



# Historical FEATURES

## The Time the Peasants Entered Jerusalem

The revolt against Ibrahim  
Pasha in the Islamic court  
sources

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Near Dung Gate in Jerusalem, where leaders of a revolt against the *nezzam* entered the Old City's walls.

As most of the readers of *the Jerusalem Quarterly* know, Muhammad ‘Ali invaded *Bilad al-Sham*, or Greater Syria—today’s Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Israel—in 1831. His stepson Ibrahim governed the region in his name until 1840. In my book, *Sacred Law in the Holy City*, published by Brill in 2004, I detail the story of the invasion and trace the legal, economic, and political changes that Muhammad ‘Ali instituted, the response of the people of Palestine and Syria to these changes, and the long-term results of the policies implemented by what Muhammad ‘Ali termed the ‘Khedival’ regime in the regions he occupied.<sup>1</sup> This interlude in Palestinian history was just one front of a much larger battle between Muhammad ‘Ali and the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II. In this battle for recognition of his new dynasty, the Khedive attempted to extend his control over all of the human, economic, and agricultural resources of the region, and in so doing destroyed the autonomy of the urban and rural centers of southern Syria. In this article, I have chosen to retell the story of the rebellion that ensued, as the people and local elites rebelled against the new regime,

which they referred to often as the ‘*nezzam*,’ the new army of Muhammad ‘Ali. The rebellion ultimately failed and the local elites and male population were decimated, leaving the region devastated. It would not recover until the population began to increase again in the late nineteenth century.

The detailed edicts and court cases that I studied in writing this book gave me a close-up view of Palestinian society. By placing these detailed records into a broader historical context and drawing information from reliable sources about issues not directly explained in the court archives, I was able to piece together a portrait of the region, a portrait that showed Jerusalem in its broadest context as a province of the Ottoman Empire. What emerged in this portrait was a Jerusalem that was linked directly to the cities at the Islamic heart of the Ottoman Empire: Mecca and Medina. Administered as a part of the most important Islamic endowment (or *waqf*) in the Ottoman Empire, Jerusalem served as the heart of the rural Palestinian economy. The Waqf of Mecca and Medina (*Waqf al-Haramayn*) owned many parcels of land throughout the Ottoman Empire, and Jerusalem’s Muslim administrators were responsible for managing those properties throughout southwestern *Bilad al-Sham*.

Those lands not controlled by the *Waqf al-Haramayn* fell under a number of different categories. Of most significance is Palestine itself, which at the time referred specifically to the region of Gaza, and which was controlled by Ottoman officials who held it as a tax-farm.<sup>2</sup> In my book, I go into great detail about these issues, as well as the issue of who paid taxes and who did not. This topic is of particular interest because the idea of citizenship had not taken hold; rather, political discourse revolved around the rights of Ottoman subjects. The Ottoman reform period, known as the *Tanzimat*, officially began in 1839, just before Muhammad ‘Ali withdrew from Syria in 1841. During this period, the Ottomans articulated new laws defining the way that their society would be organized, based upon a new understanding of the nature and role of government. Many of the challenges represented by the idea of citizenship that emerged during the *Tanzimat* period were anticipated by the conflicts that arose in Jerusalem as Ibrahim Pasha instituted new laws regulating the rights of the various political and social classes in Jerusalem—but that is to get ahead of our story.

Jerusalem and its hinterlands had four major social classes: the local Muslim administrators who served the Ottomans in the courts, known variously as 1) the ‘*ulama*, the *afandiyat*, or the *ahali*, the Muslims of Jerusalem who were exempted from all taxes; 2) the *umara*, who served as military leaders primarily east of Jerusalem but who intermarried with the *ahali* and who received land grants, called *timar*, from the Ottoman government; 3) the bedouin who served the Empire transporting goods and protecting the highways; and 4) the tax-paying ‘flocks’—the *ra’aya*—who farmed agricultural lands of all legal types, including *waqf* lands, tax-farms, and village lands not belonging to either of these types.

In 1834, the people of Jerusalem and the peasants in her hinterlands rebelled against Ibrahim Pasha for a number of reasons. The people were suffering under heavy

taxation, which had been the cause of numerous rebellions in the region in the past. In addition, Muhammad ‘Ali was conscripting Muslims into his new army, which he was deploying in Arabia against the Wahhabis and in the Yemen. These conscripts were inducted into the army *for life*, with no hope of return to their homes. Conscripted men were taking extreme actions to avoid service: some were blinding themselves in one eye or cutting off a hand; others were tattooing crosses on their arms. Egyptians had been fleeing to Syria for years to avoid conscription. Muhammad ‘Ali was intent on creating a force capable of challenging the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire himself. As part of the campaign to conscript Syrians into the Egyptian army, Ibrahim Pasha was disarming the people living in Nablus and the region around Hebron. At the same time, Muhammad ‘Ali was reorganizing the administration of the *waqfs* throughout Syria, limiting the powers of the ‘*ulama*’, taking away portage and toll fees collected by bedouins and the famous Abu Ghush family. To top all this off, Muhammad ‘Ali imposed a new tax on the Muslim administrative class in Jerusalem—a challenge to their prerogatives that they could not allow. These policies, and this last one in particular, united the city and countryside against Muhammad ‘Ali. The resistance to Muhammad ‘Ali was reported through the eyes of Westerners traveling in the area at the time and by the Greek Orthodox chronicler, the monk Neophytus.<sup>3</sup> These accounts mesh with the cases and orders recorded in the registers (*sijillat*) of the Islamic court, the main documentary source for my study. In the court documents, the specific grounds for rebellion were couched in classical Sunni Islamic terms—terms which expressed the basis for Ottoman political legitimacy.

And here is where it gets very interesting. From Al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) to Ibn Khaldun (d. 1403), to the Ottoman Tanzimat period, the ideal of government was to maintain order and justice, or “repose and tranquility” as it is often termed in the Islamic court documents. The classical political theory of Sunni Islam found its most highly articulated expression in Ottoman government, which followed the Hanafi school of Islamic law. Order meant the preservation of civilized life—that is urban life and rural agricultural life—necessary for people as they worship and prepare their souls for eternity. Repose and tranquility allowed people to pay the just taxes necessary for maintaining law and order throughout the land. The role of the state was to ensure that the economic potential of each resource was fully developed, and the Ottomans used various means to encourage productivity. The ruler who failed to protect his subjects from violence, disorder, illegal and arbitrary taxation, or any form of injustice would no longer have the right to rule. Injustice, the Sunni political tradition held, led to the disintegration of civilized life, as people abandoned their homes and fields to seek safety. And central to these ideas was the concept of rights—even unlettered peasants knew their rights under Ottoman rule—and so did the townspeople and those living in the fortified cities of the Empire. In this context, the rebellion of 1834 takes on new meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The Wahhabis originated in the eastern province of Arabia where the movement declared jihad against the Ottoman government in the Hijaz. The Ottomans viewed the Wahhabis as heretics who threatened Islamic civilization, by which they meant

settled urban centers and their supporting agricultural regions. Muhammad ‘Ali himself was ordered by the Ottomans to destroy the Wahhabis. In a war lasting from 1811 to 1818, Muhammad ‘Ali and his sons finally defeated them.

Following this victory, the Ottomans turned to Muhammad ‘Ali once again to suppress the Greek rebellion, which he did in 1822, but in the process he lost his navy in the terrible battle of Navarino (1827). Muhammad ‘Ali’s contempt for the Ottoman sultan became ferocious at this time. Using the ruse of chasing after Egyptian peasants who’d fled to Syria to escape serving in his army, Muhammad ‘Ali invaded Syria in 1831. At first the people were glad to be freed from the tyranny of the Ottoman governor of Acre, ‘Abdullah Pasha, but by 1834, they realized what their new ruler was up to, and they revolted.



Ibrahim Pasha. *Source: In the House of Muhammad ‘Ali*

On April 25, 1834, Ibrahim Pasha had convoked all of the leaders of Jerusalem and Nablus, ordering the conscription of one out of every five Muslims, beginning in the city of Jerusalem with the call-up of 200 men. Another 3,500 hundred men from the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem and Nablus, and 500 from Hebron were also demanded at that time.<sup>5</sup> Their hatred of the Khedival government united them against Ibrahim Pasha’s attempts to create a ‘modern’ army out of local conscripts. According to Spyridon’s famous contemporary account of Ibrahim Pasha’s meeting with the notables of Jerusalem and Nablus, the aims of the Pasha, and the reaction of the notables, were clear. Ibrahim Pasha asked them, “As we, Muslims, have as perpetual enemies the Nazarene nations, is it or is it not necessary for us to have a big standing army?” which they answered by saying, “Yes, undoubtedly it is necessary.” The Pasha then asked, “If so, from whom shall we take men for this army, from the Christians or from the Muslims?” to which they answered, “From the Muslims, assuredly.”

Ibrahim then reportedly said, “It is necessary for you, if you are true Muslims and wish the welfare of the nation, to send in your young men from every city and from every village, so that they may learn from their youth the art of war and be trained in it, and so be ready in case of need.” The account then states that they considered this and then said to the Pasha: “Your order be upon our heads, but there is no need for us to give up our boys and young men for war. When the enemy of our religion enters our country, all of us, young and old, will go out and fight and willingly shed our blood for our faith and our fatherland.”

But Ibrahim asked, “How do you expect to wage war if you know not the art thereof?”

and they responded, “This art of war, known to our grandfathers, who withstood the enemy and defended their country until now, is also known to us, and as they once did, so we also hope to do in the future.”

Ibrahim then told them, “War is not the place for a herd of useless men: technique and skill are required. This order I want carried out without delay, beginning here in Jerusalem.” Then, according to the chronicler, “...All of the Muslims of these districts knew not what to do. Coming together, some of them decided to revolt, saying: ‘It is far better to die with our arms than to give our children to everlasting slavery without the hope of ever seeing them again.’”<sup>6</sup>

Three days later, on April 28, Ibrahim Pasha departed for Jaffa.<sup>7</sup>

William Thomson, an American missionary stationed in Jerusalem at this time, wrote on May 19, 1834 that he had “met many fellaheens, armed and equipped for war.” He “asked one of the Fellahs who came down to us, if he was shooting birds? With a bitter smile, he said, my birds are in Jaffa, and my lead is for the Pasha.” He explained that the disturbances were due to “an order from the pasha to take every fifth man to be a soldier, at which the mountaineers are greatly enraged.” He said that they “swore by their prophet that they would never submit to be made ‘*nezzam*,’” as the Egyptian soldiery were called. Thomson said that their “greatest objections are ridiculous enough, but strikingly characterize the feelings of the people. The pasha shaves off their long beards and puts on the *Nezzam* [*sic*] dress, very much like the Frank; which two things are an abomination in the eyes of the people. One poor woman complained bitterly that the pasha ‘made them all become young again.’”<sup>8</sup>

An outbreak in Salt, the Transjordanian center of influence for the Tuqan family, was the first reported incident of peasants and bedouin joining forces against Muhammad ‘Ali’s army. Shortly afterwards the Ta’amara Bedouin, a tribe living in and around Bethlehem, joined the villagers of Sair in the *sanjaq* of Hebron and defeated the troops led by the Khedival governor of that district. This group continued to oppose Ibrahim Pasha until the withdrawal of his army in 1840.<sup>9</sup>

What happened next was unprecedented. Unfortunately, we have no documentary evidence of the planning that went into this first large-scale rebellion against the Khedival regime. However, it is clear that this rebellion was not spontaneous, but was coordinated by the leading notables of the cities of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Hebron, perhaps encouraged by the Ottoman officials of the city, or, even by the Porte, the Ottoman government in Istanbul, itself.

On 8 May 1834, it was reported that peasants surrounded the city of Jerusalem, barring all of the city gates. Ten thousand men from Nablus, Hebron, Jerusalem, and Gaza began to attack the walls of Jerusalem, but were repulsed by soldiers. Then, five days later, there was an earthquake, which the Muslims of Jerusalem believed “to have been caused by Ibrahim Pasha’s attempt to take soldiers from that sacred city—a thing never



Jerusalem under Egyptian administration (1830s). Source: *Sacred Law in the Holy City*

attempted before.”<sup>10</sup> For a period of five days, the fighting ceased. Then, on 19 May, the people of Silwan pointed out to the leaders of the rebellion an abandoned sewer running from near Dung Gate into a mill in the Jewish quarter of the city. People gathered near Dung Gate [*Bab al-Maghariba*] and on Sunday, 20 May, 36 peasants and residents of Jerusalem crawled through the sewer into the city. They then went to the Dung Gate and threw it open, letting in the rest of the peasants.<sup>11</sup> The commander of the garrison (the *bimbashi*) Rashid Bey withdrew his troops into the inner fortress (*qala'a*), where they took up defensive positions.

Some of the Muslims in Jerusalem, who had claimed to Ibrahim Pasha that they had turned in their guns, appeared fully armed and joined the rebels in looting the houses

of the officers in charge of defending the gates and walls of the city: the looters rushed back to their homes with whatever they could carry. Five hundred soldiers left the citadel and attacked looters. They then began to loot the city themselves in reprisal for the destruction of their property, until their commander put a stop to it. Carnage followed. The casualties reported on that day included 50 peasants, 16 townspeople, and five soldiers. The following day the peasants renewed their attacks. After a brief counterattack, Rashid Bey once again withdrew into the citadel. Jerusalemites opened Damascus Gate, allowing 2,000 rebels from Nablus into the city. They surrounded the citadel and began firing.

*Then young and old fell to looting, beginning with the house of the Mirilais [mir-alay] (officers in charge of the fortifications of the city), whence they removed the heavy articles which had been left behind, such as pillows, blankets and wooden tables. Then they looted the Jewish houses in the same way. The following night, the fellaheen, with some low-class bandits of Jerusalem began to loot the shops of the Jews, the Christians, the Franks, and then the Muslims. The grocers, the shoemakers and every other dealer suffered alike. Within two or three days there was not one shop intact in the market, for they smashed the locks and the doors and seized everything of value.*

*Many of the Jerusalem Muslims had had time to remove from their shops everything of value, and left behind only useless things. Now they declared that the soldiers had taken the valuable things, and they showed themselves to have a good cause of hatred against the army. The market was a miserable and pitiable sight. It looked as if it had been deserted for five years. Scattered here and there, were victuals, gewgaws, old cushions and mattresses, which they had torn open in the hope of finding money in them. In many places they dug up the shops suspecting that the owners might have hidden the 'whites' (silver money) or anything else. The citizens protested again this, but nobody listened to them, because they were few in number, compared to the fellaheen. Everybody came to take and none returned empty-handed. During the following days they began to strip and loot the houses of the Orthodox, the Franks, and the Armenians, but the leaders of the fellaheen and the shaykhs prevented them from by telling them that if they harmed the Rayahs [ri'aya—in this context referring to Christians and Jews], they would incur the displeasure of the Royal powers. In spite of this, they continued to loot the uninhabited houses every night...."<sup>12</sup>*

This chaotic event became known as “the time of the entrance of the peasants into Jerusalem” or “the time the peasants entered Jerusalem.”<sup>13</sup>

On 21 May, Commander of the Citadel Rashid Bey had arrested the ‘*ulama*’ of the city, including the *mufti*, Tahir Afandi al-Husayni, the *naqib al-’ashraf*, ‘Umar Afandi al-Husayni, as well as the *bashkatib* Muhammad ‘Ali al-Khalidi, and other prominent Jerusalemites. However, when the 2,000 men from Nablus joined the rebels, the Commander of the Citadel withdrew from the city walls into the citadel and the city was taken. The looting of residential and commercial districts in the city continued. Some 20,000 ‘peasants’ reportedly overran the city. On May 23, government warehouses for storing provisions and the government granary were looted.<sup>14</sup>

The next day Ibrahim Pasha left Jaffa for Jerusalem. Rebel scouts reported his movements along the route and on 25 May, the rebels withdrew from Jerusalem. A new campaign began along the road with ambushes on Ibrahim Pasha’s forces. It took two days and two nights for the Pasha’s retinue to cover a five-hour distance. During this time, Ibrahim Pasha lost 1,500 of his 9,000 soldiers, 500 of whom never made it back to Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Thomson reported on 24 May that “[r]eports from the seat of war become more alarming. The whole of the mountains, from Nabloos to Hebron, are in commotion. The governor of Jerusalem has fled; and his father [Qasim al-Ahmad] who was governor last year, and displaced, is at the head of the rebels. It is confidently asserted that the city had been taken and plundered.”<sup>16</sup>

On 27 May, Ibrahim Pasha returned to Jerusalem but refused to enter the city. He encamped at his headquarters on Mt. Zion. The next day he offered pardons to those who had participated in the rebellion, but none surrendered. The Pasha then set out in pursuit with 3,000 men, killing 300 and capturing 500 rebels. Seventeen rebel leaders were imprisoned, and the rest freed.<sup>17</sup>

On 30 May, Ibrahim Pasha returned to Jerusalem with 7,500 captives, as well as livestock and armaments. The following day the village of Bayt Jala was attacked by soldiers and 33 Christian men and women were killed on suspicion of looting. The Pasha stopped the massacre, but confiscated the livestock belonging to the village. On 1 June, the Ta’amara, reportedly armed with 1,000 guns, began to defend themselves and Christians in Bethlehem against looting Khedival troops, but would not participate in attacking Ibrahim Pasha.<sup>18</sup>

In the ongoing campaign of insurgency against the Pasha, on 4 June, he and his force of 4,000 men were attacked near the Pools of Solomon. Fifteen hundred men commanded by Rashid Bey, one of Ibrahim Pasha’s lieutenants and the commander of the citadel of Jerusalem, were set upon. Rashid Bey himself was killed and 800 of his soldiers were killed or captured. The prisoners were taken to Hebron. Victorious peasants then besieged Ibrahim Pasha on Mount Zion, where he had fled for refuge.



From 4-8 June, firewood and flour for baking bread were in short supply in the city of Jerusalem; meanwhile the rebellion spread to Nablus, Ramla, Lydda, Jaffa, and Acre. Rebels captured Tiberias and Safad. Bedouins attacked Karak, killing the 200 soldiers garrisoned there.

On 30 June, Muhammad ‘Ali himself arrived in Jaffa. Thomson reported the spectacle:

*Early this morning the Marina, or ‘Street that is called straight,’ was lined all the way from the landing to the apartments fitted up for the Vice Roy, with the finest troops in the army; a large band of music being placed in the centre. At one o’clock two beautiful corvettes arrived, and commenced firing a salute at about a half an hour’s distance from the anchorage, which was instantly returned by the whole fleet and batteries. At four o’clock the yards were manned, and with the roar of cannon from the fleet and forts his highness disembarked. It was a magnificent sight. I had an excellent opportunity to observe the movements and deportment of his highness, both when he was rowed down to the landing, and as he returned on his splendid horse. Without professing to know how a king ought to behave, I saw nothing but what appeared to me to be natural, dignified, and in perfect keeping with the character of a great man. At an equal distance from carelessness and that affected hauteur of the Turk, he saluted every one, bowing gracefully to the crowd on either side, as he passed along. This conduct greatly surprised the people.[...]*

*Mohammed is a fine looking old man. His dress is Turkish, not nezzam; neat, without anything to distinguish it from that of other Turkish gentlemen. His beard is white, his countenance ruddy and fair to look upon, his eye lively and expressive; although close upon the confines of that space allotted to the life of man, he has a surprising vigor and activity in all his movements. There are not many parallel cases on record; and perhaps no man living, who, all things considered, has accomplished so much, and been so uniformly successful, as Mohammed Ali.<sup>19</sup>*

Two days later he met his son at Ramla, and then they returned together to Jaffa. In Ramla, Muhammad ‘Ali asked Ibrahim Pasha about “the elders of Jerusalem, standing by in great fear.” Ibrahim replied: “They are the rulers and notables of Jerusalem.” Then, showing his well-known contempt for the ‘ulama’, “the old man frowned, looked at them from tip to toe for a while, and then, shaking his head, he sighed, but said nothing.”<sup>20</sup>



Commemorative coin for Ibrahim Pasha's military campaign, 1848 - 1948. The text reads: "Peace be upon Ibrahim. He led his army from victory."  
Source: S. Tamari

Soon after Qasim al-Ahmad had turned against Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad 'Ali ordered that he and his sons, Yusuf and Muhammad, and his allies 'Abdullah Jarrar, 'Isa al-Barqawi, and Nasr al-Mansur were fugitives and were to be captured.<sup>21</sup> The Khedive also ordered his ally Amir Bashir al-Shihab of the Lebanon to join forces with Ibrahim Pasha in the Province of Sidon. Sulayman 'Abd al-Hadi and Ibrahim Abu Ghush had petitioned for the release of Jabr Abu Ghush, who meanwhile had been convinced in prison to join forces with Ibrahim Pasha. Muhammad 'Ali ordered his release and in a short time Jabr was appointed *mutasallim* of Jerusalem.

Concerned about the impending arrival of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha with an army of 15,000 new troops, the notables of Jerusalem tried to arrange a truce between the Pasha and the rebels through the *mufti*, Tahir Afandi al-Husayni. 'Isa Amar, the leader of the rebels from the district of Hebron, set the following conditions for a truce: a general amnesty and pardon for the rebels; the discontinuation of conscription in exchange for a payment of 1,000 *qurush* per man; and the abolition of illegal taxes.

Ibrahim Pasha rejected these demands, but continued talking with the *mufti* through Husayn 'Abd al-Hadi.

Ibrahim Pasha then received a letter from Qasim al-Ahmad, now the recognized leader of the rebels in Jabal Nablus, asking for a pardon so that he could negotiate a truce. Ibrahim Pasha, with help from the *mufti* and Hussein 'Abd al-Hadi wrote a letter guaranteeing safe conduct for Qasim. With the *mufti* and Hussein 'Abd al-Hadi acting as guarantors, Qasim met the Pasha. Ibrahim rebuked Qasim for his betrayal. Qasim claimed that he had been forced to participate and apologized. The Pasha accepted his word, dressed him in a cloak of honor, and reappointed him as *mutasallim* of Nablus and Jerusalem, as well as spokesman for the rebels.<sup>22</sup>

Shortly after this, ‘Umar Afandi, the *naqib al-ashraf* of Jerusalem, Tahir Afandi, the *mufti* of Jerusalem; Muhammad ‘Ali al-Khalidi, the *bashkatib*; Shaykh ‘Abdullah Budayri, a scholar; Muhammad Abu Saud, the former *naqib* of Jerusalem; and Muhammad ‘Ali al-Husayni, the *naqib al-ashraf* of Jerusalem, were all exiled and imprisoned in Egypt on the orders of Muhammad ‘Ali. Other notables throughout the area, including Sheikh ‘Abdullah al-Fahum of Nazareth and former employees of ‘Abdullah Pasha were exiled or executed, including ‘Abdullah Pasha’s former chief advisor Mas’ud al-Mahdi, and his son, ‘Isa al-Mahdi, the *mutasallim* of Safad, who were beheaded.<sup>23</sup>

On 23 June, Qasim al-Ahmad repudiated his truce with Ibrahim Pasha, and called the men of Nablus to arms. According to Neophytus, Qasim al-Ahmad wrote to the notables of Jerusalem:

*Be it known to you all that the peace made between the deceitful Ibrahim Pasha and you and me was not a true one, but a trick by which he might escape the immediate danger, for he was then at our mercy. But now, when reinforcements have come to him, he disregards the peace and the oaths, and behold, he has already set out to destroy us. Take you, therefore, your arms and use them courageously against the tyrant. Fight bravely for your homes and your honour, for your rights and especially for your beloved children of whom he is thinking to deprive you for military service. Strike now not against the unbeliever, but against your fellow-Muslims.<sup>24</sup>*

The rebel strategy was to divide their forces to defend themselves on three fronts. Thirty thousand men formed into three divisions, one commanded by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qasim stationed at Ras al-’Ayn, the second north to guard the approaches to the Galilee, and the third remained in Nablus.

On 24 June, bedouins, unallied with Qasim, attacked Ibrahim Pasha’s camp. For the next four days a battle raged just outside Nablus. On 28 June, Ibrahim Pasha took Ras al-’Ayn and the rebels there surrendered. According to Spyridon’s report, peasants who were taken captive were sent to Egypt “to learn the art of war in a royal mode and not after the fellah fashion.” As for old men captured in the fighting, their right hands were cut off with the words: “Let them now learn how to fight their lords.” Therefore, when the leaders surrendered, “as is the custom of the Arabs, most of them sent their [*shaykhs*] and their notables to the Pasha, all wearing handkerchiefs around their necks denoting guilt and servile submission.”<sup>25</sup> Nablus was occupied by Ibrahim’s forces.

At this point, the revolt fell apart. Shaykh Qasim al-Ahmad and his sons Yusuf and Mahmud fled across the Jordan River to the town of Kerak. On 1 July, Ibrahim Pasha pursued them with 1,500 men after wrecking Kerak. Between 1-31 August, Ibrahim pursued Qasim al-Ahmad and captured him in Transjordan. The leader of the



The Kishleh Prisoner in Jaffa Gate. One of the few surviving public buildings built during the administration of Ibrahim Pasha in Jerusalem. *Source: Library of Congress, Eric Matson Collection*

rebellion was then taken to Damascus where he was beheaded, along with his fellow rebel Arsab al-Kahol.<sup>26</sup> His sons were beheaded in Acre, and many of his followers were hunted down and killed.<sup>27</sup> When the Ottomans ultimately restored their power, public sentiment in favor of Qasim al-Ahmad was so strong that the *shaykhs* of Nablus presented a “memorial” to the Ottoman military commander Izzet Pasha petitioning that “the appointment of Suleiman Abdul Hadi [as the *mutasallim* of their town] may be revoked in favor of Sheik Mahmoud-el-Kassim ibn [the son of] Kasim al-Ahmed.”<sup>28</sup>

Between 1-30 July, Jabr Abu Ghush, the new *mutasallim* of Jerusalem, undertook the disarming of the local population.

Those found with muskets or knives were executed. In addition, Muhammad ‘Ali ordered the beheading of the *mutasallims* of Lydda and Ramla, and the *shaykhs* of the villages near Jaffa that had joined in the rebellion. Acre was retaken at a loss of 2,000 villagers’ lives. With the rebellion crushed, and the local leadership destroyed, Muhammad ‘Ali was confident enough to leave for Cairo on 6 July. Ibrahim Pasha returned to Jerusalem with 30,000 conscripts on 20 July.

Those found with muskets or knives

Then, to stamp out the last pockets of insurrection, on 24 July, Hebron was besieged and its inhabitants massacred, except for those who sought sanctuary at the Tomb of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Muslim and Jewish girls were reportedly raped and killed. Six hundred and thirty young men were captured and sent to Egypt to serve in the army. To impress his total victory upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Ibrahim personally oversaw a thorough search of the city for arms on the 29th and 30th of July. On 18 September, he exiled the eminent *bashkatib*, Muhammad ‘Ali al-Khalidi to Acre and had the lesser rebel leaders beheaded at the gates of the city.<sup>29</sup>

The remarkable coalescence of the ‘*umara*’ of Nablus with the ‘*ulama*’ of Jerusalem, the *ra’aya* of the region, and the *shaykhs* of the various bedouin tribes resulted from the specific financial and military policies of the Khedival government. This rebellion arose not out of political rivalry, but out of the draconian changes introduced in the area by Muhammad ‘Ali’s government. In the words of Qasim al-Ahmad, the leader of the revolt, the peasants, townspeople and elites of the region joined together to follow his call to “[f]ight bravely for your homes and your honour, for your rights and especially for your beloved children of whom he is thinking to deprive you for military

service.” The policies of the Khedival regime aimed at securing and modernizing the area, and overturning the political and fiscal Ottoman order that was previously rooted firmly in Sunni Muslim conceptions of administration and justice under the rule of law. These policies had been promulgated in order to allow new forms of taxation and conscription, and, following the suppression of the rebellion, would permit, for the first time in Islamic history, corporal punishment of *‘ulama’* who contravened laws issued by the Khedival government. Muhammad ‘Ali’s overturn of the norms of justice under the law moved the Muslims of Jerusalem to rebellion.

With the rebellion crushed and its leadership gone, Ibrahim Pasha was poised to implement the policies that would bring Syria under the complete control of Muhammad ‘Ali. The devastation and depopulation of the area was clear. In a letter dated 17 November, 1834, American missionaries Dodge and Whiting wrote, “One thing with which we have been most struck is the depressed and wretched state of the whole country around, in consequence of the very rigorous policy adopted by the government since the late rebellion.” They stressed that the “people were disarmed, except such as fled from their houses, taking their arms with them. The number of muskets demanded of them was so great, that many were obliged to purchase them for the occasion,” adding, “[t]his measure has caused much distress in some parts of the country.” In addition, “to punish the leaders in the rebellion [...] some were imprisoned and bastinadoed (that is, beating of the soles of the feet until all flesh was removed, and which frequently led to death), and others beheaded,” and to “punish those who had fled or were concealed, their property was destroyed, that is, their olive and fig trees were cut down, and their houses demolished.” They observed that

*what the poor people seem to feel most of all, and the dread of which was the cause of their rebellion, is, that large numbers of them are demanded and dragged off to be recruited into the pasha’s army. From various towns and villages in the mountains of Judea, Nablous, and Hebron, several thousands of men and boys, we understand, have been gathered and forced into the service, either to be trained as soldiers, or employed on the public works.*

They completed the report noting, “The distress and discontent necessarily caused by these measures is very great, and the effect on business of all kinds, especially agriculture, is most disastrous.”<sup>30</sup>

The rebellion against Muhammad ‘Ali’s Khedival policies that took place in Jerusalem from April to October 1834, was not a reaction to Ibrahim Pasha’s westernized army, nor was it due to “Islamic conservatism,” as suggested by the literature on modernization in the Ottoman Empire written by scholars like Abir, Ma’oz, and Shamir.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the local elites and the taxpayers—Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—all suffered at the hands of the *nezzam*, as the events in Bethlehem and Hebron illustrate. Many observers have asserted that the rebellion was against reform per se. Rather, the



Muhammad Ali. Source: *In the House of Muhammad 'Ali*

organization of the Khedival regime in Jerusalem, Nablus, and Hebron showed the *afandiyat* and the *umara'* the dangers that its policies posed for them, leading them to rebel. Their actions aimed at protecting the established privileges and prerogatives that they had enjoyed under Ottoman law. The rebellion was against specific Khedival policies that overturned the laws of Ottoman provincial administration and were aimed at the total usurpation of the rights of the Sultan and his provincial administration to receive and administer the distribution of both *miri* and *awqaf* revenues, to impose and enforce the collection of illegal taxes from both the *ri'aya* and the *ahali* of *Bilad al-Sham* and to conscript them for indeterminate, harsh military service in distant areas. While these measures may have been intended to bring about reform, they were viewed by the taxpaying population and the Muslim ruling classes as unjust.

Already chafing at the excesses of the Khedival regime, the *afandiyat* of Jerusalem and the *umara'* of the Nablus region led a general rebellion to prevent the implementation of Khedival policies. The policies implemented in *Bilad al-Sham* by the Khedival regime sought to radically overturn the *de jure* rights and privileges enjoyed by all classes of local society—taxpaying villagers, bedouin, *timar* holders and the '*ulama'* under Ottoman administrative law. The spread of the insurgency throughout *Bilad al-Sham* during the summer of 1834 demonstrates that these were popular rebellions against what was widely perceived as the imposition of unjust rule.

The Muslim community, with its diverse social classes, adhered to a clear sense of justice under Ottoman law. That law, a combination of sacred law, administrative codes, and local customs and usages, defined the rights and responsibilities of the governed towards the authorities. When those rights and responsibilities were abused, by overtaxation, unauthorized conscription, arbitrary decrees, and other types of illegal orders, the Muslims of Jerusalem and the surrounding districts rebelled. The role of the *mufiti* of Jerusalem as mediator and leader during the rebellion, and even after the suppression of the revolt, was significant, but ultimately unsustainable during the following decades as local political rivalries intensified during the period of relative neglect in the years following the reestablishment of direct Ottoman control over the region.

Local leaders joined together in an attempt to overthrow the Khedival regime, giving them a brief moment of political unity. The rebellion aimed at the restoration of Ottoman rule in the region. Such a restoration offered the hope for a return to the legal standards upheld by the *Shari'a* and administrative law, and with it, a redefinition of the status of the various segments of provincial society and their relationships to the political center. The failure of the rebellion, the execution and exile of its leaders, conscription into the Egyptian army, and the continuing flight of the male population enabled Ibrahim Pasha to secure the area for Muhammad 'Ali, and ultimately, for the introduction of powerful Western interests in the region against the will of the local population.<sup>32</sup>

In conclusion, what are the lessons of 1834? In this case, revolt by the local peasantry against injustice as defined in classical Sunni political philosophy represented the interests of the entire local population against the oppressive policies of Muhammad Ali Pasha. This failed rebellion was fought for freedom from the tyranny of an authoritarian regime encroaching into every aspect of the economy and society. The battle was to save their children from death in distant lands, fighting battles that were not their own. The rebellion was fought to preserve life and their future. At this time, there was no incipient nationalism or ideas of challenging the class structure of the empire. The heroes of this rebellion were the men who challenged Muhammad 'Ali's right to deprive them of their sons. Their defeat ought not to be seen as a triumph of modernization but instead as the subordination of an important region to a centralizing state intent upon monopolizing power and wealth to pursue its leader's ambition to enter the arena of international politics. In the second part of my book, I trace the effects of Muhammad 'Ali's "modernizing" policies upon the men and women in the region of Jerusalem during a time when Jerusalem was drawn increasingly into the realm of international politics.<sup>33</sup>

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Judith Mendelsohn Rood, *Sacred Law in the Holy City: The Khedival Challenge to the Ottomans as seen from Jerusalem, 1829-1841* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-6.

<sup>3</sup> S. N. Spyridon, ed., *Annals of Palestine: 1821-1841—a Manuscript by the Monk Neophytus of Cyprus* (Jerusalem: Syrian Orphanage Press, 1938). Altogether, this source has much to commend it, and although its outlook is subjective, the manuscript seems to be based upon firsthand information and reports. Neophytus appears to have known the Arabic-Turkish language used in Jerusalem, and because his account has a sense

of immediacy it helps to fill in important gaps in other works.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-140.

<sup>5</sup> Lt. Mordechai Gichon, *Atlas Carta li-Toldot Eretz Yisra me-Baytar ve-ad Tel Hai [Carta's Atlas of the Land of Israel from Baytar to Tel Hai]* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1969), 91-3, Map No. 165, 92, and Asad Jibrail Rustum, *The Royal Archives of Egypt and the Disturbances in Palestine, 1834* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, Oriental Series, 1938) 53.

<sup>6</sup> Spyridon, 78-9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 114. Spyridon, Rustum and Thomson

(in the *Missionary Herald*) do not always agree chronologically: dates used here must be taken with some caution. Thomson's dates come firsthand; they are therefore more certain.

<sup>8</sup> *The Missionary Herald*, Vol. 31:2 (February 1835), 44. This kind of comment has led to much misunderstanding of the reasons of the revolt.

'Nizam' was an Ottoman term for regular soldiers.

<sup>9</sup> Rustum, *Disturbances*, 56. Apparently Ibrahim Pasha never caught up with Shaykh Muhammad of the Ta'amara. Robinson reported that this outlaw, with a price on his head, "was known to be often in Jerusalem, and was on good terms with the convent in Bethlehem. . . . he was of course on good terms with all the other outlaws and Arabs . . . He was a noble-looking man . . . [and h]e fulfilled his contract [as guide] honourably . . .," Robinson, 154, 319.

<sup>10</sup> *The Missionary Herald*, Vol. 31:3 (March 1835), 87. Rustum, *Uâul*, II, 141, No. 48 dated 16 *Muharram* 1250/28 May 1834.

<sup>11</sup> Spyridon, 76-80. I did not locate the legal document mentioned here. On December 14, 1986 at the home of Shaykh As'ad al-Imam al-Husayni, I interviewed 'Abdullah Budayri, a descendant of Shaykh 'Abdullah Budayri, who was one of the leaders of the rebellion, and who was exiled by Muhammad 'Ali (see Rustum, *Disturbances*, 70). He also mentioned that another ancestor, Shaykh 'Urabi Budayri, was killed by Khedival soldiers at the entrance of *Bab al-Nazir*. He believed that the fountain known as 'Sabil al-Budayri' was dedicated to him on that spot, but actually it dates from the Mamluk period, when it was constructed in honor of the scholar Shaykh Budayri, the founder of the family. Ishaq Musa al-Husayni, *Al-abniya al-athariya f'il-quds al-Islamiya* (Jerusalem: Awqaf Administration of Jerusalem, 1977) a translation of the English work published by The British School of Archeology in Jerusalem, 21. This useful source, with its large format map and its indexes, contains information not found in other works.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* This is the only hint that the Porte may have offered tacit support to the rebel leaders that I discovered in all the evidence researched.

<sup>13</sup> *LCRJ* 319, 25 and 48.

<sup>14</sup> Spyridon, 79-85.

<sup>15</sup> Gichon has Ibrahim Pasha's troops at 5,000; 92.

<sup>16</sup> *The Missionary Herald* 31:2 (February 1835), 46.

<sup>17</sup> Gichon, 93, Map No. 166; Spyridon, 85.

<sup>18</sup> Spyridon, 88-92.

<sup>19</sup> *The Missionary Herald* 31:3 (March 1835), 90-1.

<sup>20</sup> Spyridon, 98.

<sup>21</sup> Rustum, *Uâul*, II, 115-8, No. 134 dated 25 *Safar* -12 *Rabi' I* 1250/3-20 July 1834.

<sup>22</sup> Spyridon, 92, 98. See also Rustum, *Uâul*, II, 115-8, No. 134. Truce was dated 11 *Rabi' II* 1250/ 18 July 1834.

<sup>23</sup> Gichon, 91, Spyridon, 94, Rustum, *Disturbances*, 69-71, F.O. 78/243 11 August 1834, Farren to Palmerston, Rustum, *Uâul*, II, 121-2. Husayn 'Abd al-Hadi signed the orders; it is unclear whether this was his own decision or ordered by his superiors. It is possible that this initiative allowed him to settle up some old scores. See also Adel Manna, "Continuity and Change in the Socio-political Elite in Palestine During the late Ottoman Period," in Thomas Philipp, ed., *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century* (Stuttgart; Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), 69-89, 73.

<sup>24</sup> Spyridon, 94. Donna Robinson Divine cites W. M. Thomson and Rustum in her assertion that the truce fell apart over the refusal of peasants to deliver grain to Ibrahim Pasha's starving army in *Politics and Society in Ottoman Palestine: The Arab Struggle for Survival and Power* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 60 and 75 n. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Spyridon, 115.

<sup>26</sup> F.O. 78/243 20 September 1834 Farren to Palmerston.

<sup>27</sup> Gichon, 91, Spyridon, 95-6, 101-7. Rustum, *Uâul*, II, 165-6, No. 165 provides information concerning the financial legacy of the brothers Yusuf and Muhammad—this amounted to a total value of 8,300 *qurush* which was to be liquidated and the cash to be sent to the *Diwan al-Khazina* and the *Diwan al-Nas* in Nablus. Ahmad and Qasim al-Ahmad's legacies remained undiscovered. 13 *Dhu al-Qa'da* 1250/12 April 1835.

<sup>28</sup> Cunningham, 198.

<sup>29</sup> Spyridon, 96-101. 30,000 is an exaggerated number, but again, carries the sense of a large force.

<sup>30</sup> *The Missionary Herald* 31:10 (October, 1835), 274.

<sup>31</sup> Rood, 20-21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-190.

<sup>33</sup> In the second part of my book, I trace the effects of Muhammad 'Ali's 'modernizing' policies upon the men and women in the region of Jerusalem during a time when Jerusalem was drawn increasingly into the realm of international politics.