The memoirs of Omar es-Saleh, grandson of the last lord of Deir Ghassaneh, Sheikh Saleh Abdul Jaber al-Barghouti (1819-1881), and son of Sheikh Hussein es-Saleh (died 1919), provide us with a unique window to the final days of the feudal lords of central Palestine in the middle of the 19th century—just as Ottoman regulations began to privatize the ownership of land. Deir Ghassaneh was the throne village of Bani Zeid, north of Jerusalem. Its mutazims (tax farmers) ruled over the estates of twenty villages, which separated the northern part of the Jerusalem hills from Jabal Nablus, and wielded immense power over the region's peasantry.

The life of Omar es-Saleh is of great interest because he articulated, over five

1 The dates are not certain, and are derived from oral sources cited by Fathi Ahmad (see below). I would like to thank Suad al-Amiry and Rema Hammami for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this review.
decades, the transition from demonstrating a clear pride in local aristocratic privilege, to adopting urban nationalist affinities and accompanying life-style. His Jerusalem-based affinities led him through a number of political shifts: adopting the path of Ottoman de-centralization, followed by total immersion in Palestinian Arab nationalism. After joining the Istiqlal party, he became a leading opponent of the leadership of Haj Amin al-Husseini. Following the 1948 War, his career was closely associated with the Jordanian regime, despite his criticism of King Abdullah, and he served as cabinet minister in two successive governments. His activity against the Zionist project and agitation against British High Commissioner Herbert Samuel led to his exile to Akka in the 1920s.

But Omar was also a scholar and militant advocate of educating women in the liberal secular tradition. In 1919, he co-edited Jerusalem’s Mīr‘at al-Sharq, one of the most influential newspapers in Palestine at the time. His books include The History of Palestine (with Khalil Totah, 1923), Studies in Palestinian Customs and Folklore (1922), Bedouin Law in Palestine (1929), al-Yazuri: the Unknown Vizier (1948), History of the Ummayad Caliphate (n.d.), and several works of fiction and unpublished historical manuscripts. During the Mandate he studied law and became a law professor in the Palestine Law Institute (Ma3had al Huquq) where he authored a number of legal publications including the Index of Laws and Statutes of Palestine in 1931.

Omar’s memoirs vividly demonstrate that the transition from tax-farming, officially abolished in 1858, was prolonged and protracted and left substantial privileges in the hands of the lords of Bani Harith, Bani Zeid and Bani Murra regions long after formal termination. These privileges included the continued collection of the tithe in the name of the Sublime Porte, the adjudication of territorial disputes, the meting out of traditional justice, the ownership of household slaves and various administrative duties delegated by the modernizing authority from Istanbul. They

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2 Amin al-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem during the Mandate, and leader of the Palestine Arab Party, the main oppositional force to the British authorities during the 1930s.

3 For a list of these publications see Ya‘coub 3awdat, Min A3lam al-fikr wal adab fi Filasteen, Third Edition, Jerusalem, p. 43.

4 The Sultan as representative of the Ottoman State in Istanbul.
also demonstrate that the rich and complex relationship linking through marriage bonds and mutual support the feudal lords of Bani Sa'b - the Jayyusi clan, Bani Zeid, Bani Harith, among others - with the patrician elites of Jerusalem and Nablus, were much stronger than is often assumed in the literature. Barghouti claims in this context that his clan's power originated in Jerusalem itself, where it was charged with control over entry to the city through Da'ya Gate (later the New Gate) when the Sublime Porte sub-contracted the family with the tasks of tax farming, on behalf of the state, a large area that covered the Bani Zeid, Bani Murra, Bani Salem and other areas extending as far as the Mediterranean shores. More interesting, however, is the impact of these transformations on the lives of members of this rural aristocracy, who have just begun to move to the district centers and other major cities of Palestine - in this case Jerusalem. Even though the clan history presented on these pages is contested, Omar's memoirs are important because of their subjective and lived narratives.

The vivid and detailed depiction of daily life in the Palace of Sheikh Saleh, Omar's grandfather, and his father, Sheikh Mahmoud, through the last days of the sultanate make these memoirs a historian's treasure. But the memoirs' significance goes even beyond their ethnographic details; they offer the rare opportunity to examine a new class in the making. Omar es Saleh is probably the only diarist who recorded the critical transformation of the scions of the major feudal lords of nineteenth century Palestine from the twenty-odd throne villages to the cities of Jerusalem, Nablus, Jaffa and Haifa - the major urban centres of the country. There a new urban hegemonic class was emerging from the combined networks of mercantile groups, urban notables, and absentee landlords arriving from their rural domains. The Tuqans, Abdul Hadis, Qasims, and Jayyusis represent this latter segment with whom Omar as Saleh was intimately acquainted, as in-laws, future business partners, and political allies and adversaries.

In the first book of his diaries, Omar recalls the great divide that separates the dwellings of the Baraghteh from the rest of the village's peasantry. His father's mansion, built originally in 1011 A.H., was divided into three compounds:

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5 These claims and many others are challenged by several historians, including Ihsan an Nimer. For a sustained critique and an alternative perspective on the origins and status of the Barghouti family see Fathi Ahmad, *History of Rural Palestine in the Ottoman Period*, Ramallah, 1992, Chapter 6, "Tribal Conflict in the Bani Zeid Region", pp. 175-217.

6 Omar Saleh al-Barghouti, *Al-Marahel*, p 33. The memoirs were edited by Rafif al-Barghouti and published by Al Mu'assasah al-Arabiyya LilDirasat wal Nashr, Beirut and Amman, 2001, 739 pages, 24 photographs, five appendices. A sad reflection of the current prevailing conditions is that it is virtually impossible to buy this book unless the reader goes to Lebanon, since the book is not available in Jordan (where it is banned), and in Palestine (where it cannot be imported), the two countries of its main potential readership.

7 One should obviously take Barghouti's narrative about his clan's history with great caution. Fathi Ahmad, who wrote a history of the Bani Zeid region, correctly points out that Barghouti virtually ignores his family's main rivals for feudal power in the region, the Sihwail clan in 3ebwein. He also considers the Barghouti's lineage claims to Khalid ben al Walid, and his tracing of the family's origins to Jerusalem notables as purely putative and invented. Ahmad published these comments before al Marahel was published; he was referring to Barghouti's History of Palestine (written jointly with Khalil Totah), but the publication of al Marahel, in my opinion, does not change the basis of this judgement.

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The upper floors had its windows perched high above the village with its famous laced windows (*mashrabiyyat*) where the women of the household could see but not be seen. On top of that hung the *eliyyeh*, the Sheik’s retreat and resting place overlooking his estates.8

Unlike the peasant women of the region, Barghouti women were heavily veiled and confined to the *haremlek*. Covered from top to bottom in their black *abayehs* they were not allowed to visit a relative or pay a condolence visit except after sunset and accompanied by blood kin (*mahram*). Once inside their quarter however, women dressed in the aristocratic urban tradition. The Sheikha (the Sheikh’s wife) wore the *tarboush* embroidered with golden coins; the top of her headdress adorned with pearls. The womens' daily dress was made of unembroidered light cotton or silk dresses. On their legs, they wore a silver *khilkhal* (leg bracelet). Unlike urban women, they did not use lipstick or powder; but lined their eyes with *kuhl* and plucked their eyebrows.9 The Barghouti women were able to accumulate small private fortunes, primarily from trading in textiles but also from lending money at very high interest rates.10

Still, their lives were markedly restricted through a strict tradition of confinement, a tradition that made the Barghouthi women unique even among the feudal families of Palestine (only the Jayyusis, the Rayyans

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9 *Marahel*, 41–42.

10 *Marahel*, 61.
and Abdul Hadis were similarly veiled and confined). Confinement was reinforced by a strict endogamy: Barghouti women were given in marriage only to their clan members and to a small circle of lordly families that included the Jayyusis, Rayyans, Abu Kisheks, and the Mas'udi emirs. Peasant women by contrast were unrestrained:

*They moved and roamed unveiled seen by all. They worked in the fields with their men folk and with strangers. They collected water from the 3ain and wood on their own. They harvested and slept under the trees, and guarded the vineyards. Men would come in on women in the cottages without knocking, and often guests would sleep in the same dwellings as [the host] women.*

Another distinguishing feature of the lords of Deir Ghassaneh was slave ownership, a practice that continued well into the first third of the twentieth century. The slave quarter in the mansion of Omar as-Saleh included palace guards, servants, cooks and fighters, many of whom were brought up since childhood in the household. Barghouti slaves - we are told - dressed well, carried arms and rode horses. According to Omar as-Saleh their status was well above the local peasants, and they carried their master's name.


12 Marahel, 30.

13 Marahel, 43.

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**Omar Abandons "The Mother of the World"**

In 1898, when he was only five years old, Omar was sent to the village kuttab to study the Qur'an and grammar. When he passed the tests (khātīm al-Qur'an) at the age of nine, his father sent him to the Alliance school, a Francophone Jewish primary school in Jerusalem. The idea was to study French and Turkish - the languages of power internationally and locally - in preparation for furthering his education in Istanbul. There he discovered the world outside the village and the novel amenities of the big city. In the first two books of the diaries - those covering his childhood and youth - Barghouti continuously refers to himself in the third person:

*Alone he would say to himself: 'In Deir Ghassaneh I thought I was in the mother of the world, and the capital of capitals. When I came to Jerusalem I found it beyond my wildest expectations. I saw horse-driven carriages for hire, driving in broad avenues asphalted and leading to Nablus, Jaffa, Hebron and Jericho...Initially he was fearful of riding these carriages, but his father showed him how, and then he would take it daily from Jaffa gate to his school, paying a Turkish matleek for the fare, and enjoying every step of the trip. At night he was overwhelmed with the street lamps breaking the darkness, and making street walking in the evening easier. He saw men with hats wearing their elegant formal suits. He saw beautiful women wearing fancy dress.*
unveiled, evoking charm and lust. He saw women covered in black, with a manteel hiding their faces, walking shamelessly among men. He was amazed how these men were buying [only] a ratl [3kg] of flour, an ouqiyeh [250 grams] of ghee and ratl of onions, and he was annoyed. For why would they not buy their provisions for the year as they do in the village? He saw the streets paved with stones to prevent accumulation of mud in the winter. He was fascinated by the glass on the windows bringing light to the room and preventing the dust from penetrating. And he thought, if these glass windows were fitted in the village homes the boys would smash them at the first brawl. 

On the verge of puberty Omar finds lodging in the old city with Maria the Copt - a breed of women he had not met before. She was, in his words, "a manly-woman [imra'a nisf] who constantly smoked the argilah, danced and sang." Maria virtually adopted him and introduced him to the world of the city. His frequent references to her are oblique but saturated with the youthful discovery of sexuality. Once a week she would bathe him and scrub him with the loofa while telling him tales of love and passion, ornate with vulgarities previously unknown. [86] She becomes his companion and continues to befriend him after he moves to new lodgings.

In Jerusalem, Omar is constantly intrigued with the contrasts with his village environment. He is at once repelled and fascinated by city-ways. He is particularly annoyed that his father is treated as an ordinary citizen, and not as the Sheikh of Bani Zeid - and he as the Sheikh's eldest son. It takes him a long time to get used to the milieu of restaurants, cafes, bars, and hotels where clients pay money for their food and lodgings. Omar is shocked by the open drinking of alcohol - "which only during Ramadan Muslims desist from drinking" [92]. But above all he is enchanted by the manners of women in the city: their tight clothes, their red lipstick, and the way they walk-innahu lashay'in 3ujab ("what a wondrous thing"). But he quickly acclimatizes to the city, and by the second year he is already embarrassed to be seen walking with his visitors from the village. [94]

The teenager [Omar's reference to himself] soon assimilated into the life of the city and began to detest his traditional clothing - al-hatta and the igal, the kufiyeh and the qumbaz and the abaya. He would avoid being seen with the peasants in the market for fear of being called a fallah; a word that now evoked in his mind low status, rough mannerisms, dirt, and simple naïve characters. He chose to speak with a Jerusalem accent, but only selectively. He kept his qaf, his dha, his tha, and his dhad. He also prided himself in talking in the fusha. 

Omar's schooling is a record of the modernization of pedagogy in Ottoman Palestine. The transition from the Kuttab to the Alliance school marks his introduction to secular education. He is

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14 Marahel, 18-19.

15 Marahel, 105.
later moved to the Frere School, with its stronger French curriculum. But his father is alarmed by the amount of Christian indoctrination he is subjected to. Jewish and Muslim students rebel and hold a strike against compulsory Catholic classes, but to no avail. He is moved again to St George's [Anglican] school, where the instruction is in Arabic and English, and where the education is liberal and open-minded, and Muslims and Jews are given instruction in their own religious texts. One of his memorable teachers there is Khalil Sakakini, the progressive educator who banned the use of violence against students. [109] In the fifth year of his schooling Omar is moved again to the Sultani School in Beirut - where instruction in Arabic and Turkish prepare him for the study of law in Istanbul (Dar al-Funun).

Sultani Beirut, the provincial state school, was based on military discipline. All classes in science, history, geography, mathematics, civics, grammar and literature - except Arabic - were in Turkish. The students were constantly supervised by the staff in their daily routine of prayers (five times a day), dining and classes. The excessive amount of praying and religious instruction Omar was subjected to served the opposite purpose, however, and seem to have alienated him from religion altogether. Thursday the students were bathed under supervision, and on Friday they were to be taken on a school outing, usually to Junieh or Dbayyeh. Two uniforms were issued to the students each year, velvet in winter and linen in summer. Curiously, students were obliged to wear their uniforms when they left the school and on holidays, but were free to wear their own clothes for classes. Despite the strict discipline and his halting Turkish, Omar was happy.

Beirut is not Jerusalem

In Beirut, teenage Omar is exposed to Arab nationalism, the cinema, newspapers, the sea, and bordellos - more or less in that order. The year is 1907 and the city is simmering with rebellion against Ottoman despotism, and for movements calling for autonomy and secession from Istanbul. In Omar's mind the freedom afforded by the city more than balances out the internal discipline imposed on him by life as a boarding student in Sultani Beirut. He is mocked and downgraded for his poor Turkish, but he still manages to take sick leaves and acquire a taste of the city.

While in Jerusalem, Omar had been exposed occasionally to European imports only read of in the village - in Beirut, they are his for the choosing. Omar attends the theatre in the company of his father at the Ma'aref Café, near Jaffa Gate. He listens to his first gramophone playing Egyptian and French music on wax cylindrical records at the home of Doctor Photi, the Greek physician. He gets drunk on sweet wine with Maria, who also teaches him how to smoke rolled cigarettes. He watches his first cinema projection with
his cousin - and witnesses many of the viewers fleeing the hall for fear of getting wet from the stormy sea magnified on the screen. [97-98]

But all of these encounters with the European experience pale in comparison with Omar's exhilaration at the novelties of Beirut. His enchantment is partly due to the absence of family control in Sultani Beirut, where he travels and lives alone. But it also stems from Omar's encounter with a cosmopolitanism absent in Jerusalem. Indeed, Omar itemizes in a shortlist, what he considers to be the outstanding features of Beirut, in contrast to Jerusalem:

- Daily newspapers are distributed in the morning and editorialize openly for decentralization and the establishment of Arabic as the official language of [Greater] Syria;
- Beirutis have a variety of dress codes not seen in Jerusalem or Nablus. The kufiyyeh is rarely seen; instead most men wear the tarbush or a hat on top of a European suit;
- Automobiles have everywhere begun to replace the horse-driven carriage;
- Restaurants and hotels are far superior to those in Jerusalem. The cuisine is much more varied and the service more sophisticated;
- Cafes and nightclubs contain gramophones that play the latest music from Syria, Anatolia, and Egypt. There is a rich and varied nightlife and the government regulates bordellos;
- "The sea of Beirut is superior to that of Jaffa." It has a safe harbor where the customs house receives imports directly, and the passengers disembark in the port. In Jaffa, by contrast, passengers and goods had to be transferred from their ships to smaller boats that carried them ashore for disembarkment.

Omar is particularly impressed with the self-conscious urbanism of Beirut. He observes it in the Friday outings to horse races near the Beirut forest, and in the promenades by the sea where the middle classes flaunt their wealth in their dress and their carriages; he even sees it in their manicured cemeteries full of flower beds, and carved marble shawahid. (One should be cautious however about Omar's lavish contrast between Beirut and Jaffa. Muhammad Izzat Darwazeh, the great Nablus essayist and nationalist leader, had visited Beirut just a few years earlier, in 1898 when the Beirut safe harbor had not yet been built, and his description of the city was much more modest, particularly as he compared it to Nablus and Jaffa.)

Imposed Emancipation?
Most perplexing in Omar's narrative, however, are his "anti-feudal" diatribes, which are replete in their constant references to the "passing order" in Palestine. In discussing the objectives of the Arab Society - the secret movement he

16 Marahel 124-126; compare this description of modernity to Jawhariyyeh, Volume 1.

17 Marahel, p. 125. Shahid is the plural shahid, the engraved tombstone.


19 I am using the concept "feudal" here in a loose manner to refer to the system of privileges that accrued to the rural shuyukh of central Palestine, most of whom were muluzims until the passage of the land code of 1858. For a discussion of this issue see Alexander Scholch, "Was there feudalism in Palestine?" in his seminal Radical Transformation of Palestine (IPS, 1991), pp 211-216 (page reference here is to the Arabic translation, Jordan University Press, 1988).
joins in his twenties (see below), he often refers to the declining authority of *Shuyukh an-Nawahi* (the tax farmers) in a disparaging manner: "The feudal system has demonstrated its utter failure; it has no army and no power to rule or to discipline; for the authority of the feudal lord rests on the consent of his followers - and when they defy him his power collapses…"

He frequently refers to the "reactionary feudal system," and "backward feudalism."

Yet elsewhere in the memoirs Omar shows pride in his own patrimony as well as his readiness to utilize it when it serves his interests. For instance, he exploits his privileged status to the utmost when he begins to organize young fighters from the Bani Zeid region to join the Arab Society. He also refers with great pride to the exclusive marriage bonds that tie the Barghoutis of Deir Ghassaneh to the aristocracy of Jabal Nablus, particularly the Jayyusis and Qasims. [135] He is especially incensed when Jerusalem *effendis* treated his father as if he were "an equal, and do not recognize his social status and prestige" [91]. How does one account for this anomaly in Omar's perspective?

The explanation lies partly with Omar's personal rebellion against his father-the last representative of the passing order. Sheikh Hussein obviously belongs to the side of moderate opposition to the Ottomans. His leadership of the Peasants' Party (discussed below) was fully integrated into the regime's institutions and aimed at competing for proper representation in the chamber of deputies in Istanbul. He constantly opposed Omar's choices in critical moments of his youth: his desire to study in Istanbul rather than

*The Last Feudal Lord*

Beirut; his membership in the Arab Society and agitation against the Ottoman *Mutassarif*; and-perhaps most crucially-his ignored wish and desire not to marry his cousin.

Simultaneously, Omar is forever escaping his rural background, as is made obvious through his refusal to wear the *hatta* headdress in Jerusalem, his adoption of a modified urban accent (while retaining the *fusha* as a mark of aristocratic distinction), and his general life-style. This fascination and enchantment with city life can be gleaned through his first encounter with Jaffa, which he contrasts with his negative impressions of Ramleh in 1904. His father took him to the Zarifeh hotel, which had a cabaret show that he secretly visited at night.

The young man [i.e., Omar] loved Jaffa. He saw in it what was absent in Jerusalem and Nablus: a thundering sea carrying ships to its harbour. A shoreline overwhelming the visitor with new smells; anchored boats and ships with its masts defying the wind. Jaffa's orange groves surrounded the city and dominated it with its intoxicating blossoms...[T]hroughout Iskandar Awad street one sees hotels and restaurants, and everywhere singing and dancing halls, and legally established whorehouses. Of course the abundance of cabarets and nightclubs is not uncommon in a port city, even though it may undermine the religious sentiments and mores of Arabs and Orientals. [108]
This last remark is obviously perfunctory, and is meant as an observation rather than as a reflection of his own ideological attitude towards religious mores. 

Omar's anti-feudalism therefore should not be taken at face value. It was essentially a search for modernism and an emancipated social setting denied him in his village environment. It was a path that he articulated as a personal journey, as well as a reformist agenda that he hoped would uplift the community as a whole. Invariably this reformist tendency was expressed in support of women's education, which remained a singular and constant passion throughout his career. Just before the war he negotiated with an English missionary from Aboud, Miss Nicolson, to open a girl's school in Deir Ghassaneh. To that end he prevailed on his father to contribute rooms for the school, and gave another two rooms in the family mansion for the teachers' lodging. He then pressed the local mukhtars to sign a memorandum for the payment of the teachers' salaries, against the wishes of the village elders. [139] While dispensing with his feudal title, Omar obviously was keen on keeping the privilege, status and power that came along with inherited signorial rights.

But Omar's search for personal emancipation was persistently frustrated by his father's designs and family obligations. The first major crisis occurred when Omar's father arranged for his marriage to a cousin - apparently in an attempt to distance him from his political involvements. Omar's resistance was short lived:

He complained against this imposition. He was still young and had not finished his schooling. For it was well known that the search for knowledge and married life do not mix. Our ancestors have wisely coined the dictum 'Learning suffocates between the thighs of women'. For marriage is always followed by children, and new responsibilities. Moreover his cousin was ignorant, uncouth, and had not been exposed to a sophisticated environment.20

When his protestations failed, Omar succumbed to the marriage but decided to dictate his own rules of domestic conduct for his bride: "She will be his partner - not his servant; he forbade her from kissing his hand - from the first day she was to treat him as her companion; she was compelled to eat with him on the same table, and to appear next to him in public."

All of these egalitarian impositions must have weighed heavily on the poor lady. But they were indeed revolutionary for a Palestinian mountain village society. It is a great loss to the reader that key sections in the diaries discussing intimate family matters have been removed from the published version.21 We do know however that Omar's pact with his wife is a failure. When he moves to Jerusalem, she refuses to move with him until he threatens to divorce her. When they have a child she rejects his choice of a name, Mis3ab, and insists on calling the boy Jamil. She is

20 Marahel, p. 149.
21 The editor, the late Rafeef Barghouti and Omar's granddaughter, who passed away in early 2002, was courageous in publishing all his political entries, with the result that the book was banned in Jordan. But she apparently felt that controversial references to his family life and his mistresses should not appear in public.
especially unwelcoming to his female visitors - not a surprising attitude when we are treated later in the memoirs to rare glimpses of Omar's adventures with women [157]. He adds bitterly: "She never reciprocated his respect, and she constantly maintained an attitude of anger, boredom, and disgust in his presence for reasons that she never explained." [151]

We Are All Ottomans

After he is sent to Beirut for his schooling Omar begins to appreciate the nature of the main divide in the national movement in Syria between the Unionists and the advocates of Ottoman decentralization (al-I'tilafiyyun). He becomes an avid reader of the opposition press, al-Mufeed and ar-Rai'i al 3am and declares his devotion to the Arab cause.

But Omar's Arabism was ambivalent, just as his anti-Turkish tendencies were qualified. The memoirs are full of contradictions on this issue, partly because they were re-written on the basis of diaries lost during WWI during the pillaging of his home. By then anti-Turkish sentiment was heightened by the ruthless behavior of the retreating German and Turkish officers towards their Arab recruits. Mainly, however, the ambivalence appears due to Omar's intimate acquaintance with Turkish and Syrian officers belonging to the two main contending factions of Ottoman politics, the Unionists and the Federalists, and in particular with those officers who genuinely wanted to establish a multi-citizen constitutional state under the imperial domain of the Ottoman state.

These ambiguities over the limits of Arab nationalism are obvious in Omar's discussion of the three political movements in which he was active as a young man. The first was his membership in the Society for Uplifting the Fallah [Jam3iyyat al Falah li-Najah al Fallah] founded by "a group of feudal leaders in Jerusalem" and chaired by Sheikh Mahmud Saleh, Omar's father. Its objectives were to "support the new constitution and come to the aid of the coup d'etat in Istanbul." When Sultan Abdul Hamid attempted to annul the constitution, the society mobilized thousands of armed supporters in the Jerusalem area in support of Mahmud Shawkat Pasha and the leadership of the constitutional movement in Turkey until the Sultan was arrested and exiled to Salonica. Following the coup, Palestinian supporters of Ottoman de-centralization and latent Arab nationalists were active in sending parliamentary delegates from Jerusalem (which had three seats) to the new parliament in Istanbul. They failed, according to Barghouti, since the "Unionists controlled the local press, the institutions of government and the intelligence units."

When the war broke out, Omar was in Deir Ghassaneh recuperating from a broken leg. There, he conspired with ten members of his clan to establish a clandestine movement, the "Arab Society," whose purpose was "to intensify the struggle against Ottoman despotism." They had four conditions for joining: a member should be under 30 years of age; he should own a gun and a minimum of

22 For the differences between these factions the reader is referred to Hasan Kayyali's book cited below.

23 p. 111-112.

24 Barghouti has a careless manner of dating his entries (or not dating them at all), leaving it the reader to guess the event from its context. To add further confusion, he often returns to earlier events to embellish his narrative.
100 bullets (those who could not buy a gun, where allowed to join with a pistol); candidates should be nominated by two members; and they should swear an oath of allegiance to the Arab Nation. The society raised the Arab flag of *bilad asSham* (Greater Syria) at their headquarters, the Saleh Compound, and within a month had 150 fighting members. [143]

It is unclear, however, what were the exact politics of the Arab society. From Omar's description, the group seemed to emulate the tradition of old city *Qabadayat* (neighborhood street toughs), and were essentially engaged in rural gangsterism-training on the use of arms, imposing "taxes", and disciplining opposition. The society had branches in the neighboring villages of Beit Rima, Nabi Saleh, Abud, and other Bani Zeid townships. Within six months it had 800 active members. The fact that both the Peasant Party (*Jam'iyyat al Fallah*) and the Arab Society were hardly mentioned in the writings on Syrian politics in the late Ottoman movement indicate either that Barghouti was exaggerating their impact, or-more likely-that they were local, Jerusalem-based movements. [25]

It was only when Omar joined forces with disgruntled Palestinian officers of the Ottoman army who were active in the ranks of the 3ahd (Covenant) Party - which he himself joined in 1912 - that the Arab Society acquired a broader political perspective, and a sense of national belonging. The Party's declared political objectives paralleled other nationalist movements in Ottoman Syria, espousing the beliefs:

- That Arabic be added as an official language of the state, and be used exclusively in the Arab provinces;
- That deputies to the Istanbul Parliament reflect the proportion of Arabs in the population at large;
- That Arabs make up half of the ministers in the cabinet, and that Arab officials be appointed to government jobs in the Syrian provinces; and
- That decentralization be applied to the administration of internal affairs.

To implement these objectives the Arab Society, with the support of al 3ahd Party, began to call for a tax boycott, which was followed by a call for a general insurrection. The coalition's moment of glory arrived in the organization of a display of military power in the procession of Nabi Saleh near Deir Ghassaneh [146], in which hundreds of members converging from the Bani Zeid villages participated.

The main achievement of this public spectacle was to draw the attention of the Jerusalem Ottoman *Mutassarif* (Governor) and his detectives. They summoned the "ring leaders" of the party and arrested them. The Arab Society was banned and Omar himself was co-opted through his appointment as tobacco inspector, the official in charge of reporting and destroying illegally planted tobacco in the Bani Zeid region. This appointment was followed several months later with another, that of livestock inspector, whose work was the imposition of sheep tax on cattle herdsmen. It is illustrative of Omar's character that he portrayed this debacle, and a number of political "retreats" throughout the memoirs, as acts undertaken to serve the community. "The

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25 There is no mention of either movement in the memoirs of Muhammad Izzat Darwazeh who lived and was active in Nablus-based Ottoman de-centralization movements in the same period.
Mutasarrif aimed at getting the young man out of politics [apparently with the connivance of Sheikh Hussein, Omar's father-ST] by giving him a job with a substantial salary; and while he undertook these tasks enthusiastically, he did not sever his ties with his party comrades, nor did he abandon his principles" [148] As the war effort progressed and began to take its toll on the Palestinian conscripts, local sentiments began to take an anti-Turkish turn, and al-3ahd Party activities became clandestine within the ranks of Arab officers and government civil servants. Omar was advised by his contact with the party, Syrian commander Hilmi Bey, to understate his views and to demonstrate his public loyalty to the Sublime Porte.

The vacillations in the tactics and objectives of Jerusalem political groups in that period indicate that local elites were still locked into the Porte-centered patronage of regional feudal groups. Omar's father, and probably Omar himself, belonged to privileged elements in the Palestinian and Syrian provinces that were still trying to find a political niche that protected their relationship to the central government, while at the same time related effectively to local groups seeking autonomy from Istanbul. This persistence of the old political game under new names explains also why it was possible for Barghouti to become involved in a number of (mostly failed) political opposition groups-and then bounce back to his family connections when these forays either collapsed or he was caught. As the leadership of the constitutional movement increasingly began to take the path of Turkification, this reformist-autonomist option in the Syrian provinces, with which he had associated his political career, became increasingly untenable.

When Omar was finally conscripted into the Ottoman army in 1914, one of his tasks was to help mobilize villagers in Jerusalem area army camps by making inflammatory speeches against "the enemies of religion," [158] which he did with a certain degree of zeal. As the war progressed, however, public sentiment in Syria and Palestine, and with it the 3ahd Party's objectives, moved towards an openly anti-Turkish direction. Al-3ahd began to plot clandestinely for the secession of the Arab provinces from the Empire. Governor of Syria Jamal Pasha—according to Omar's entries in the diaries—brought in the Tenth Army from Izmir to suppress the potential rebellion. One of their achievements was to arrest many officers who were active in the party and execute them. At this stage Barghouti was playing a double game, politically-speaking. He still served an officer in the Turkish southern front, but he was also a member of a movement that was effectively undermining the war effort. Later when Omar was promoted to the position of procurement officer in Bir-es-Sabe' (Bir Sheva), he was given instructions to encourage Arab soldiers to desert and join Sherif Hussein's army [188]. He was also asked to sabotage the war effort by burning an army food depot, a task that he refused to fulfill. Instead, he gave soldiers extended leave using forged papers.

Like many young men of Ottoman Palestine during the war, Omar was fascinated by the personality of Jamal Pasha, a key leader of the Unionist movement. Pasha was feared and hated as an opponent of the rising tide of Syrian nationalism and separatism, but admired as a ferocious military leader who, until
the very end of the war, struggled to keep Palestine and Syria within the Ottoman system.

But by the end of hostilities, Omar says this about the retreating Ottoman army:

*All over Jerusalem the word spread that Jamal Pasha had negotiated a secret agreement with the Allies to rebel against the Unionists in Istanbul and to secede from the Ottoman state. In return the allies would declare an Arab state in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq of which he would be declared the head. Most people welcomed this news and tended to believe it...*\(^{26}\)

What is important about this story is not its validity, which is highly questionable, but the fact that many Palestinians were willing to believe it and even support it. The phenomenon reflected the ambivalence of many Arab nationalist intellectuals in that period, like Omar, towards secession from Istanbul.\(^ {27}\) Omar's attitude towards Jamal Pasha reflects a certain complexity that is closer to the profile drawn by Ottoman revisionist historians - which attempts today to rehabilitate his anti-Arab and anti-Syrian reputation - than the prevailing attitude in Arab nationalist historiography.\(^ {28}\)

\(^{26}\) *Marahel*, p. 187.

\(^{27}\) A good source about Palestinian and Syrian attitudes towards Jamal Pasha and Arab sentiments towards the Ottoman question during WWI is James Gavin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of the Empire*, University of California Press, 1998.


**War as an Instrument of Modernity**

One of the major weaknesses of these memoirs is the author's annoying tendency to disrupt his personal narrative with political and historical interventions and commentaries that could easily have been moved to a separate volume, and which - in any case - are readily available in standard histories of the period. In the places where Omar was a direct witness to these historical episodes however, the reader has much to gain from his vivid recollections and personal perception of the event. One of the most riveting episodes in his book narrates the collapse of the southern front during his service as an officer in Bir es Sabi and his subsequent flight to Deir Ghassaneh where he tries to slip between the retreating Turkish and German armies and the advancing British forces. The story is where the personal and the political are integrated at their best.

In his biographic essay on Omar, Saleh Yacoub al Awdat retells that same story with one major embellishment:

*In 1917, just before Jerusalem fell in British hands, [Omar al-Barghouti] was exiled to Ankara together with many young Arabs who were active in the Arab nationalist movement and who were sent to inner Anatolia to get rid of them. From his exile, Omar escaped to Jenin, and from there to Nablus...and to Koor, where he took refuge among the Jayyusi clan...*\(^ {29}\)

But Awdat got the facts wrong. He must have confused Omar with his father, who was indeed ordered exiled to Ankara, but

\(^{29}\) Yacoub al Awdat, *Op Cit*, p. 42.
did not actually arrive [201] (Omar is reticent about why his father, explicitly moderate and conciliatory to the Ottomans, was exiled).

Omar's actual story is much more interesting and reads like a first rate war adventure. In it, he deserts his army post in the Negev dessert, traveling incognito to Jerusalem, where he becomes involved in a major debate by the city notables—meeting at Khalil Sakakini's home in the old city—as to whether Jerusalem was to be declared an Open City (i.e., a non-combat zone) and surrendered to the Allies. While hiding in Jerusalem, Omar meets Fawzi al Quwakgi, the Syrian Ottoman officer who was to lead the Salvation Army into Palestine thirty years later, and Colonel Ismat Innunu, Chief of Staff of the Eighth Ottoman Army and future President of Turkey. In these debates, the German commanders in Jerusalem had the upper hand and refused to declare it an open city.

From then on Omar is on the run. He deserts his house and belongings and tries to get to the British army in order to surrender himself. In the process, he is shot twice and eventually moved to a mobile British hospital in Abud, and then to Jaffa for recuperation. In the hospital "he was visited by Mr. Dades, head of British military intelligence in the Occupied Zone. He spoke to him in Turkish and queried him about the inclinations of the Arab population. He then lectured him on the historic friendship between the Arabs and the English, and asked him if he can be of any service to Omar." [208-209] Thus ends the Ottoman episode in Omar's life.

One cannot help gaining the impression that Barghouti was a survivor. This is evident in his cynicism about the Ottoman use of religion to mobilize the Palestinians when the Allies were advancing at the Egyptian front. It is also evident from his extensive use of his army and government postings to serve his career while also advancing his ideological commitments to the Arab cause. But it is a tribute to Omar's inquisitive mind that he was able to see the long-term impact on the future of Palestine of these momentous events. Above all, Omar reflects extensively on the impact of the war on what he considered the country's social mores.

Arab society has progressed considerably from contacts with German [and Western] culture...men and women were affected by this modernism. Restrictions and divisions between individuals and groups were broken down. A new mentality has emerged which was open to the offerings of the West. Without the war this change would have taken tens of years to be accomplished. [192-193]

Omar then lists some of these outstanding changes, which are both behavioral and ideological. Among the behavioral, he cites the unveiling of women, first among Christians and then by Muslim women, until the veil "was considered a reactionary habit." He also cites middle class café societies and the drinking of alcoholic beverages, to the extent that he hears Muslims "claim that drinking is not forbidden in religion."

Among the ideological changes brought about by the war, Omar lists two remarkable phenomena. First he notes that adherence to religion has become "purely

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10 Omar is probably referring here to participation in religious festivals such as Nebi Musa and Nebi Saleh.
ritual." "Today Muslims have abandoned their prayers, and consider religious amulets such as saints' tombs, processional flags\textsuperscript{30} as something of the past." That was in 1916.

The second ideological phenomenon Omar remarks on is the emergence of Arab Nationalism, triggered by the Turkification of the Arab provinces and the repression of Arab national pride and language. Many of these reflections, he developed in lively discussion with three of his intellectual companions: Nakhleh Zureik, Khalil Sakakini (his teacher) and Is'af al-Nashashibi. In most of these debates, he would "listen and not participate," presumably in deference to his elders. But all the time Omar was forming his own impressions about the coming of the new era, and had a boundless enthusiasm for the unknown.