

Editorial

Of Edwin Samuels, seferberlik,
and Tony Blair as a *ciarlatano*¹

JQ 50, published this summer, was a landmark issue, attesting not only to the survival of a journal whose original scope and objectives – reading Jerusalem – were often questioned, but also to its ability to attract a wide spectrum of writers from academia and investigative journalism.

With the present issue, *JQ 51*, we decided to expand this scope to include wider themes that, while pertaining to Jerusalem, are also of broader interest in the region, such as Dolbee's contribution on seferberlik and Hanna Mina. In *JQ 52* we will publish an original contribution by Leila Salloum Elias on Syrians who boarded the *Titanic*. The "Syrians" in this case are turn-of-the-century Shamis who included Lebanese, Palestinians, and Jordanians seeking a better life in the New World and an escape, among other things, from seferberlik.

The passing of Professor Gabi Baramki, a leading Palestinian educator and civil society activist from Jerusalem, happened as we were going to press. By sheer coincidence *JQ* had scheduled the publication of an essay about the Baramki house in Musrara, built by his father during the Mandate, expropriated by the Israelis and converted into a "Museum on the Seam." Baramki's encounter with his own patrimony is narrated here in its absurdist dimensions in a selection from Suad Amiry's forthcoming book, *Golda Slept Here*. There could not have been a better tribute to his memory.

Nicola Ziadeh's memoirs of Jerusalem and the north in the 1920s recall the historian's youthful adventures before he made Beirut his home. Ziadeh, a leading historian of Bilad al-Sham and the Maghreb died at the ripe age of 99 in 2006. We offer the first English translations of three selections from his copious autobiographical writings. He recalls a period in his own

1 Ciarlatano: early seventeenth-century term denoting an itinerant seller of supposed remedies.

lifetime when Palestine, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Syria had just come under the British and French mandates that replaced Ottoman unity, necessitating passports and travel permits to visit what was still viewed as one's own homeland.

JQ 51 also pays tribute to a giant of Arabic social realist literature. In "Seferberlik and Bare Feet: Rural Hardship, Cited Dreams, and Social Belonging in 1920s Syria," Samuel Dolbee discusses the persistent impact of seferberlik on Hanna Mina and his generation in Latakia and other cities and villages of the Syrian littoral. The title refers to the manner in which "shoes functioned as symbols of social status, signaling the economic means to afford a barrier between the natural world and the human body."

In his analysis of the "Jerusalem Master-plan" Francesco Chioldelli tackles the objectives of Israeli comprehensive planning for the next four decades, revealing the state's vision for dealing with the eastern part of the city in the twenty-first century. One feature of this plan is an official realization that the 30:70 formula for an Arab-Jewish demographic balance is no longer feasible – and that planning should take into account a more likely 40:60 ratio.

Rema Hammami muses on the transformations of Sheikh Jarrah, her home for the past thirty years. This abode of the Jerusalem upper classes has been recast as a melange of left-behind elderly ladies, refugees, the Shin Bet and a shopkeeper with hypertension, plus a creeping invasion by radical Jewish settlers. "In all," she writes "the settler master plan for the neighborhood envisages evicting more than five hundred Palestinians from SJ and building three hundred settler homes in their place. The two pits that were supposed to be Palestinian hotels are still pits. The rubble cemetery in the neighbourhood finally got a building permit. Still under construction, the four-story building has been rented for \$1.5 million by Tony Blair in his role as representative of the Middle East Quartet. He spends four days a month here and has never met the families losing their homes in the neighborhood, nor ever made a statement about the plight facing the Palestinians of Sheikh Jarrah or of Jerusalem."

Edwin Samuel was the son of the first High Commissioner and the lesser known of the two. Penny Johnson's reading of Viscount Edwin Samuel's *Life in Jerusalem* is a fascinating rediscovery of this gem of Mandate memoirs. Having served in virtually every department of the mandate government – including as District Officer for Ramallah, director of the Palestine Broadcasting Service, and senior immigration officer – the younger Samuel had full access to, if not control of, British policies in Palestine. Yet he was a double agent – "kind of" – for the Zionist movement and its British institutions, especially when it came to immigration policies, in which he was heavily involved. Samuel's eccentric attitude to the holy places and the sacred geography of Palestine was both amusing and outrageous. This essay is intended to be the first of a series re-reading a number of classical works on Jerusalem. Readers are invited to send their suggestions for new/old texts.