christians had little leverage in this respect. What was most ironic about charges of undue Christian influence was the fact that the reality was quite the opposite. With respect to the nationalist movement, it was becoming increasingly clear that Christians were not even on an equal footing with Muslims, much less dominant. The formation of the Muslim-Christian Associations during the early days of the Mandate had, for many Christians, been symbolic of the beginning of a new political relationship between the two communities. It had not taken long, however, before the traditional Muslim notable families came to dominate the MCAs and the movement. Christian nationalist leaders found it increasingly difficult to act in their own right, tending rather to become the attachés of Muslim leaders. The relationship between Ya'qūb Farraj and Rāghib al-Naḥṣāshibī might be understood as such; likewise that between Alfred Rok and Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī.

The inclusion of Christians in nationalist activities often reflected a certain practical utility, particularly when representing the nationalist cause abroad. The inclusion of the Christians Ibrāhīm Shammās and Shibli Jamal on various delegations, for example, reflected the fact that they were both completely fluent in English (unlike the majority of

205 In connection with developments as discussed in the first chapter.

206 See, for instance, CO 733/69, 'Secret Political Resumé for Jerusalem-Jaffa District for Period Ended the 2nd June, 1924,' dated 2 June 1924.


208 The latter, reflecting, as noted above, the special relationship between the Husayni family and Greek Catholics.
Muslims); equally, that they were useful for generating sympathy among Westerners for the nationalist cause for the reasons discussed above. In general, it was also felt that a strong united-front between Muslims and Christian would produce a favourable effect on public opinion in Britain and the West. Whatever their utilitarian value, Christians had increasingly to come to terms with the fact that they were becoming marginalized. This is not to say Muslims did not see a role for them in the nationalist movement; most were quite happy to make common cause with their Christian compatriots, even if seeing Arab identity as something inherently ‘Islamic.’ Even there was an antecedent for this—thus, the movement of Muslim solidarity or asabiyya as espoused by ‘Abdallah al-Nadim had defined a limited political role for Christians and Jews within the umma.

The only question was that concerning Christian loyalty, and increasingly, the burden of proof was falling on Christian shoulders. In large part, this reflected the reality that the entire region was under the political domination of European ‘Christian’ powers. A growing perception existed that, just as Christians had benefitted from a European ‘Christian’ presence during the Ottoman period, they now constituted a privileged class under the present mandates. Many seemed all too happy to take advantage of the situation, whatever they might profess with respect to the nationalist cause. As the demand for bi- or multi-lingual personnel grew, Christians, with their tradition of learning, experience in commerce, and greater familiarity with Western institutions, were


210 Porath, The Emergence, p. 295.

211 See, for instance, Filastin, 2 March 1928.

212 For example, al-Karmil, 10, 28 June 1928; see also ISA, 1904/33, essay by Ben-Zvi entitled ‘Christians and Muslims in the Land of Israel’ [no date].

213 Filastin, 2 March 1928.
well placed to take advantage not only of new employment-opportunities, but of economic ones as well. Muslim concerns regarding the depth of Christian loyalty were not without basis, particularly if considering the behaviour of Christians in the neighbouring mandated countries. On the other hand, Christians in Palestine were arguably less supportive of the mandates than their coreligionists in the other Arab countries. Much of this was no doubt due to their strong opposition to Zionism, but there were other factors involved as well. Thus, for instance, while many Orthodox Arabs benefited from the opportunities presented by the Mandate, the affluence enjoyed by its wealthier members was still founded in large part on their close relations with the ruling Muslim establishment. As such, even during the mandate period, many Orthodox Arabs continued to see their interests as being aligned with the Muslim elite.

The Supreme Muslim Council

Any discussion of the political rivalry between the Opposition and the Majlisin must take into account the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC). Hajj Amín’s control of the SMC not only constituted a source of revenue and patronage (as discussed in the previous chapter); it was also a source of great prestige. It was this institution that constituted his political power base. As noted in the previous chapter, the SMC was essentially a British creation, established so that the Muslim community might have responsibility for the

214 See, for example, ibid.

215 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, pp. 130-131.

216 See, for instance, al-Karmil, 3 October 1931.

217 See, for instance, CO 733/19, dispatch from Deedes to Churchill, 23 February 1922; also Uri M. Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1987), p. 32.

218 See, for example, F.H. Kisch, Palestine Diary (London: Victor Gollance Ltd, 1938), p. 263.

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Islamic religious courts and the administration of Islamic *waqfs*.\(^{219}\) It was also hoped that it might act as a counter-balance to the Jewish Agency (inasmuch as the British offer of an equivalent ‘Arab’ Agency had been rejected). Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī’s position in the SMC was greatly strengthened by the fact that the Palestine Government was reluctant to put any pressure on the institution for fear of being accused of interfering in Muslim religious affairs.\(^{220}\) More than simply not wishing to provoke Muslims, the Palestine Government saw the SMC as a medium by which it might earn their good-will.\(^{221}\) This was particularly apparent with regard to disputed *waqf* properties,\(^{222}\) inasmuch as a general perception existed among British officials that *waqfs* by definition were religious, and that any mishandling of them by a ‘Christian power’ would stir up trouble.\(^{223}\) Hajj Amīn was more than happy to take advantage of such British apprehensions.\(^{224}\) A concern over Muslim sensibilities dictated to a large extent British policy regarding the Council’s finances as well. Thus, the Government proved quite ready to provide advances and bank overdrafts whenever the Council found itself in financial difficulties.\(^{225}\) Government generosity also manifested itself in final settlements concerning properties

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\(^{219}\) Regarding the creation of the Supreme Muslim Council, see Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council*, pp. 21-25.

\(^{220}\) Ibid, pp. 38, 52, 128, 153.

\(^{221}\) See, for instance, CO 733/250/8, extract from a letter from Wauchope to the Colonial Secretary, 14 April 1934.


\(^{223}\) Ibid, pp. 117-118, 121.

\(^{224}\) See, for instance, ibid, pp. 91, 117.

\(^{225}\) See, for example, CO 733/213/8, dispatch from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, 17 September 1932.
previously unrecognised as *waqf* and claimed as such by the Council\(^{226}\); likewise in the fact that, whereas the Government chose not exercise any authority over the *shari'a* courts, it paid the salaries for court personnel, as well as related travelling expenses, together with various other fees, inclusive in some cases of rent.\(^{227}\) For the most part, the Palestine Government would remain generous in its dealings with the Supreme Muslim Council until the end of the Mandate.

Coinciding with Hajj Amīn’s rise in prominence was a growing tendency towards radicalisation among Palestine’s Muslims, many of whom were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional leadership and their moderate policies. To many, it seemed that the notable class was more concerned with promoting its own commercial interests than with achieving nationalist objectives.\(^{228}\) Many of these were newly educated Muslim youth frustrated, as discussed above, by their inability to find suitable employment. Added to this were the large numbers of semi-proletarianised peasants recently migrated to the cities and towns in search of employment. Under their new circumstances, many suddenly found themselves considerably less dependent on the notable class than had been the case in the villages, where the latter continued to remain economically dominant as landowners and moneylenders. Indeed, it was often the case that they had fled their villages in order to escape the debts they owed them.\(^{229}\) Thus, the negative feelings they harboured towards the traditional elite were often based on more than just a frustration that they were failing to achieve nationalist objectives. Added to this, through their experience in the wider labour market, peasants were increasingly being exposed to radical new political ideas and possibilities. Corresponding to this was a


\(^{227}\) Ibid, pp. 59-60.


\(^{229}\) Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p. 189.
greater willingness to challenge traditional modes of political and social organisation as well as the patron-client networks that until then had defined notable-peasant relations.230

Members of this latter group in particular were becoming increasingly aware of themselves as ‘Muslim,’ significantly, in a manner that defined Islamic identity in a much more particularistic and rigid manner than had previously been the case—it was an identity more closely affiliated with Islamic institutions, and based more on right religious practice. It is perhaps not surprising then that many of these semi-proleteriatised peasants would come under the sway of such militant religious figures as Sheikh 'Izz al-Dîn al-Qassâm. This theme is taken up more fully in chapter five. It is sufficient to note for now that Muslims were increasingly expressing their dissatisfaction in sectarian terms—hence the belief that they were being discriminated against as Muslims with respect to government positions, the establishment of the YMMAs, and so forth. As the 1920s progressed, nationalist activity in general increasingly took on a religious character. It became more centred round Islamic institutions such as the mosques and the YMMAs. By the end of the 1920s, for instance, it was increasingly the case that nationalist demonstrations were organised around the Friday prayers at mosques.231

Inasmuch as this tended to link nationalist feelings with religious passions—such as were often aroused by the prayer services—such demonstrations tended to be much more fervent than those organised by the Muslim-Christian Associations.232

230 These developments would also have an impact on their home villages, as peasants recently migrated to the cities and towns generally maintained close contact with them. Ted Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” pp. 182-183, 196.

231 Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 78. Though to some extent, this had always been the case, and constituted a factor underlying the general low turnout of Christians at demonstrations among the rank-and-file. Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, pp. 247-248.

Khalidi (1996) notes that during the Mandate, something akin to an alliance developed between second-rank notables—a group he characterises as ‘the disadvantaged faction of the elite’ and which Muslih refers to as the ‘Younger Politicians’—and young professionals, both of whom would, over the course of the Mandate, grow increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional leadership. One might very well group among the latter the aforementioned growing pool of newly-educated Muslim youth frustrated by their inability to find meaningful employment; in many respects they had a comparable educational experience and shared similar aspirations and outlook. Khalidi notes that both groups were attracted to a salafi brand of Arab nationalism, one that originally had called for the reform of Islam against the corrupting influence of the Turks, but now targeted the traditional leadership as the source of its corruption. More than just providing a basis for challenging the traditional leadership, it was suggestive of a more radical political programme than the one generally favoured by it. Khalidi points out that, under the Ottoman, its appeal had often been greatest among those who, while initially supporting constitutionalism and greater liberalism, had been greatly disappointed when the expected opportunities for advancement never materialised. Under the Mandate, such a situation continued to exist, though this time it was the traditional leadership that was largely held accountable. Conveniently, salafi Arabism also provided a point of convergence with respect to the semi-proletarianised peasantry, which, as noted, was becoming increasingly attracted to Islamic reformers.


234 See Khalidi “Society and Ideology,” pp. 119-131. While Khalidi traces the process back to the late-Ottoman period, he sees it very much as constituting a factor during the Mandate. See in particular ibid, pp. 128.

235 Ibid, p. 129.
The radicalisation and Islamisation of the nationalist movement was something of which Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, in his position as Grand Mufti and President of the Supreme Muslim Council, was quick to take advantage, largely through a religious agitation that sought to lend a religious dimension to Palestinian politics. Most important in this respect was his emphasis of Palestine’s Islamic significance in connection with the Muslim holy sites, most notably the Haram al-Sharif. All of this did not bode well for Christians—at best, it threatened to marginalize them; at worst, to see them alienated from the movement altogether. Certainly they fell on the wrong side as far as Muslim grievances concerning government employment. Equally, the Missionary Conference had only served to intensify pan-Islamic sentiment among Palestine’s Muslims. The decisive event as far as the nationalist movement’s Islamisation, however, would not involve Christians at all, but rather would reflect growing tensions between Muslims and Jews.

Radicalisation

The chain of events leading up to the Wailing Wall Riots might be traced back to September 1928, at the time of the Jewish Day of Atonement, when the government authorities had had a Jewish partition screen removed from the pavement in front of the Wailing Wall. The Wailing Wall adjoined the Haram al-Sharīf, the most holy Muslim site in Jerusalem, and the question of whether Jews were permitted to bring religious appurtenances there was a hotly contested one. The incident quickly saw the mobilisation

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of both Jews and Muslims, the latter most prominently in the formation of the Society for
the Protection of the Muslim Holy Places.\textsuperscript{239} A partial resolution was found with the
White Paper of November 1928, wherein the British Government indicated its intention
to uphold the \textit{status quo},\textsuperscript{240} a decision understood as favouring the Muslim position. In
late-July 1929, the sixteenth Zionist Congress convened in Zurich and passed a resolution
expressing its dismay over the position adopted by the British and Palestine
Governments. This had the effect of exciting Arab opinion in Palestine as it was taken as
evidence of an attempt to pressure the British Government to reverse the decision taken
in the 1928 White Paper. On 15 August, the day after the Jewish Feast of Tisha B’Av,
Jews staged a demonstration in front of the Wailing Wall; the following day, a Muslim
counter-demonstration took place.\textsuperscript{241}

On 17 August, a Jewish youth was killed in an altercation with Arab youths. His funeral
the following day quickly turned into a political demonstration directed against both the
Arabs and the Palestine Government. Tensions continued to rise, and by 23 August,
rumours had begun to spread among the Arabs that the Jews intended to attack the al-
Aqsa Mosque.\textsuperscript{242} Many of the Muslims attending Friday prayer at the Mosque that day
had come armed with sticks and clubs. During the midday prayer, inflammatory speeches
were made, and many of the worshippers, in a fanatical mood upon departing the Haram
area, quickly set upon whatever Jews they encountered. The disturbances soon spread
throughout Jerusalem and shortly thereafter, to the rest of Palestine. The worst attacks
took place in Hebron, where more than sixty Jews—many of them women and children—

\textsuperscript{239} Formed in conjuncture with the ‘General Muslim Conference’ convened in November 1928. Command
Paper Number 3530, \textit{Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929}, Presented by the
Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, 1930, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{240} Meaning the \textit{status quo} as of the end of Ottoman rule. See ibid, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid, pp. 47-57, 154-155.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid, pp. 56-57, 91.
were murdered, and almost as many severely wounded.\textsuperscript{243} By 30 August, the disturbances had finally come to an end. The final tally saw 133 Jews killed and 339 wounded. Arab casualties came to 87 killed and 181 wounded, the majority at the hands of the Palestine police and British military forces.\textsuperscript{244}

The Wailing Wall Riots would have a major impact on the internal political struggle within the Arab leadership, largely to the advantage of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī. The riots served to intensify religious sentiment among Muslims. Correspondingly, Hajj Amīn was quick to characterise the nationalist cause as a religious struggle by emphasising the need to defend the Muslim holy sites, chief among them the Haram al-Sharif. This would become most evident with his organisation of the World Islamic Conference two years later (discussed more fully in the following chapter). The Wailing Wall Riots certainly made one thing clear—for the majority of Muslims, religious sensibilities ran a good deal deeper than nationalistic ones. Certainly nothing that had happened till then with respect to the nationalist movement had elicited such a reaction. Arguably, most Muslims, particularly among the peasantry, made little distinction between the Palestinian cause as a nationalist one and as an Islamic one.

Till then, it had been possible for Christians to see for themselves a role in directing the nationalist movement; in shaping the nature of Arab identity; likewise in determining the nature of any future Arab state. Christians might have maintained the notion that they and their fellow Muslims shared a similar understanding concerning all these things; likewise, the relationship between Arab identity and Islam. Following the Wailing Wall Riots, such a belief became considerably more difficult to maintain. From that point on, Christians

\textsuperscript{243} Other places in Palestine that saw major disturbances were Safed, Haifa, Beisan, and Jaffa. Safed was particularly badly hit and saw some 45 Jews either killed or wounded. Several Jewish colonies were also subjected to attacks, amongst them Motza. Counter-attacks in which Jews attacked Arabs also took place, the most notable of these being in Jaffa and Jerusalem. Ibid, pp. 63-65.

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid, p.65.
would become increasingly marginalized, able to do little beyond following the lead set by their Muslim compatriots.

Christians had, from the beginning, tried to maintain the nationalist movement along more national-secular lines. Thus, where possible, they had opposed the use of religious arguments and the arousing of religious feelings, even when directed against Jews. An article appearing in the Christian-edited newspaper *Mirʾāt al-Sharq* on 14 May 1924, for example, had called for a clear distinction between religion and the national struggle and denounced the circulation of songs cursing the Jewish religion, noting that “such songs are meaningless and moreover, were opposed to the principles of a monotheistic religion, be it Islam or Christianity.” Among other things, there had always been a concern that aroused Muslim feeling might turn against them. What was becoming increasingly clear however was that there was no way to prevent Muslim leaders from using religion as a means of appealing to the masses. Initially, Christians responded by trying to ensure at least that Christianity was kept on an equal footing with Islam. Before long, however, it would seem that the only way for Christians to maintain a role for themselves with respect to the nationalist movement was to somehow demonstrate that a special relationship existed between them and Islam. By the end of the 1930s, Christian Arabs would be more concerned with trying to define their relationship to Islam than with defining a model of Arab identity intrinsically inclusive of non-Muslims (as discussed more fully in the fifth chapter).

Within the Orthodox community, the cracks in Muslim-Christian unity were somewhat obscured by the ongoing conflict between the laity and clergy. Since the beginning of the Mandate, the conflict had actually escalated, significantly, in a manner that alienated the

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245 *Mirʾāt al-Sharq*, 14 May 1924.


clergy not only from its own lay community, but equally from the broader Arab community. From the beginning, the Orthodox clergy had shown little support for Arab nationalist aspirations, and indeed, were less concerned with Zionism than with the movement for the Arabisation of the Patriarchate. Thus, they had shown themselves to be cooperative with the British government right from the start and had opposed Palestinian unity with Syria. 248 A few years into the Mandate, in an effort to resolve its financial crisis, the Patriarchate began selling church properties to Jews. 249 Not surprisingly, the Arab laity took strong issue with this, and in 1922, it expressed its anger by opposing the appointment of the Bishop Cleopas as Metropolitan of Nazareth. The following year, the first Arab Orthodox Congress was convened in Haifa under the presidency of Iskandar Kassab. The Congress demanded the reestablishment of the mixed council that had been abandoned at the beginning of the First World War, only now with a clear majority of lay members in a proportion of two to one. The council was also to have authority over political and economic matters as well as administrative ones. Finally, the Patriarch was not to speak on behalf of the Orthodox community except with the expressed permission of the mixed council. 250

The British responded in 1925 with the formation of the Bertram-Young Commission. Its report proposed that Arab Orthodox Christians be accepted into the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, and that they be given a greater say in the Patriarchate’s financial decisions. As with the Bertam-Luke Commission before it, it opposed the taking of a loan


249 See, for instance, CO 733/8, draft reply from Deedes to Churchill, 22 December 1921.

from a Greek bank. Conversely, it allowed that the Brotherhood should continue to draw its membership primarily from Greeks so long as they adopted Palestinian nationality and learned Arabic. Moreover, in acknowledgement of the Patriarchate's special relationship with the Holy Places, there was no insistence that there be an Arab patriarch or Arab hierarchy. 251 In any event, it would be some time before any attempt was made at implementing the Commission's recommendations—not until 1938, in fact—and almost another twenty years before any of them were ratified. 252 The Orthodox community protested strongly against the Commission's recommendations. In particular, they were incensed at the Commission's acknowledgement of Greek rights in connection with the Patriarchate's function as guardian of the Holy Places. Protests eventually gave way to a second congress, held in Ramallah in June of 1926, under the presidency of ʿĪsā al-ʿĪsā, the proprietor of Filastīn. By now the Orthodox cause was defined almost exclusively in nationalist terms. Among the resolutions passed was the demand that an Arab patriarch be elected; correspondingly, an insistence that the Arab laity should participate in the election. 253 In November 1927, the Orthodox People's Party was founded, which pledged itself "to restore the Arabs' national rights usurped by the Greeks." 254

While Muslims had always been supportive of the Orthodox laity in their struggle with the Greek-dominated clergy, they had nonetheless tended to see it as largely a communal matter. 255 The revelation that the clergy had been selling church properties to Jews,

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251 Ibid, p. 204.


254 Filastīn, 16 October 1931.

255 See, for instance, CO 733/4, Minutes of the Advisory Council for 14 June 1921.
however, elevated it to one of national concern. Correspondingly, many Muslim organisations came out strongly in support of the Orthodox cause. The fact that Orthodox Arabs had from the beginning defined their struggle in overtly nationalistic terms did much to strengthen this feeling of empathy. Thus, it was one of the more important issues discussed at the Sixth Palestinian National Congress, held in June 1923. In this sense, the Orthodox laity’s struggle against the clergy did much to assure Muslims regarding the loyalty of Orthodox Arabs to the nationalist cause. At the same time, not all of the Orthodox laity was opposed to the Patriarchate. Many Orthodox Arabs reacted to the first Orthodox Congress by forming a rival ‘moderate’ party, one which had the support of the Patriarch, and which, while supporting some of the demands made by the Congress—for instance, the recalling of the mixed council—considered the matter a communal one and not a nationalist one. Added to this was the fact that from the beginning of the Mandate, Orthodox Arabs had adopted a relatively moderate position towards the British. Many had been accustomed to Russian support, a support suddenly withdrawn following the Bolshevik Revolution; some now looked to Britain to fill that role. It was not entirely unreasonable then if Muslims were not entirely convinced regarding Orthodox commitment to the nationalist cause. In any case,


258 O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians,” p. 28.

259 See CO 733/139/1, draft report of the Commission on the Controversies in the Orthodox Patriarchate, 26 June, 1925, produced by Bertram and Young, pp. 11-19. Overall, their demands were much more moderate—thus, for instance, they only insisted on equal lay representation on the mixed council (that is, that it should consist of six lay and six ecclesiastical members). CO 733/139/1, draft report of the Commission on the Controversies in the Orthodox Patriarchate, 26 June, 1925, produced by Bertram and Young, pp. 95, 99.

whatever support lent the Orthodox cause by Muslims, it did not necessarily translate into a greater role for Christians within the nationalist movement.

Apart from its growing Islamic character, Christian marginalization in the nationalist movement was also an aspect of its growing militancy. Christian participation in the nationalist movement had until then largely manifested itself at the organisational level. Christians, for instance, had always been strongly represented at the various national congresses. At the first congress—the All-Palestine Congress—held at the beginning of 1919 in Jerusalem, 6 of the 27 delegates were Christian. 10 Christians were present at the Third Palestinian National Congress; and 16 out of a total of 108 delegates attended the Fifth National Congress. More telling perhaps was their strong representation on the Congresses’ Executive Committees. Thus, there were 2 Christians out of a total of 9 for the Third Palestinian National Congress; 5 out of 15 for the Fourth National Congress; 4 out of 23 for the Fifth National Congress; and 5 out of 31 for the Sixth National Congress.

Conversely, among the rank-and-file, there were few Christians to be found; certainly few had been actively involved in the various riots or the more violent demonstrations that had taken place till then. In any case, early on at least, nationalist activity had confined itself largely to petitions, the formation of delegations, and the occasional


262 ISA 7/12-2, secret report by Captain Camp’s report to OETA Headquarters, 15 February 1919.

263 ISA 7/15-2, CID report for 4 November 1920; and ISA 7/16-2, CID report for 4 January 1921.

264 Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 354, Appendix IX.

265 Ibid, p. 255, Appendix X.

peaceful demonstration, and had generally avoided extralegal tactics. Activities such as these were well suited to organisations like the Muslim-Christian Associations and the Arab Executive, given their dominance by the notable class. The extent to which the MCAs and AE were associated with moderate politics is perhaps best reflected in the response received by the Acting Commissioner when he approached one of the MCAs out of a concern that, should Arab demands continue to be frustrated, they might "resort to other means of attaining their ends, and that a situation might arise containing elements of danger to public peace and security." He was quickly assured by one of its higher-ranking members that "even if no change of policy or any material alteration in the existing system of Government [were] secured... [t]hey intend[ed] to continue their policy of constitutional opposition in the belief that...they [would] eventually convince His Majesty’s Government of the necessity of meeting at least some of their demands." 

Christian political activism was fully compatible with an approach that emphasised legal constitutional means of protest, and through their affiliation with the MCAs and the Arab Executive, Christians were able to feel an equal part of the movement, at least early on. The Christian tendency towards moderation was evident from the start of the Mandate. In the Arab delegation sent to London in 1921, for example, it was its two Christian members—Shibli al-Jamal and Ibrâhîm Shammâs—who took the most accommodating position, both with respect to continued British authority and Zionism.


269 See, for instance, CO 733/54, note from Samuel to Ormsby-Gore, 19 July 1923, where Wadi’ al-Bâstanî is characterised by a high-ranking Government official as a "petition writer."

270 ISA 4/3-2, report by the Director of Public Security to Deedes, [no date]. See also Tsimhoni, The British Mandate, p. 276.
Shibli al-Jamal, in an interview with the *The Morning Post*, for example, agreed to limited and controlled Jewish immigration, an attitude certainly not shared by the Muslim delegates, who opposed any compromise with respect to Zionism. A willingness of Christians to compromise had also been evident with respect to the Legislative Council. Though equally active in boycotting the elections, beforehand, it was Christians who were most active in trying to reach some kind of accommodation with the Government. Notable in this respect again were Shibli al-Jamal and Ibrāhīm Shammās, though not only them. Bulūs Shahāda, the editor of *Mirʿât al-Sharq*, for instance, argued in his paper that participation in the Council did not necessarily equate to an acceptance of the Balfour Declaration and that the Arabs might more effectively combat Zionism by working through such a political body. The Protestant Sulaymān Nasīf organised a group of notables in Haifa (all of them Muslim excepting himself) to discuss the basis for reaching an accommodation with the Government. Finally, there was the Orthodox clergy, which called on the Orthodox community to participate in the elections. Following the Council’s rejection, Christians would remain among the stronger

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271 *Al-Karmil*, 10, 20 August 1921.


273 ISA 4/16-72, Storrs to the Assistant Chief Secretary regarding a conversation with al-Jamal, 26 September 1922; and conversation with Shammas, 23 September 1922.

274 *Mirʿât al-Sharq*, 4 September 1922.

275 ISA 6/19-5, Samuel’s report on his meeting with Nasif, 11 February 1923.

proponents of the establishment of a representative body along the lines of the proposed legislative council.\textsuperscript{277}

In addition to those factors discussed above, the movement’s radicalisation also reflected what were broader regional developments, among these, a growing anti-colonialism, disillusionment with Western liberalisation, and militarism. In some countries, this saw the rise of a grass-roots based Islamic fundamentalism, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Palestine was quite exceptional in this respect. While there did exist a rising Islamic sentiment, it generally found its expression within the framework of traditional notable politics. In Palestine, the British authorities had maintained the traditional elite pretty much intact. This in part explains why they were able to maintain control of the leadership of the nationalist movement for as long as they did. For most of the Mandate, rising Islamic sentiment in Palestine never took the form of Islamic fundamentalism. Moreover certain elements within the traditional leadership—Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī in particular—proved particularly adept at channelling this sentiment to their own purpose.

The discrediting of Western liberalism reflected the experience of living under European colonial rule. Many Muslims (and some Christians) had become increasingly disillusioned with the European powers and the supposed values they represented, and many were sceptical that they would ever achieve their independence through an adherence to liberal principles, principles increasingly associated with the passive acceptance of foreign rule. Not lost on many Arabs were developments in Europe during this period—the rise of fascism in Italy and other European nations—which offered an alternative form of nationalism, one based not so much on liberal notions of contractual government and democracy, but on the glorification of the nation, often at the expense of individual rights. It was a nationalism moreover which romanticised the past—for many Muslim Arabs, this meant an emphasis of their Islamic heritage and the greatness that was Islamic civilisation. Related to this was the growth of militarism and the belief that it

\textsuperscript{277} See, for example, Mir‘āt al-Sha‘rā‘, 18 June 1924; also ISA 6/20-2, Samuel’s minutes on his conversation with Nasif, 1 June 1924.
was only through the strength of arms that the Arabs would ever become liberated. For many Muslims, the example of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey—first and foremost seen as a ‘Muslim’ hero (see above)—lent a great deal of substance to this contention.

Within this context, the Islamic umma lent itself quite well to fascist notions concerning the primacy of the nation. An emphasis on Islam also lent fascist movements a broader appeal than they might otherwise have had. As in the rest of the Arab world, fascism had its adherents in Palestine; during the 1930s, when, following the rise of Hitler in Germany, fascism became more strongly associated with anti-Semitism, its appeal would broaden considerably. Thus it was noted by one British official that “[t]he anti-semitic character of present day Germany, the pre-war German sympathies of the former Ottoman subjects, and a desire to seize upon any opportunity for change, [we]re amongst the motives.” Many young Muslims saw in fascism the best possibility of uniting the different Arab countries against colonialism and Zionism. In the end, fascism in Palestine never really developed into a significant movement, something attributable to a number of factors, not the least being its active suppression by the British administration. Unlike the case in Egypt, or even Iraq, the British were more directly involved in Palestine’s administration, and thus able to stifle such developments. The strong role played by the older notable families in Palestinian politics was also a factor, inasmuch as they were quick to check the rise of any militant group that might challenge their authority. In this sense, the British authorities and the older notable families found common cause in maintaining the political status quo. In the short-term, this no doubt had a positive effect on Muslim-Christian relations, the nature of which was still largely determined through the interaction of their respective political leaders at the level of the notable elite. At the same time, it was recognised by Christians that over the long term, such an arrangement might do more harm than good with regard to Muslim-Christian relations. Thus, in an open letter to the Pope published in his newspaper al-Karmil, Najib

278 FO 371/16926, CID Report, dated 30 August 1933. See also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 76.

279 See ibid, CID Report, dated 22 September 1933.
Nassār expressed a concern that the good relations between “Muslims and Christians, who had lived side by side under Muslim rule for hundreds of years, would not survive a further twenty years under Christian rule.” While the development of more radical and militant organisations may have been somewhat checked in Palestine, the underlying sentiment remained. Moreover, it was a sentiment that would be increasingly directed against the traditional leadership, something that would have negative consequences for Christians.

280 Al-Karmil, 12 November 1924.
Chapter IV, The World Islamic Conference

The ascension of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī

In a manner reminiscent of Sir Herbert Samuel’s description of the ‘three currents of thought’ underlying Arab opposition to the British occupation in the 1922 annual survey,¹ Uri Kupferschmidt speaks of three different orientations underlying how Palestinian Arabs defined both their identity and their struggle: a local Palestinian one, a pan-Arabic one, and a pan-Islamic one. As he explains, “[t]he three were inextricably interwoven, as long as all three could be of assistance to the Arabs of Palestine in attempting to shake off the yoke of British rule and to terminate the Jewish National Home policy.”² I would take it one step further, and propose that the local or purely ‘Palestinian’ orientation was largely defined by elements of the latter two, and whether one was a Christian or Muslim played a significant role in determining which of these two broader orientations predominated. As discussed earlier, Christians were most likely to define the Palestinian movement as essentially a secular nationalist one, albeit, one within which Islam had a place as part of the Arabs’ shared cultural heritage. For the majority of Muslims, the emphasis was generally the reverse. The Palestinian movement was first and foremost an Islamic one. What was ‘Palestinian’ about it were the circumstances particular to that corner of the Muslim world, and what was most significant about being Palestinian was that one’s homeland contained the Haram al-Sharīf (along with other Islamic holy sites). The significance of being Arab was largely determined by the special place allotted them with respect to Islam, not the other way around. For the most part, and particularly in the face of the larger threat of Zionism, differences of emphasis were generally obscured within the context of the local orientation—that is, the Palestinian one, which was largely defined by that threat. This was not always the case, however, as circumstances related to

¹ See Introduction.

specific events were often such that Christians and Muslims were no longer able to ignore what in the end were fundamentally opposing orientations. One such event was the World Islamic Conference, which convened in Jerusalem in 1931.

How individuals within the Palestinian leadership chose to define the movement was further determined by the power struggle between its two main factions; the moderate camp, best represented by the Nashashibi family and the more radical faction represented by Hajj Amín al-Husaynî, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Supreme Muslim Council, and his supporters. For the latter, given the religious basis of Hajj Amín’s status, accentuation of the ‘Islamic’ character of what were, after all, issues that might just as easily have been defined as essentially nationalist served to strengthen his position with respect to this internal rivalry. One such issue was the Wailing Wall controversy, which Hajj Amín immediately tried to characterize as a matter of general Muslim concern on the basis of its Islamic significance. More specifically, he sought to transform the Palestinian struggle against Zionism into an Islamic one, by demonstrating the danger Zionism posed to the Islamic holy sites.

One of the first actions he took following the Wailing Wall disturbances was to invite Muslim witnesses from countries other than Palestine to speak before the Wailing Wall Commission, which had been sent under the auspices of the League of Nations at Britain’s request to determine rights and claims in connection with the Wailing Wall. Likewise, he sought to raise money from Muslim countries for the related Arab victims.

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3 See, for instance, CO 733/1957, letter from Hajj Amín to the High Commissioner, 11 October 1931.


In connection with these activities, Hajj Amīn also began cultivating old and establishing new contacts with Muslim representatives throughout the Islamic world, from Cairo to India. More importantly, perhaps, was the impact the Islamisation of this issue had in Palestine, where his popularity reached new heights. As observed by a British officer in the aftermath of the 1931 Islamic Conference, “leaders who fail to rouse the masses on political issues may find no difficulty in arousing them by encouraging religious susceptibilities, and in order to achieve their ends may either exaggerate any religious issue or endeavour to convert a political grievance into a religious one.”

Hajj Amīn quickly established himself as the champion of the Haram al-Sha’īf. Almost immediately, he exonerated those who had participated in the disturbances as being ‘rightly guided.’ Significantly, Arabs involved in the rioting had been exclusively Muslim. The riots clearly had been triggered by the perceived need to defend the Islamic holy sites against Jewish incursion, a fact that served to accentuate the religious character of the event. At the same time, the incident was characterised as a nationalist one—the three Arabs later executed by the British for their involvement in the riots were immediately upheld as martyrs to the national cause. For Christian Arabs, this presented a dilemma. On the one hand, they were under great pressure to demonstrate their solidarity with their Muslim compatriots. On the other hand, many found it difficult to actively condone the violence connected with the incident. Given the religiously fanatical tone of the riots, the whole incident sat rather uneasily with many Christians. Such fanaticism might just as easily be directed against them. Thus, for example, Christians in mixed neighbourhoods in Jerusalem had found it necessary to paint red crosses on their doors

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6 CO 733/195/4, extract from ‘Political Summary for the Month of February, 1931,’ concerning ‘The Wailing Wall Question’ (original in 87021/31).

7 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 45.

during the rioting in order to ensure that their homes were spared. Indeed, they were. Nonetheless, Muslim chants during the rioting of “Friday... death to the Jews; Saturday, death to the Christians...and Sunday, death to the Government officials” must have remained somewhat disconcerting. The fact that those found guilty of having taken part in the riots faced serious repercussions from the administration was an additional inducement for Christian Arabs to distance themselves from the incident, and in fact, there is little evidence of any Christian involvement. In some cases, they had actually played an active role in stemming the violence. The city of Acre, for instance, was largely spared the worst of it thanks to the actions of the Christian Arab District Officer there.

Most Christians were inclined to disown any involvement in the riots. Typical in this respect were Ya‘qūb Farrāj and Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam, who almost immediately after the disturbances, made a public expression in favour of moderation during a public encounter with high-ranking Zionist figures. At the same time, it behoved them to at least demonstrate some degree of support for their Muslim compatriots. While not condoning the violence, the Christian press tended to put the onus of blame on the Jews. Additionally, they stressed the incident’s nationalist aspect. During the early part of the


14 See ibid, pp. 251, 339.
Mandate, issues related to the Muslim holy sites had been considered a strictly ‘Muslim affair,’ and Christians had even taken issue with attempts by Muslim leaders to emphasise their importance in connection with the nationalist cause. As the Mandate wore on and the nationalist movement took on an increasingly Islamic character, however, Christian Arabs began to recognise the need to accommodate this decidedly Muslim concern. Articles began to appear in the Christian press explaining why Christians should care about the Muslim holy sites on nationalistic grounds. Thus, it was pointed out that Islam was an ‘Arab’ religion, and since the Christians living in Palestine were Arabs, they had a duty to respect Islam and preserve its holy places.

With respect to the Wailing Wall disturbances, Christians demonstrated their support first and foremost at the organisational level, particularly through those organisations that were neither Muslim nor Christian but representative of Palestine’s Arabs as a whole. On 26 October 1929, a few months after the riots, for instance, a Palestine Women’s Congress, chaired by Madame Kāzīm Husaynī, the wife of Mūsā Kāzīm al-Husaynī, was convened in Jerusalem. In a show of solidarity, it was attended by over two hundred Muslim and Christian female delegates. In keeping with one of its resolutions, the Arab Women’s Association of Jerusalem subsequently bought two plots of land in Hebron, which were dedicated as a trust to benefit the families of the three men who were hanged. Likewise, many of the Muslim-Christian Associations submitted letters

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15 Al-Jamī’ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 15 November 1928, referring to an article that appeared in al-Zuhūr; also al-Kāmil, 14 January 1930.

16 Ibid, 14 January 1930; al-Jamī’ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 15 November 1928.

17 Al-Kāmil, 14 January 1930.


19 Mogannam, The Arab Woman, pp. 56-58. The same organisation later transmitted a telegram to the Colonial Secretary protesting the findings of the Commission. The telegram was signed by both its Muslim
protesting the findings of the Wailing Wall Commission (see below). Political parties in which Christians figured prominently also issued letters of protest. Typical in this respect was a letter issued by the Liberal Party, among whose founders were 'Īsā al-'Īsā, the Orthodox proprietor of Filāştit, and Hanna Asfur, a Christian lawyer based in Haifa. Apparently drafted by the latter, the letter ran on at great length—eleven pages in total—and spared no superlatives in describing the Haram al-Sharif’s Islamic importance.

Christian support with respect to the riots was also evident in Christian testimonies verifying Muslim ownership of the Wailing Wall as an integral part of al-Aqsā Mosque. The Supreme Muslim Council later tried to derive as much capital as possible from these supposedly unbiased testimonies, complaining in a correspondence following the release of the Commission’s findings that “[t]he Moslem side [had] procured unbiased witnesses, Palestinian Christians as well as foreigners, including Priests, Monks and guides to prove that [Jewish claims to the Wailing Wall were unfounded]...[but] the Commission [had] paid no heed to such evidence although the majority of these witnesses were impartial non-Moslems, Palestinians as well as foreigners.” No doubt, such avowals were, at least in part, genuine. On the other hand, such testimonies were generally elicited, and it is hard to imagine, given the circumstances, how a Christian Arab might actually decline

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20 See for example, CO 733/195/7, letters of protest addressed to the High Commissioner from the Muslim-Christian Associations of Nablus and Jaffa, 11 June and 4 July 1931 respectively.

21 Ibid, letter from the Liberal Party, signed by the ‘Standing Committee,’ and apparently drafted by Hanna Asfur, to the High Commissioner, 15 June 1931.

22 Ibid, correspondence from Hajj Amin to Wauchope, 11 October 1931; also Filāštit, 30 October 1929.
such an invitation regardless of any personal views he might hold to the contrary; indeed, the Commission was somewhat sceptical concerning Christian support. 23

Perhaps more significant than the actual riots with respect to Muslim-Christian relations was the broader political shift following them, something not brought about solely by their occurrence, but no doubt intensified by them. The national movement was taking on an increasingly Islamic (and correspondingly, radical) colour, something of which Hajj Amîn was quick to take advantage. Within a month of the riots, he had established a Central Relief Committee to provide for the financial needs of the family members of those Arabs that had been injured or arrested. Significantly, the Committee was established outside the framework of the Arab Executive, and was under his direct control. 24 In an effort to turn the disturbances into an Islamic issue of regional significance, he began appealing to Muslim organisations in other countries. Among these was the Muslim Indian Congress, which in an act of solidarity, designated the 16th of May 'Palestine Day.' 25 The Arab Executive, still dominated by the more moderate faction, responded as well, convening a countrywide meeting at the end of October. Its response, however, came across as relatively tentative and uninspired. Hajj Amîn had taken the initiative in responding to the situation, and from that point on, a good deal of the activity of the Arab Executive resembled more a feeble attempt at keeping pace than anything else. The High Commissioner expressed the dilemma well when he noted that the chief weakness of the Opposition lay “in the power of the mufti to raise some


24 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 3.

religious cry, which in time of unrest might sweep the country and compel his present opponents to follow his banner.\(^{26}\)

At the same time, Hajj Amīn was operating under some very real constraints. Even his control of the Supreme Muslim Council was not absolute, as evidenced by the election of an Opposition candidate to its board in October 1930, following the death of one of its members.\(^{27}\) Additionally, moderation had not yet fallen completely out of favour; a fair portion of the Palestinian Arab leadership were still hopeful of arriving at some kind of equitable compromise with the British regarding Zionism.\(^{28}\) Finally, there was the fact that, as noted above, Hajj Amīn’s positions as President of the Supreme Muslim Council and as Grand Mufti were effectively government posts, and were therefore largely dependent on British support. This last factor was a particularly powerful constraint, given that any attempt to directly challenge the Opposition for the leadership of Palestine’s Arabs would have meant the unequivocal adoption of a more radical stance (as a counterpoint to their more moderate one), and would thus have required him to openly confront the Palestine Government. For the time being, Hajj Amīn and the Opposition-dominated Arab Executive made a show of unity. Neither was in a position to dominate the Palestinian Arab leadership. Nonetheless, the latter was clearly becoming weaker.\(^{29}\) Moreover, it was fast splintering. In the aftermath of the Wailing Wall riots, many of the members of the Opposition had begun forming their own parties, a process

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\(^{27}\) Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p 55.

\(^{28}\) See ibid, pp. 22-23.

\(^{29}\) The Arab Executive was also running into financial difficulties, and even had, at one point, to borrow money from the aforementioned Central Relief Committee, a body largely under the Hajj Amīn’s control. See ibid, p. 136.
which would accelerate rapidly over the coming years. Most of these parties took a moderate position with respect to the issues of the day, and in some cases, even demonstrated a willingness to compromise with the Jewish Agency and the British administration. 30 Unable to form a united front on account of personal divisions, the Opposition would provide little effective opposition to Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī. 31

Christians continued to affiliate with the Opposition through the newly formed political parties. This was particularly true in the Galilee, where many Christians resided, and where many of these parties were based. Most Christians continued to favour moderation, as it was considered that the adoption of a more radical platform—particularly one under the leadership of Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī—would most likely result in further religious agitation. 32 At the same time, many Christians could see which way the wind was blowing and recognised what was a certain inevitability with respect to the radicalisation of the nationalist movement, likewise its Islamisation. Many Christians still hoped to channel these developments in a manner that would not see them completely marginalized. One way of doing this was to define Palestine’s Islamic significance as something apart from the nationalist movement; likewise to ensure that Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī was not able to utilise such a characterisation for bringing the movement under his control. The aforementioned letter from the Liberal Party, for instance, was particularly critical of the fact that

the persons who represented the Moslems of the world before [the Wailing Wall Commission], appeared on behalf of the Supreme Moslem Council of Palestine only [which] did not hold any powers of representation from the Moslem Kings and Princes and consequently should not have been

30 See, for instance, ibid, pp. 50-52.

31 See, for instance, CO 733/195/7, correspondence from the High Commissioner’s office to Cunliffe-Lister, 19 November 1931.

32 See, for instance, al-Karm il, 10 June 1928.
regarded by the Commission to have represented the whole of the Moslem world.33

Christians likewise maintained that, analogous to Palestine’s worldwide Islamic significance was its worldwide Christian significance.34 Arguably, Christians hoped in this way to maintain for themselves a role in the nationalist movement in spite of its Islamisation. Thus, for instance, many called for an Islamic-Catholic alliance against Zionism. In one lengthy editorial, al-Karmil called on Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī to seek out an alliance with the Vatican.35 The belief that such an alliance was possible was not entirely without basis, as indeed the Vatican had often expressed its concern about Zionism.36 Additionally, it had shown sympathy regarding Muslim interests in Palestine, expressing on a number of occasions a preference that Palestine should remain under Muslim control rather than fall into Jewish hands.37 In some cases, the proposed alliance was set out as one directed against Zionism and Protestantism (thus touching on the strong hostility many Muslims felt towards missionary activity).38 In other cases, Protestant Britain was called upon to wake up and reject Zionism.39

33 CO 733/195/7, letter from the Liberal Party, signed by the ‘Standing Committee,’ and apparently drafted by Hanna Asfur, to the High Commissioner, 15 June 1931.

34 Al-Karmil, 3 October 1929.

35 Ibid, 26 October 1929; see also ibid, 11 March 1928.

36 See the second chapter.


38 Al-Karmil, 26 October 1929.

39 See also ibid, 21 September 1929; Filastīn, 18 June 1936.
Shortly after the Wailing Wall riots, Hajj Amin, approached one of the members of the Muslim Indian Congress, Shawkat 'Ali, about the possibility of establishing a worldwide Muslim organization in defence of Palestine and its Islamic holy places. Shawkat 'Ali, as a leading member (and later President) of the Indian Muslim Khalifat Committee—an organization which sought the restoration of the caliphate in the Muslim World—was quite willing to cooperate in such an endeavour. His organization sought to promote pan-Islamism, and had as early as 1929, begun promoting the idea of creating a 'Supreme Islamic Council' in Jerusalem composed of representatives from the various Muslim countries. For 'Ali, the conference would serve as a venue for promoting pan-Islamism and revitalising the caliphate; for Hajj Amin, it would serve as a means of drawing attention to the threat posed by Zionism to Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites.

Moderation in trouble

Beginning in April 1930, special one-judge courts established in Palestine by the British began pronouncing judgment on those charged in relation to the Wailing Wall riots—of the 27 sentenced to death, 26 were Arab, all of them Muslim. In the end, only three Arabs were hanged, on 17 June 1930. A general strike was called for by the Arab


41 Concerning the long-standing relationship between the Supreme Muslim Council and the Indian Muslim Khalifat Committee, see CO 733/49, dispatch from Samuel to the Colonial Office, 23 September 1923; also a telegram sent from Samuel to the Colonial Secretary, 26 September 1923, and an 'urgent memo' to Downing Street from the Under Secretary of State for the India Office, 1 October 1923. See also Kupferschmidt, "The General Muslim Congress of 1931, pp. 128-129.

42 FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, attached to correspondence from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, 24 December 1931; also FO 371/15332, 'Note of Interview of Shawkat Ali, 10 February 1931,' enclosure to confidential dispatch, 14 February 1931.

43 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, pp. 4-5.

44 See FO 371/14489, telegram from the High Commissioner, to the Colonial Secretary, 18 June 1930.
Executive, to be held two days prior as a gesture of protest. The Arab Executive’s leadership of the nationalist movement was being challenged by more radical elements, and it was finding itself increasingly under pressure to adopt a more confrontational stance towards the Government. At the same time, the traditional elite was hesitant to take any action that might jeopardise its own commercial interests, and thus found itself incapable of adopting more extremist tactics, even on a modest scale.

On 20 October 1930, the British Cabinet under Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald submitted to Parliament a draft of the Passfield White Paper, prepared by the Colonial Office, outlining proposed Government policy on Palestine. Published the next day, it called for a legislative council along the lines proposed in 1922. It also called for a stronger line against Jewish immigration and Jewish land purchases. The more moderate Opposition received the Passfield White Paper well, particularly the passage concerning the proposed legislative council. While not explicitly abrogating the Balfour Declaration, its terms held the promise of ensuring Zionism’s failure. Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and his faction were less sanguine, and, particularly as expressed in al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, were extremely critical of the White Paper. At the same time, in deference to the fact that overall Arab opinion was favourable (if not enthusiastically so), they stopped short of rejecting it out of hand. Jewish reaction, by contrast, was bitter and furious—they saw the White Paper as a complete betrayal of the Balfour Declaration, and


46 See, for instance, CO 733/204/2, correspondence entitled ‘Arab Incitement,’ circa mid-1931.

47 Named after the Colonial Secretary at the time, Lord Passfield.

48 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 31.

49 See, for instance, CO 733/182/8, telegram from Wauchope to Lord Passfield, 4 November 1930. For the overall Arab press reaction, see ibid, ‘Palestine Arabic Press Summary No. 57 for the week ending 25th October 1930.’
the British Government was soon flooded with letters of protest from Jewish organizations from around the world.  

50 In response, on 13 February 1931, Prime Minister MacDonald issued his famous letter to Chaim Weizmann, ‘reinterpreting’ the principles of the White Paper in such a way as to nullify any impact they might actually have had on the Zionist enterprise.  

51 This spelled the beginning of the end for the moderates—the ‘black letter’ as it was dubbed lent weight to those arguing for the adoption of a more militant stance against the British, and discredited the Arab Executive’s efforts at a negotiated settlement.  

Shortly after the release of the MacDonald Letter, the Arab Executive published a ‘Declaration of the Noble Arab Nation.’ In it, they expressed their utter disillusionment with the British government and their conviction that further cooperation with the British Government was useless. Among those signing the declaration were Ya’qūb Farrāj and Mughannam ʿĪyās Mughannam.  

52 On 2 March, a meeting was convened over how best to respond to the MacDonald Letter. Some members called for a policy of civil disobedience and non-cooperation with the Government. Others suggested that reaction be limited to a political and economic boycott of the Jews.  

53 Christians figured prominently among the latter, the most notable among them being ʿĪsā al-ʿĪsā, the proprietor of Filāstīn. In the end, neither proposal was carried out; once again, the Arab Executive had proven incapable of taking decisive action.


51 Concerning the fact that the letter represented official policy as such, see CO 733/197/1D, in particular, ‘Extract from the Official Report of 12 th February 1931’; also Laqueur, A History of Zionism, p. 493.


53 ISA, AE, 1022, Salim Salamah, Secretary of Ramallah MCA to the AE, on the Legislative Council.

54 See Porath, Riots to Rebellion, pp. 34-35.
It was around this time that the idea of holding a World Islamic Conference in Jerusalem began to take on definite shape. Earlier, Hajj Amin had gotten in contact with Shawkat 'Ali, who in January had become the head of the Indian Muslim Khalifat Committee. After some discussion, it was agreed that the two would act as co-sponsors for the proposed conference.\textsuperscript{55} A short time prior, the Wailing Wall Commission had released its report on the Wailing Wall disturbances.\textsuperscript{56} The Commission’s report proposed a compromise, with Muslim ownership of the Wailing Wall being retained, but the right of Jews to worship there guaranteed. The Zionists accepted the Commission’s findings; the Palestinian Arabs, following the lead of Hajj Amin, did not. In spite of the opposition expressed by the Arabs, the Palestine Government chose to uphold the findings of the Commission. One last attempt at presenting a unified front was initiated by the Arab Executive; true to form, they responded by initiating a writing campaign appealing to Arab leaders outside of Palestine to intervene on their behalf. Not surprisingly, many found the Arab Executive’s response wanting, and were beginning to lose patience with its continued refusal to adopt a more hard-line position. Towards the end of 1931, the Arab Executive’s situation would deteriorate further. A report prepared by the Director of Development, Lewis French, in connection with a government sponsored development plan, indicated among other things that a number of prominent members of the Arab Executive had been involved in land transactions with Jews. While members of the Supreme Muslim Council were also indicted, the report nevertheless proved more damaging to the Arab Executive on account of its moderate politics.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{56} CO 733/195/5, telegram from the High Commissioner, to the Colonial Secretary, 16 June 1931.

\textsuperscript{57} Porath, \textit{Riots to Rebellion}, 38-40.
The World Islamic Conference

At the end of July 1931 Hajj Amīn began sending out official invitations for the World Islamic Conference scheduled for that fall in Jerusalem.58 Twice deferred, the starting date was eventually set for 7 December, the anniversary of the Night Journey of the Prophet to Jerusalem. While the financial burden of the Conference would, for the most part, be born by Shawkat 'Ali and his organization, the Indian Muslim Khalifat Committee, its organisation was largely left in the hands of Hajj Amīn. With Hajj Amīn serving as president of the preparatory council, the Conference quickly evolved into his own personal project.

The Conference opened with 130 delegates in attendance, representative of almost all the Muslim countries, the only notable exceptions being Saudi Arabia and Turkey.59 The latter was particularly sensitive to the question of revitalising the caliphate. The most viable candidate for caliph was the deposed Ottoman caliph 'Abdulmeclid,60 the reinstatement of whom, needless to say, would have proved problematic for the recently secularised Turkish state. Interestingly, the Turkish Minister of Justice characterised the caliphate as "a kind of Muslim imperialism" that had until then only "promoted hatred amongst peoples."61 The Turkish government was also concerned about the overall political character of the Conference, which it viewed as running contrary to the principles upon which newly established Turkish Republic was founded, principles that


61 Oriente Moderno, December 1931, p. 579, from Türkische Post, 24 November 1931.
were decidedly secular. 62 In an official statement issued by the Minister of Foreign
Affairs, it was noted that Turkey was “opposed to any internal or external policy which
makes use of religion as a political instrument.” 63 Finally, scepticism was expressed
concerning Hajj Amīn’s motives. The aforementioned Turkish Minister of Justice noted
that “the Mufti of Jerusalem, who today was organising the ‘Congress of the Caliphate’
had yesterday worked against Turkey, for the union of the Arabs, not that of the
Muslims.” 64

Turkey was not the only country concerned about the issue of the caliphate, likewise the
Conference’s overall political character, and Hajj Amīn found it necessary, prior to the
Conference’s commencement, to provide assurances to several of the Arab countries.
Saudi Arabia and Egypt proved the most difficult in this respect. The former, as noted,
ended up not sending any representative at all to the Conference. 65 The latter did, but
only after being paid a personal visit by Hajj Amīn. Egyptian reticence reflected in large
part the fact that the Egyptian King, Fu’ād, had pretensions of his own to the caliphate. 66
Al-Azhar University in Cairo took the official government position, and denounced any
attempt to raise the caliphate question at the upcoming Conference, 67 though arguably, it
was more concerned with the proposal to establish an Islamic University in Jerusalem,

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64 Oriente Moderno, December 1931, p. 579, from Türkische Post, 24 November 1931.
65 Ibid, December 1931, p. 580, from al-Ahrām, 23 November 1931. See also Kramer, Islam Assembled,
p. 129.
67 Oriente Moderno, November 1931, p. 527, from al-Ahrām, 3 November 1931. See also Mayer, “Egypt
and the General Islamic Conference,” p. 313.
one which might conceivably threaten its own status as the most prestigious university in the Islamic world. Hajj Amīn assured King Fu‘ād and official Egyptian circles that the Conference would not promote the caliphate; likewise, that the planned Islamic University did not seek to challenge the pre-eminence of al-Azhar.

The British were equally reluctant to see the subject of the caliphate taken up at the conference, and it was indicated that under no circumstances would the former Ottoman caliph, 'Abdulmeđid, be permitted to enter Palestine. The British were concerned in fact that any political issue should be taken up, and prior to the Conference, the High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wauchope, met with Hajj Amīn and received assurances that there would be no discussion of political questions, neither concerning the caliphate nor Italian policy in Libya, and that the conference would be strictly religious in nature. As it turned out, Hajj Amīn made no effort to inform any of the participants that such assurances had been given; in fact, he barely acknowledged that such discussions had even taken place. As a result, political questions were very much on the agenda, not only

68 Ibid. Shawkat 'Ali, in elaborating his program for the restoration of the caliphate, had called for the establishment of an Islamic university in Jerusalem, as in his opinion, al-Azhar had lost its religious zeal. See Kupferschmidt, “The General Muslim Congress of 1931,” p. 130.

69 Oriente Moderno, November 1931, p. 529, from al-Ahram, 6 November 1931. See also Kramer, Islam Assembled, p. 128.

70 See FO 371/15283, exchange between the Foreign Office and the High Commissioner on the question of admitting the ex-caliph into Palestine, 23 and 20 November 1931.

71 Concerning the Italians in Libya, see FO 371/15282, correspondence from Rendel to Williams, 17 November 1931; also ibid, correspondence from the Italian ambassador to the British Foreign Office, 17 November 1931.

72 Gibb, “The Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in December 1931,” p. 103; also Oriente Moderno, December 1931, p. 579, from al-Ahram, 29 November 1931.
concerning Palestine, but with respect to the entire region.\textsuperscript{73} The British nonetheless found it difficult to bring themselves to interfere in what was, in principle at least, a religious affair, for fear of rousing Muslim sensibilities.\textsuperscript{74}

Almost immediately after the Conference had commenced, it was apparent that the two men responsible for it, Hajj Amīn and Shawkat `Ali, had very different agendas. The former wanted to focus strictly on Palestinian issues, issues not coincidentally that would strengthen his own political position within Palestine. These included issues related to the Wailing Wall and the promotion of an Islamic University in Jerusalem. Shawkat `Ali, on the other hand, was more concerned with reviving the Islamic caliphate as a basis for Pan-Islamic solidarity. Both spoke the language of pan-Islamism; the difference was that, whereas the former saw in pan-Islamism a utility, both in drawing attention to the Palestinian struggle and in enhancing his own political status, the latter saw it as an end in itself. In any case, that the Conference was first and foremost an ‘Islamic’ affair—whatever the nationalist aspect of any particular issue raised—was something recognised from the start. Thus Alfred Nielsen, writing about the conference a year later in the journal \textit{Moslem World}, defined it as a ‘modern expression of pan-Islamism.’\textsuperscript{75} In Egypt, press supportive of the Islamic Conference characterized it as an Islamic rather than a nationalistic event,\textsuperscript{76} and H.A.R. Gibb writing about the same time, noted that he saw in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textnormal{\textsuperscript{73} Kramer, \textit{Islam Assembled}, pp. 134-35. See also Gibb, “The Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in December 1931,” p. 105, footnote 1, from \textit{Oriente Moderno}, January 1932, p. 42.}
\item \textnormal{\textsuperscript{74} Kramer, \textit{Islam Assembled}, pp. 126, 135. See also CO 732/47/6, Colonial Office internal memorandum, 8 September 1931.}
\item \textnormal{\textsuperscript{75} Alfred Nielsen, “The International Islamic Conference at Jerusalem” in \textit{Moslem World}, 22(1932), p. 341. Nielsen’s article appeared almost immediately after the Conference and in many respects, resembles a journalistic account of the event. Much of the information provided was, in fact, taken from the newspaper \textit{Filāṣṭīn}.}
\item \textnormal{\textsuperscript{76} Mayer, “Egypt and the General Islamic Conference,” p. 319.}
\end{itemize}
the Conference evidence of a developing 'organizational aptitude' in Islam. This may seem a case of overstating the obvious, but given that most of the issues raised at the conference could very easily have been defined in nationalistic terms, it is a point which bears emphasising.

The Conference appealed to the Muslim world for unity. Not a single speaker failed to stress the importance of this at the inauguration ceremonies. Muhammad Rashīd Rīda called for the unification of the different schools of law in Islam, and the Conference adopted a recommendation that new branches of the Young Men's Muslim Associations (or YMMAs) be established throughout the Muslim world to act as the vanguard of a 'cultural army.' Most significant with respect to the pan-Islamic character of the conference was the proposed al-Aqṣā Mosque University. As one of the Iranian representatives noted, the university was to be called 'Muslim' and not 'Arab' and that therefore, "any national distinction in connection with it should be avoided." Shawkat 'Ali, in arguing for the study of languages other than Arabic, likewise emphasised its Islamic character—it was to be a university for all Muslims, not just those from the Arab countries.

77 Kramer, Islam Assembled, p. 135.


79 Al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabiyyah, 7, 10, 14 and 16 December 1931; also Kupferschmidt, "The General Muslim Congress of 1931," p. 14

80 FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931; also al-Jāmi'ah al-'Arabiyyah, 11 December 1931.

81 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 30, from Filāstīn, 6-18 December 1931.

82 Ibid.
At the same time, the conference was very much about Palestine. Most importantly, it defined the Palestinian cause as an Islamic one. In the days leading up to the Conference, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī claimed that the Zionists sought through propaganda to cause the Conference to fail in order to “separate the Palestinian question from Muslim questions and to convince the West that the Palestinians are alone in defending their holy sites, when in fact they are supported by Islam and the Arabs.”83 The linking of the Palestinian cause with Islam was further evident in the choice of the opening-day for the Conference—the 27th of Rajab, commemorating the Night Journey of the Prophet, when he ascended to heaven from the Temple Mount. In his speech opening the conference, Hajj Amīn noted that “it was in view of the religious position of Palestine and of the Mosque of Omar [that] the Congress was arranged.”84 One British official commented that “the attention of the Congress was directed almost exclusively to Moslem affairs in Palestine,”85 but indeed, it might be said that Palestine had itself become a Muslim affair.

During the Conference, the Mufti emphasized with great regularity the need of the Muslim world to unite behind the Palestinian cause—specifically, the need to preserve the Arab-Islamic character of Palestine.86 The focus of the Conference on the Palestinian cause, moreover its characterization as an Islamic cause, was clear even to outsiders. Thus, Nielsen in his account noted that “[t]he third international Islamic conference owed its origin to the Zionist movement...if all Moslems would take up the case as their own and protest, Great Britain might choose a Palestinian policy that would be less an

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83 Oriente Moderno, November 1931, p. 529, from al-Ahram, 6 November 1931.

84 FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.

85 Ibid, handwritten secret cover memorandum from the Colonial Office (No. 98036/32), dated 12 February 1932, concerning the police report on the Islamic Conference.

86 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 25, from Filāstīn, 7 December 1931. See also al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 12 June 1931 and al-Karmil, 24 June 1931; also Kramer, Islam Assembled, p. 123.
irritation to Moslems in India, Egypt and Mesopotamia."87 The Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem were the subject of what was probably the most important of the eight sub-committees of the conference;88 as if to emphasize its regional significance, the chairman was not even a Palestinian, but rather the former Egyptian Minister of Waqfs, Muhammad 'Ali Pasha. It was in connection to the holy sites that the uniquely Palestinian problem of Zionism was given an Islamic context—namely that it posed a threat to the Islamic integrity of the third holiest city in Islam. In his opening speech, Hajj Amīn noted that in “comparison to other Islamic territories, Palestine, this Holy Land which called for the Congress...suffered most by reason of the establishment of the Jewish National Home. On this account and in view of the religious position of Palestine and of the Mosque of Omar, the Congress was arranged.”89 As one participant at the Conference put it, had it not been for the Mandate and by extension, Britain’s support for the Zionism, the Jews would never have even dared to try to appropriate the Wailing Wall. The general feeling expressed at the Conference, moreover, was that the Jews would not stop there. Eventually they would seek to appropriate the entire complex of the Haram al-Sharīf.90

The Islam-Palestine connection was further emphasised by the decision to have the names of rulers and notables who contributed funds for the implementation of congress resolutions placed on special boards, to be hung inside al-Aqṣā Mosque;91 likewise, in the


88 Concerning the subjects of the eight sub-committees, see Gibb, “The Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in December 1931,” p. 105.

89 FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.

90 The general view being that they intended to rebuild the Jewish temple on the sight of the Haram al-Sharīf. See ibid.

proposed university, which sought to promote Jerusalem as a regional centre of Islamic learning, while simultaneous countering the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and thus addressing the Zionist challenge.\textsuperscript{92} In this sense, the proposed university was strongly symbolic of the link forged at the Conference between pan-Islamism and the Palestinian cause. Finally, it was evidenced in the decision taken that future conferences should be held in Jerusalem on a permanent basis. As noted by Rashīd Rūda, the Conference “had been convened specifically in defence of Palestine, and so should always be held in Jerusalem.”\textsuperscript{93} That the cause of Palestine was now an Islamic one was clearly evident. As one British official noted, “[the] aim [of the Conference was] to show to the Zionists a united Muslim front, and to make Muslims all over the world notice the injustice being done to their Palestinian co-religionists.”\textsuperscript{94}

\textbf{Arab nationalism subsumed}

Alongside the World Islamic Conference, a gathering was held on 16 December 1931, around the theme of Arab nationalism at the home of ‘Awnī ‘Abd al-Hādī.\textsuperscript{95} Attending it were the Arab participants from the Conference, all of whom signed a pact—“The Manifesto to the Arab World”—calling for Arab unity and the full independence of the Arab countries.\textsuperscript{96} The gathering was intentionally organised as something apart from the

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{93} Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 15, 18 December, 1931.

\textsuperscript{94} Nielsen, “The International Islamic Conference,” p. 354, quoting from an article appearing at the time in a journal called \textit{Near East}—uncited.

\textsuperscript{95} The ‘gathering’ was essentially a party given by the Palestinian lawyer, ‘Awnī ‘Abd al-Hādī, to about forty guests, and only later became known as the ‘Arab Conference.’ See Mayer, “Egypt and the General Islamic Conference,” p. 318.

Islamic Conference in order to avoid the latter assuming the appearance of a pan-Arab as opposed to a pan-Islamic event. At the same time, though on the face of it representative of what would appear to be strictly Arab nationalist demands, there was no question of its affiliation with the Conference. In many respects, the relationship between the two was illustrative of that between Arab nationalism and pan-Islamism, at least from the perspective of most Muslims. Arab nationalist issues were but one component of a much broader Islamic agenda, and the problems of the Arabs were inherently those of the broader worldwide Muslim community. Of course, this dovetailed quite nicely with the salafi model of Arab identity favoured by most Muslims. Though the pan-Arab gathering received hardly any publicity, its manifesto would provide the inspiration for more extremist nationalist organisations and political parties, the most notable being the Istiqlāl Party (formed under `Awnī `Abd al-Hādī). The Istiqlāl Party in particular would appeal strongly to those disaffected with the traditional leadership, and would come to constitute an important factor in Palestinian Arab politics.

Arab nationalists attending the World Islamic Conference were not entirely unaware of the need to maintain at least some distinction between purely Islamic issues and those that might be qualified as Arab nationalist, and thus of importance to non-Muslims. More specifically, there was a concern that the Conference should not have a negative impact on Muslim-Christian relations. Thus, for instance, Hajj Amīn was more than a little alarmed when the Iranian ex-Prime Minister, Ziya al-Dīn al-Tabataba’ī, while speaking before the other delegates, defined the purpose of the Conference as being to combat the ‘Christian’ Government in Palestine that discriminated in favour of the local Christians. Hajj Amīn was genuinely concerned that the Conference should not alienate Palestine’s


98 Five of the Manifesto’s signatories, in fact, were among the founding members of the Istiqlāl Party. See Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 124; also Kupferschmidt, “The General Muslim Congress of 1931,” pp. 155-56.
Christian Arabs. His cosponsor, Shawkat 'Ali, seemed sensitive to this concern as well, and took great pains to emphasise the positive reception he received from the local Christians whenever visiting Palestine. Referring to a trip he had made to Jerusalem just a few months prior to the Conference, he noted that

> [w]hile coming this morning on the train I was recognised on the journey by some Christian Arab brothers and they all complained to me of not informing them of my arrival so that the whole town would have come to welcome me... They showered on me hospitality which was genuine Arab hospitality."

Nonetheless, the theme of 'Christian favouritism'—that is, that the mandate governments were discriminating against Muslims in favour of local Christians—was not one so easily stifled. Thus for instance, a Syrian participant, when complaining about French interference with Muslim preachers and Muslim waqfs, could not resist noting that Christians did not suffer the same treatment.

What impact the conference might have on Muslim-Christian relations was not only a concern in Palestine. Other Arab countries had relatively large Christian minorities, most notably Egypt. Thus, the Egyptian delegate 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Azzam, in a speech given as part of the opening ceremonies, greeted the participants on behalf of Egypt’s Muslims and Christians, noting that the latter were equally supportive of the Conference and that they stood to benefit as much as Muslims from its success. The impact of the

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99 ZA, S/25, 4142, Kalvarisky to Arlosoroff, on a talk with al-Tabataba'i.

100 From a statement made by Shawkat 'Ali appearing in Filāstīn. See CO 732/47/6, collection of speeches and statements made by 'Ali, collected by Arlosoroff, and addressed to Brodetsky, 3 October 1931.

101 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 39, from Filāstīn, 6-18 December 1931.

Conference on Muslim-Christian relations was of general concern to all the Egyptian delegates, who feared that a manifestation of unity which took on too Islamic a colouring could fan the flames of sectarianism back home. It was this concern in part that had motivated the Wafdist al-Nuqrashī not to attend the Islamic Conference at all. For Egypt, this would remain an important consideration, particularly with respect to the Palestinian cause. Even years later, when speaking on British policy in Palestine, the Egyptian nationalist al-Nahhās took great pains to express his objections on three different bases—as an Arab, as a Muslim, and as an Egyptian—thus, in the first case, he saw Palestine as belonging to the native population whether Christian, Muslim (or Jewish); in the second, he found British (that is, Christian) protection of the Muslim holy sites intolerable; and in the third, he considered the possibility of a neighbouring Jewish state as a danger. Which of the three took precedence often seemed a factor of the audience being addressed.

As noted above, emphasising Palestine's Islamic significance was also a matter of political expedience. That such an emphasis served to enhance the status of Hajj Amīn goes without question. Certainly the topics slated for discussion at the Conference worked to his benefit: the Haram al-Sharīf was, after all, under the control of the Supreme Muslim Council, and the establishment of a pan-Islamic university in Jerusalem could only add to his status as the most pre-eminent 'Muslim' leader in Palestine. By

103 Ibid, p. 51.


105 Ibid, p. 47.

106 As President of the Supreme Muslim Council, Hajj Amīn also held the title Raūs al-'Ulamā', which might be translated as President or 'head' of the Muslim leadership or 'learned community.' See Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council, p. 79.
any measure, the conference was Hajj Amīn’s project, and his hand was fully evident in it from start to finish. The Rawdat al-Ma’ārif College, under the authority of the Supreme Muslim Council, served as the assembly hall; the musical band and boy scouts of the Muslim Orphanage, likewise under the SMC’s authority, were at the opening ceremony at al-Aqṣā Mosque; finally, al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, Hajj Amīn’s mouthpiece, had begun making propaganda long before the Conference by publishing articles on the delegates scheduled to attend.107 Concerning the composition of the participants, very little had been left to chance in fact, and it soon became apparent that the majority of those attending were there primarily on the merit of being supporters of Hajj Amīn. His faction fairly dominated the Conference, and right from the start, he was acknowledged as Congress President.108 It was this, in fact, which underlay much of the hostility towards the Conference of the Opposition,109 which criticized him for his autocratic handling of the nomination of the Palestinian delegates.110 The Opposition argued that Hajj Amīn was using the Congress as a tool for his own self-aggrandizement, and attacked the Congress and its preparatory committee in a manifesto.111 Hajj Amīn, for his part, portrayed himself as a national leader representative of the majority of Palestine’s Arabs, and dismissed the Opposition as being of little significance.112


108 See FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931; also Filāstīn, 8 December 1931; al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 9 December 1931. See also Uri M. Kupferschmidt, “The General Muslim Congress of 1931,” pp. 139-40; and Kramer, Islam Assembled, p. 133.


The Opposition’s campaign against Hajj Amīn was initially successful in generating scepticism about the Mufti’s intentions. Primarily, they attacked the partisan way in which he and his associates had organized it, suggesting that his purpose was to exploit it for his own political and personal gain. This was certainly a view shared by many in the British administration, who noted that there was “some foundation...that the Mufti was exploiting the Congress for the [furthering] of his own personal ambitions.” The Opposition, led by Rāghib al-Nashāshibī, quickly followed up on this by organising a rival conference, the Congress of the Palestinian Muslim Nation, which opened session on 11 December 1931 at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. About 1,000 individuals attended, and it was the first time all the Muslim factions opposing Hajj Amīn had come together in one event. The Congress used the Conference as a forum for directly attacking the Supreme Muslim Council, and called for new elections and reforms aimed at limiting the Council’s control of the shari’a courts. It was generally understood that the Congress of the Palestinian Muslim Nation also stood for moderation and cooperation with the Government.

The World Islamic Conference concluded on 17 December with the establishment of a permanent Executive, with Hajj Amīn as its chair. Shawkat ’Ali, also elected to the Executive, relinquished his seat in frustration over the manner in which Hajj Amīn had

113 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 47.
114 FO 371/16009, secret correspondence from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, 26 March 1932.
116 See FO 371/16009, secret correspondence from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, 30 January 1932.
117 Ibid.
dominated the entire Conference.\textsuperscript{119} A number of resolutions were passed, among them the intention to convene again in Jerusalem in two years time.\textsuperscript{120} Other resolutions particular to Palestine included the intention to establish an Islamic university in Jerusalem (to be called the al-Masjid al-Aqṣā University); the condemnation of the selling of land to Jews, and the intention to establish a company to save Palestinian land from being purchased by them;\textsuperscript{121} a proclamation concerning the sanctity of al-Buraq (the Wailing Wall) and the willingness of Muslims to protect it; and, perhaps most relevant to Palestine’s Christian Arabs, the intention to combat Christian missionary activity directed at Muslims.\textsuperscript{122} Notably, this last resolution was tempered with another one expressing gratitude to Palestine and Transjordan’s Christians for having supported the Conference, together with a message of congratulations to the Second Arab-Orthodox Conference, then taking place in Jaffa.\textsuperscript{123}

The Second Arab Orthodox Congress

Christian reaction to the Islamic Conference, at least on the face of it, was generally positive, and many of Palestine’s Christian Arabs publicly declared their support.\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[119] Kramer, \textit{Islam Assembled}, p. 137. Concerning the manner in which Hajj Amin dominated the Conference, see also FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.
\item[121] Oriente Moderno, January 1932, pp. 38-39, from Filasta, 6-18 December 1931.
\item[122] This was to be done largely through the printing of polemical pamphlets on the Crucifixion and the Redemption, spelling out what it was that Muslims did and did not believe concerning Jesus. Ibid, p. 35, from Filastin, 6-18 December 1931.
\item[123] A complete list of the resolutions can be found in Porath, \textit{Riots to Rebellion}, p. 12.
\item[124] See FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.
\end{footnotes}
Thus, for instance, George Antonius endorsed the conference without reservation, stating unequivocally that he regarded the conference as "potentially the most important constructive effort among Moslems in recent years, and one which [was] fraught with far-reaching possibilities."\footnote{Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, p. 135.} Shortly after it began, the President of the Jerusalem Muslim-Christian Association paid the Conference a visit as an indication of Muslim-Christian solidarity.\footnote{Coury, "Egyptians in Jerusalem," p. 45.} Whether such gestures were representative of Christians as a whole is questionable however. Certainly not all Christians were happy with the World Islamic Conference, particularly the fact that it stressed Jerusalem’s role as a centre of Muslim religious and cultural revival\footnote{Ann Mosely Lesch, "The Palestine Arab Nationalist Movement Under the Mandate," *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, eds., William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 19.}; an article appearing in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahrām* suggested that Christians (along with Zionists) generally opposed the Conference.\footnote{Oriente Moderno, November 1931, p. 528, from *al-Ahrām*, 25 October 1931.}

The Islamic Conference made some effort to keep on good terms with Palestine’s Christian Arabs, though often in what seemed a somewhat patronising manner.\footnote{Kupferschmidt, "The General Muslim Congress of 1931," p. 156.} Thus, for instance, on the third day of the Conference, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, in referring to a telegram of congratulations from the Arab Orthodox Congress “mentioned briefly the collaboration and solidarity which Palestinian Christians had given the Muslims in the national struggle and proposed that they be saluted and that a letter of gratitude be sent them.”\footnote{Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 27, from *Filāstīn*, 6-18 December 1931.} Implied in such statements was that the national struggle was at heart a ‘Muslim struggle’; Christian Arabs, it seemed, might choose to lend their support or
not. In any event, for most of the participants at the Conference, it was sufficient simply that nothing was said or done that might be seen as blatantly hostile towards the Christian community (see above). Ironically, supposed Muslim-Christian harmony was often cited at the Conference as a model to be imitated; as characterised by one participant, a relationship of ‘sympathy and brotherhood,’ the very attitude, he went on to note, so amply demonstrated by the Islamic Conference towards the Christian community. More than once, the lack of cordiality between the different factions at the Conference was contrasted with the supposed harmonious relations that existed between Muslims and Christians. Thus, one participant, when addressing religious divisions within Islam, commented that different trends should be respected, and drew a contrast with the situation in Palestine, where an “attempt [was being made] to promote harmony between Christians and Muslims.”

Various Christian associations did send the World Islamic Conference telegrams and mazbatas of support, among them, the Second Arab Orthodox Congress. Again, whether such sentiment was representative of the broader Christian community is debatable, though arguably, this was the case with many in the Orthodox community. There, the struggle between the Arabic-speaking laity and Greek-dominated clergy had come to a head (see below). Strong nationalist feelings had been stirred, and by extension, feelings of solidarity with Muslims. Members of the Orthodox community were prepared to do more than send words of congratulations. Most notable in this

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131 A similar attitude was evident with respect to the boycott of the elections for the legislative council in 1923 (see the second chapter).


133 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 35, from Filästin, 6-18 December 1931.

134 See FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.

135 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 27, from Palestine Bulletin, 7 December 1931.
respect was 'Īsā al-'Īsā, the editor of Filāstin, who sent the World Islamic Conference a proposal outlining a scheme for saving Palestinian lands from the Zionists through their endowment as waqfs. Specifically, he proposed that Palestinian lands still owned by Arabs be assigned a value per dunam, high enough to attract the interest of rich Muslims, who might then buy them and donate them as religious endowments. All profits would go to the proposed Islamic University. In reading the proposal to the participants at the Conference, the Secretary, Riyād al-Sulh duly noted the overall solidarity demonstrated by Christians towards their Muslim brethren. 136

Underlying this feeling of solidarity was the fact that the Second Arab Orthodox Congress was being held concurrently with the World Islamic Conference. The Congress was precipitated by the death earlier that year of the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarch Damianos. The long-standing feud between the Greek-dominated higher clergy and the Arab laity had thus been rekindled around the question of who would be the next Patriarch and, equally important, how he would be selected and by whom. As in the past, the Orthodox community defined the conflict in strongly nationalistic terms—that is, as but one component of the larger nationalist cause. This was perhaps best expressed in an editorial appearing in Filāstin at the time:

Palestine is oppressed not only by the British mandate but also by those of the Zionists and Greeks which are no less severe. These three mandatories have aided one another in depriving Palestinian Arabs of their rights. The Greek patriarchate supports the Zionists against the Arabs... All Palestinian Arabs have a duty to combat these three foreign mandates. 137


For most Orthodox, the defence of the Haram al-Sharif was equally but one component of the larger nationalist cause. Zionism—as manifested in the sale of church properties by the Greek-dominated clergy and the Jewish contestation of religious rights with respect to the Wailing Wall—defined the link between the two. As such, the nationalist cause belonged equally to Christians as to Muslims.

Responsibility for choosing the next Patriarch rested with the Electoral Assembly, a body strongly dominated by the Greek-speaking higher clergy as represented by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate. The laity was represented on the Electoral Assembly, but was outnumbered. They now demanded equal representation; also that the Fundamental Law determining the constitution of the Assembly be altered. The Betram-Young Report of 1926 had recommended such a change, further that “in the event of the present Patriarch dying, or vacating his office, the [related] ordinance [which was in draft form in the appendix of the report] should be passed before the election of his successor.” The High Commissioner had, in January 1930, sought to bring the substance of the bill into force as part of the Religious Communities Organisation Ordinance. The Foreign Office, however, fearful of Greek interference, decided it would be better to implement the suggested changes after the “[t]hrone was firmly occupied.”

138 Concerning the functioning of the Electoral Assembly, see CO 733/204/9, article clipping from the Church Times, entitled “The Jerusalem Election. How the New Patriarch Will Be Chosen,” 16 October 1931.

139 Ibid.

140 Concerning the involvement of the Greek government, see ibid, internal British memorandum (no date), circa late-December 1931, and letter from the Office of the High Commissioner to Thomas, 31 October 1931; also Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen, The Holy Land Christians, ed., Natalie King (Jerusalem: Private Publication, 2003), pp. 97-98.

141 CO 733/204/9, internal British memorandum (no date), circa late-December 1931.
When it became clear that the Government had no intention of changing the Fundamental Law prior to the election of a new Patriarch, the Orthodox community immediately began petitioning the Government, and numerous memorials were sent calling for the Law's immediate revision. The Second Arab-Orthodox Congress finally convened in Jaffa, and immediately appealed to the Government to reconsider its position, claiming that, based on Ottoman precedent, it had the right to "assert and secure the constitutional rights of its subjects and to impose such law on all concerned" independent of the will of the Synod. The Congress called for a boycott of the election until its demands had been met. The election of the new Patriarch, already delayed from its original starting date of 23 September—the day the Electoral Assembly was scheduled to meet in order to begin the process—was indefinitely postponed.

The Second Arab Orthodox Congress elicited strong Arab-nationalist sentiment within the Orthodox community, and many felt a sense of common purpose with the World Islamic Conference, then taking place. Ostensibly, both events were religious affairs, yet just as the Orthodox Arab community saw their struggle as but one component of the larger nationalist one, likewise, they saw the need to defend Palestine's Muslim holy sites—the reason for convening the World Islamic Conference—as but one aspect of the broader nationalist struggle. Both were two sides of the same coin so to speak. Correspondingly, each community might expect the other's support. In this vein, the Arab Orthodox Congress demanded that the Islamic Conference address the authorities

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142 Ibid, representation submitted by the Executive Committee of the Second Arab Orthodox Congress to the High Commissioner's Office, 22 October 1931; and ibid, letter from Douglas to Gaselee, 2 October 1931. See also Daphne Tsirnhoni, "The Status of the Arab Christians under the British Mandate in Palestine" in Middle Eastern Studies, 20 iv, 1984, p. 171 and footnote 34.

143 CO 733/204/9, letter from Office of the High Commissioner to Thomas, 31 October 1931.

144 Ibid, article clipping from the Church Times, 16 October 1931.

145 See, for example, Filastin, 8 December 1931.
on their behalf regarding the election of a new Patriarch. Such thinking was evident in an article in Filāstin that had appeared a few months earlier. In it, it was noted that the Orthodox cause “ought to be the cause of all the Arabs, Muslim as well as Christian.”

There was certainly no reason for Muslims not to endorse the Orthodox cause, and indeed, it was resolved at the World Islamic Conference that “the Orthodox question [be considered] as part of the bigger Arab question, and to draw the attention of the Government to the right of Orthodox Palestinians to elect an Arab patriarch.” In the end though, however much Orthodox Arabs may have wanted to see it as such, the two struggles were not analogous; neither the manner in which they were represented by their respective conferences. Whereas the Arab Orthodox Congress rejected the position of the Greek-dominated higher clergy—wherein the community’s ties with the universal Greek Orthodox community were greatly stressed, largely in connection with the Christian holy sites in Palestine of which the clergy considered itself the guardian—the Islamic Conference sought to emphasise Palestine’s ties with the larger Islamic world on the basis of that country’s Muslim holy sites.

The Islamisation of the Palestinian cause

One should be careful not to exaggerate the impact of the Islamic Conference, nor the degree to which it boosted Hajj Amin’s status. Muhammad ‘Ali al-Tāhir, Hajj Amin’s publicist, noted with disappointment in his account of the Conference that, within six

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146 Oriente Moderno, January 1932, p. 35, from Filāstin, 6-18 December 1931. See also FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931, where it is noted that “Nachleh Kattan of Jerusalem sought the support of the [Islamic] Congress of Christian Orthodox demands...” Also Nielsen, “The International Islamic Conference,” p. 344.

147 Elie Kedourie, “Religion and Politics: The Diaries of Khalil Sakakini,” Middle Eastern Affairs, 1, St. Antony’s Papers, 4 (1958), p. 86, footnote 22, original from Filāstin, 16 October 1931.

months of its having concluded, it had been largely forgotten by the Arab public.149 Certainly none of the resolutions passed at the Conference ever really amounted to anything, including the decision to convene subsequent conferences. The proposed Islamic University proved a non-starter as well, mostly due to a lack of funds.150 Concerning the impact the Conference had on Hajj Amin’s status, the net effect was to his benefit. The Palestinian cause had become regional in scope, and Hajj Amin would remain in regular contact with Muslim religious leaders around the world, often soliciting their support in the name of Islam. Typical was a letter he wrote in 1935 to various Muslim religious leaders concerning “the grave situation of the Muslims in this Arab Muslim country,” and “the great danger which has befallen this sacred and blessed Moslem country.”151 Arguably, Hajj Amin had become a leader of international stature.152 Thus, for instance, when the British considered deporting him in 1936, there was some concern about possible repercussions in India, Egypt, Iraq and Arabia.153 In the aftermath of the Conference, many in the administration wondered if allowing the Conference had not been a mistake. As noted by the French consul in Jerusalem, “a dangerous instrument of propaganda and agitation ha[d] been put in Hajj Amin’s hands which, if he use[d] skillfully, could complicate the task of those powers in authority in Muslim lands.”154


152 See, for instance, Leach, Arab Politics in Palestine, p. 107.

153 See, for instance, CO 733/311/5, telegram from the Home Department of the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, 10 October 1936.

At the same time, Hajj Amīn’s heavy-handed managing of the Conference had disaffected not only Arabs in Palestine, but some of the participants from the other countries as well,\(^\text{155}\) including Shawkat ʿAli.\(^\text{156}\) There was a strong negative reaction in official circles in Egypt,\(^\text{157}\) criticism being levelled at the Palestinian focus of the Conference, evident in the fact that the preponderance of participants, all of whom were effectively appointed by the Mufti, had come from Palestine and Transjordan. One Egyptian newspaper remarked it odd that a conference touted as being regional in scope should have as many as 88 participants representing the approximately one million Muslims residing in Palestine and Transjordan, and only 70 participants representing the roughly 400 million Muslims that made up the rest of the Islamic world.\(^\text{158}\) The Conference’s impact on his status within Palestine was in some ways equally mixed; as noted in an article appearing in the journal Near East written in the immediate aftermath of the Conference, “[i]n the Islamic world the mufti’s name has grown more famous, but what will be the results in Palestine itself?”\(^\text{159}\) On the one hand, the counter-conference organized by the Opposition seemed to have a limited impact\(^\text{160}\)—by the time of the Nabi Musa festival in 1932, less than half a year later, the Opposition’s status had reached an all-time low.\(^\text{161}\) At the same time, the Mufti’s ability to work with certain important

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\(^\text{155}\) See FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.


\(^\text{157}\) FO 371/16009, secret correspondence from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, 26 March 1932.


\(^\text{160}\) See, for instance, ZA, S/25, 3557, report from A.H. Cohen, 11 October 1933, concerning the long-term impact of Opposition Congress.

\(^\text{161}\) See, for instance, FO 371/16926, CID Periodical Appreciation Summary, 25 March 1933.
members of the Palestinian leadership was damaged beyond all repair. As far as turning the Palestinian cause into an Islamic one regional in scope, the 1931 Islamic Conference was an unqualified success. From that point on, Arabs and Muslims in other countries became increasingly vocal in their opposition to Zionism. Resolutions and petitions in support of the Palestinian Arabs were issued with ever increasing frequency. Equally, demonstrations against Zionism became a common phenomenon in Muslim countries. Many of those who had participated in the Conference went on to become outspoken critics of Zionism in their home countries. Significantly, the great majority of movements in support of Palestine in the other Arab countries were initiated by Islamic organisations, and it was generally on the basis of Islam, not pan-Arabism, that they sought to generate support. Nationalist organisations, by contrast, proved disinclined to become involved.

The nationalist cause was being transformed into an Islamic one, and while this certainly had the benefit of generating regional support, it also had the effect of marginalizing Christian Arabs. As long as Palestine remained predominantly a ‘Palestinian’ issue, or even an ‘Arab’ issue, in principle, it belonged to non-Muslims as much as Muslims. The accentuation of ties with the larger Muslim world also raised questions regarding with whom Palestinian Muslims saw their primary affiliation. Was it with other Muslims or with non-Muslim Palestinian Arabs? The proposed al-Aqṣā University was case in point. On the one hand, it was often described as being meant to counter the Hebrew University in Jerusalem—in effect, to promote the Palestinian cause against Zionism. At the same time...

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163 See, for instance, CO 733/231/3, correspondence from different Muslim countries indicating solidarity with Palestine’s Arabs and a concern for the Muslim holy sites there; also Kupferschmidt, “The General Muslim Congress of 1931,” pp. 156-57.

time, as one of the delegates to the Conference noted, it was a university for ‘Muslims,’ not ‘Arabs.’ Moreover, as expressed in a report on the Conference put together by the High Commissioner’s Office, it was meant “to enable Moslems [seeking a secondary education] to dispense with non-Moslem institutions.” These ‘non-Muslim’ institutions were certainly not Jewish ones. Additionally, the proposed Islamic university was also to have a regional significance. Orthodox Arabs might well imagine that the Arab Orthodox Congress and the World Islamic Conference were somehow cut from the same cloth; that participants in both saw their respective events as part of the same broader movement. Perhaps this was true in part; but surely then, both saw their respective roles within the ‘shared movement’ somewhat differently. In any case, the fact remained that, whereas the Second Arab Orthodox Congress had sought to redefine what was on the face of it a ‘church’ issue—the question of the succession of the Patriarch—in overtly nationalist terms, the Islamic Conference had set about to do exactly the opposite—to redefine the Palestinian cause in Islamic terms.

165 FO 371/16009, police report on the 1931 Islamic Conference, 24 December 1931.

166 While they might equally have been referring to government schools as missionary-founded ones, it is worth noting that one of the main criticisms of the government schools was the fact that a preponderance of the teachers in them were Christian Arabs. For example, al-Jami’ah al-‘Arabiyah, 15 November 1928.
Chapter V, The Road to Radicalisation

Muslim-Christian disunity

The early 1930s marked a period of increasing tensions between Muslims and Christians, particularly following the murder of Jamīl Bahri, the Christian journalist and editor of the newspaper al-Zuhur, during a communal dispute over a cemetery in Haifa claimed by both Muslims and Greek Catholics. Ownership of the cemetery had been in dispute for some time, and the British authorities had forbidden both Christians and Muslims from burying their dead there until a ruling could be made. The recently appointed director of the Haifa Waqf, Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, had challenged this suspension however, and had begun erecting an iron-wire fence around the cemetery. The Greek Catholic community saw this as a provocation, and responded by granting two poor Christian families permission to build living accommodations on the site of the cemetery. On 6 September 1931, while supervising their construction, Bahri was confronted by a mob of Muslims and killed by a revolver shot. Most alarming to the Christian community was the possibility of complicity on the part of Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, a Muslim of high-standing in the community, and Ramzi Amir, the Secretary of the local Young Men's Muslim Association. Both were formally charged with instigating the mob, 15 of whom were later charged with murder. To make matters worse, a Muslim policeman present at the scene had helped some of the Muslims involved escape.


2 In addition to his position as director of the local waqf, he was the manager of the Arab Bank in Haifa.

3 The account given here is derived primarily from the English-language journal, The Palestine Bulletin, 7, 8, 14 September, 3 October 1931.
Both Muslims and Christians reacted strongly to the incident. The family of the murdered Christian editor rejected the £P 2000 offered by the Haifa Waqf as compensation. The Christians in Haifa were reticent about receiving a proposed delegation from the Arab Executive, particularly if for the purpose of mediating the dispute. The local leadership responded by noting that “if the delegation arrives all [we] will want to hear from it will be an expression of regret and not a discussion of peace terms.” Christian women in the Arab Women’s Association withdrew their membership and began taking steps to establish a rival Christian Women’s Association, and al-Zuhūr ran an article strongly questioning the value of supposed Muslim-Christian unity. Feelings ran strong in the opposite direction as well; a few weeks later, it was reported that Muslim owners of wells in mixed quarters were refusing to sell water to Christians. Al-Yarmūk, a Muslim-owned newspaper, published an article claiming that Christians were in favour of transferring the Mandate to Italy. Strangest of all was when both Rashīd al-Hajj Ibrāhīm and Rāmzā Amīr, while being transferred from the Police Station to the Court Magistrate after having turned themselves in, expressed a preference that the Christian policeman accompanying them in the car be replaced by a Jew.

The Christian press in Palestine reacted for the most part by trying to minimize the incident’s impact on national unity. Typical of this was an article appearing in al-Karmil

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4 The Palestine Bulletin, 15 September 1931.

5 Ibid, 14 September 1931.

6 Ibid, 15 September 1931.

7 Referenced in al-Karmil, 4 October 1931.

8 The Palestine Bulletin, 19 September 1931.

9 Referenced in ibid, 17 September 1931.

10 Ibid, 16 September 1931.
on 14 September 1931, reproaching both sides for wasting valuable time and energy in internal squabbling instead of focusing on the task at hand—the defence of the homeland against Zionism. A similar appeal was made in an article on 4 October 1931, wherein al-Karmil’s editor called on Muslim and Christian leaders to restrain their respective communities, and unite in the face of the common enemy. “Leave the matter to the judiciary and show the people that there are wise men among you, and let your unity not weaken.”

Christian nationalist leaders were also active in trying to close the widening breach between the two communities. Thus, for instance, Yūsuf Gregorius Hājjar, Palestine’s Greek Catholic Archbishop, left almost immediately after the incident for Jerusalem in order to consult with members of the nationalist leadership. Shortly thereafter, he received a delegation of Muslims consisting of Tawfīq `Abdāllah, the mayor of Acre, Hasan Bey Shukrī, the mayor of Haifa, and Abdāllah Mukhlis, a Muslim leader in Haifa.

That the nationalist movement was taking on an increasingly Islamic character—one with which Christians were extremely uncomfortable—was strongly evident at a nationalist conference convened in Nablus on 20 September 1931. The conference was convened in response to calls for a boycott of the Government, as well as the Jews, by what turned out to be a rather short-lived radical organisation, the Committee of the Nablus Congress. A boycott of the Jews was a strategy with which most Christians could agree; indeed,

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11 Al-Karmil, 14 September 1915. A brief summation of the article appears also in The Palestine Bulletin, 15 September 1915.

12 Al-Karmil, 4 October 1931.


throughout the Mandate, many had suggested adopting exactly such a strategy.\textsuperscript{15} Boycotting the Government, however, was another matter. In any event, the atmosphere was so religiously charged that Christians declined to attend, and in the end, not a single one participated.\textsuperscript{16} The Conference was in fact boycotted by the more moderate members of the Arab Executive, and in the end, only about 250 of the roughly 750 invited turned up.\textsuperscript{17} Among other things, the speakers demanded that Palestine’s Arab women renounce Western dress.\textsuperscript{18}

Coinciding with the movement’s Islamisation was a growing Muslim hostility towards Christians. During the latter part of 1932, Christians were subjected to sporadic attacks by gangs of Muslims in a number of Palestinian towns, and in Lydda, a church was desecrated.\textsuperscript{19} The growing dissension between Muslims and Christians was evident as well in a dispute around that time between the editors of Filastīn and \textit{al-\textasciitilde{J}āmi‘ah al-Islāmiyyah}—a paper once associated with moderation, but more recently adopting a strong pan-Islamic slant—concerning whether or not Amīr ‘Abdāl-lah of Transjordan was scheming with Zionists. The latter made such a strong appeal to Muslim religious fervour in support of its position that the British authorities were certain there would have been a breach of the peace between the two communities if the editors of the two papers had not been ordered to discontinue the subject. As noted by one British official, “the existing

\textsuperscript{15} See, for instance, ISA, AE, 1771, ‘Isa al-‘Isa’s proposal for an economic boycott of the Jews, Sixth National Congress, 1926.

\textsuperscript{16} Their decision not to attend was also influenced by the fact that the Nashāshibī-led Opposition had called for a boycott of the meeting. Porath, \textit{Riots to Rebellion}, p. 120.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Al-\textasciitilde{J}āmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah}, 24 September 1931; and \textit{Mīr‘at al-Shārqi}, 25, 30 September 1931.

\textsuperscript{18} Filastīn, 22 September 1931.

\textsuperscript{19} FO 371/16926, CID Secret Report, dated 19 January 1933.
discord between Moslems and Christians in this country [was] only kept beneath the surface by the constant efforts of political leaders."

In addition to this was a growing sentiment among Christian Arabs that relative to the Muslims (and Jews), the Palestine Government was neglecting them. Often it seemed that the British were more sensitive to ‘Muslim’ issues than ‘Christian’ ones. Christians complained that, in fulfilling their obligations to the Arabs as stipulated in the Mandate, the British had seemingly confused ‘Muslim’ with ‘Arab.’ In similar fashion, the Orthodox community was resentful that the Government had not taken any steps to resolve their conflict with the Greek-dominated clergy. They complained that whereas “the Government lost no time in acting with regard to both the Moslem and Jewish communities,” they had yet to resolve their own controversy with respect to the Patriarchate. In another instance, Christians complained that they had not been allotted time for religious broadcasts as had Muslims and Jews, something they attributed to “a certain lack of maintaining Christian standards [on the part of the authorities] for fear that these standards should be taken to infringe Moslem or Jewish rights or be considered in the light of Christian propaganda.” Another complaint was that Muslim and Jewish holidays were given precedence over Christian ones—thus, whereas they might take off their respective days of rest, “the Christian official, in fact, frequently [had] to do the work of the Jewish and Moslem Arab official on his own nominal day of rest.”

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20 Ibid.


22 CO 733/346/7, letter from Faraaj to the Chairman of the Royal Commission of Enquiry, 16 February 1937. See also CO 733/34/10, Second Revision.

23 CO 733/347/10, Second Revision, p. 9.

was some truth to their contention that relative to the Muslims and Jews, they were somewhat neglected. Of the three religious communities, they were arguably politically the weakest, and often, the Government's consideration of them was only in relation to legislation concerning the other two. The legislative council proposed by the Government in 1922, was case in point. The electoral scheme finally arrived at for determining the council's composition was largely in reaction to Jewish demands that it not be dominated by Muslims; that Christians ended up with more seats than would otherwise have been the case (two versus one) was almost entirely incidental.

In November 1932, the Congress of the Educated Muslim Young Men was established. Almost immediately, its Executive Committee initiated a campaign calling for more Government jobs for Muslims in proportion to their majority in the country. Almost from the start, it took a strong anti-Christian tone. Eventually, a delegation of Christians met with the Congress to register a protest, demanding that measures be taken to prevent actions that could affect "the good atmosphere which exists among the children of the single homeland." Especially singled out was the Young Men's Muslim Association in Jaffa, which Alfred Rok, a member of the delegation, referred to as the "root of the evil." The response of the Congress was that it was not acting against Christians but rather in favour of Muslim rights. This anti-Christian tendency when dealing with the subject of Muslim unemployment was also evident in the newspaper \textit{al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmiyyah}, which often came close to openly inciting Muslims against Christians.

\footnote{\textit{ibid}, p. 143.}

\footnote{See \textit{ibid}, pp. 151-152.}

\footnote{\textit{ISA, CS, K/190/32, letter from the Congress of the Educated Muslim Young Men to the High Commissioner, 6 December 1932.}}

\footnote{\textit{Ibid. See also Porath, The Emergence, p. 302.}}

their part tried to draw attention away from themselves by noting that they too were losing jobs, and by asserting that the real culprits behind the lack of job opportunities for Muslims were the Jews.30

It was not only the Christian Arabs of Palestine that were experiencing problems. The situation of Christians throughout the Middle East had begun to deteriorate. With the pullout of the British in Iraq that summer, for example, a wave of anti-Christian sentiment swept the country. Especially targeted were the Assyrian Christians in the north, who had separatist goals and had acted as military mercenaries under the British. Their persecution culminated in the machine-gun massacre of hundreds of Assyrian men, women and children by the Iraqi army at Simayl in the summer of 1933.31 Nestorians were harassed as well and were eventually forced to flee into neighbouring French Syria, where they were eventually resettled in Jazira, in Syria.32 Only the Chaldean Catholics managed to escape persecution, mostly by acquiescing quietly to the nationalist administration in Baghdad.33 For Christians in Palestine, events in the newly independent Iraq augured ill for those contemplating a future under an independent Muslim-dominated government.

30 Filastin, 8 December 1932.


32 See Betts, Christians in the Arab East, pp. 37-38. In 1937, the Christian population of Jazira would become greatly distressed when the district was brought under the direct administration of Damascus. A massacre of Christians that year in ‘Amuda would initiate a strong movement for local autonomy and even independence, led by the Syrian Catholic Patriarch. Ibid, pp. 36-37.

33 Ibid, p. 38.
More relevant in this respect, perhaps, was the situation in Transjordan, perhaps the closest proxy of what they might expect should Palestine ever achieve independence. The situation did not look particularly promising there either. In early 1933, an incident took place in Madaba when the local qa 'immaqām broke up a meeting of Latin Catholics.\(^{34}\) This was apparently the latest in a series of such incidents, and the Christian community called on Amīr 'Abdāllah to have him dismissed.\(^{35}\) Much to their disappointment, he proved reluctant to do so.\(^{36}\) Christians were already apprehensive about a proposal put forth in the Legislative Council the previous month, calling for an amendment to the Electoral Law so as to reduce the number of Christian representatives.\(^{37}\) Shortly thereafter, it was reported that 'Abdāllah had congratulated the newspaper al-Jāmi'ah al- İslāmiyyah for its anti-Christian propaganda.\(^{38}\) Matters became worse when he and his Chief Minister questioned the signature of a local Christian. This saw a series of articles appearing in the Christian newspaper Mir'āt al-Sharq, which criticised the Amīr’s attitude towards Christians in general. Shortly thereafter, on 27 June, a Muslim attacked the Christian Chief Clerk of the Judicial Department on a main street in Amman. It was considered by many that the Clerk had been “partly responsible for the offensive articles,” and it was maintained by the Christian community “that the offender [had been] instigated by more highly placed persons” as an act of retaliation.\(^{39}\) Whether this was the

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\(^{34}\) FO 371/16926, ‘Report on the Political Situation for January 1933,’ 28 February 1933.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, attachment to Colonial Office minutes, 24 April 1933, addendum to the February report, Cox.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, ‘Report on the Political Situation for February,’ 28 February 1933.


\(^{38}\) Ibid, ‘Report on the Political Situation for February,’ 28 February 1933.

case or not, it was clear that Christians in Jordan did not feel fully accepted by the Muslim majority.

**Christian versus Arab**

Beyond any specific problems between Muslims and Christians was the fact that the nationalist cause was increasingly being characterised in Islamic terms as a holy war against a 'Christian' mandate. Correspondingly, the loyalty of Christian Arabs to the nationalist cause was increasingly considered suspect. This reality was perhaps best summed up in the oft-cited observation by Khalil al-Sakākīnī in a letter written to his son in December 1932:

No matter how sincere my patriotism is, no matter how much I do to revive this nation... as long as I am not a Moslem I am nought. If you desire to amount to anything, then be a Moslem and that will be peace.

Much space in the Christian press was devoted to the assertion that Christians were as 'Arab' as Muslims. An article appearing in *Mir 'at al-Sharg*, for example, took issue with the notion that Christians constituted a 'minority.' "I, a Christian Arab, who write in this noble tongue, and belong to that noble Arab race protest most vehemently with all my power, against the term 'minority.'" Continuing, he argued that, "between Christians whose language and characteristic are Arabic and their Muslim brothers there is no difference, except that the Muslim worships God in his Mosque and the Christian in his Church." Christians also asserted that they were an integral part of Palestinian society.

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42 *The Palestine Bulletin*, 16 October 1930, reprinted from *Mir 'at al-Sharg*. 276
The aforementioned article appearing in *al-Karmil* following the shooting of Jamīl Bahrī, for example, noted that Christians had in “their hands the manufacturing and trading,” while “Muslims ploughed the earth.” Christians were finding themselves increasingly confronted with the question of where they fit in with respect to the larger Muslim community. From a secular nationalist perspective, one maintained by a large number of Palestine’s Christian Arabs, the objective had been to define a shared identity where religious affiliation was of secondary importance. Muslims and Christians were, nonetheless, more than ever spoken of as constituting two distinct communities.

Especially since the Wailing Wall riots, the link between Arab identity and Islam had become increasingly emphasised, almost to the point where for many, the two were one and the same. In August of 1930, a series of articles appeared in *al-Karmil* asserting that the only solution to the ‘disputes’ between Muslims and Christians was that “the Christians adopt their [that is, the Islamic] faith. In this way the constant conflicts which hinder the development of the national movement [would] be brought to an end.” This was not the first time that a Muslim had called on Christians to embrace Islam as the basis of the nationalist movement. As early as 1922, Ḥāfiz Tuqān, one of the members of the first Arab delegation sent to London, had suggested the same during a reception held in the delegation’s honour. Interestingly, some Christians were beginning to see it the same way. Most notable in this respect was the Orthodox Khalīl Iskandar al-Qubrusī,

43 *Al-Karmil*, 4 October 1930.

44 Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p. 54.


46 ISA 4/16-2, secret report by the Sub-Governor of Tulkarm, 18 September 1922.
who in 1931 issued a pamphlet entitled ‘Da‘wat Nasārā al-‘Arab ilā al-Dukhūl fi al-Islām’ (‘A Call on the Christian Arabs to Embrace Islam’). In it, he denounced European Christianity as a corrupt religion and accused European monks and missionaries of sowing discord between Palestine’s Muslims and Christians. By contrast, he described Islam as a benevolent and egalitarian religion, and concluded by calling on all Arab Christians to become Muslim “in order to free them from the trivialities of the foreigners and to rid them of their corruption.” In similar fashion, the editor of al-Karmil, Najīb Nassār, asserted that Christians should convert to Islam.

Palestinian Arab politics were becoming increasingly radical. On 4 January 1932, the National Congress of Arab Youth convened for the first time in Jaffa, and adopted the National Covenant of the General Arab Congress (the ‘Manifesto to the Arab World’), which had convened concurrently with the World Islamic Conference (see the previous chapter). The Istiqlāl Party, established on 4 August 1932 by ‘Awnī ‘Abd al-Hādī as the first regularly constituted Palestinian political party, also adopted the National Covenant. The latter in particular was representative of a new kind of leadership. Its founders were generally individuals who had attained social or professional status by their own merit. None came from Jerusalem, and in this sense, the party constituted a real break with the traditional leadership. The more confrontational approach represented by the Istiqlāl Party proved particularly attractive to members of the younger generation, and it was not long before the Young Men’s Muslim Associations and later, the Independent Boy Scout troops, fell under its influence.

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48 Al-Karmil, 5 October 1931

49 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 121.

The Istiqlâl Party in particular emphasised an Arab nationalism inspired by salafi Arabism along the lines discussed above—that is, an Arab nationalism which emphasised the relationship between Arab identity and Islam. While not explicitly exclusive of Christians, it was hardly a model within which Christians might play a proactive role as far as shaping Arab identity. Their ability to do so was largely predicated on to what extent they were able to appropriate Islam as a part of their own national heritage. At minimum, this meant trying to redefine Islamic festivals as nationalist ones—not only the Nabi Musa festival, but even the Prophet’s Birthday; at most, a relinquishing of one’s faith and conversion to Islam. The fact that the party sought to shift control of the nationalist movement away from Jerusalem to Nablus was in many ways indicative of the diminishing role of Christians. Indeed, it was commented by one British official that the attempt to do so was motivated in large part by a “desire to keep Christians away from the national movement, as [it was believed] that the Christians, despite all their professions, will not oppose [the] Government.” Nablus, a town known for its strong Islamic character, had few Christians as contrasted with Jerusalem, where they were roughly equal in number to Muslims. It was also a place where anti-Christian sentiment often found strong expression. Of course, attempts at such a shift were meant primarily as a challenge to the traditional leadership, but even in this respect, there were significant consequences for Christians. It was only within the framework of the traditional leadership that Christians had been able to appropriate for themselves an effective role in the nationalist movement. It is perhaps not irrelevant then that in connection with the aforementioned radical nationalist conference (see above), the Nablus branch of the Muslim-Christian Association had changed its name to the Patriotic Arab Association.

51 In justifying this, the Christian editor of al-Karmil noted that it was Muhammad who had made the Arabs great, and that it was because they had “stopped following his teachings [that] they had become divided and weak and of no account.” Al-Karmil, 9 September 1927.

52 FO 371/16926, CID Secret Report, 1 April 1933.

53 See, for instance, ibid, CID Secret Report, 10 March 1933.

54 In Arabic, al-Jam'iyyah al-'Arabiyyah al-Wataniyyah. Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 120.
The death of moderation

Beginning in 1933, external factors only served to exacerbate tensions. Following the establishment of the Nationalist-Socialist regime in Germany, there was a large jump in Jewish immigration to Palestine, up from 9,553 the previous year to 30,327.55 The threat posed by Zionism took on more serious dimensions, and moderation increasingly came to be seen as an unviable policy. Another blow to moderation was the release of the French Report towards the end of 1931, which—as discussed in the previous chapter—brought to light the fact that some of the more prominent members of the traditional leadership had been selling land to Jews. As noted, many of these were members of the Arab Executive. Members of the Supreme Muslim Council were also implicated, but the overall effect proved more damaging to those associated with moderation. Thus, during a meeting held the following year in Jaffa, the Nashāshibī faction in particular was singled out for rapprochement for having sold land to Jews.56 The French Report would prove a thorn in the Arab Executive’s side, and as much as anything else brought about its eventual demise. The report implicated the very organisation that, if it harboured any hope of continuing to lead the nationalist movement, had actually to deal with it. It was not until 9 September 1932, that the Arab Executive began addressing the French Report, and then, only to defer further discussion until the next meeting. The growing inconsequence of the Arab Executive is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that they would not reconvene until October 1933, more than a year later.57


56 Mir’at al-Sharq, 29 March 1933; also al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah, 27 March 1933.

57 See, for instance, ZA, S/25, 3557, report of 4 August 1933; also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, pp. 38-39. Its office met only once, on 19 May 1933, during the period in-between. Ibid.
The Arab Executive was fighting for its very survival, and the growing tension between Christians and Muslims did not help.\(^{58}\) Increased Jewish immigration due to the worsening situation in Europe was putting heavy pressure on the Arab Executive to be seen to be doing something. Its status was rapidly diminishing, and already some of its members had suggested the body's dissolution; many, particularly those affiliated with the Istiqlāl Party, had already withdrawn. The Arab Executive managed to organise a number of demonstrations in October 1933, some of which even turned violent and resulted in the arrest of some of its members. A series of additional demonstrations were scheduled for later that fall, though in the end, nothing came of it, largely due to the influence of merchants and citrus growers fearful of the economic loss they would incur if demonstrations and strikes continued.\(^{59}\) As usual, the traditional elite making up the leadership of the Arab Executive proved reluctant to promote the nationalist cause when it ran contrary to their own economic interests.

**Christians and the nationalist movement**

On the surface, cooperation between Muslims and Christians was still very much in evidence, though not anywhere near to the same extent as had been the case during the early part of the Mandate. Muslim-Christian solidarity was most apparent in women's organisations. Thus, for instance, on 15 April 1933, Muslim and Christian women organised a coordinated protest against Jewish immigration timed to correspond with Lord Allenby's visit to Jerusalem. The Arab Women's Association of Jerusalem marched in unison to the two most important Christian and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem. Tarab `Abd al-Hādī, the Muslim wife of `Awnī `Abd al-Hādī, spoke at the Church of the Holy

\(^{58}\) See, for example, ZA, S/25, 4143, Intelligence Report, 29 January 1933.

\(^{59}\) Though officially, the reason given was that the "High Commissioner had promised to consider [the Arabs'] demands. See Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p. 46. *Al-Jāmi‘ah al-‘Arabiyah*, 8 November 1933.
Sepulchre, while Matiel Mughannam, the Christian wife of Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam, spoke at the al-Aqsa Mosque.\textsuperscript{60} In some ways, women’s organisations seemed better able to bridge the gap between religious communities and political factions than the mainstream (that is, men’s) political parties. In many respects, this seemed their raison d’être.\textsuperscript{61} The Arab Women’s Association, for instance, represented itself in overtly non-sectarian terms.\textsuperscript{62} Its president, Walidī al-Khālīdi, the wife of Husayn Fakhī al-Khālīdi, and one of its two secretaries, Mrs. Jamāl al-Husaynī, were Muslim, while the other secretary, Matiel Mughannam, was Christian.\textsuperscript{63} Though ostensibly its purpose was to assist poor and distressed Arab women, it was quite active politically. Other women’s organisations included the Arab Union of Haifa, run by Madame Sadj Nāṣār, and the Arab Women’s Society of Jaffa. Overall, Christian women featured quite prominently in such organisations, a reflection of the fact that, generally speaking, they were better educated and had greater freedom of movement than their Muslim counterparts.\textsuperscript{64} In terms of the active role played by Christians, the women’s organisations seemed to hearken back to the Muslim-Christian Associations of the early days of the Mandate.

Women’s organisations aside, however, the great majority of Christian Arabs were not happy with the direction the nationalist movement was taking. The British Deputy Inspector-General noted in the monthly CID Report for February 1933, that Christians

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} See, for instance, FO 371/16926, CID Secret Report, dated 23 October 1933.
\item \textsuperscript{62} See various declarations and official correspondences as presented in Mrs. Matiel E.T. Mogannam, \textit{The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem}, pp. 67-102.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid, p. 76.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ylana Miller, \textit{Government and Society in Rural Palestine, 1920-1948} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 106.
\end{itemize}
were becoming concerned with the ‘fanatic’ policy being expressed in *al-Jāmi‘ah al-Islāmiyyah*, a paper until then generally associated with moderation. ⁶⁵ Immediately following the murder of the Christian journalist, Jamīl al-Bahrī, the British Government began receiving petitions from Christian Arabs disavowing any connection with the national movement as well as with Muslims. ⁶⁶ The following year, the High Commissioner commented that

> Christian Arab leaders...have admitted to me that in establishing close political relations with the Moslems the Christians have not been uninfluenced by fear of the treatment they might suffer at the hands of the Moslem majority in certain eventualities. ⁶⁷

For their part, Muslim expressions of anti-imperialist sentiment seemed increasingly directed at Christians *per se*. The Iṣtiqlāl Party organised a demonstration in Nablus protesting the dedication of the Y.M.C.A. in Jerusalem. ⁶⁸ While ostensibly directed against Lord Allenby, who was to take part in the event, it also reflected a general antipathy among Muslims with respect to the YMCAs in general, which they very strongly associated with British imperialism. Not a single Christian took part in the demonstration. Christians were even finding themselves subjected to harassment in connection with events with which they clearly had nothing to do. Thus, for instance, it was noted in the Transjordanian Political Situation Report for the month of September 1933 that the reaction in Jordan to the death of King Faysal of Iraq was a “somewhat

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⁶⁵ FO 371/16926, CID Secret Report, dated 18 February 1933.


⁶⁷ CO 733/202, secret dispatch, the High Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary.

hysterical outburst of grief with a distinctly anti-European and anti-Christian bias.' 69

Many of the Muslim nationalist leaders, including Hajj Amīn al-Husyanī, were concerned about the growing hostility expressed by Muslims towards Christians. If nothing else, it was considered imperative to present a united front before the British, and attempts were made to ease tensions, and where necessary, reconcile the two communities. 70

Many Christians had serious doubts as to whether Muslims accepted them at all as having a role in the nationalist movement. In the aforementioned letter to his son Sari, Khalīl al-Sakākīnī noted bitterly that

> if the people love me and respect me, it is because they think that I am nearer to Islam than to Christianity, because I am wealthy in the Arabic language, because they fancy that I am a conservative and will not depart from Oriental customs under any circumstances. But if I were to struggle with a Moslem who is less founded in knowledge and heritage than I, I would not doubt that they would prefer him to survive. 71

Christians were finding it increasingly necessary to demonstrate their commitment to the cause by taking as radical a stance as possible towards the Government. It was becoming increasingly difficult for a Christian Arabs to come out against hard-line policies without making themselves suspect. Thus, for instance, when the Arab Executive was debating whether or not to continue organising strikes in the fall of 1933, Ya’qūb Farrāj and Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam, came out strongly in favour. How sincere they were is another matter—as noted by Porath, as the Arab Executive’s most prominent Christian

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69 Transjordanian Political Situation Report for the month of September 1933, signed by the Acting British Resident, and attached to the Minutes from the Colonial Office, 27 October 1933.

70 Porath, The Emergence, p. 303; see also FO 371/16926, CID Secret Report, 10 March 1933.

71 Tsimhoni, “The Arab Christians and the National Movement,” p. 76.
members, Farrāj and Mughannam could hardly afford to adopt a moderate stance at a
time when the organisation was fighting for its very survival. For most Christians, if the
movement was going to take a radical turn, it was certainly preferable that it should do so
under the leadership of the Arab Executive—theoretically at least, a role for Christians
still existed in that body, arguably to a greater extent than might be hoped for within the
framework of any other nationalist organisation, either existing or potential. Spawned in
large part by the Muslim-Christian Associations, it had had a strong Christian presence
from the beginning, a presence reckoned not only in numbers, but also in a qualitative
sense—there they had a role in setting policy; conceivably, also in formulating
Palestinian (that is, Arab) national identity and defining the kind of state to which they
collectively aspired.

Hajj Amin

On 16 January 1934, 'Id al-Fitr, the Arab Executive called for demonstrations to take
place in all the main towns. The demonstrations went along peacefully enough, in large
part because the turnout was so poor. The Arab Executive as a political entity was largely
spent, the final knock-out blow coming only a few months later with the death of Mūsā
Kāzim al-Husaynī, its much revered President. Whereas the status of the Arab
Executive was in decline, that of Hajj Amin was on the rise. Though reluctant to openly
confront the government, he had nevertheless proved more adept at giving the impression
at least that he was prepared and willing to do so. He was also more capable at political
manipulation of the more traditional variety. In January 1933, the new Municipal
Corporations Ordinance came into force, calling for elections for twenty municipal

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72 See, for example, Mīr'at al-Shārqi, 21 August 1933; also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 62.

73 Ibid, p. 46.

74 For more details, see, for instance, FO 371/17878, CID Periodical Appreciation Summary, 8 March
1934, and CID Periodical Appreciation Summary, 26 April 1934; FO 371/18957, CID Periodical
councils, to be held later that year. Hajj Amín quickly forged an alliance between the Husaynī and Khālidi families against the Nashāshibīs. Though the latter did well in Jaffa and Gaza, they were unsuccessful in Jerusalem—there, Rāghib al-Nashāshibī lost the mayorship to Husayn al-Khālidī. Significantly, the vote was largely split along sectarian lines: in three out of four Muslim wards, the Husaynīs and Khālidīs scored a clear-cut victory; the Nashāshibīs by contrast won only one Muslim ward, though both Christian wards.

Later that year, Hajj Amín initiated a campaign through the Supreme Muslim Council against the selling of land to Jews. In order to reach the smaller villages, he made extensive use of village sheikhs and preachers in the mosques. As part of his instruction campaign, it was argued that, on Islamic grounds, it was a sin to sell land to Jews. Those who broke the prohibition against the selling of land to Jews were threatened with being denied a Muslim burial. A number of other tactics were adopted as well. For instance, the Supreme Muslim Council sought to create new waqfs, as the sale of such endowed properties was strictly forbidden by Islamic law. Another tactic was to ensure that the shari'a courts—which were controlled by the SMC—refused to sanction the selling of

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76 See Ibid, pp. 63-64. Concerning Christian support for Rāghib al-Nashāshibī, see below.
78 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 97. See also CO 733/234/2, translated article from al-Jamī'ah al-Islāmiyyah, 27 March 1933, attached to official dispatch from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, 1 April 1933.
land in which legal minors had a share. The campaign against the selling of land to Jews culminated with a large meeting of village sheikhs and elders, held in Jerusalem on 29 December 1934. At the meeting, Hajj Amīn issued a special fatwa prohibiting the sale of land by Muslims to Jews. Those attending took an oath never to sell land to Jews or in any way facilitate the purchasing of land by Jews, and it was not long before the fatwa had been circulated throughout the country. The campaign well illustrated the link between Hajj Amīn’s growing prominence in the nationalist movement and its Islamisation.

Hajj Amīn further consolidated his position as the dominant Arab political figure in Palestine with the establishment in March 1935, of the Palestine Arab Party (al-Hizb al-‘Arabī al-Filastīnī). The leadership of the party was dominated by well-educated Muslims, many of whom were religious functionaries. In general, they came from a more traditional background, with a fair number being members of notable rural families. Though its President was Jamāl al-Husaynī, Hajj Amīn’s cousin, there was no question concerning who actually ran the party. During this period, Hajj Amīn was also able to assert his authority over the extremist camp as a whole, most importantly, over the National Congress of Arab Youth and the Istiqlāl Party.

**The splintering of the Opposition**

Even as Hajj Amin was consolidating his position, the Opposition was splintering into a number of rival political parties. The most important of these was probably the National

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80 The sale of property by a custodian on behalf of a minor needed the consent of a shari'a court. See Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 94, footnote 81.


Defence Party (*Hizb al-Difa’ al-Watani*)—formed in December 1934—which stressed a platform of cooperation with the Government. Their policy was determined in large part by the fact that among its members were some of the richest landowners, orange-growers, and entrepreneurs in Palestine. The party enjoyed the support of many of the local councils as well as several important newspapers, including *al-Jāmi‘ah al-Islāmiyyah*, *Filastin*, *Mir’āt al-Sharq*, and *al-Difa‘*. It also enjoyed the support of a many of the more notable landowners, among which were some of the more important citrus cultivators. Two other Opposition parties quickly followed, the Reform Party (*Hizb al-Islāh*), under Husayn al-Khālidī, and the National Bloc Party (*Hizb al-Kutla al-Wataniyya*), under ‘Abd al-Latif Salāh, a Nablusite lawyer.

Christians were affiliated with all three parties to one degree or another. The National Defence Party enjoyed strong support among Christians, who were well represented on its Central Committee, constituting three out of its twelve members. These were Ya’qūb Farej, the Greek Orthodox Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem who was its Vice President, the Protestant Mughannam Ilyās Mughannam, one of its two Secretaries, and ‘Isā al-‘Isā, the

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84 See FO 371/18957, CID Periodical Appreciation Summary, 30 January 1935.


86 In Arabic, *Hizb al-Islāh*.

87 See Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p. 64.

88 In Arabic, *Hizb al-Kutla al-Wataniyyah*.


90 Ibid, p. 64.
proprietor of Filastin. The great majority of Christians still supported political moderation. The Christian-run newspaper Mir'at al-Sharq went so far as to demonstrate a strong willingness to compromise with the Zionists. Commenting on a proposal for cantonisation put forward by the Hebrew daily Do'ar Ha-Yom, Mir'at al-Sharq noted in a favourable tone that the Arab journalist Yusuf al-'Isā, the brother of 'Isā al-'Isā and cofounder of Filastin, had suggested the same proposal several years earlier. The same newspaper, when later discussing the possibility of uniting Palestine with Trans-Jordan, even acknowledged that the Jews should have a say in the matter, something tantamount to saying they had political rights with respect to Palestine. It would be a mistake to see Christians as being opposed to radicalism across the board, and there were a number who fell in with the Husaynī camp. Thus, serving on the party bureau for the Palestine Arab Party was not only Alfred Rok (as might be expected), but Emīl al-Gawhri, a Latin Catholic and the Party's Secretary, and Michel 'Azar. While to some extent, this reflected the historical tendency of Catholics to affiliate with the Husaynī family, it was also indicative of the fact that these individuals actually tended towards radicalism. Emīl al-Gawhri, for example, was active in connection with the militant organisation, al-Jihād al-Muqaddas.  

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91 Mogannam, The Arab Woman, pp. 237-238; also Mir'at al-Sharq, 5 December 1934.


93 Mir'at al-Sharq, 29 September 1933.

94 Ibid, 7, 14 March 1934.

95 In Arabic, al-Jihād al-Muqaddas.
While there was never any question that the base of Hajj Amîn’s support was the Muslim peasantry, their inclusion might be understood as an attempt to reach out to Christians.

Al-Qassâm

In the fall of 1935, a chain of events was initiated which would see the nationalist movement shift irreversibly towards extremism, eventually culminating in the General Strike and the Great Revolt. On 18 October 1935, an arms shipment hidden in a cargo of cement imported from Belgium and destined for a Jewish merchant was discovered in Jaffa harbour. At a mass meeting held in Nablus in early November, some of the younger, more radical participants called for a more militant policy against the Government. Later that month, a Jewish police sergeant was killed in the countryside just outside of Haifa by a militant group centred round the Young Men’s Muslim Association in Haifa and led by the radical Islamic reformer Sheikh 'Izz al-Dîn al-Qassâm. He in turn was killed several days later, on 21 November 1935, in a gun battle with pursing police officers near Ya‘bad. The funeral of Sheikh 'Izz al-Dîn al-Qassâm transformed into a nationalist demonstration, and al-Qassâm was immediately hailed as a national hero.

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96 He was, in fact, one of three Christians involved with that organisation.

97 See FO 371/16926, CID Secret Report, dated 18 February 1933.


99 Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 44.

100 See Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 116.

This was the first time an Arab militant group had come into open confrontation with the British authorities since the early days of the Mandate. Until now, attacks had been directed primarily at Jews, and in fact, al-Qassām’s organisation had initiated its militant campaign several years prior by attacking Jewish settlements in the Jezreel valley.102 Starting in 1935, while campaigning among the peasantry against the selling of land to Jews, al-Qassām began actively recruiting peasant youths.103 It was following the discovery that October of the arms shipment in Haifa supposedly headed for Jews, that al-Qassām decided the time had come to initiate a campaign of guerrilla warfare. It was while looking for a suitable base in the hills of northern Samaria, from where he might later launch armed attacks against both the Government and Jewish settlers, that the above incident occurred.

In many respects, al-Qassām’s militant group heralded those affiliated with the Great Revolt. Many of these latter would in fact base themselves on al-Qassām’s group.104 Al-Qassām and his followers operated independently of the traditional leadership and were intimately connected with the peasantry, inclusive of those recently migrated to the cities and larger towns seeking employment. Al-Qassām appealed to Islamic sensibilities rather than secular nationalist ones, and his group bore a distinctly Islamic character.105 In many respects, it resembled a Sufi order—his followers referred to themselves as sheikhs and allowed their beards to grow wild, and frequently associated their struggle with the wars against the Crusaders centuries earlier.106 All its members were imbued with a message of strict piety, and were encouraged to emulate early Islamic heroes.107

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102 For more details concerning al-Qassām’s involvement in the attack, see Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 135.


105 Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 46.

Al-Qassām himself was a graduate of al-Azhar, and a student of Muhammad ʿAbduh, with whom he shared a similar outlook. After being sentenced to death in absentia by a French military court for his militant activities against the mandate government in Syria, he had fled to Haifa, where he became established as a teacher in the Haifa Islamic school and shortly thereafter, as a preacher in the new Istiqlāl Mosque. He was later appointed as a marriage registrar in the local shariʿa court. It was not long before he became a leading figure in the nationalist movement, in large part based on his affiliation with the Young Men’s Muslim Association in Haifa, which he himself had helped establish, together with Rashīd al-Hajj Ibrāhīm—the same director of the Haifa waqf who had figured so prominently in the murder-case of Jamil Bahri, the Christian editor of al-Zuhūr. Unlike most other political activists in Palestine at the time, al-Qassām focused his efforts exclusively on the lower classes among whom he lived. He was later able to extend these efforts to the surrounding countryside on the basis of his position as marriage registrar, which required that he frequently tour the northern villages. By 1932, he had begun to achieve national prominence, and was elected acting president of the national conferences of YMMAs. From an early point, al-Qassām had become actively involved with the growing militant movement centred round the local YMMAs.

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109 For instance, he set up a night school to combat illiteracy amongst the migrant labourers occupying the Haifa shantytowns. Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” p. 189. See also Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 40.

110 Thus, he encouraged peasants in the villages to set up growing and distribution cooperatives. Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” p. 189.

and was one of the nascent movement's principal organizers. The authority he enjoyed was based in large part on his reputation for Islamic piety, something shared by his immediate followers, who fulfilled the precept of prayer five times a day and would often read from the Qur'an and speak of the merits of jihad and self-sacrifice. It was largely, in fact, on the basis of his religious reputation that al-Qassām was able to recruit followers.

Aside from a few members of the religious establishment in Haifa, almost all of his followers came from the lower strata of society, being either peasants living in the small villages surrounding Haifa, or recently migrated labourers residing in Haifa itself. The majority of them, whether living in the villages or as migrant-workers in the cities and larger towns still saw their primary identity as an Islamic one. As such, they were easily drawn by leadership figures who defined the nationalist cause in Islamic terms, and who behaved as exemplary Muslims. This is not to say that they did not see their identity as also being Palestinian Arab. For the majority of Muslim peasants, however, even this identity was informed first and foremost by a sense of Islamic communalism; likewise it was an identity understood primarily in connection with Palestine's Islamic significance. This aspect of Palestinian Arab identity had become particularly pronounced following the Wailing Wall riots. The majority of those who had participated in the riots had been drawn from the Muslim peasantry, their involvement having been solicited through an appeal to religious sensibilities in connection with the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. The World Islamic Conference of 1931 had only served to accentuate this tendency.

112 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 132.


115 Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 40; also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 137.
The formalisation of Islamic practice

It is worth considering at this point why the peasantry were so drawn to militant figures of a strongly religious character. For centuries the peasantry had practiced what might best be thought of as a traditional, and decidedly flexible, form of Islam, one that did not necessarily translate into support for an Islamic political movement. What would distinguish the revolt in Palestine from similar movements in other parts of the Middle East was the strong support it enjoyed among the peasantry. This might be contrasted, for instance, with the situation in Egypt, where nationalist activity was largely an urban phenomenon, and very few of the peasantry actually became involved. Much of this reflected geography. Unlike the situation pertaining in Egypt, peasants in Palestine were in regular close contact with larger urban centres. Often, a town and its respective satellite villages were collectively known by the name of the former (Jabal Nablus or Jabal Hebron, for instance). Significantly, such designations reflected not only physical proximity, but what were strong social, economic and political connections as well. The changes brought about by the reforms of the mid-nineteenth century, together with increased European economic penetration, impacted on town-village relations in a profound way, not least in the way Muslim peasants understood and practiced their faith. Changes wrought in this respect would make them more predisposed to support militant nationalist movements of an Islamic character during the Mandate. What had been a more traditional and flexible form of religious practice became increasingly legalistic, less based on existing practice and more on a ‘correct’ interpretation. As such, it was one more susceptible to control by Islamic ‘authority-figures.’

Recapping what was discussed in the first chapter, the relationship between local elites and the peasantry had through the early part of the nineteenth century been at least partially one of mutual obligation. That the former, made up of urban notables and country sheikhs, had the better end of the deal is without question. At the same time, the peasantry was not without some leverage, inasmuch as the ability of local elites to rule

\[116\] Ibid, p. 137.
was in no small part dependent on the willingness of the peasantry to accept their authority.\(^\text{117}\) This was all the more so given that there often existed strong internal rivalries between various notable families, such that each family sought to attract the largest number of supporters. A good deal of effort was devoted to cultivating good relations with members of the peasantry in order to elicit their backing, often enough through patronage. Moreover, the ability of notables to maintain their authority depended, in many respects, on their reputations, something determined in large part by what one might deem an Islamic criterion—whether one held an important position within an Islamic institution, as a *qādī* or a *muftī*; at the very least, whether one enjoyed a reputation as a good Muslim (as being just, honest, hospitable, and so forth). With the appropriation of newly created administrative structures by local elites, elites moreover driven increasingly by commercial considerations, the peasantry soon lost this leverage. Power was increasingly defined by one’s position in the new administrative structure, and was no longer dependent on tacit support from below.

It is worth examining more closely the changing role of the country sheikh as this perhaps best exemplifies the process by which the relationship between local elites and the peasantry was so radically altered. While enjoying a certain degree of authority, it was an authority that, to an even greater degree than had been the case with the urban notables, was dependent on the goodwill of the peasantry. Thus, as observed by Elizabeth Anne Finn, the wife of the mid-nineteenth century British consul James Finn, members of the peasantry were quite likely to resist an arbitrary application of the law by any given sheikh. “*[S]hould he utter a decision or express an opinion contrary to the traditionary code, he is liable to be corrected, and to have his sentence questioned by the merest child.”\(^\text{118}\) She further observed that sheikhs took great pride in being sought after and

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respected in connection with their ability to dispense justice wisely. Country sheikhs were expected to look after the welfare of the peasantry, both in mediating between the villages and neighbouring urban centres, and in maintaining law and order within the villages themselves. As with the urban notables, the trust and respect accorded country sheikhs had, in many ways, a religious dimension, defined on the basis of the aforementioned 'Islamic virtues'—that he should be pious, that he was considered fair and just, and so forth.

It was an Islam of the most informal kind, defined more by tradition and recognized practice than legalism, often enough incorporating folk religious practices. Thus, for instance, very few villages had mosques. More common were shrines (maqams) dedicated to saints (walis), and nearly every village had at least one where peasants might plead for holy intercession. Religious practice was defined by a set of legal and cultural norms, best defined by the term 'urf. As described by Elizabeth Finn, sheikhs ruled by “a code of unwritten traditional laws,” some of which could be traced to the Qur'an (shar'iyyat Muhammad), but others only to regional codes. Thus, in the south of Palestine, cases were often judged under the ‘Law of Abraham’ (shar'iyyat Khalil). Qur'anic law was generally associated with the cities, and it was noted that the “peasantry always prefer[red] the law of Abraham to that of the Koran, [moreover that] it [was] administered by the sheikh and the elder.” Often, legal codes drew on Bedouin

119 Ibid, p. 22.


social norms. Thus, in the area around Bethlehem, Elizabeth Finn noted that, in certain cases, sheikhs found it necessary to resort to “Bedawy or wild Arab code.” The ability to resort to different codes of law allowed the country sheikh a certain degree of flexibility in discharging his responsibilities, particularly those of a judicial nature. Judicial arrangements were generally based on rural custom and trials were held before the sheikhs, such that village peasants rarely took recourse to the formal Islamic courts. In fact, as one missionary noted, it was generally considered preferable to “settle their disputes so far as possible without resort to the government.” Indeed, among many of the peasantry, it was considered that “going to accuse in towns show[ed] a decadence of their independence.”

As long as the interests of these rural elite coincided with those of their respective villages, the system worked reasonably well. With the institution of the Tanzimat reforms, however, the status of the country sheikhs as mediators between town and village began to erode. In connection with this, their authority became less based on

122 Finn, Palestine Peasantry, p. 24. See also Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 28.

123 Baer, “The Office and Functions of the Village Mukhtar,” p. 120.

124 See, for instance, Pierotti, Customs and Traditions, pp. 208-209.


128 See, for instance, Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 179.
whatever personal qualities might have earned them the respect of the peasant class, and
more on their political position as defined within the rapidly consolidating Ottoman
hierarchy. As discussed in the first chapter, they were transformed into servants of the
state wherein their authority stemmed entirely from the urban centre.129 Those able to
take advantage of newly arising commercial opportunities soon aligned their interests
with the developing merchant class. What remaining status they enjoyed with respect to
the peasantry became the basis for their exploitation. Thus, for instance, in an effort to
compete with other merchants in gaining access to the surplus crops needed for the
manufacture of various goods, textiles or soap, country sheikhs sought to use their
position of authority in the villages and the relationships they had cultivated to their own
advantage. Moreover, as with their urban counterparts, country sheikhs increasingly
sought to define their right of exploitation as one of legal prerogative.130

The peasantry was no longer able to rely on the country sheikhs, neither the urban
notables, for justice, and increasingly its members found it necessary to take recourse to
the formal judiciary institutions of the Islamic courts in the larger urban centres. Often
enough, recourse to the urban-based Islamic courts was for the purpose of challenging the
authority of the country sheikhs, the exercise of which seemed increasingly arbitrary. As
expressed by Doumani, for many peasants the “best of hope of carving out a political
space for themselves lay in involving the state and appealing to its sense of justice.”131
This phenomenon was perhaps most evident in the pronounced rise of cases appearing in
the Islamic courts during this period.132 This process extended beyond mere court visits.

129 Country sheikhs had become little more than tax collectors and rural administrators, their authority
stemming entirely from the urban-centre. See ibid, p. 170.

130 See, for example, ibid, pp. 142, 153, 167.

131 Ibid, pp. 169, 175. One might contrast this was the situation as it had stood earlier, when the peasantry
made every effort to avoid state institutions! (See above.)

Islamic law increasingly came to provide guidelines with respect to business practices, the resolution of social conflicts, and the defining of social roles (for instance, on the basis of gender). Indeed, over the course of the Mandate, the number of cases handled by the shari'a courts would continuously rise, particularly towards the end. Interestingly enough, this phenomenon would be particularly pronounced in those cities and towns—for instance, Haifa and Jaffa—that were mixed and had large Christian populations. The Islam practiced by the peasantry was becoming increasingly tied to Islamic legal institutions. As such, it constituted an important factor in what Doumani refers to as the ‘urbanisation’ of Islamic practice among the peasantry.

At the same time, folk practices were increasingly coming under attack by religious reformers. Al-Qassām was exactly one such reformer, establishing a reputation for himself during the 1920s by attacking folk religious practices, then still common in the Haifa area, as being un-Islamic. Mosques preaching Islamic orthodoxy replaced maqams (saints’ shrines) as centres of village worship, and peasants were increasingly educated as to which practices were authentically ‘Islamic.’ Through this process, the peasantry was becoming increasingly conscious of their identity as an Islamic one in a radically new way. Where previously recognised as an inherent aspect of a traditional mode of living, it was now taking on a new dimension; it was an identity less defined by

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133 Ibid.

134 Though it would appear that this phenomenon was not as strong in the north of Palestine as elsewhere. Kupferschmidt, The Supreme Muslim Council, pp. 98-100, 106.

135 Ibid, p. 100.

136 See Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 167.


practice and more by ideal, an Islam defined less by tradition and more in connection with its formal institutions—by extension, it was an Islam within which there was a right practice and wrong practice, based no longer on utility but more on archetypes. Significantly, it provided the basis of a definable shared Islamic identity. As expressed by Doumani, "Islamic law offer[ed] a common denominator or... a set of shared reference points that made it an appealing framework at a time when market relations were carving an ever-larger space in the hinterlands of the interiors."139 It was also an identity that might be set in opposition to other identities, as the particulars of what the former should entail—as far as proper Islamic behaviour and beliefs—became more rigidly defined. Significantly, this formalisation of Islamic practice would also play a crucial role in determining how the peasantry came to view the notable class.

For a large majority of the peasantry, their sense of Islamic self-identity had, during the latter part of the nineteenth century become more particularistic and more pronounced. In this sense, it was also more susceptible to appropriation by nationalist leaders of a certain religious qualification during the Mandate. By the mid-1930s, it is not surprising that a figure such as al-Qassām should have had such a strong appeal among the peasantry, a peasantry that was becoming increasingly literate and politically aware as well. Figures such as al-Qassām, more than just representing a continuation of the process of religious reform, situated it within the context of the nationalist movement. Through such reform, he sought to instil within the peasantry a commitment to the nationalist cause founded on religious discipline and piety. As described by Schleifer, for al-Qassām,

> [t]he perfect mujahid helps the poor, feeds the hungry, comforts the sick and visits his relatives, and all of these good deeds must be crowned by constant prayer. Therefore the mujahid must concentrate upon his prayer.140

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139 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, p. 167.

Put another way, “the virtues preceded bravery or militancy as a prerequisite to fighting.”\(^{141}\) In like manner, Johnson characterises al-Qassām’s movement as ‘redemptive’ and goes on to note that such a characterisation in fact became quite fashionable during the late-1930s in Palestine among Muslims themselves (here referring to the frequent use of the term *fidā’,* meaning ‘redemption’ or ‘ransoming’).\(^{142}\) As he goes on to note, al-Qassām’s message extended beyond a call to wage holy war. “He preached a reformed and more fundamentalist Islam, and believed that only those who were themselves pious could be the salvation of the country.”\(^{143}\)

An emphasis on Islam, in addition to drawing the lower social strata into the national movement, also provided a shared understanding between them and the more educated strata, in particular, those Muslims among the professional class and what was a fast growing pool of newly educated Muslim youth who aspired to a *salafi* version of Arab nationalism (as discussed above). Members of both groups tended to affiliate with the various YMMA branches. As Porath notes, “the necessity for struggle against the British Mandate and Zionism overcame the barriers between the higher and educated strata and lower classes. But it should be borne in mind that this happened when the struggle was expressed and understood as an *Islamic* necessity [emphasis his].”\(^{144}\) Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, for his part, would evoke this older religious criterion in challenging the more moderate members of the traditional leadership, many of whom could count themselves among the elite on the basis of little more than their wealth. Given the perceptions held by the peasantry with respect to this element of the traditional leadership—that they were

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\(^{141}\) Ibid.


\(^{143}\) Ibid, p. 41.

\(^{144}\) Porath, *Riots to Rebellion,* p. 137; also Johnson, *Islam and the Politics of Meaning,* p. 46.
unwilling to put the nationalist cause before their own economic interests—it would prove an effective means of challenging their authority.

The General Strike

On 25 November 1935, the leaders of five of the six major Arab parties (the exception being the Istiqlāl Party) submitted a joint memorandum to the High Commissioner. In it, they reiterated their national demands: the immediate stoppage of Jewish immigration; the cessation of land sales to Jews; and the establishment of a democratic government in Palestine in accordance with the terms of the covenant of the League of Nations (inclusive of the development of self-governing institutions). In the meantime, tensions between Arabs and Jews continued to rise. On 15 April 1936, two Jews were killed during a highway hold-up near Tulkarm, most likely by members of the militant group Ikhwān al-Qassām. Shortly thereafter, two Arab peasants were murdered near the Jewish settlement of Petah-Tikvah. The funeral of one of the murdered Jews, held two days later in Tel Aviv, quickly evolved into an angry demonstration, igniting a series of assaults on Arabs living in the vicinity. Arab mobs responded two days later by attacking Jews in Jaffa and killing three of them. The Government responded by ordering a curfew, and a state of emergency was declared. A few days later, a nationalist conference was convened in Nablus, and a national committee formed, which resolved to carry out a general strike involving all Arabs engaged in labour, transport and shop keeping until nationalist demands were met. The leaders of the six major Arab parties (again excluding the Istiqlāl Party) agreed with the decision to strike, and national committees were established almost immediately in all the Arab towns and villages.

With the complete radicalisation of the nationalist movement, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī and his faction quickly came to the fore. As already noted, though part of the traditional leadership, Hajj Amīn had proven considerably more astute than his rivals in adapting his

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145 The Ikhwān al-Qassām (Brethren of al-Qassām) sought to rally the peasantry to the nationalist cause by upholding Sheikh 'Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām as a martyr.
rhetoric to the evolving situation. Even as representatives of the major Arab parties were convening in Nablus, Hajj Amīn sent one of his closest followers to Jerusalem to organise a gathering of Muslim youth there. Hajj Amīn’s ability to assume control of the nationalist movement required among other things that he dissociate himself from the traditional leadership. As noted above, one of the main challenges to the traditional leadership during the 1930s came from the Istiqlāl Party, which had sought to take advantage of the peasantry’s disaffection with the notables in order to transform the nationalist movement into a populist one. Hajj Amīn had by the mid-1930s managed to assert a fair amount of control over the Istiqlāl Party, and many of its members had in fact come to join his own Palestine Arab Party, thus providing him with a base of support apart from the traditional framework of leadership.¹⁴⁶ It might be added that the inclusion of such individuals also had the effect of forcing Hajj Amīn to adopt a more militant stance.

Hajj Amīn was soon able to assert his authority over the other parties as well. To a large extent, events had begun to take on a momentum of their own, and the traditional leadership had until now been more or less simply reacting to events. They now began to take steps to gain control of the movement. On 25 April, the Supreme Arab Council, consisting of ten members representative of all the major Arab parties (with the initial exception of the Istiqlāl Party), was established to act as a coordinating body. In short time, this would become the Higher Arab Committee (the HAC),¹⁴⁷ with Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī as its President. Christians were represented on the Committee by the Greek Catholic Alfred Rok (affiliated with Hajj Amin’s Palestine Arab Party) and Ya’qūb Farrāj (of the Nashashibi camp).¹⁴⁸ The Higher Arab Committee confirmed the decision to strike, and declared that it would continue until nationalist demands were met. With the


¹⁴⁷ In Arabic, al-Lajnah al-‘Arabiyyah al-‘Aliyyah.

¹⁴⁸ Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 165.
one notable exception of Haifa (see below), what came to be known as the General Strike would prove successful throughout Palestine and would continue until October despite the hardship it caused Palestine’s Arabs.

The period leading up to the General Strike saw a proliferation of militant organisations. There was of course the aforementioned ʿIkhwān al-Qāḍīm, led by one of Sheikh ʿĪzz al-Dīn al-Qāḍīm’s followers, Sheikh Farhan al-Saʿdī. Another one of al-Qāḍīm’s followers, Khalīl Muhammad ʿĪsā, formed a militant group called the Dervishes. Another similar organisation was the aforementioned ʿAl-Jihād al-Muqaddas, which emerged in the Jerusalem area some time in 1931, under the leadership of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Husaynī, the son of Mūsā Kāzim. Beginning in May 1934, they called for open rebellion, and taking refuge in the hills surrounding Jerusalem, began attacking passing vehicles and nearby military installations. Another militant organisation was the Green Palm of the Hand\(^{149}\) established in 1932 with the purpose of committing terrorist attacks. Though mostly based in Hebron, it had branches in other Palestinian towns and villages. Beginning in 1935, a group calling itself the Revolting Youth\(^{150}\) became active in the Tulkarm-Qalqilya area. Other militant groups starting up around the same time included the Black Hand and Young Palestine.

Christian involvement in the various militant groups was not entirely absent. Thus, for example, there were some Christians active in ʿAl-Jihād al-Muqaddas. Three of its seventeen members were Christian in fact, among them, the aforementioned Emil al-Ghawrī.\(^{151}\) That said, the overwhelming majority of those militantly active were Muslim. The great majority of the rank-and-file of such organisations, in fact, came from the peasantry. As such, they were generally more inspired by Islamic sentiment than secular nationalism. Correspondingly, most of the militant groups were inspired by and modelled

\(^{149}\) In Arabic, ʿal-Kaff al-Khadārā.

\(^{150}\) In Arabic, ʿal-Shabāb al-Thāʾir.

\(^{151}\) Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 131.
themselves after al-Qassām's organisation. In most cases, the peasantry's involvement in the nationalist movement was channelled through local mosques, or the local branches of the YMMA. The importance of these institutions soon became readily apparent with respect to the organisation of militant activity. Even such an avowedly non-religious organisation as the Palestine Communist Party felt it necessary at its Seventh Congress to call for increased propaganda efforts at the mosques during Friday prayers and at popular religious festivals such as the Nabi Musa festival, noting that it was "during such mass celebrations that the fighting capacity of the fellahin [was] appreciably aroused."

On 7 May, representatives of the various national committees met in Jerusalem under the auspices of the Higher Arab Committee. In spite of the High Commissioner's appeals to desist, the Conference called for a continuation of the strike; also for an Arab refusal to pay taxes, to begin on 15 May, if by that date the British Government had not met their demands. Additionally, they called for the stoppage of municipal government. By 12 May, the Arab Chamber of Commerce had joined the General Strike, and on 15 May, the public was called on to implement the decision concerning non-compliance with tax-payment. Arab government officials, a large number of whom were Christian, found themselves in a particularly difficult position, and while some working in the Public Works Department went on strike, they were the exception. The vast majority refused to join in, rather agreeing in the end to relinquish a tenth of their salaries to a strike fund. Additionally, on 30 June, 137 Arab senior officials and judges submitted a signed memorial to the High Commissioner in support of the strike in principle, arguing that

152 Swedenburg, "The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry," p. 190.

153 See, for instance, Johnson, Islam and the Politics of Meaning, p. 18.


distrust of the Government was justified, and threatening resignation in the event that Jewish immigration was not at least temporarily suspended. Among those drafting the memorial was the Christian Arab, George Antonius. Interestingly enough, Hajj Amin found himself in a similar situation—as head of the Higher Arab Committee, he came under pressure to place the Supreme Muslim Council on strike. At the same time, he was technically a government employee. In the end, he opted for a partial strike, closing down the Council’s main offices, while keeping open the *shārīʿa* courts, the *waqf* administration, the mosques, and the poor relief services.

Christian involvement in the Strike was initially fairly strong. Thus, among those organisations directing the strike at the ground level were Christian sports clubs. The one notable exception in this respect was Haifa. While it was not only Haifa’s Christians that showed a disinclination to participate in the Strike, their general apathy as a community would very quickly become a source of tension between them and the city’s Muslims. Significantly, Muslim-Christian solidarity in Haifa had never been particularly strong—even at the height of Muslim-Christian solidarity, the Christian community there had chosen to maintain for itself separate political representation apart from the Muslim community. Thus, instead of an MCA, Haifa had from the beginning two separate Muslim and Christian Associations. Christian enthusiasm for the strike waned after a time, something that no doubt reflected the fact that Christians suffered from the disruption of economic activity caused by the strike a good deal more than their

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156 Ibid; also Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p. 170.


158 Ibid, p. 34.

159 ZA, S/25, 3252, Arab Bureau News, 12 July 1936, concerning conflict between Muslims and Christians in Haifa. See also Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, p. 177.

Muslim compatriots. Before long, many were resisting compliance. Thus, it was not uncommon that Christians were threatened by Muslim gangs demanding exorbitant sums of money as a demonstration of their loyalty to the nationalist movement. Towards the end, Christians were generally reluctant to carry on with the strike, something that caused some tension with the Muslim majority.

The Great Revolt

The British took an unyielding position, refusing to consider Arab demands, nor to suspend immigration (in May, the Government even announced the next six-month labour immigration quota) until the strike came to an end. It was not long before the General Strike evolved into outright revolt, particularly as the focus of activity shifted to the countryside. By mid-May, peasant bands had begun proliferating in the highlands. Militants inspired by the example of al-Qassām—and hence often described as

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162 See, for instance, Filasṭīn, 15 July 1936, though the author claims that this was, in fact, a lie perpetrated by the Jews, and that the money was given voluntarily, as Christians were completely devoted to the nationalist cause.

163 Thus, for instance, the Christian-run Filasṭīn was the first newspaper to call for its end. Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 212, article appearing 16 September 1936.

164 See, for instance, Filasṭīn, 16 July 1936, concerning attacks on Christian homes in Acre. Also ZA, S/25, 3875, Najib to the Zionist Executive, 22 September 1936.


166 Lesch, "The Palestine Arab Nationalist Movement," p. 36.
‘Qassamites’—featured prominently in many of them. By mid-May, violence peaked, and while much of it was directed against Jews, it was the Palestine Government that was the main target. Though there was no clear overall military commander, a number of figures did emerge—for example, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, the hero of the Syrian Druze rebellion of 1925, who entered Palestine with an armed detachment of pan-Arab volunteers, and Fakhr al-Hadi. Overall, though, the various militant groups never became truly unified, divisions between them reflecting the more traditional ones that had plagued the Arab nationalist movement in Palestine since its beginning.

Politically, leadership of the Revolt fell to the Higher Arab Committee, and thus, by extension, Hajj Amin al-Husayni. While in principle, Hajj Amin was more than happy to assume a leadership role with respect to the Revolt, it did put him in a rather compromising position inasmuch as, technically, he was an employee of the Government. Initially, he adopted a relatively moderate position, at least as far as public pronouncements. Thus, for instance, he refrained from using his position as Mufti and President of the SMC to ascribe a religious character to the revolt, likewise, from using religious slogans. As the Revolt continued, however, Hajj Amin began to take on a more extremist stance, and even to become directly involved in it. The Haram al-Sharif was used to store arms and as a place of refuge for militant leaders, and Hajj Amin began to play a more active role through the Higher Arab Committee and the various

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169 See Porath, Riots to Rebellion, pp. 193, 195.

170 See, for instance, CO 733/311/5, secret correspondence from Wauchope to Parkinson, October 1936.

171 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 194.
national committees in collecting the funds needed to maintain the rebels.\textsuperscript{172} What influence he actually had with respect to the various militant groups is questionable. Al-Qāwuqji, for instance, tended to favour the Nashāshibīs over the Husaynīs as far as any dealings he had with the traditional leadership. The Husaynī faction did hold sway over the rebel bands in the Jaffa-Ramla and Ramallah-Jerusalem-Hebron regions, particularly those affiliated with the militant group \textit{al-Jihād al-Muqaddas} led by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husaynī. Beyond this, it is unclear if he had any connections with the other militant groups, though as Porath points out, it might be that such contacts were maintained secretly.\textsuperscript{173}

The Higher Arab Committee was coming under pressure from two sides—beginning in September, the British authorities boosted their military force to 20,000 and declared martial law. At the same time, the agricultural season had commenced and the peasantry wanted to resume work. Not surprisingly, the upcoming harvest was of equal concern to the wealthy citrus-growers, who were clamouring for an end to the strike.\textsuperscript{174} In addition to this was a recognition that the Jewish community was benefiting economically from the strike as it was making it more independent of the Arab economy.\textsuperscript{175} The Higher Arab Committee, the majority of whom still represented notable interests, opted for negotiations, and on 10 October called off the six-month-old General Strike.\textsuperscript{176}

Even at this point, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī was not entirely committed to an extremist position. Nonetheless, in attempting to assert his leadership against his more moderate

\begin{footnotes}
\item{172} ibid, p. 286.
\item{173} ibid, pp. 193-194.
\item{174} Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” p. 191.
\item{175} Lesch, “The Palestine Arab Nationalist Movement,” p. 36.
\item{176} Swedenburg, “The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry,” p. 191.
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rivals, he had painted himself into a corner. As noted by the High Commissioner, Hajj Amīn had “allowed himself to be pushed into extreme courses.” Hajj Amīn tried to maintain some kind of middle ground, perhaps most evident in the partial strike of the Supreme Muslim Council (noted above), and indeed, related institutions continued to function to such an extent that the Palestine Government did not even acknowledge that they were on strike, something which eventually prompted the qādis of the shari‘a courts to submit an almost mutinous memorandum to the Government insisting on the immediate fulfilment of all Arab demands. The greater part of Palestine’s Arab population no longer trusted the traditional leadership, a leadership of which Hajj Amīn was as much a part as Rāghib al-Nashāshibī. To a large extent, he had managed to redefine the basis of his leadership role so as to adapt to changing social and political realities. Still, it was something of an uneasy transition given his government-based positions as President of the Supreme Muslim Council and Grand Mufti, the very positions, ironically, through which he sought to assert his control of the nationalist movement as it became more radicalised and, correspondingly, more Islamicised.

The British Government initially sought to deal with the Revolt by sending a royal commission to investigate its cause. On 5 November 1936, what came to be known as the Peel Commission—named after its head, Earl Peel, the former Secretary of State for India—departed for Palestine. The Higher Arab Committee initially took the decision to boycott the commission unless Jewish immigration was at least temporarily suspended, though they eventually relented under pressure from the Arab rulers. The Commission remained in Palestine for a little over a month, during which time it took statements from representatives of the various political elements. Its final report was issued on 7 July 1937. It recommended that the Mandate be abandoned and that the country be divided into three parts: an Arab state comprising those parts of Palestine that were predominantly Arab; a Jewish state compromising those parts predominantly Jewish; and

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177 See also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 195.

178 See, for instance, CO 733/387/2, correspondence from Wauchope to Ormsby-Gore, 3 November 1936.
a smaller state, inclusive of Jerusalem and other areas of religious importance to
Christians, to remain under British control.\(^{179}\) Initially, Rāghib al-Nashāshībī and his
faction indicated a willingness to consider partition, on the basis of which they withdrew
from the Higher Arab Committee. This move backfired, however, when it became
apparent that the partition plan allocated considerably more land to the Jews than had
been anticipated. The result was that Rāghib al-Nashāshībī’s political standing was
severely damaged, and the National Defence Party eventually forced to dissolve.

For the most part, Christians were opposed to the partition plan, though to a large extent,
this reflected the fact that the Galilee, an area heavily populated by Christians, had been
allocated to the Jewish state.\(^{180}\) This was in fact, of general concern to all Arabs,\(^{181}\) even
among those inclined to at least consider partition. Some among the Christian leadership
were willing to consider partition, at least in principle—thus, Ya’qūb Farrāj was among
those joining Rāghib al-Nashāshībī in withdrawing from the Higher Arab Committee.\(^{182}\)
Nonetheless, as soon as the extent of the territory being allocated to the Jewish state
became apparent, most Christians came out against it. In the end, the partition plan
actually had the effect of closing ranks between Christians and Muslims. Among other
things, Christians were concerned about the impact partition would have in dividing what
was already a small community. Some concerns were of a more practical nature—for

\(^{179}\) Abdul Wahhab Said Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History (London: Third World Centre for Research

\(^{180}\) See, for instance, ZA, S/25, 3292, Report from Haifa, 19 July 1917, concerning the Greek Catholics in
Galilee; ZA, S/25, 10098, note on talk with Tawfiq al-Ghusayn, 21 March 1938, concerning the Greek
Catholics in Galilee; also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 270.

\(^{181}\) Particularly given that at that time, the Jewish population made up only .001 per cent of the rural
population of the (corresponding) Acre subdistrict and 4 per cent of the Safad subdistrict. Lesch, “The
Palestine Arab Nationalist Movement,” p. 37.

\(^{182}\) Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 270.
instance that regarding the jurisdiction of religious courts, which under the plan being recommended, would remain in British-controlled territory. 183

Resumption of the Revolt

The second phase of the Revolt erupted in September 1937, following the assassination of the British District Commissioner for Galilee (most likely by Qassamites). Almost immediately, the Palestine Government forcibly dissolved the Higher Arab Committee, together with all of the national committees. Six members of the HAC were set for deportation, among them, Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī. The latter managed in the end to escape to Lebanon from where he was able, at least initially, to maintain control of the nationalist movement. By the summer of 1938, most of the Palestinian highlands were in rebel hands, and by September, even in the urban centres, government control had virtually ceased. As the Revolt progressed, its religious character became increasingly prominent. As noted by the High Commissioner, Harold MacMichael, the leaders of the revolt were “more and more stressing the religious aspect of their struggle.” 184 It was generally in the name of Islam, often as expressed by religious functionaries, that the masses were called upon to support the revolt and join its ranks. Much was made of alleged insults to the Qur'ān and mosques by British troops. Likewise, it was asserted with great frequency that the Muslim Holy Places would be lost if Zionism were allowed to prevail. 185

As discussed earlier, for many Muslims, nationalist and Islamist sentiment often overlapped. This was certainly true among the peasantry, and indeed, it was the peasants (inclusive of those who had migrated to the cities and larger towns) who made up the

183 Ibid.

184 Ylana Miller, Government and Society, p. 124.

185 FO 371/20018, CID Secret Reports, 23 June 1936 and 22 July 1936.
majority of band leaders and fighters. It was the peasantry that lent the revolt its character as well, something particularly evident in the costume forced on Arabs coming under the authority of the various militant commanders. Thus, for instance, many townsmen were ordered to remove their urban headgear, the fez, and don the peasant head cloth, the kūfiya. While to some degree, this was for practical reasons—it made it harder for the authorities to pick out rebels186—it also marked the fact that the countryside had effectively gained hegemony over the city.187 It also reflected the assertion of what was a more traditionally-based value system—one more associated with traditional Islamic institutions, albeit, radically reconfigured along the lines discussed above—over the more Western-based liberal ideas often favoured by the merchant elite residing in the cities and larger towns.

As discussed above, the peasantry had never really come round to a secular brand of nationalism. As observed by the High Commissioner, “[a]mong the village population Moslem religious sentiment is a stronger, more unifying and more universal sentiment than Arab nationalism.”188 In any case, for most, their sense of Arab identity was defined primarily by its association with the period of ‘Islamic glory,’ when the Arabs were exalted as the carriers of the Islamic faith.189 Added to this, for many Muslims, an Arab nationalism that emphasised Islam made considerably more sense as a response against

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187 The kūfiya had till then been worn only by bedouin and peasants, while those in the city had traditionally worn the tarbush. Ibid.

188 CO 935/21/27, the High Commissioner to the Secretary of State, 13 September 1938.

189 Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: *University of California Press, 1997), pp. 6-7, 37. Even to the extent that it was linguistically based, it was centred around the Arabic of the Quran, a language specifically bestowed by Allah on the Arab people. Ibid, p. 37.
European imperialist encroachment, stressing as it did Islamic unity against Europe. Concomitant with this tendency, as discussed above, were changes in how many Muslim peasants conceived of their religious identity. For most, it had become something more pronounced and particularistic. As such, it was an identity more susceptible to being appropriated by leaders of a certain religious qualification.

Not surprisingly, it was the Qassamites who featured most prominently in organising and commanding militant bands. Most of the Qassamites had strong reputations as devout and righteous fighters “who followed in their nationalist fighting the precepts of the Qur’ān and the gospel which Sheikh al-Qassām had taught them.” Many in fact saw their mission as being as much about reform as about liberation; in this sense, the revolt actually constituted only one component of a larger programme. Significantly, calls for reforms were often directly linked to the interests of the peasantry (as well as the migrant workers in the towns and cities). Thus, many rebel practices—such as the moratorium on debts and the heavy contributions levied against the wealthy—were directly aimed at addressing their more immediate needs. Just as urban men were forced to adopt the kāfiya, urban women were compelled to wear the veil. Much of the leadership, particularly among the Qassamites, was made up of the aforementioned newly educated Muslim youth. It was these who took up the positions of commanders, advisers, arms transporters, and instructors. Many of the highest posts were occupied by second-rank notables—individuals like Fakhrī ‘Abd al-Ḥādī—who often were unable to define for themselves a meaningful role in the nationalist struggle within the traditional leadership.

190 Ibid, pp. 6-7.

191 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 183. Concerning the overall Islamic character of the Qassamites, see, for example, ZA, S/25, 4550, Ha-Cohen and Sasson to Shertok, reporting on talk with al-Hajj Tahir Qaraman, 21 August 1938.


193 Ibid.
Indeed, in many respects, the Great Revolt was as much directed against the traditional leadership as against the British and Zionists. As discussed by Doumani, the Revolt had a strong social dimension, one that revolved largely “around the issues of debt, loss of land, vulnerability to the machinations of urban elites, and internal power struggles.”

In areas where rebel commanders held control, wealthy notables were often compelled to ‘contribute’ large sums of money to the revolt. Particularly large sums were demanded from the citrus-growers and merchants of Jaffa who tended to support the Nashāshibī faction. On 1 September, a declaration was issued by the joint rebel command calling for a moratorium on all debts and warning debt collectors and land agents against visiting the villages. It also called for the cancellation of all rents on urban apartments, which by then had risen to appallingly high levels. This, of course, directly impacted on the situation of many (formerly peasant) migrant workers. Needless to say, it was members of the notable class to whom the peasants were indebted.

Initially at least, it might be argued that the Revolt had a unifying effect between Muslims and Christians. Thus, an Englishwoman, upon her arrival in the predominantly Christian village of Bir Zeit in the summer of 1938 (during which time it was in rebel hands), had the impression that the rebellion had reduced negative feelings between Muslims and Christians. By the following spring, however, she noted that relations between the two had deteriorated significantly. In general, it would seem that, at least over time, the Revolt had the effect of heightening tensions between Muslims and

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194 Issues which Doumani traces back to the Ottoman period. Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, pp. 244-245.


196 Ibid.

197 Miller, Government and Society, p. 124, originally in H.M. Wilson’s School Year in Palestine, 1938-1939.
Christians considerably. Among other things, many Muslims were sure that Christians were receiving favourable treatment from the Government. This was of course an old charge, but given the current circumstances, it raised strong suspicions regarding Christian commitment to the nationalist cause and greatly exacerbated anti-Christian sentiment. Tensions peaked in December 1936 when an anti-Christian leaflet was circulated in the countryside calling for Muslims to join in a boycott of Christians. The leaflet, signed by 'the carriers of the banner of al-Qassâm,' justified this with the contention that Christians were not committed to the cause. Muslim members of the Arab leadership, Hajj Amín included, tried to limit the damage caused by such incidences, though how successful they were in this respect is debatable.

According to one British police-officer, it was generally held among Muslims that Christians were traitors to their own people. He went on to describe the relationship between the two as being one of 'savage and bitter feeling,' and noted that it was often the case that a British constable was posted to the house of a Christian Arab to act as a bodyguard. Christian notables were targeted in particular it would seem and "were suspected of all manner of anti-Moslem activities, such as helping the British, or even selling land to Jews." The Nabi Musa festival, once considered an expression of Muslim-Christian unity, now became an occasion during which agitators "urged the multitude to fall upon the Jew and Christian infidels and slay them."

198 Ibid.

199 ZA, S/25, 3875, Najib to the Zionist Executive, Jaffa, 26 June 1936.

200 ZA, S/25, 9350, copy of leaflet. See also CO 733/347/10, Second Revision of section on 'The Christians,' from the report of the Royal Commission, 1937, p. 12.

201 Ibid. See also Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 270.


203 Ibid, p. 114; see also CO 733/204/2, letter from Aaronsohn to Smith, 9 April 1931.
Christians increasingly felt a need to demonstrate that they were as committed to the nationalist cause as Muslims. An article appearing in *Filastīn* in July 1936, for instance, recounted an interview conducted by an American journalist in which Christian youth indicated emphatically that he stood side by side with his Muslim brothers in his willingness to sacrifice everything for the national cause. 204 Equally, efforts were made to demonstrate that Muslim-Christian unity was still quite strong. Those accusing Christians of not being loyal nationalists were the exception, not the rule. Most Muslims understood that Christians were devoted to the nationalist cause. 205 Correspondingly, any evidence of cooperation between Muslims and Christians was quickly seized upon. *Filastīn* made much of the fact, for instance, that Christians in a village near Haifa had helped Muslims in the building of a mosque 206; likewise, of the appearance of Bulūs Shahāda, the editor of *Mirʿāt al-Sharq*, as a guest speaker at the Gaza branch of the YMMA, who was invited there to speak on the subject of sectarianism. 207

Of course, particularly when considering the peasantry, it was not only Christians who suffered at the hands of rebel bands; with respect to any given incident, it is hard to say whether Christians suffered on the basis of their faith, or simply because they were peasants, and just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. 208 On the other hand, the charge that Christians as a whole were not as committed as Muslims to the national cause had some justification, at least as measured by the level of their

204 *Filastīn*, 15 July 1936.

205 See, for example, *al-Karmīl*, 17 June 1936; *Filastīn*, 16 July 1936.

206 *Filastīn*, 9 November 1932.

207 Ibid, 25 October 1932. Also attending was his wife Mary, whom spoke on the subject of feminism.

involvement in the Revolt. Certainly very few Christians numbered among its leadership. Thus, Porath notes that out of a total of 282 individuals who might be qualified as ‘officers,’ only four were Christian. Likewise, very few Christians were to be found among the rank and file, and it was not uncommon that Christian villages refused to supply food and arms to rebel bands, even when pressured to do so. Often this saw acts of retaliation directed against them, inclusive of the uprooting of vineyards and the raping of Christian girls.

Generally speaking, Christians found it difficult to support the Revolt given its strong Islamic undertone. As expressed by one British official affiliated with the 1937 Royal Commission, Christians had “come to realise that the zeal shown by the fellaheen... was religious and fundamentally in the nature of a Holy War against the Christian Mandate and against Christian people as well as against Jews.” The Revolt was presented at times as a war between Islam and Christianity rather than one of liberation. Thus, Christians were greatly disturbed in one instance when a rebel band marching through the Christian village of Bir Zeit sang ‘We are going to kill the Christians’ instead of the more usual ‘We are going to kill the British.’ Christians were alienated by rebel injunctions forcing Christian women to wear veils and Christian men kufiya, and the insistence that Christians observe Friday instead of Sunday as their weekly Sabbath. While the partition plan had temporarily closed the ranks between Christians and Muslims (see above), the resumption of the revolt quickly saw a revival of tensions between Muslims

209 Ibid, p. 269.

210 ZA, S/25, 3875, Najib to the Zionist Executive, 22 September 1936.


212 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 270.

and Christians. Muslims became outraged, for example, when Christian priests refused to join in political demonstrations.  

As the Revolt wore on, Christian Arabs increasingly inclined towards moderation. Yet moderation was increasingly becoming an untenable and even dangerous position to hold. Thus, for example, in the summer of 1936, Ṣāḥib al-Ḳāmil was physically accosted on account of his moderate stance regarding the Strike as well as his pro-ʿAbdallah position. By 1938, it was not only Christians who were being targeted in this respect. That year, Ṣāḥib al-Nashšūb and his supporters were subjected to a series of terrorist attacks and murder attempts, mostly orchestrated by Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī. A fair number of these were successful. Having by this time openly sided with the government against the Revolt, Ṣāḥib al-Nashšūb and his followers were considered by many Arabs to be traitors to the nationalist cause. By the summer of 1938, things had become so extreme that Ṣāḥib and a number of his more prominent associates were forced to go into self-imposed exile in neighbouring Arab countries. They would not return to Palestine until the spring of 1939.

Christians by this time had become almost completely marginalized, and many of them knew it. Thus, for example, when in 1935, the Christian nationalist al-Sakākīnī was offered the position of director of the Arabic department in the Palestine Broadcasting Service, he rejected it, explaining that a Muslim would be more appropriate for the post. At the municipal level of government, Christian political influence had been in

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214 Porath, Riots and Rebellion, p. 270.


216 ZA, S/25, 3875, Najib’s report from Jaffa, 14 August 1936.


decline ever since the municipal elections of 1927. The Municipal Corporations Ordinance, promulgated in January 1934, only made matters worse. Whereas until then, representation had been secured for the different religious communities, municipal elections were now to take place on the basis of wards. In the subsequent 1934 election, 36 Christians were elected against 94 Muslims. This represented a collective loss of seven representatives over the previous election. The loss was felt most strongly at the local level. In both Beersheba and Beisan they lost their lone representative; in Acre their representation decreased from three to one; in Nazareth, from five to four, and in Jerusalem, from three to two. Additionally, it was decided that in the towns only one deputy mayor should be nominated. The latter change was particularly problematic for Christians, inasmuch as, where there had been more than one, the second deputy mayor had usually been a Christian. In Jerusalem, the mayor had traditionally always been Muslim and his deputy Greek Orthodox. The problem was that Christians and Jews were now competing for the same spot. Thus, during the 1934 election, Christians lost their deputy mayor in Haifa.

Christians were greatly alarmed by this trend, and many demanded that special measures be taken to ensure Christian representation, though not most claimed, for fear of being dominated by Muslims, but as a safeguard against the Jews. In general, Christians were inclined to blame the Jews for their situation. Thus, for example, the Greek Catholic bishop of Galilee, Yūsuf Ḥājjar, blamed the weakening of the Christian position on


222 *Filastīn*, 23 October 1933.
Jewish immigration. Christians tended to tie concerns about Christian representation to the problem of representation in general, a tendency that dated back to at least the late 1920s. Thus, for instance, when threatening to boycott the Seventh Palestinian National Congress out of fear that they would not be properly represented as a community, Christians had asserted that it was not only with their own representation that they were concerned. In similar fashion, when criticising the proposed legislative council in 1930, at a time when most Muslims supported it, Filastin was careful to join its concern about the lack of Christian representation—there were to be only two Christians—with broader ones regarding representation in general. Thus, it was not only noted that “every Christian community has…its own opinion,” but also that “[e]very district in Palestine has its own opinion.

Regionally, it had become less fashionable to emphasise the Islamic nature of Arab nationalism in the manner that Rashid Rida once had, and as was still asserted by such figures as Shakib Arslan. For them, Islam took precedence over Arabism in an obvious way. The moral laws of Islam were to be binding on the nation; moreover, the Arabs were considered to have a kind of moral mission to regenerate Islam following its long period of corruption under the Turks. Emphasis was now on the Arabic language, which, as expressed by one Iraqi intellectual, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, was the “soul of the Arab nation.” At the same time, it was Islam that defined the content of that language, though, it was argued, whosoever spoke Arabic might appropriate Islam and its past as his own. According to al-Bazzaz, Christian Arabs were as much a part of the nation as

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224 See the third chapter.

225 CO 733/182/8, ‘Palestine Arabic Press Summary No. 58, for the Week Ending 31st October, 1930.

Muslims and might equally take pride in what had been done historically by ‘Muslim’ Arabs. It was still Islam that defined who the Arabs were, though now it was defined as a culture rather than as divine law. As Hourani puts it, “instead of Arab nationalism being regarded as an indispensable step towards the revival of Islam, Islam was regarded as the creator of the Arab nation, the content of its culture or the object of its collective pride.”

A number of Christian intellectuals attempted to appropriate the idea of an Arab identity defined by Islamic culture. Qustantín Zurayq, an Orthodox Christian from Damascus and a professor at the American University of Beirut, described the Arabs as a community that drew its inspiration and its principles from Islam. Again, it was an Islam that was more cultural than religious. Thus, while Muhammad was seen as the unifier of the Arab people and the creator of Arab culture, it did not follow that the Arabs should be guided by Islamic law or Islamic institutions. Another Christian intellectual promoting a similar understanding of Arab identity was Edmond Rabbath, a Uniate from Aleppo who defined Islam as underpinning a religious solidarity that was a forerunner of national solidarity. In this conception, the Islamic community was in effect an ‘embryonic Arab community.’ Whether such conceptions of Islam had any bearing on how most Muslim Arabs conceived of their identity and the place of Islam in it is highly questionable. What does seem clear is that Christians recognised a need to come to terms with Islam, and such attempts might be understood as constituting a last-ditch attempt by Christians to maintain some say in shaping Arab national identity—to allow for the primacy of Islam in a manner that did not see non-Muslims entirely relegated to second-class status. There is little to indicate, however, that they were successful in this. In Palestine, Christians remained active in the nationalist movement, but increasingly only as surrogates of

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227 Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 308-309.


229 Ibid, p. 310.
Muslim nationalist leaders, leaders moreover, who—particularly in connection with the movement’s radicalisation—tended to emphasise their Islamic identity.

The Round Table Conference

With the publication of the Woodhead Partition Commission report in November 1938 declaring partition technically infeasible, and the British government’s accompanying announcement to hold a Round Table Conference in London, the Revolt lost momentum and eventually collapsed. An overriding factor in this was that by late-1938, many among the peasantry had grown disaffected with the militant groups, thus helping the British to suppress the Revolt. The Round Table Conference convened on 7 February 1939 in St. James’ Palace in London. As the Jewish and Arab delegations had refused to meet one another, British officials had to arrange separate meetings. The Palestinian delegation was headed by Jamāl al-Husaynī. Also present was Rāghib al-Nāshāshībī, along with Ya’qūb Fārrāj. These two represented the only moderate element in the Arab delegation. The British Government proposed a drastic cutting back of Jewish immigration and land purchases; making future Jewish immigration dependent on Arab consent; and the eventual creation of an independent united Palestinian state. Jews were to be given veto-power over the latter as a counter-balance to Arab control over immigration. In the end, the Jewish delegation walked out of the Conference. The Arab

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230 A ‘Technical Commission of Inquiry’ was established on 8 November under the chairmanship of Sir John Woodhead to consider the feasibility of the partition proposal.


233 On account of which it is also known as the St. James Conference.

234 The overall Arab delegation included representatives of six other Arab countries.
delegation, for its part, attempted to impose further conditions on the Government, which the latter found unacceptable. In the end, the British Government was forced to terminate the talks. In lieu of a settlement, the Government issued a white paper along the lines of what had been proposed during the Conference. What came to be known as the MacDonald White Paper (named after the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald) was issued on 17 May. It disclaimed any intention of creating a Jewish state, and restricted Jewish immigration to 75,000 over the next five years. Likewise, it placed restrictions on land purchases, and called for an independent Palestinian state within ten years. Omitted was the Jewish right of veto.

The decision by the Higher Arab Committee to take part in a conference in London gave the Christians some temporary leverage with respect to the national movement, as it was considered imperative by the Arab leadership that the HAC should appear representative of a united Palestinian-Arab people. When the Christian leadership was asked to downplay the less savoury aspects of the Revolt with respect to Christians, they threatened to send a separate delegation to the London Conference. The threat worked, and at the end of December, the rebel leaders in Jerusalem published a declaration condemning the various anti-Christian acts that had been committed in connection with the Revolt. (At the same time, they attributed such acts to renegade individuals whom they characterised as 'rascals.') Hajj Amin al-Husaynī also tried to exert pressure on his followers to behave more tolerantly towards Christians. In the end, the Palestinian Arab delegation sent to the Conference did give the impression of a united front. Whether Christian Arabs actually exerted any influence within the delegation is another matter. Interesting to consider in this respect is the Christian Arab, George Antonius, who acted not only as Secretary for the Palestinian Arab delegation, but as Secretary-General of the

235 Porath, Riots to Rebellion, p. 270.


united delegation of the six Arab countries attending. That he played such a prominent role at the Conference, however, was probably more a reflection of his prominence within Western circles than an indication of any influence he had within Arab ones. Commenting on Antonius following the Round Table Conference, F.H. Kisch, one of the Zionist representatives noted that "[w]hatever may have been his services to England, it is certainly a fact that neither in Palestine nor in Syria is [Antonius] regarded as a leader of any Arab circle whatever." 

The Second World War through 1948

By the time of the Second World War, the nationalist movement was completely exhausted. It was also effectively leaderless, as a result of which, during the Second World War, the Arabs could neither act politically nor counter the Jewish revolt that started towards its close. The Nashāshibī faction initially supported active cooperation with the British war effort. It became silent, however, following the assassination of Fakhri al-Nashāshibī in November 1941. In any case, political activity was forbidden during the war, and this prohibition was strictly enforced. For his part, Hajj Amin took a decided position against the British. Following a pro-Axis coup in Iraq, he went to Baghdad, only to be forced to flee after it was suppressed, first to Iran, and than on to Rome and Berlin, where he spent the remainder of the war engaging in pro-Axis activities. For its part, the Government sought during this period to implement the land transfer stipulations of the MacDonald White Paper. Overall, Arab reaction to this was muted, while the Jewish community was more absorbed with immigration issues. By the end of the Second World War, initiative with respect to the Palestinian nationalist movement had fallen to the surrounding Arab states, mostly through the newly created League of Arab States, formed on 22 March 1945. In the fall of 1945, the Higher Arab

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Committee was recreated at the initiative of the outside states, and again came to be dominated by Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī, following his return from exile in France.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 40-41.}

The Arab nationalist movement in the meantime had become eclipsed by what was a growing Zionist militancy, which since the end of the Second World War had begun attacking British institutions with the aim of driving the British out of Palestine altogether. Most notable in this respect was a joint-operation carried out by the Irgun and Stern Gang on 22 July 1946, which saw the office-wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem blown up at the cost of over ninety British, Arab and Jewish lives. Complicating matters was the fact that the British were coming under pressure from the United States to permit large-scale Jewish immigration. A joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was established in order to consider the Jewish refugee problem. Its report, published in May 1946, called for the establishment of a bi-national state with neither a Jewish nor an Arab majority. Partition in fact was becoming the favoured solution within the international community, the newly formed United Nations voting in favour of it on 29 November 1947. As hostilities between Arabs and Jews continued to escalate, the British prepared to abandon Palestine altogether.

Interesting to consider here is the statement made by those representing the Christian community before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, which essentially resembled a prepared speech with no other objective than to demonstrate Christian solidarity with Muslims. The Christian Arabs were collectively represented\footnote{ISA, 274/17-9, The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 23 March 1946.} by the Reverend George Hakīm, the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Galilee, who, interestingly enough, introduced himself by asserting that in spite of being Christian, he was an Arab.

\begin{quote}
I am an Arab and my connections with the Byzantine Church do not deprive me of being an Arab with Arab blood running in my veins—just
\end{quote}
as an Englishman is English whether he is Roman Catholic or Anglican.\textsuperscript{242}

Beyond that, he ‘limited his statement’ to three points, points that in many ways encapsulated the basis and extent of Christian involvement by that time in the nationalist movement. First, that “the Christian Arab in Palestine [had] everything in common with their Moslem brethren [and] that [r]eligious beliefs [did] not in any way make of them two peoples.” Second, that “Zionism [was] a menace to the Christian as well as to the Moslem population in Palestine.” Third, that “the Zionists’ claim to Palestine [was] based on Biblical promises in the Old Testament [and that] all promises given to the people of Israel in the Old Testament have been annulled by the advent of Christ.”\textsuperscript{243}

The Reverend Nikola al-Khūrī, Secretary of the Arab Greek Orthodox Clergy, immediately added that:

we Christian Arabs in Palestine are very happy living in this country with our Moslem brethren. We are being treated well, and we have been living for hundreds of years amicably together, with no differences between us, and our Holy Places have been guarded, and we have no molestation from any sect so far. I believe that the country should be left to its inhabitants, whoever they are, as they are living well together. As far as the Moslems and Christians are concerned, we have been living very well together, and there have been no differences between us for many hundreds of years. We are all as one nation.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid.
As far as can be determined from the minutes of the meeting—aside from one final comment by the Reverend George Hakîm (below)—the Christian Arabs had absolutely nothing to add.

Were relations between Muslims and Christians as good as they maintained? It is interesting to note that the aforementioned final comment added by the Reverend Hakîm at the very end was in reference to a declaration made by the Archbishop Mubârak in Beirut that had appeared in the *Palestine Post* a few days earlier, which suggested that relations between Muslims and Christians were, in fact, less than ideal. Concerning this, the Reverend Hakîm made clear that whatever the truth regarding the Bishop Mubârak's position, "he [spoke] in his own name and not in the name of the Christians." It would seem by the end of the Mandate that Christian involvement in the nationalist movement was basically limited to toeing the political line set by their Muslim compatriots. One might consider here a comment made by Richard Crossman, one of the members of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, concerning an acquaintance of his, the Christian Albert Hourani, then working for Chatham House, whom he characterised as being "more intransigent in [his] policy than the old leaders, [partly he supposed] because [he was] westernized and so compenseated for any western bias by an excess of nationalism." He went on to comment that Hourani and his friends realized that the present social structure won't last long and that the new political movements will be ultra-nationalistic. Hourani is quite right to feel that if he is to represent the literate Arabs of Palestine then he must speak the same language as the Mufti, otherwise he will be rejected as a British agent, particularly since he worked so closely with Chatham House.

244 Ibid.


While the statement no doubt also reflected the fact that Hourani had been born and raised in Manchester, England, his faith no doubt also constituted a factor. In any case, Muslims generally perceived Christian Arabs as Westernised and as overly sympathetic to their European coreligionists. As such, the sentiment perfectly encapsulated the dilemma confronting Palestine’s Christian Arabs.

One might consider here as well statements made by the Muslim dignitaries standing before the Anglo-American Committee, which, in addition to being significantly longer than those made by their Christian counterparts, strongly emphasised the Islamic character of Palestine. Thus, for instance, Sheikh Dia ad-Dîn al-Khâtib, though perhaps doing this the least and even briefly paying lip service to Muslim-Christian unity, made reference to the Crusades and noted that “it is the duty of every Moslem by religious law to help in safeguarding Moslem territory.” Subsequent Muslim speakers before the Committee took this theme further. Thus, for instance, Sheikh Sabrî Abdîna noted that

There is no part of Palestine which does not abound in Moslem Holy Sanctuaries, mosques and shrines, and where Moslem monuments cannot be found. Its very soil has been sanctified by the bodies of a great number of the Companions of the Prophet, of those others who came after them, of the Ulamas (Learned), the Saints and the pious in Islam... Their tombs are to be found along the coast, in the hills and in the plains of Palestine.  

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247 ISA, 274/17-\(B\), The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 23 March 1946.

248 Ibid.
He then went on to note that "[h]undreds of millions of Moslems in the Arab world, in India, Indonesia, China, the Philippine Islands, Afghanistan, Iran, Yugoslavia, Turkey and even in Russia and in other parts of the world passionately yearn for Palestine."²⁴⁹

By contrast, those European Christians attending the inquiry on behalf of their churches seemed to feel that Christian interests would best be safeguarded if the places in which they lived were put under international administration rather than being left as part of a Muslim-dominated state. While no doubt such a position reflected the concerns of their respective larger church communities regarding the Christian holy sites, it would seem that it was also generated by a concern for the well-being of their respective Arab lay communities. Thus, when speaking out in favour of partition, W.H. Stewart, the Bishop of the Church of England in Jerusalem, insisted that it was as much a matter of protecting the rights of Christian minorities as anything else. Specifically, he felt that Christian rights would suffer equally whether in a state run by Jews or Muslims. While he hoped that in either case, ‘proper guarantees’ would be put in any future constitution, he did not have much faith that they would safeguard the rights of minority Christians.²⁵⁰ The only solution, he asserted, was that a separate enclave be created inclusive of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and the Galilee.

On 15 May 1948, the last High Commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, and his remaining staff departed from Palestine, thus ending the British Mandate forever. The same day, the State of Israel was proclaimed. In the fighting that ensued between Arabs and Jews, the former were only able to hold onto the seacoast around Gaza and the central hill region. Oddly enough, these two regions found themselves divided between the two factions that had split the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement from the start. The Higher Arab Committee under Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī formed a ‘Government of all Palestine’ in Gaza in late September 1948, while the hill area came under the control of

²⁴⁹ Ibid.
²⁵⁰ Ibid.
Amīr Abdāllah of Jordan, who shortly thereafter appointed Rāghib al-Nashāshībī as military governor in what would come to be known as the West Bank. 251

The war saw a large exodus of Christians from Palestine—between 55,000-60,000 Christian Arabs fled from the coast and the Galilean highland. Also hard hit were those Christians living in the western part of Jerusalem, as well as those in Haifa, Jaffa, Ramla and Lydda. About half of these settled in Jordan (inclusive of the West Bank), primarily in areas that already had large Christian populations, such as east Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah. Others settled in Amman and Madaba on the east side of the Jordan River. Many of those fleeing from Haifa settled in Lebanon. 252 Quite a few Christians stayed behind in the newly formed Israeli state, though usually only because they had had no choice, having been surrounded by Israeli forces during the war. Thus there remained a strong Christian presence in Nazareth and in parts of the Galilee. 253 In all, it can hardly be said that Christians suffered any less than Muslims as a result of the war. Nonetheless, the disillusionment felt in its aftermath saw Christians accused of having aided the Western ‘imperialist’ powers in establishing the state of Israel. 254 In other cases, resentment was felt over the fact that Christian refugees tended to be absorbed into the larger existing populations much faster than Muslim ones. 255 It was later maintained that those Christians who ended up in Israel adjusted too easily to their new circumstances. Even until now, among Israeli-Arabs, Christians are generally seen as being more moderate, and in fact, they have been known in some cases to volunteer to serve in the


252 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, pp 67-68.

253 Ibid, p. 69.

254 Ibid, p. 211.

255 This was particularly the case in Lebanon. Ibid, p. 68.
Israeli army. At the same time, many Christians, particularly from the Orthodox and Protestant Anglican communities, have continued to act on behalf of the nationalist cause, even in some cases, taking part in militant activities. It would seem then that question of where Christians fall within the framework of Arab national identity remains a difficult one to resolve.

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257 Betts, Christians in the Arab East, pp 67-68.
Conclusion

In examining Muslim-Christian relations in Palestine during the Mandate period, I have focused on two factors. Firstly, I have examined what was an existing tension between two different conceptions of Arab national identity—the first defined primarily in secular terms and based on a shared history, culture and language; the latter, defined primarily in Islamic terms as an extension of the umma, or community of believers. Speaking in general terms, the former largely reflected the perspective of Christian Arabs and the latter, Muslim ones. During the early part of the Mandate, both Christians and Muslims found it quite easy to avoid confronting what were fundamental differences in their respective conceptions of Arab national identity. In many respects, this reflected the fact that the nationalist movement in Palestine had, from its start, defined itself first and foremost by its opposition to Zionism.

The second factor was the internal struggle within the Arab leadership for political control of the nationalist movement, between its more extremist faction (centred around Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī), and its more moderate one (the Opposition). The former, particularly as represented by Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī—the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Supreme Muslim Council, religiously derived titles both—tended to emphasize the Islamic character of Palestine and of the nationalist movement. In addition to radicalising the movement by appealing to religious sentiment, such emphasis also served to enhance Hajj Amīn’s status. Through him, the nationalist cause was redefined as a matter of defending the country’s Muslim holy sites, in particular, the Haram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem. Not unrelated was the growing struggle between the traditional leadership—of which both Hajj Amīn and the moderate faction were a part—and what was a growing militant element within the larger population, made up primarily of second-rank notables, a growing professional class, and newly educated Muslim youth. It was against this backdrop that Palestine’s Christian Arabs sought to define for themselves a role, not only with respect to the nationalist movement, but likewise, in shaping Arab national identity.
It is perhaps useful here to briefly recap the argument set down in the thesis. Thus, it was noted that during the early part of the Mandate, the nationalist movement was indeed marked by a high degree of solidarity between Palestine’s Muslim and Christian Arabs, most notably as represented by the various Muslim-Christian Associations (MCAs)—and by extension, the Arab Executive—which at the start constituted the movement’s leadership. Significantly, the organisational structure of the nationalist movement was also reflective of the traditional political hierarchy. Christians were particularly well represented in the MCAs, in numbers greater than their percentage of the overall population warranted, and indeed, during the early going, they were arguably at the forefront of the nationalist struggle, something which reflected the fact that initially, Christians were more vehement than Muslims in their opposition to Zionism, both as the community most directly threatened by it economically, and because of what were strong anti-Semitic tendencies.

In addition to the struggle within the traditional leadership was that between the traditional leadership as a whole and what was a growing militant element within the population at large. By the late-1920s, many of Palestine’s Arabs had become frustrated with the traditional leadership’s inability to achieve nationalist goals. A large number of these were newly educated Muslim youth, who, together with members of the professional class and certain elements within the notable class (that is, second-rank notables), would become increasingly politically active during the early-1930s. Almost all advocated a *salaifi* Arab nationalism that stressed the relationship between Arab identity and Islam. Much of the dissatisfaction felt by newly educated Muslim youth during this period manifested itself in a growing belief that Christians were faring much better under the Mandate than Muslims, particularly with respect to government employment. Feelings of resentment were further exacerbated when, in 1928, the International Missionary Council held a conference in Jerusalem; while very few local Christians attended, they were not spared the resulting Muslim outrage.

As the nationalist movement became more radical, it also became more Islamic. A number of factors underlay this development, one of which related specifically to
changes then taking place with respect to the peasantry. Over the course of the Mandate, large numbers of peasants migrated to the cities and larger towns in search of employment. Once there, they often became affiliated with local religious institutions, not only mosques, but also socio-religious organisations such as the YMMA. Associated with both were often religious reformers who preached a strong brand of Islamic orthodoxy. Many were also strongly nationalistic, and saw the reform of Islam as a necessary precondition to the achievement of nationalist goals. A typical example of such a reformer, and one examined more closely in the thesis, was Sheikh 'Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām.

The strong appeal such individuals had among the peasantry was predicated by certain changes that had taken place the previous century in how peasants conceived of their religious identity. Over the course of the nineteenth century, religious practice among the peasantry had become more formalised and more closely tied to Islamic institutions. Related to this, the peasantry had become more self-conscious of their Islamic identity in a manner radically different from the way in which they had conceived of it previously. During the greater part of the Ottoman period, being Muslim had meant first and foremost being part of the mainstream society; what was considered acceptable 'Islamic’ behaviour reflected more social norms—often inclusive of folk practices and rural customs—than sanctioned practice. Muslims were now, however, becoming more aware of themselves as constituting a community among others; as such, it became more necessary to consider what being a Muslim actually meant. It is an important contention of this thesis that, while several factors may have underlay this development, a particularly important one was that encompassing the changes wrought by the Tanzimat reforms and increased European economic penetration.

The Tanzimat reforms undermined the traditional basis of notable-peasant relations. Through the beginning of the nineteenth century, the authority of the notable class (inclusive of the rural elite) had in large part been defined through their collective role as mediators between formal Islamic institutions and the peasantry. The latter rarely took recourse to such institutions, relying rather on the notables to resolve disputes and
provide rudimentary religious services and instruction. Correspondingly, the ability of notables to exercise authority was dependent in no small part on the willingness of the peasantry to accept that authority as legitimate. This ensured that the peasantry had at least some leverage in their dealings with members of the notable class. With the Tanzimat reforms, however, the basis of notable authority became wedded to newly created administrative institutions. As a result, notables no longer needed to worry about whether the peasantry accepted their authority as being legitimate or not. Additionally, the notable class began to use its administrative-based authority as a means of exploiting the peasantry. Increasingly, peasants found themselves tied to Islamic judiciary institutions, either through formal contracts or by virtue of having to take recourse to the Islamic courts in order to combat the exploitative practices of the notables. Combined with other changes then taking place, this had the effect of formalising the Islamic religious practice of the peasantry.

The formalisation of Islamic practice saw a corresponding formalisation of Islamic identity; whereas previously religious identity had been understood primarily as an inherent aspect of a traditional mode of living—one defined more by custom than legalism—it now took on a new dimension; it was an identity less defined by practice and more by ideal, an Islam defined less by tradition and more in connection with its institutions. Importantly, it provided the basis of a definable shared Islamic identity. As such, it was an identity more easily appropriated by leaders of a certain religious qualification—individuals like Sheikh 'Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām for example, whose strong appeal among the peasantry was based in no small part on his reputation as a pious and learned Muslim. It was also an identity that corresponded well with the salafi-Arab nationalism favoured by those members of the professional class, newly-educated Muslim youth and second-rank notables inclined toward radicalism.

Particularly during the latter part of the Mandate, the nationalist movement underwent a process of Islamisation, something which first became overtly manifest with the Wailing Wall riots of August 1929, the immediate cause of which was, without doubt, religious. All of the Arabs who took part in the riots were Muslims, most being motivated by a
belief that the Zionists had designs on the Muslim holy sites. Hajj Amīn al-Husaynī was quick to capitalise on the religious passions aroused by the incident, first and foremost by seeking to recast the nationalist cause in terms as Islamic as possible. The culmination of this effort was the World Islamic Conference, held in December 1931, of which he was the principal sponsor. Through the Conference, Hajj Amīn sought to redefine the Palestinian national cause as an Islamic cause—that is, as a matter of defending the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. The World Islamic Conference marked a turning point for Christian Arabs. It was now Muslims who were entirely setting the political agenda, and Christians were increasingly finding themselves little more than surrogates to Muslim nationalist leaders. The emphasis given Islam during the Great Revolt of 1936-1939 saw Christian Arabs almost completely marginalized; very few took an active part in the Revolt, and it was not uncommon that they were accused of being disloyal to the nationalist cause. By the end of the Mandate, Christians were still active in the nationalist movement, though in many respects, largely only by sufferance.

The relationship between Arab identity and Islam

The extent of Christian involvement in the nationalist movement during this period might be taken as constituting a measure of to what degree Christians were able to participate in shaping—likewise, share in—Arab national identity. As discussed in the thesis, the turn-of-the-century saw the conception of what were essentially two very different models of Arab national identity—the one largely a secular model based on a shared language, culture and historical legacy; the other (that is, the salafi model), based primarily on the special relationship between the Arabs and Islam. Given the eventual marginalization of Christians with respect to the nationalist movement and the outcome of the political rivalry between the Husaynī faction and the more moderate Opposition, it seems reasonable to maintain that it was the latter model that prevailed in the end. In any event, this is certainly my contention. A fair question to ask then might be if such an outcome was indeed inevitable. While it is difficult to be counter-factual on this point, consideration of two factors in particular might be suggestive as to a possible answer.
Significantly, both models emphasised the special role of the Arabic language in defining the basis of Arab national identity. Problematic from the point-of-view of secular nationalists, however, is the fact that Arabic is the language of the Qur'an—hence, as noted in the introduction, what was often a strong resistance to allowing dialects to influence its development or use. The one exception has been in connection with the development of more regionally specific identities (Egypt and Lebanon, for example), and it is worth noting that such exercises have often reflected, at least in part, a conscious attempt to define a national identity as something apart from Islam. This might be contrasted with the situation pertaining to European nationalist movements. Whereas there, the formulation of standard vernacular languages had originally been part of an exercise set against the holy language of Scripture (that is, Latin), in the case of Arab nationalism, its standardisation actually embraced it (that is, the holy language of Islam). In the European case, the simple fact of having translated Scripture into the vernacular was significant in and of itself. Although constituting a phenomenon predating nationalism, it served to divorce religious identity from the universal church in Rome, and thus diminish the role of religion as a whole in shaping national identity. Almost the exact reverse is true in the Arab case. Here, the language defining national identity was also the language of Scripture. Arguably then, its emphasis could only serve to enhance the role of religion—in this case, Islam—as a defining aspect of that identity.

Another factor we might consider here is the greater emphasise given ‘Islamic culture’ as an identity marker, beginning in the 1930s—that is, as something evident of an ‘Islamic’ identity standing apart from Islam, the religion, and as such, more inclusive of non-Muslims. As discussed in the thesis, it was certainly a model many Christian Arab intellectuals supported at the time. Some historians have suggested that Christian Arab

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3 That is, in connection with the Reformation.
nationalists had always accepted the idea of Arab identity as somehow being inherently Islamic. I would dispute this contention, holding rather that, while Christians had always recognised the need to concede Islam as constituting a significant part of a shared Arab heritage, they had from the beginning resisted the idea that it should somehow define the core of what constituted Arab national identity. One might characterise their attitude towards Islam and its relationship to Arab national identity as one of ‘conceding the minimum possible.’ Nonetheless, over time, they were increasingly compelled to accept an ever more enlarged role for Islam as one of its defining components.

One might ask then whether it is possible to speak of ‘Islamic culture’ (considered here as the basis of Arab national identity) as something apart from Islam. Regardless of how intellectuals may have sought to define the relationship between Islam and Arab identity, there remains the question of how most Muslims actually saw it. Arguably, there was a certain inevitability concerning the centrality of Islam to Arab national identity. In trying to determine whether indeed this was the case, we might begin by considering the situation of Palestinian Christian Arabs more recently—more specifically, how they have come to define their position in relationship to the Palestinian nationalist movement. Telling perhaps in this respect is an article published not too long ago by a Palestinian Christian Arab from Jaffa, one André Élias Mazawi of Jaffa, entitled “Palestinian Local Theology and the Issue of Islamo-Christian Dialogue.” The article appeared in 1993, at the time of the First Intifāda.

Notably, whereas previously, Christian Arabs had once sought to define a shared identity on the basis of Arab nationalism, the author here seeks to do so on the basis of Islam,6 on

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5 See, for instance, Zeine N. Zeine, The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East (New York: Caravan Books, 1958 [reprinted 1973]), p. 34.

6 Here clearly referring to ‘Islam’ the religion, as opposed to ‘Islam’ the civilisation.
the one hand, by trying to "produce some theological account of the meaning, and relevance, of [the] Islamic presence (wajūd) and its specific witness (shahāda) for the Palestinian Christian," and on the other, by justifying the faith of the Christian Palestinian Arab, through the formulation of a 'local church' theology, such that it should be politically relevant to the nationalist struggle. As he expresses it, Palestinian church leaders should

expand the ecumenic definition of 'local church' to overlap with the ethnico-national group to which Christians are affiliated, namely, all Palestinians, whether Christians or Muslims. Thus the notion 'local church' henceforth connotatively meant a 'Palestinian church' firmly rooted in a national spirit (wataniyya).

While the author acknowledges that some might criticise such an exercise as leading to "the 'islamization' of Palestinian Christian theology and its 'emptying' from its unique world-perspective," he justifies it by noting that the Palestinian Christian cannot detach himself from his ethnico-national identity, his heritage and his social life. In addition, he cannot disregard the fact that the socio-cultural environment in which he lives is embedded with Islamic values and traditions to a very large extent.

8 Ibid, pp. 104-105.
9 Ibid, p. 104.
11 Ibid, p. 96.
More to the point perhaps, the author indicates that, among its many functions, such a theology would serve "as a mechanism concerned with the dissipation of doubts concerning Christian national loyalty." It is interesting to note that, concurrently, there were some Christians who felt they might best safeguard their interests by constituting themselves as a community apart from Muslim Arabs. Thus, the year before the publication of this article, some of the Christian members of the Israeli Arab Democratic Party called for the establishment of a 'Christian Democratic Party' in response to the former's perceived Islamisation. It would seem that questions concerning the nature of the relationship between Arab identity and Islam and the place of Christians with respect to both have yet to find a satisfactory resolution.

Which brings us back to the question of whether it was inevitable that Arab national identity should become somehow 'Islam'-based. Smith, particularly in his book The Ethnic Origins of Nations (1986), argues strongly that modern national identities have deep roots in pre-modem forms of communal self-identification; thus, we might expect a certain degree of continuity to exist between pre-modem and modern modes of identity. Other historians dealing with the phenomenon of nationalism have recognised this, though have dealt with the question of continuity in different ways. Hobsbawm, for example, has suggested that proto-national modes of identity function as a kind of toolkit from which modern political actors (and nationalists) are able to draw upon as proves expedient relative to existing circumstances. By contrast, Smith, sees myth-symbol complexes and ethno-histories not simply as resources to be used, but as cultural

12 Ibid, p. 112.


structures delimiting the scope for this kind of ideological activity. If we take Hobsbawm's model as our starting point, it might well be argued that the manner in which Arab identity came to formulated was hardly written in stone; that under a different set of circumstances, a very different kind of relationship might have developed between Islam and Arab identity. Conversely, Smith's argument suggests that there was a certain inevitability regarding how things turned out.

One can find evidence to support both views. As noted above, salafi Arabism was almost from the start, an anti-establishment movement, and it is arguably the case that there existed some support, at least during the early part of the Mandate, for European-style liberalism. As Palestine's Arabs (likewise, those in Syria and Iraq) became disillusioned with the Western powers in connection with their continuing status as mandates, however, they began to reject the ideologies and value-systems associated with them. As such, many turned to salafi Arabism, much as their counterparts a generation earlier had done in expressing their opposition to Ottomanism and the CUP. As historians like Isaiah Berlin and Smith have noted, nationalism has often been adopted as an expression of opposition against the existing order, particularly when the latter might easily be characterised as foreign and imposed, and the former, as reflecting the indigenous culture and thus, as something entirely apart from the oppressive power. In the case of mandatory Palestine then, the rising middle class was (so it is argued) attracted to a cultural nationalism, one based on a traditional Islamic model; this was set in opposition to a nationalism based on liberalism, which, though inherently more inclusive of non-Muslims, unfortunately bore too strong an association with British rule. The adoption of an Islam-based model of nationalism might thus be seen as constituting an expression of opposition.


Taking this perspective, one might well wonder if things would have turned out differently in the event that Britain had pursued policies other than the ones it did—for instance, if Britain had not lent its support to the Zionist movement, or had attempted to implement the terms of the Mandate calling for the eventual establishment of an independent Palestine within a reasonable timeframe. In the end, it is hard to be counterfactual, though Cottam’s consideration of the case of Iran—wherein he contends that a liberal model of secular national identity inclusive of a broad range of ethnicities and religious groups might well have succeeded were it not for the CIA-inspired coup that saw Musaddiq thrown from power and a royal dictatorship imposed in his place—is surely suggestive in this respect.

We might conclude by considering some areas of possible future research. In considering the relationship between Islam and Arab national identity, it would, I believe, be worthwhile to re-examine Christian attitudes as they evolved over time. In much of the relevant literature, the Christian mind-set around this question has tended to be discussed as something relatively static and with little consideration of the manner in which it might have changed over time; likewise, the extent to which such changes might have reflected developments within the nationalist discourse of Muslim Arabs. Zeine and Hourani are something of an exception in this respect, but a good deal more could be done, and a systematic examination along these lines might prove insightful.

Another area for possible future research relates to what constitutes a key component of my thesis—namely, the impact the Tanzimat reforms had on notable-peasant relations,

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18 His basic contention being that nationalist leaders such as Musaddiq enjoyed a certain degree of nationalist legitimacy and thus were able to act as a mobilizing agent among those newly politicised in favour of secular nationalism. His overthrow created an opening which clerical leaders were well suited to fill, particularly given the Shah’s lack of nationalist legitimacy and the fact that most of those newly politicised came from the urban lower and lower-middle classes, and thus tended to be religious. Richard Cottam, “Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Iran and Dr Muhammad Musaddiq,” in *Iranian Nationalism and Oil*, eds., James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 23-47.
and, correspondingly, on the formalisation of 'Islamic' identity among the peasantry. Underlying my argument is the not entirely unfounded assumption that relations between the notable class and the peasantry were more equitable prior to the period of reform. It appears to me that there is something of a dearth of scholarly works dealing with the situation in Palestine and Syria just prior to the nineteenth century. It might be added that too often scholars dealing with the nineteenth century have seemingly taken for granted that the exploitative nature of notable-peasant relations so characteristic of that period in fact pre-dated it; and this, in spite of the fact that what circumstantial evidence there is seems to suggest that earlier, notables exhibited a very limited amount of actual control; equally, that both their authority and that of the country sheikhs was in many respects dependent on its tacit acceptance by those over whom it was exercised.

Finally, assuming the correctness of my contention, I believe a more thorough consideration of the process by which the 'Islamic' identity of the peasantry became formalised is warranted. This might involve, for instance, a closer examination of the pattern of court appearances among the peasantry, something which overall saw a marked rise during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Any other information concerning changes in the religious practices of the peasantry during this period (for instance, related to mosque attendance; the construction of new mosques; practices tied to religious shrines, etc.) might also prove insightful in this respect. Arguably, the special consideration of those groups which come to constitute 'minorities' in the formulation of nationalist identities can prove especially illuminating, not only as far as the study of any particular identity is concerned, but as regards the phenomenon of nationalism itself. In this light, it is my hope that some of the ideas set forth in this thesis might contribute in some small way to a better understanding of both Arab nationalism and nationalism as a whole.
## Appendix

Table A.1. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of population by religion and town/village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subdistrict of Jerusalem</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem (inner)</td>
<td>9,345</td>
<td>5,639</td>
<td>7,262</td>
<td>22,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem (outer)</td>
<td>4,068</td>
<td>28,332</td>
<td>7,437</td>
<td>40,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ain Karim</td>
<td>1,282</td>
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Notes: 1 Taken from Table V. Population by Districts and Subdistricts: Subdistrict of Gaza, p. 8; Table VII. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 14-22; Table IX. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 24-31; Table XI. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 33-41; Tables XIII-XIV. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches, pp. 44-45 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). / 2 Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
Table A.1. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of population by religion and town/village (continued)\textsuperscript{1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
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<th>Christians\textsuperscript{2}</th>
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Notes: 1 Taken from Table V. Population by Districts and Subdistricts: Subdistrict of Gaza, p. 8; Table VII. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 14-22; Table IX. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 24-31; Table XI. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 33-41; Tables XIII-XIV. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches, pp. 44-45 from the 1922 Census in \textit{Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922}, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). 2 Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
Table A.1. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of population by religion and town/village (continued)¹

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<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Christians²</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Notes: ¹ Taken from Table V. Population by Districts and Subdistricts: Subdistrict of Gaza, p. 8; Table VII. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 14-22; Table IX. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 24-31; Table XI. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 33-41; Tables XIII-XIV. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches, pp. 44-45 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). ² Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
Table A.1. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of population by religion and town/village (continued)\(^1\)

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<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
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Notes: 1 Taken from Table V. Population by Districts and Subdistricts: Subdistrict of Gaza, p. 8; Table VII. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 14-22; Table IX. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 24-31; Table XI. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 33-41; Tables XIII-XIV. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches, pp. 44-45 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). /2 Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.

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Table A.1. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of population by religion and town/village (continued)

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<th>Locality</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
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Notes: 1 Taken from Table V. Population by Districts and Subdistricts: Subdistrict of Gaza, p. 8; Table VII. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 14-22; Table IX. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 24-31; Table XI. Population by Districts and Subdistricts, pp. 33-41; Tables XIII-XIV. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches, pp. 44-45 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). / 2 Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
<table>
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Notes: 1 Listed in descending order by population and taken from Table XII. Christian Population of Palestine Showing Members of Different Churches, p. 43 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). 2 Omitting villages with less than ten Christians. 2 Jerusalem-Jaffa Subdistrict.
### Table A.3. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of Christian population by church and town/village

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Notes: 1. Taken from Table XIII-XVI, Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches—Southern District; District of Jerusalem-Jaffa; District of Samaria; Northern District, pp. 44-51 from the 1922 Census in *Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922*, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). 2. Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
Table A.3. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of Christian population by church and town/village (continued)

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Notes: 1. Taken from Table XIII-XVI. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches—Southern District, District of Jerusalem-Jaffa; District of Samaria; Northern District, pp. 44-51 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). 2. Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
Table A.3. All Palestine 1922: breakdown of Christian population by church and town/village (continued)  

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Subdistrict of Tiberias

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Notes: 1 Taken from Table XIII-XVI. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches—Southern District; District of Jerusalem-Jaffa; District of Samaria; Northern District, pp. 44-51 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). / 2 Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
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Notes: ¹ Taken from Table XIII-XVI. Christian Population Showing Members of Different Churches—Southern District; District of Jerusalem-Jaffa; District of Samaria; Northern District, pp. 44-51 from the 1922 Census in Reports and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Taken on the 23rd of October, 1922, compiled by J.B. Barron, Superintendent of the Census (London, 1922). ² Omitting villages with less than ten Christians.
Table A.4. The process of the development of schools
Since the establishment of the Civil Administration

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Notes: 1 Taken from Colonial No. 12, Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government on the Administration Under Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1924, London, HMSO, 1925, p. 32. 2 The numbers of schools include training colleges and secondary sections of elementary schools.
Table A.5. Palestine Government employees by religion for the period 1920-1921

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First-Hand Accounts


**Others**


Press

Filastīn
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Al-Jami‘ah al-Islāmiyyah
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**Unpublished**


