



The Husayni* Family Faces New Challenges: Tanzimat, Young Turks, the Europeans and Zionism, 1840-1922

Part II

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Preface

In the final installment of his two-part article, historian Ilan Pappe continues his exploration of the "politics of notables" in Jerusalem through tracing the fortunes of the influential Al Husayni family through the Tanzimat period to the immediate aftermath of World War I. Pappe's main argument is that the "politics of notables" served the family well in confronting dramatic upheavals and even the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire; the notables' code of adaptation and mediation between the local

* In this piece the standard transliteration is used, rather than the more common spelling of "Husseini".

community and the Ottoman Empire provided both legitimacy and power. However, as he notes in his introduction to Part One, this code "was not sufficient in the face of Zionism." In Part One, Pappe delineates the family's role in local conflicts in the nineteenth century, such as the long-standing Qais-Yamani rivalry, in the politics of empire and its coveted appointments, and in the navigation of the problems and conflicts posed by the rising power of the European Consuls in Jerusalem, particularly the interventionist British Consul, James Finn. Part Two opens with the impact of the Ottoman reforms on the Husayni fortunes and strategies and ends with the Husaynis - and the rest of Palestinian society - struggling to come to grips with the Zionist movement.

The Tanzimat's Impact on the Family's Fortunes

The Ottoman reforms were in essence a centralizing effort, creating in Palestine new power centers. This transformation did not bypass the Husaynis. Until the Crimean War the family largely dominated the three traditional power bases: *Mashyachat al Haram* (the Guardian of the Haram), *Niqabat al-Ashraf* (head of the Prophet's family), and the *Mufti* (head of the committee for religious research and rulings). As a result of the Tanzimat, a new bastion had to be conquered: that of the *Baladiya*, the town council. This was done quite successfully. The mayoralty fortified the family's dominance in local politics in Jerusalem from the 1860s through the Mandatory period. I stress this continuity with the family's position in the Mandatory period in order to refute the common historiographical assumption, put forward

mainly by Israeli orientalists, that the British gave the Husaynis their dominant role in local politics. The British in theory had the power to rob the Husaynis of that role, but in fact decided to leave the balance of power in the city intact.

The municipality in Jerusalem was established in 1863 as part of the overall effort of the Sultan, 'Abd al-Aziz the Second, to build a modern centralized state on the French model. For most of the time until the outbreak of the First World War, the Husaynis added this position to their other power bases. However, in order to gain this position, previous assets such as noble genealogy, religious piety and good connections in Istanbul were not enough. There was a need to secure the goodwill of electors, who in their turn chose the mayor. Some of the electors were Jews, a reality that generated interesting and intricate relationships between Jews and the family.

The other main contenders for this position were the Khalidis. And at times, but not usually, they had the upper hand. Such was the case in 1898, when the Khalidis took the post with the help of the Jewish vote. This was a package deal and when the post was won, an array of positions could be secured to many junior members of the triumphant family. The competition according to some evidence was not too harsh and quite fair. Haim Gerber remarks, quite convincingly, that as this was the beginning of a new era, optimism and openness were the order of the day.¹

¹ Haim Gerber, "A New Look at the Tanzimat: The Case of the Province of Jerusalem." in D. Kushner (ed.), *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1986), pp. 41-42.

The Husaynis' control over the municipality became more continuous during the first decade of the twentieth century. The last mayor of Jerusalem before the First World War was Husayn Salim al-Husayni, who inherited the mayoralty from his father in 1910. His step-brothers, 'Abd al-Salih and Sa'id, held the posts in the years 1900 to 1906. Sa'id was also elected as a representative to the Ottoman parliament and hence personified the way that new positions emerging in the Tanzimat period were added to the traditional power bases of the family.

The successful adaptation of the family to the new political reality did not mean that it sided with the Tanzimat. The family is recorded as opposing the process in principle, unlike other families such as the Khalidis who supported the reforms and hence were granted a dominant role by the authorities in the power bases of the city in the 1840s and early 1850s. As long as the Husaynis' strong ties with the rebellious Abu Ghosh clan were intact in this period, the family's antagonistic attitude eroded their position in the city and they lost positions such as the *Mufti* and the *Mashyachat al-Haram*.

But the lean years were soon over and the family's fortunes improved again in the aftermath of the Crimean War. The first indication was in 1856 when the Husaynis returned to the *Ifta* (the committee headed by the Mufti). The Mufti Fadhal 'Abdullah Jarallah died and was replaced by Mustafa al-Husayni, the grandfather of Haj Amin. The shift in their fortunes was made possible due to the good relationship cultivated with the Ottoman governor of Damascus and probably more importantly, the strong ties the family had with the Jarallahs. Mustafa al-Husayni remained in office until 1893 and his son,

Shaykh Taher, replaced him. Mustafa's son from his first wife Mahbuba, Kamil, replaced his father in 1908, and Amin, his son from his second wife, Zainab, became the grand Mufti after the British occupation in 1921.

The pragmatism imbedded in the "politics of notables" smoothed the family's adaptation to the major feature of the Tanzimat - centralization - that seemed to threaten the positions of Arab notables all over the empire. Antagonism was turned into acquiescence and eventually support for the new era and its spirit. We will note a similar tendency during the Young Turk's time and even the first years of the Mandate, tendencies that did not persevere due to the Young Turks' Turkification policy and the pro-Zionist stance of the Mandatory powers.

Benefits of Centralization: The Sanjaq of Jerusalem

Once the Husaynis dissociated themselves from the rural lords around them, they discovered the benefits of a tighter regime. Centralization did not only clip the wings of the rural lords, it also crippled the power of the regional capital, Damascus. The decline in Damascus' fortunes had benefited to a large extent those living in Jerusalem. More concretely, the administrative reforms had upgraded the status of the city. It became the center of an autonomous *Sanjaq* in 1872. Abu Ghosh and the other *Mashyachat* of the mountains were no longer a credible social or political force when the *Sanjaq* was created. The urban families were the only members of the local elite to partake in the enlarged political sphere offered by Ottoman reforms.

The creation of the autonomous *Sanjaq* was

the peak of the centralization effort, rather than the result of the European pressure on Istanbul, as is sometimes attributed. As Butros Abu Maneh rightly noted:

*New challenges facing the Ottoman period during this century aroused the need for the reinforcement of Ottoman rule in the area. Consequently the sanjaks [sic] of Jerusalem and Gaza acquired a renewed importance for the Ottoman authorities.*²

These new challenges were primarily the Wahabis's control of Mecca and Medina, wresting the holiest cities from the Sultan's hand; the need to counterbalance them dictated increasing the religious importance of Jerusalem.

The new *Sanjaq* transformed Palestine into a more well-defined geo-political unit; its former ecclesiastical boundaries crystallized into political borders. The road from this geopolitical event into a deeper sense of self-determination among the notables, such as the Husaynis, passed through another catalytic event, which acted to exclude Palestinians from the Empire. This event was the Young Turk's revolution.

Coping with the New World of the Young Turks: From the Politics of Notables to the Politics of Nationalism

The Husaynis were quite amazing in the way they adapted to the new reality created by the 1908 coup. This was partly due to the

fact that for them it was indeed a coup and not a revolution, as it would seem to the historian many years later. From Jerusalem, the despotism of the new rulers of Istanbul was neither different - nor better - than that of the Hamidian regime. The difference was that the new despotism was challenged by a modern response: Arab nationalism. In order to survive as a leading socio-political force in the city and in the new *Sanjaq*, the family had to grasp the new ideology and become a principal vehicle for its promotion.

The Young Turk revolution went through two major phases in its relationship with the Arab national movement. The first phase, up to 1912, was quite positive. Jerusalem responded, from above and below, with what seemed to be genuine expressions of approval for the new regime as well as a sincere joy at the fall of the Hamidian police state. The popular demonstrations in the streets of Jerusalem during the first months of the revolution were partly orchestrated and partly spontaneous. Husaynis who were teenagers at the time remember the period as one in which school children were recruited to participate in ceremonies welcoming the new regime. Tawfiq and Hilmi, the sons of Musa Qazim, were recruited to one such street theater, which celebrated the new dawn.³

The elders of the family held the most prominent positions in the city and therefore could not shun a central role on the local stage. It is difficult in hindsight to reconstruct their basic attitudes towards the new rulers.

² Butrus Abu Maneh, "The Rise of the Sanjak of Jerusalem in the Late Nineteenth Century" in Gabriel Ben Dor (ed.), *The Palestinians and the Conflict* (Haifa: Haifa University, 1982), p. 21.

³ Izzat Tanus, *al-Filastiniyyun: Madi Majid wa-Mustaqbal Bahir* (The Palestinians: A Noble Past and A Glorious Future), (Beirut: PLO 1982), p. 24 and Muhammad Izzat Darwazah, *Mudhakirat wa-Tsjilat* (Memoirs and Notes), (Damascus: 1984), Vol. 1, p. 174.

They could have felt offended when they learned that the new government chose Jaffa as the venue for its official inauguration in Palestine, or they could have felt relief, not to be immediately recruited by the new administration, given their very solid and loyal relationship with the Ottoman emperors. In any case it was up to Jerusalem's mayor, Salim al-Husayni, to conduct the official ceremonies, or *Baya'* for the secular regime. His first act was to convene the city's officials and notables and address them, while standing in front of heavy framed picture with the logo "The Committee of Union and Progress," the name chosen by the Young Turks for the only legitimate party in the Empire. The family thus went through the motions and one can only guess their deeper feeling about the end of more than four hundreds years of Ottoman rule - or indeed whether they perceived this dramatic conclusion of an historical era.⁴

Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood? The Fate of Shuqri Al Husayni

We can read the local newspapers read by the Husaynis at the time. These papers were full of praise for the coup and expressed hopes for a better life under the new rulers. The press did not, however, serve as a debating stage for the notables. But we do know that among the Husaynis there were differences of opinion on how best to approach the new regime. The dissension was between those advocating the adoption of an anti-Turkish version of local nationalism and between

those advising cooperation with the new ruler. Such discord was beyond the common debates typical to the "politics of notables." These were by all accounts most difficult times for the family.

Ten days after the coup took place, one section of the Husaynis sided with the revolution. It was led by Shuqri al-Husayni, the brother of Ismail, the official head of the family and an official of the highest rank accessible to an Arab in the Ottoman administration. Shuqri was also a senior official. He was the head accountant in the Ministry of Education in Istanbul for a long period (1888-1907) and held the prestigious title of Pasha. It was Shuqri who directed the pro-revolutionary festivities in the city. As Khalil al-Sakakini noted in his diary, these festivities were the first ever Muslim-Christian demonstrations of solidarity in the city and thus, unwittingly, the pro-Turkish feelings helped to cement Arab nationalism.

This paradoxical development was manifested in another activity of Shuqri. He was one of the founding fathers of an Arab-Ottoman solidarity group. This group would become, again inadvertently, the first national organization in Jerusalem daring to oppose Turkish rule. Although Shuqri himself remained loyal to the Young Turks and was not easily "Arabized," he nonetheless died an Arab martyr. He finally came out openly against the new regime when it declared its intention to Turkify the Arab provinces. Against this initiative, Shuqri positioned himself as an Ottoman-Arab, which was enough for the Turks to charge him with treason. He would have been executed, had he not died due to the inhuman way he was treated on the way to his military trial. His convoy stopped for the night in Hamah, on

⁴ Walid al-Khalidi, *Qabl al-Shitah, al-Tarikh al-Musawar lil Sh'ab al-Filastini, 1876-1948* (Before the Diaspora: A Pictorial History of the Palestinian People), (Beirut: PLO 1987), picture no. 7.

the way to Aleppo, but he never made it to the morning after.⁵

Arab historiography, like any other national historiography, tends to nationalize, indiscriminately in Benedict Anderson's words, every event in the past. Thus, the Arab-Ottoman solidarity group has been appropriated, as were Shuqri's deeds, as precursors of Arab nationalism. The Arab-Ottoman group was in fact an embryo or proto-national formation, but its founder wished it be something else.⁶ For Shuqri, it was a channel for integrating the family and the society into the new political order; indeed, the solidarity group was soon called the party of Arab-Ottoman brotherhood and was in effect a branch of the ruling party, the Committee of Union and Progress. Some argue that "Ottoman" was added to the union's title out of fear of the Young Turks' wrath, and yet one may accept that Shuqri and his friends were genuinely taken by the new revolutionary ideas. It was probably, as the union's platform stated, a sincere effort to preserve Arab culture within the political Turkish structure. The union's platform was concise and simple: it accepted the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, it respected the Empire's territorial integrity, it called for the improvement of economic and social conditions in the Arab provinces on an equal basis with the rest of the Empire's other peoples and demanded further extension of Arabic education in Arabic those areas.⁷

In fact, in 1908, Shuqri al-Husayni's major concern was the fate of the Empire, not that of Palestine. He spent much of the time in organizing petitions and demonstration in Jerusalem, responding to news of the declining fortunes of the Empire in the Balkans. Thus, for instance, the population of Jerusalem was asked to send petitions against the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria. Shuqri instigated a boycott of the fashionable Tarbush, of Austrian make, as part of this show of discontent (the tarbush, a red felt cap with a silk tassel, was most popular among the notables.)⁸

For one brief moment in the winter of 1908, it seemed as if Shuqri al-Husayni succeeded in stirring the family to a co-operative course with the new regime and adaptation to the new world created by the "Young Turks." Shuqri prodded the family to participate in parliamentary life, even under the new regime. A month after the suspended constitution of 1876 was readopted, Istanbul issued new orders about an election campaign for a new parliament (one representative for each *Mutasarifiyya* with 50,000 inhabitants). This meant that the *Sanjaq* of Jerusalem was offered three seats. Every man above 25 voted for a group of electors who in turn chose the three delegates. Ruhi al-Nashashibi, was elected, along with two Husaynis (Sa'id and Salim) who rotated the seat, and a representative of Jaffa from the al-Dajani family.

⁵ Muhammad Al-Dabagh, *Biladuna*, Vol. 10, part 2, *ibid*, pp. 369-370.

⁶ Ajaj Nuhayd, "Rajul min Filastin: Khalil Sakakini" (A Man from Palestine: Khalil Sakakini), *Filastin*, 12 July 1955.

⁷ Amin Sa'id, *al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra* (The Great Arab Revolt), (Cairo, no date and no publishing house), Vol. 1, pp. 7-8.

⁸ Darwazah, *ibid*, p. 174.

Enlisting Ismail and the Erasure of "Ottoman"

Shuqri succeeded in enlisting the support of the head of the family, Ismail al-Husayni to the Arab-Ottoman initiative. This was not an easy task, given Ismail's reputation as one of the most loyal notables to the Hamidian regime. He must have felt less confident than his brother. The new regime in Istanbul started a purge against all those who were suspect of having been the last Sultan's confidantes and agents. The new regime asserted that quite a few of the Palestine notables had been in a contact with the "Hafiye," the Sultan's secret police. According to Izzat Darwaze's memoirs, it were eventually the notables of Nablus who were the principal suspects, and not those of Jerusalem.⁹ When these apprehensions were allayed, Ismail gave his blessing to the new organization.

What induced Ismail was a simultaneous consent by his friends and one of the most important dignitaries in the city, Ghalib al-Khalidi, to join his initiative. Ghalib had a special status as he had been the person who informed the people of Jerusalem about the revolution. It was expected that Rauf Pasha, the governor, would be the one to announce the event, but his antagonistic relationship with the notables led him to assume erroneously that such a move would lead to a rebellious mood among the city's notables. Ghalib was a distinguished member of the regional court and a member in the educational council, whose head was Ismail.¹⁰

But Shuqri, Ghalib and Ismail were soon to find out that their admiration for the idea of Arab-Ottomanism was not reciprocated by the government of Istanbul. Domestic unrest, instigated by followers of the former sultan and several successive national uprisings led to a firm Turkification policy by the three people who took over the leadership from the early, more liberal, coalition of Young Turks. Arab intellectuals, including members of the Arab-Ottoman solidarity groups now had to make a choice. On August 23, 1909 the Turkish government issued a decree prohibiting the establishment of political groups based on ethnic or national identity or carrying a name to such an effect. The term Ottoman was also erased and replaced by the only valid term allowed: Turkish. Many Arab activists decided to choose Arab identity and organized secretly in national societies, which would be the basis for the development of the pan-Arabist national idea.

Teachers of Arab Nationalism: Sakakini, Nahleh and Baidas

But it took more than an anti-Arab policy by the Young Turks, or youthful enthusiasm, to breathe life into the embryonic national movement. It is commonplace, ever since Antonious published his monumental work, to attribute the role of modernization agents to the American missionaries, who transmitted the concept of modern nationalism from its birthplace in America to the Arab world. This is probably still valid as a theory today. However, in the case of the young generation of the Husaynis, it was Arab Christian teachers who in fact "nationalized" the family. Three names come to mind in particular: Khalil al-Sakakini,

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 171.

¹⁰ Khalil al-Sakakini, *Kadha Ana Ya Dunya* (Such am I, Oh world), (Beirut: PLO 1984), entry from 12 November 1908.

Zureik Nahleh and Khalil Baidas. These three men would influence a whole generation of young Muslims and Christians in Palestine. The most prominent among them was the Lebanese Nahleh, an Anglican who directed the English College on Mt. Zion and educated the Husaynis from the end of the Hamidian period. He had a colloquium for modern Arabic in his house and is rightly considered as one of the greatest scholars of the Arabic language in the 20th century.

A particular bond was struck with al-Sakakini, who was himself a student of Nahleh.¹¹ After the revolution of 1908, al-Sakakini opened the National Constitutional School in which he tried to cultivate Arabic language and heritage. He worked intensively and enthusiastically for the Orthodox church, but also entertained wider loyalties to the idea of a Palestinian nation.

After the revolution, the family ties with these three teachers strengthened. Nahleh and al-Sakakini were particularly respectful of the mayor Salim al-Husayni, and taught all his children.¹² It was this triumvirate that in the autumn of 1908 met in a coffee house, owned by the Greek Ansti, to discuss the new concept of a Muslim-Christian association. This occasion would be the basis for Palestinian nationalism in the early years of the British Mandate. The three Christian teachers must have felt that this particular branch of the family, the secular branch in a fashion, was not in line with some of the *Ulama* of Jerusalem, including several Husaynis, who wished to create a national Arab society on a purely Muslim basis.

New Alliances and the Nationalism of Notables

Another component in the development of national consciousness was a transformation of the inter-family relationships in the city. We have already mentioned the close relationship between Ghalib al-Khalidi and Ismail al-Husayni. This indicated new alliances in the city which would form the basis of what one may call the nationalism of notables.

Ever since the appointment of Ghalib to the educational council, under Ismail's chairmanship, the Khalidis and the Husaynis moved closer to each other. These were the two most important families in the city, formerly arch-rivals (for instance the Husaynis led the Yamani faction in the Jerusalem area and the Khalidis, the Qaisi.) The hatchets were buried now; with the past forgotten, a new partnership was formed, which served the two families throughout the Mandatory period.

As important as the two families might have been, their links were not enough to unite them. For a politics of nationalism to develop, a wider coalition of families was needed which accepted some form of hegemony and hierarchy. However, this acceptance was not easy to reach, which is one, but not the only, explanation for the fragility of the Palestinian national movement during the Mandatory years. When the Nashashibis decided to dissent and form their own coalition, the basis of the whole national movement became shakier. The Husaynis on their part never really accepted to be just *primus inter pares* and strove to concentrate the political, and above all the financial power, in the hands of one family. Thus an aspiring family, such as

¹¹ Tanus, *al-Filastiniyyun*, p. 54.

¹² Sakakini, *ibid*, 21 September 1908.

the Nashashibis, could not be induced, apart from the very early stages of the national history, to co-operate with the new coalition.

Regardless, the early seeds of nationalism were planted with relative ease in the Husayni political field; however, as noted previously, not without causing some dissent within the family. It was mainly a generational divide. If Shuqri al-Husayni presented the elders' tendency to go along with the powers to be, his nephew Jamil al-Husayni, represented the younger one.

A New Generation

Jamil, like other members of a younger generation, was in Istanbul as a student when the revolution broke out. Like other Arab students of higher education institutions in Istanbul, he was one of the first to raise the banner of nationalism and challenge the idea of Arab-Ottoman solidarity. The enthusiastic students took it upon themselves to build a network of branches all over the Arab provinces in order to promote the idea of Arab nationalism, or at least foment solidarity against the Turkification policy. The antagonism was not only nationalist, it was democratic, as it based the Arab demands on the demographic majority the Arabs enjoyed in the Empire (roughly two thirds of the overall population).

Jamil was introduced to this new venture by 'Abd al-Karim al-Khalil, an Arab intellectual who had founded in 1909 the secret organization, *al-Fatah*, ("Arab Youth"), a society which acted under the cover of an Arabic literary club in the Turkish capital, the famous *al-Mundata al-Adabi* (the Literary Club). The *Mundata* was conducted as a cultural club where literature and poetry

were discussed and read - an activity allowed by the Turks. Jamil was one of the first members of that club and immediately joined its secret activities. *Al-Fatah* was the first group demanding the liberation of the Arab provinces from the Turkish yoke of occupation. For some reason the secret police was never able to expose their true activity. When Jamil returned to Palestine, he maintained the same structure of public and secret activity.

Sa'id al-Husayni was probably the only one among the middle-aged generation who supported the younger members of the family. According to one testimony it was in his house that the returning young Husaynis met other young notables to discuss their next steps as members of the new nationalist movement.¹³ Sa'id joined the *al-Fatah* group and became an active member in it, poising himself in direct confrontation with the government in Istanbul.

The "politics of notables," however, required a middle ground between opposition and surrender. The good old tactics were best manifested in the conduct of Musa Qazim, another member of the "secular branch" of the family. Musa Qazim had a brilliant and astonishing career in the provincial Turkish administration. He was a *Mutasarif* of Hawaran and later of Muntfiq in Iraq. Up to the outbreak of the First World War, he supported, but not enthusiastically, the positions of Shuqri and Ismail, who belonged to the same branch. It is difficult, however, to describe him as a conservative. Siding with the Young Turks was, in part, siding with development and modernization which could revolutionize the lives of notables such as

¹³ Darwazah, *ibid*, p. 181.

himself. He was more exposed to the *raison d'etre* behind secularization, and in fact was infected by the Young Turks' modernizing zeal. After the war, he embraced fully the nationalist option, but not before. And when he chose that option, he replaced Ismail as head of the family.

Attitudes Towards the West

The opposing views of Sa'id and Shuqri towards Istanbul's policy led them to different views of British involvement in the Middle East and Palestine. Shuqri echoed eagerly the anti-British twist of Egyptian nationalism, particularly the one preached by Mustafa Kamal, who had associated pro-Ottomanism with the struggle against British occupation. Sa'id, on the other hand, was an Anglophile who spoke impeccable English, which he had learned in the American Colony in Jerusalem. He saw the British as potential allies of Arab nationalism, as indeed would many other leading activists in the pan-Arabist movement.

It is quite difficult to reconstruct the attitude of the young Husaynis to the "West." Izzat Tanus, a co-pupil of many of the Husaynis in St. George School, and a young teacher there since 1911, tells candidly in his memoirs that any clear-cut analysis would miss the complexity of that attitude.¹⁴ If education is any yardstick for measuring Western influence, than it would be safe to assert that the youngsters received a "European education." The school curriculum towards the end of the Turkish rule was European and was well received by some of the students. If parental or domestic socialization is a

gauge, then one may, paradoxically, connect positive attitudes with the level of the parents' national consciousness - parents sympathetic to Arab nationalism were also more sympathetic to the West, while the more Ottomanist parents would criticize Europe and its culture. "Europeans" for most of the Husaynis were the consuls in town, and there was very little in the latter's conduct and relationship with the family that inspired confidence in them or in what they represented, be it European policy or culture.

All in all, one wonders how deep was the politicization among the teenagers. Like young men everywhere else then (and now), they were enthusiastically in favor of one particular Western import - football. However, there was one exception, the teenager Muhammed Amin. He did not join the football games and was quite reclusive and kept to himself, reading about politics and religion. Nobody paid any particular attention to this young, somewhat ecstatic, youth. It was only his mother, Zainab, who took a keen interest in the boy's career. When he expressed his wish to pursue a political career in Istanbul, his mother convinced Amin's elder and half-brother, Kamil, to dissuade him from taking this course. Kamil was the Mufti and must have realized that if Amin took a theological course he would be one of the possible candidates to inherit his post after his death. He agreed to direct Amin towards a more religious career. Ironically, religion would turn Amin into a pure politician. Thus, with the brother's blessing, Zainab took her son on a Haj to Mecca in 1913 and then sent him to al-Azhar to study under the auspices of the great Rashid Rida, the spiritual godfather of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, in *Dar al-D'awa*.

¹⁴ Tanus, *ibid*, p. 17.

Amin was sent together with his cousin, Yaqub, to Cairo where he studied theology and Arabic. He had long evenings in Rida's house. He also went to evening classes in Kuliyyat al-Adab in the University of al-Azhar. He was deeply impressed by Rida's call for the integration of Arab nationalism and Islam as the only feasible potent force against the West. However, he also learned in Cairo the complexity of the Western impact on the Arab world. Rida taught the young Amin of the importance of Western technological achievements and political systems. Under Rida's influence, Amin established his first national organization for the sake of Palestine. Together with his roommate, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Alami, he rounded up about twenty Christians and Muslims to arouse the national consciousness against Zionism.¹⁵ The society did not last for long and disintegrated as the war broke out.

Spheres of Influence: Beirut, Jerusalem

Each individual member of the family absorbed and digested the European influence in a different manner with different consequences. Much depended on the age and place in which each member found himself in the dramatic period between the coup of 1908 and the outbreak of the war. The young members of the family made their ways to different centers in the empire where they were exposed to the new Ottoman thought and methods, as well as to Western ideas and customs. In these places, young Husaynis internalized and articulated the new

currents of change and Europeanization, processes that facilitated the relatively calm passage of the family into the new and dramatic phase of the British occupation.

Amin's cousin, Jamal al-Husayni, a leading Palestinian leader in the Mandatory period spent his formative youthful years as a medical student in the Protestant College in Beirut since 1912. In the College, he was exposed not only to medical expertise but also to national ideologues such as Butrus al-Bustani and Nasif Al-Yasghi who were among the College's teachers. Given that most of his other teachers were Americans and Canadians, we may say that he was more exposed than anyone in the family to Western influence.

Beirut provided a different outlet for the more intellectually inclined Husaynis such as Ishaq Musa al-Husayni. Ishaq was captivated by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city which proved an ideal surrounding for an autodidact like himself. By mere reading and contemplation, he chose the intellectual route to the changing world of tomorrow. This path was thought to be far too extreme as it came at the expense of the collective good of the family and, very typically, he soon found himself outside the boundaries of the Middle East.

It was in fact not necessary for the younger Husaynis to leave Jerusalem in order to play a role in keeping the family's position and stature in the changing world of the Middle East. Local education also provided knowledge in European languages and culture and childhoods were spent in a neighborhood where consuls, missionaries, and Christian friends, such as Khalil Al-Sakakini, were regular visitors to the family's house.

¹⁵ Philip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Haj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 8-9.

The elder generation was also attracted to European ideas and influence, but unlike the younger generation this did not lead to espousal of the politics of nationalism. A fine example was Ismail al-Husayni, the head of the family. Ismail, whose main activity was in the realm of education, was largely responsible for the transformation of the educational system in Jerusalem. However, he did not seem to be interested in nationalist education and withdrew gradually from politics and persisted in his recluse until the end of his life in 1945. Others in the family who had enjoyed a prestigious career under the Ottoman system followed suit.

In the final analysis we can say that most of the Husaynis were not, cognitively or emotionally, anti-Western and were not overcharged by nationalism. They tackled nationalism, as they had tackled in the past the invasion of foreign consuls in their life, the introduction of hostile Ottoman centralizing reforms during the Tanzimat period (1840-1876) and the young Turks. They tested the possibility of opposing these phenomena and then adapted to their inclusion. In a similar way, they treated the emergence of a national discourse and ideology in their environment. It was a development, towards which in the very beginning they showed a considerable indifference. Nationalism as a dogma or a position did not bring economic and financial benefits for them, but on the other hand, it was not a threatening development as it did not challenge the perks offered by the Turkish world. It had no socialist or communist message in it and in the microcosm of Jerusalem, before the *Watan* of Palestine was recognized as such, it had little impact on their life. Typically, however, they were not

induced during the first months of the war to side against the national movement, in a counter-organization offered by Jamal Pasha, the Turkish ruler of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, not even when this invitation was accompanied by threats.

It was the younger generation who showed greater enthusiasm for nationalism. As students, they were more easily drawn into the radical and intriguing world of Arab nationalism. It was mainly the Husayni students in Istanbul who were, like younger people all over the world at the time, drawn into the whirlwind of this new gripping and global idea of national identity, translating it, or rather localizing it, in the face of the Turkish reality, at first, and then the British one.

The young generation ensured a leading role for the Husaynis in the national movement. The rest of the family would join forces when the First World War ended both the Turkish rule and the Ottoman world as they knew it. The relative late entrance of the family, as a whole, into the business of nationalism left them quite handicapped *vis-à-vis* the vigorous combination of nationalism and colonialism exercised by the Zionists.

Zionism before the Young Turk revolution

Where does the Zionist phenomenon enter or intervene in the family's perception of the social and political reality of the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century? The elder generation seems to have taken the Zionist threat more seriously. However, they lacked the national framework that was the appropriate prism to understand and confront this challenge. National ideology fired the

imagination of the young Jews who had come to settle in Palestine and uproot its local population. To defend themselves, and more importantly their society, the Huysanis, and the notables in general, needed to generate a similar energetic response.

The majority of the Jews arriving in the *Sanjaq* of Jerusalem since 1882 were Austrians, Russian and Americans. The consuls of these countries facilitated the entrance of these Jews despite the Turkish government's principled opposition to such immigration (in general, the Austrians were less helpful than the rest). The Turkish government opposed immigration from the very outset of the Zionist movement. Already in 1882 a decree prohibiting Jewish immigration had been proclaimed, but it was revised in 1889, under the consuls' pressure, to allow a three-month stay for pilgrimage purposes only. However, two years later, again the Ottoman government tried to limit the immigration by prohibiting large groups from entering. Small groups were allowed to stay only one year.

An even harsher line was taken at the turn of the century, when Istanbul once more revised its policy on Jewish immigration. In 1900 the Turks sent a request to steam-liner companies to cooperate with them in preventing immigration. In the same year, Article 2 of a new law stipulated that any Jew staying more than three months would be expelled. The tendency of Istanbul to restrict Jewish immigration did not operate well in the case of British Jews, as they were the only ones whose passports did not mention their Jewish origin. Furthermore, the British consuls in the area were most reluctant to expel British subjects of any origin. And so

the emancipatory virtues of Britain helped the Jews who had lost faith in the possibility of their assimilation as equals in Europe to emigrate to Palestine.

Zionism and the Family Agenda

Zionism occupied the family's agenda, since it had interests that were not strictly limited to the clan's life. Its social standing required some sort of public reaction, transcending the family's narrow interests. The family's political and social status depended on the Muslim or at least Arab nature of Jerusalem and of Palestine as a whole (less cynical historians would even talk about concern for the fate of the society or the nation). Until 1908, this interest was scant. The position of each member of the family dictated the appropriate response; hence, the Mufti was the most active in expressing resistance to Zionism. As part of his duty, he was constantly asked for official reaction to Jewish immigration. Later, however, when the national conscience was in the possession of almost every member of the elite, these differences would hardly exist. Zionism for all became a colonialist movement based on European imperialism, attracting a growing number of Jews to Palestine, purchasing land and assets at an alarming pace, and who were determined to wrest Palestine from the Palestinians. Yet around 1908 none of the people involved in the Zionist movement, or those opposing it, knew how it would develop and what would be its "real" essence. At the time it was an integral part of other European colonial initiatives in Palestine (the most successful of which were the Templars).

Like the Zionists themselves, the Husaynis

could not yet distinguish between fantasy and reality. At a time that witnessed such persons as a self-proclaimed prince named Immanuel, who came to Jerusalem in July 1904 and enthroned himself as the new leader of the Jews, it is understandable why some viewed Herzl in a similar way. However, the establishment of the first seven Zionist settlements in Palestine did rouse the population through the press, although more the newspapers coming from Cairo and Beirut than the local press.

The family began to treat the phenomenon more seriously probably when the local press did so. In 1910, the paper *al-Karmil* started publishing excerpts from Theodore Herzl's manifesto, "The Jewish State." The Husaynis were divided between Sa'id, who was fiercely anti-Zionist (we have some of his proclamations in the Parliament, through the Arabic press), and Husayn, the mayor. The latter, like his father Salim, was appointed to his position with the help of the Jews, the largest group in the city. It was the "Society of Jewish Ottomans," headed by Dr. Levi, the director of the Palestine Bank that elicited Jewish support for his appointment. Hence, although Husayn was also temporarily a parliament member, he did not echo the sentiments of Sa'id.

Rumors and Realities: Questions in Parliament

An informative source for all the notable families in Jerusalem was the Damascene parliamentarian, Shuqri al-Asali. He for instance presented a query to the Ottoman parliament about the precise number of Jews in the *Sanjaq* of Jerusalem. The government talked about 100,000 (al-Asali estimated them

to be 85,000.)¹⁶ Al-Asali was a firm believer in the rumors appearing in the Arab press about Zionist diplomatic skills. They were suspected as moving behind the scene of the Young Turks. The source of these rumors seems to have been Arab students in Istanbul. Prominent among them were two Husaynis: Jamil, whom we have already mentioned and who was of the Hasani Branch (i.e. the more religious branch), and Mustafa Nafiz, of the Tahiri, more secular branch. Jamil and Mustafa helped to organize their colleague to act against the Zionist purchase of land and immigration into Palestine. It was the prestigious *al-Ahram* that first gave credence to these rumours about Zionist influence in Istanbul. A leading article was republished again and again titled "The Zionists in the Turkish Parliament"; its most severe allegation was that the *Shaykh al-Islam*, Jawdat Pasha, was a converted pro-Zionist Jew. Similar suspicions were directed at Talat Pasha, the interior minister.¹⁷

On May 16, 1911, Sa'id raised for the first time in the parliament the Palestine question and claimed: "The Jews intend to establish a state in the area, which will include Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia." In response Khalil Bey, the Interior minister, informed the house that his government opposed Zionism and that Sa'id was making unjustified allegations.¹⁸

Sa'id's anti-Zionist stance was not easily forged. Sa'id had been sent by his father to attend the Jewish Alliance School. He was taught Hebrew there, a proficiency that secured him a position in the local censorship office.

¹⁶ Mahmud Hasa Salih Mansa, *Tarikh al-Sharq al-'Arabi al-Hadith* (The History of the Modern Arab East), (Beirut, 1984), p. 150.

¹⁷ *Al-Ahram*, 15 March 1911, 7 February 1913.

¹⁸ Neville Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 112-113.

For months he scrutinized daily the Hebrew press, published mainly in Jerusalem. Sa'id must have been ambivalent, even after he made his vociferous objections to Zionism in the Parliament. When reproached by former Jewish class mates for his views on Zionism- of which they read in the Hebrew press- he tried to mitigate their fears by claiming that it was all done for the sake of public opinion. To be more precise, he needed the votes of Jewish electors to be re-elected to the parliament.

It was difficult to reconstruct Ismail's views on Zionism. He had a cordial, at times a genuinely friendly relationship with the Jewish community. In 1909 he tried to open with Jewish partners a Commercial Bank in Jerusalem, an enterprise that failed because of strong Turkish objection.

This whole analysis of the attitude towards Zionism should not be analyzed retrospectively and we should be careful to assume in hindsight that the subject must have been one of the family's highest priorities. The years 1908-1914 had brought with them endless worries and concerns- some of a dramatic nature, some quite mundane. Indeed, the locust invasion in 1910 may have seemed more threatening than the Zionist invasion, as the Husaynis owned by then quite a lot of land. Such a natural disaster affected it economically to a considerable extent. This was quite an horrendous attack, which filled the houses in the city with hordes of dead insects. The authorities promised compensation for anyone presenting them with a sack full of the dead enemies.

There were persons in Palestine who were totally committed to challenging the Zionist threat, but they were mainly Christians in those days. When the Turkish paper in Arabic, *al-*

Mufid, criticized the *Wujahaa* (the notables) of al-Quds for not contributing their share to the advancement of the reforms, Najib Nasar's paper *Al-Karmil* responded by an editorial article titled: "The Arab Palestinian League." "We Palestinians," argued Nasar, "have nothing in common with the Beirutis. We do not share the same economic and social predicament." Nasar suggested to the notables of Jerusalem and other cities that they establish a "Palestinian League" that would co-ordinate the elite's efforts *vis-à-vis* Zionism and defense of the Watan (the homeland) instead of the reforms.¹⁹ The antagonistic attitude to the reforms was there; whether it was replaced by nationalism as Nasar wanted it, is quite doubtful. In any case, one person, the Turkish governor, Akram Bey, was convinced that the notables, and particularly the Husaynis, devoted all their energy to undermining the government's reform. Indeed, this was the important divide in late Ottoman Palestine: supporting or rejecting the new reality created by the Young Turks, not by the Zionists.

However, any antagonism between Akram Bey and the Husaynis did not lead to anti-Turkish sentiment in the family's policy. Hence, in the years leading to the Great War, the Husaynis acted against Zionism within the framework of the political Turkish institutions such as the parliament or the city, as well as the regional councils. For that reason, one can assume a clear distinction in the minds of the Husaynis, active in the matter of Zionism, between the settlers and the residential veteran Jewish community of Jerusalem. This explains the limited nature of the reaction against Zionism. With some Jewish and Christian families, the Husaynis enjoyed a fair and

¹⁹ *Al-Karmil*, no. 336, 3 September 1913, p. 1.

cordial relationship. Their efforts on behalf of these families during the mainly anti-Christian terror imposed by Jamal Pasha during the war in the city testify to the intimacy in the relationship. At times these efforts were carried out at a considerable risk to the individuals involved.

The tendency to cope with Zionism through the institutions of the powers that be continued to a certain degree after the British occupation. The younger generation, which took over the family's leadership, returned in a way to the "politics of notables." Their legitimacy was based on their religious and national status, recognized by both their society and the Mandatory power. Colonial support was thus seen as crucial for maintaining both the family's stature and for challenging the Zionist threat. In this sense, Haj Amin al-Husayni deviated from the preaching of his tutor, Rashid Rida, who advocated uncompromising anti-colonialist struggle. Neither, it seems, did the mass anti-British resistance in Egypt in July 1919 erode the family's trust in its ability to move the British Mandate on a pro-Palestinian course. But when the Mandate was officially established in June 1920 and a pro-Zionist Jew was appointed as the High Commissioner, at least some of the family, such as Musa Qazim, developed serious doubts about Albion's loyalty. His suspicions were aroused when the new rulers extricated some of the most important official ranks from the family's hands and gave them to British, Jewish and rival families.

This failure does not necessarily indicate that the Husaynis, to use modernizing jargon, were 'traditionalists.' The conventional Mandatory historiography juxtaposes the modern and revolutionary Zionists with the 'traditional' Arab leadership. If one examines this

dichotomy from within the Husaynis' history, it seems that the family's leadership in the early years of the Mandate was rebellious and young, headed by a youngster in his early twenties who challenged the traditional heads of the family.

This challenge is the real watershed in the family's history, and it had begun long before the British Occupation. The occupation was indeed a dramatic juncture in the history of Palestine, but the Young Turk Revolution was traumatic to many elder members of the family. The young generation adapted itself successfully to the changes brought by the young Turks, and even to the transformation of Palestine by the British authorities, as did young generations all over the Arab world. However none of the Husaynis' peers in the Arab world had to cope with the burden of solving the Jewish problem in Europe.

The history of the family thus changed in the years 1840 to 1922, through a long process in which many young members of the family in each generation internalized the transformations around them - and exploited these processes as well. The successes and failures were due to the educational transformation of the young Husaynis on the one hand, and the family's tradition of survival, on the other. Both his educational background and the family's "politics of notables" brought Haj Amin al-Husayni to the presidency of the Supreme Muslim Council in 1922; an event which was in a way the apex of this process. But, in the following years the inadequacy of the skills acquired in both the educational system and in the "politics of notables" became only too clear when the family had to face the Zionist movement in earnest.

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