



EDITORIAL

Modernity and Memory

The German engineer Heinrich Meissner (with the white beard) brought technical expertise and administrative ability to the building of the Palestine-Hijaz railway. *Source: The Hejaz Railway.*

This *Jerusalem Quarterly* features a unique mix of historical analysis and memoir that bring forth new perspectives on modernity and change in Palestine and Greater Syria.

Khaled Safi's review and critique of traditional analyses of the Egyptian period raises questions about the how modern statehood has been defined, and challenges those paradigms. "Ma'oz led a generation of scholars to believe that the years 1840-1860 were the beginning of the modern period of Palestinian history," he writes. "I believe that the real turning point came earlier, in the 'early modern' era of Dhahir al-'Umar, setting the stage for substantial changes later under the Egyptians."

Safi critiques the view that modernization was carried in only with the foreign intervention made possible under Egyptian powers; this reflects a familiar patronizing perspective, he says, towards local development and political maturity.

Johnny Mansour, in his description of the ways in which the Hijaz and Palestine

railways built by the Ottomans aided Haifa in developing economically and politically, provides a lens into more advanced expressions of modern state organization and government planning.

The tensions created in Palestine by outside intervention and centralization are attested to in Donn Hutchison's presentation of the memoirs of his father-in-law, Jirius Mansur, who struggled between his father's peasant beliefs and the new world of his British teacher at the Ramallah Friends School in the early 1900s.

These autobiographical excerpts take us up to the Nekbe, where the diaries of Hala Sakikini, edited by Salim Tamari, are remarkable windows into the thoughts of a young girl living in the lead-up to the 1948 War. The writing has a youthfulness and naiveté. "Today, in the evening, we had the first blackout in Jerusalem," Hala tells us in her schoolgirl English. "From our veranda, we could see all of Jerusalem in the dark and so the sky and the stars seemed to us nicer and brighter."

Yusif Sayigh, a pivotal part of the Arab National Fund, that collected money for fighting the Zionist movement in Palestine, was not so worry-free. In these recollections of the period just before the war, Sayigh describes the political atmosphere and his own role in the final hours before Jerusalem's fall.

Every now and then you'd hear that five or six young men had spent a night or two with Ibrahim Abu Diyeh's men protecting Katamon. But that was not a line of defence. You have to have continuity. A few days later, you would ask about these five or six young men and find that three had already left. By the end, when I was taken prisoner of war, we were only 23 young men in the whole of that part of west Jerusalem. And [we were] not really fighters. Three of us had revolvers, but the revolvers were ornaments, décor. What training had I had? Nothing.

This edition of the Jerusalem Quarterly is a rich resource for the collective indicators of a society traversing stages of modernity—the massing of certain types of political and economic power. That kind of modernity is vivid in Safi's descriptions of Bedouin armies driving out the vanquished Egyptians. But the moment when those critical elements are lost is equally vivid in the casting of Palestinian elites and centralized structures far and wide in the 1948 War.