



# Jerusalem's Ottoman Modernity: The Times and Lives of Wasif Jawhariyyeh<sup>1</sup>

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*"I was born on Wednesday morning the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1897, according to the Western calendar, which happened to be the eve of the Orthodox New Year. At the moment my father was preparing a tray of knafeh for the occasion as was customary*

<sup>1</sup> This essay is based on Wasif Jawhariyyeh's hand written memoirs (three volumes). The manuscript is being edited and will be published in Arabic as *Oud wa Barood: The Jerusalem Diaries of Wasif Jawhariyyeh (1904-1948)*, ed. Issam Nassar and Salim Tamari (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 2001). This essay deals only with the first volume of the diaries. I would like to thank Mr. George Jawhariyyeh (in Athens) and Ms. Aya Jawhariyyeh Shaker (in Jerusalem) for making Wasif's manuscripts and photographic collection available to the Institute and for their invaluable help during the editing of the manuscript.

then in Eastern Orthodox households. I was named Wasif after the Damascene Wasif bey al-'Adhem who was then my father's close friend and the sitting judge in Jerusalem's Criminal Court."<sup>2</sup> Thus opens the memoirs of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, one of Jerusalem's most illustrious citizens: composer, 'oud player, poet, and chronicler.

Jawhariyyeh's memoirs span a period of sixty years (1904-1968) of Jerusalem's turbulent modern history, covering four regimes and five wars. More significantly it marks the transition of Palestinian society into modernity and the break-out of its Arab population beyond the ghettoized confines of the walled city.

His father, Jiryis (Girgis), was the *mukhtar* of the Eastern Orthodox community in the Old City (1884) and a member of Jerusalem's municipal council, serving under the Mayors Salim al-Husseini and Faidy al-Alami. Trained as a lawyer he was well versed in Muslim Shari'

<sup>2</sup> Wasif Jawhariyyeh began writing his memoirs systematically in 1947 in Jericho at the Agricultural Development Society in Jericho on the basis of earlier notes he had in his possession. He continued writing in Beirut during the sixties. That he began writing in the 1940s can be gleaned from his comment on the Mascobiyyeh neighborhood during the Ottoman period, where he mentions in passing "today these quarters serve as the center of British intelligence" (p. 220). In a communication from his son, George Jawhariyyeh, however, he informs me that his stepmother Karimeh (Wasif's second wife, now eighty-five), who now lives in Peru, insists that Wasif wrote the whole diary late in his life from memory: "He had total recall and a photographic memory for details." This claim, however, contradicts the various references in the diaries to places and events that indicated that he was writing about them during the Mandate. In addition to the three-volume manuscript, he has left a collection of musical notes and notations, a compendium of poetry, and a large collection of popular proverbs and their interpretation. His late daughter Yusra Armita (died March 2000) used the latter collection in her book on Palestinian folklore, *Al-Funun al-Sha'biyya fi filasteen* (Beirut: The Palestine Research Centre, 1988).

law and commanded several languages, including Greek, Turkish and Arabic. He worked briefly as a government tax assessor, but later turned to private business, becoming a successful silk farmer in Ezariyyeh and proprietor of a public café over the Jraisheh River. He was also a skilled icon maker and amateur musician—which accounts for his encouragement of Wasif to take on the 'oud early in his youth.

His mother, Hilaneh Barakat, descended from a leading Orthodox family from what later became known as the Christian Quarter. Having lived in the Barakat family compound before he moved to Haret al-Sa'diyyeh, his father Girgis became friendly to Hilaneh's father, and when the latter died at an early age, the young Jawhariyyeh took care of the two Barakat children—marrying Hilaneh, who was considerably younger than him, when she reached puberty.

Where do we place the Jawhariyyehs in the social hierarchies of Jerusalem at the turn of the nineteenth century? The material provided by the author is somewhat confusing. On the one hand, the father and grandfather seem to have occupied important public positions in both the Ottoman civil service and in the city's institutions. As mentioned, Jiryis (also known as Girgis) was also a prominent member of the Orthodox Christian community and a delegate to the City Council. But the rest of the family seemed to have passed through a number of more modest occupations. At one point he refers to his grandfather as a shoemaker or tanner. His elder brother Khalil was initiated as a carpenter's apprentice before he was

conscripted into the Ottoman army. Wasif himself worked in a number of odd jobs including, briefly, as a barber's assistant before he turned into an itinerant 'oud player and singer in wedding parties; his main income initially came from employment in the Ottoman and British civil service. It is not clear whether he was paid for his early employment—certainly the family was not happy with his career as a musician and wanted him to settle in a more respectable job. Later on, the family's fortunes improved significantly with the father becoming a prominent lawyer and bailiff. Khalil owned a successful café near Jaffa gate, and Wasif joined government service. We can say with some certainty that the family members occupied that precarious space between artisanal work and the middle ranks of the civil service. From the detailed description of the ceremony accompanying Girgis's funeral it becomes evident that the family had achieved social prominence in the Old City just before the Great War. In any case they were solid urbanites and held a remote, though benevolent, attitude to the peasantry of the neighboring villages with whom both father and son were to have substantial dealings.

It is impossible, however, to understand the Jawhariyyehs placement in pre-Mandate Palestine without relating to their critical bonds as protégés of the Husseini family in Jerusalem: feudal landlords and patricians of the city's inner circle of *a'yan* (notables). Jiryis spent part of his early career looking after the Husseini estates in Jerusalem's western villages, particularly in Khirbet 'Amro. Wasif was "adopted" by

Hussein Effendi, later mayor of Jerusalem, after the death of his father. Hussein Effendi set Wasif up in a number of jobs in the city and ensured that he was treated well in the Ottoman army. The family was on such intimate terms with their patrons that Wasif was entrusted with the welfare of Hussein Effendi's mistress, Persephone, when she became ill.

Wasif's vivid rendition of daily life in Haret al-Sa'diyyeh (situated between Bab al-Sahira and Via Dolorosa) during the first decade of last century marks one of the most valuable records of Palestinian urban life that exists anywhere. The account provides a first-rate primary source for the social historian and the ethnographer. Shifts towards the bourgeoisification of domestic living arrangements are periodized and described in detail:

*During the summer months [of 1904] we would sit around the lowered table for the main meal. Food was served in enameled zinc plates. That year we stopped eating with wooden spoons imported from Anatolia and Greece and replaced them with brass ones that were oxidized periodically. We replaced the common drinking taseh [bowl] tied to the pottery jar with individualized crystal glasses. In 1906 my father acquired single iron beds for each of my siblings, thus ending the habit of sleeping on the floor. What a delight it was to get rid of the burden of having to place our mattresses into the wall enclaves every night.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Wasif Jawhariyyeh MS, vol. 1, p. 11. All subsequent page references refer to volume one of the diary manuscript.

We also gain insight about modes of transport in the Old City:

*My father used to go to work on a white donkey. We had two stables: one outside the house in Haret al-Sa'diyyeh and the second in a lower anteroom inside the house. At the corner we kept coal and wood for the winter days. My brothers and I would feed the donkey daily and take care of removing the saddle and cleaning it after my father came from work. In the evening we would glean the donkey's oats from stones and dirt and mix them with hay. People who saw the donkey would think, from the amount of excessive care we gave it, that it was a pure bred Arabian horse.<sup>4</sup>*

Jawhariyyeh's cognitive map of Jerusalem's neighborhoods and the identification of communal boundaries prevalent in his youth reinforce the view that the division of the city into four confessional quarters was a later development. The new boundaries were demarcated by the British for purposes of preserving equilibrium between the city's populations on the basis of creating a modern sectarian balance between the four ancient communities. The basis of this balance was the preservation of the status quo in the administration of the holy sites carefully negotiated during the late Ottoman period and elaborated and codified in the early Mandate rule over the city.

The diaries implicitly challenge this notion of quarters, based on the regulation

of relations between Jerusalemites in terms of their religious and ethnic habitat.<sup>5</sup> In his rendition of daily life in the alleys of the Old City, we are struck by the weakness of this conception in two respects: one suggests that there was no clear delineation between neighborhood and religion; we see a substantial intermixing of religious groups in each quarter. The boundaries of habitat, furthermore, were the *mahallat*, the neighborhood network of social demarcations within which a substantial amount of communal solidarity is exhibited. Such cohesiveness was clearly articulated in periodic visitations and sharing of ceremonials, including weddings and funerals but also active participation in religious festivities. These solidarities undermined the fixity of the confessional system from a pre-modern (perhaps even primordial) network of affinities.

But the confessional boundaries were being undermined also by the rise of the nationalist movement in Palestine: initially in the context of the constitutional Ottoman movement at the turn of the century when secular intellectuals like Pandeli Jozi and Khalil Sakakini began to desert their religious affiliations and identify with the larger Arab nation. It was further strengthened after the 1908 coup, which received a lot of support among intellectual circles in Jerusalem; and later in the anti-Turkish trends within greater Syrian nationalism. These shifts can be gleaned in

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Yoshua Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: The Old City* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 155-166 (for the Muslim Quarter); pp. 219-237 (for the Christian Quarter); and pp. 315-332 (for the Jewish Quarter).

these memoirs in a haphazard and selective manner. Jawhariyyeh—who was not involved in any political party but was an Ottoman patriot, and later a Palestinian nationalist—clearly believed that the move towards modernity (and presumably post-Ottoman nationalism) was linked to the move outside the city by the rising middle classes.<sup>6</sup> Already members of the notable clans had established bases in Sheikh Jarrah to the north and in Wa'riyyeh to the south by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Within the Jewish population a similar move took place in the construction of the new neighbourhoods of Mea Shearim and Yemin Moshe, signaling a separation of ways between modern Palestinian Arab nationalism and Jewish communal consciousness—even before the entrenchment of Zionism among the city's Jewish population.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Although he was clearly a protégé of the Husseini family, he does not indicate that he was a sympathizer of the Palestine Arab Party, which they led at a later date. When his patron Hussein al-Husseini died, he allied himself with Ragheb al-Nashashibi, the opponent of Haj Amin, without identifying himself with the Defense Party. These shifts should not be read as a mark of opportunism in Jawhariyyeh's attitude, especially since both families conceived of Wasif as an artist and musician and had no political expectations from him. George Jawhariyyeh wrote to me from Athens, however, that Wasif was an enthusiastic supporter of Haj Amin as well as the commander Abdul Qadir al-Husseini. Later on in his life he became a Nasserite. He was also on good terms with both Fakhri and Raghīb al-Nashashibi—although he was very critical of their pro-British policies (letter from Athens, 7 July 2000).

<sup>7</sup> See Rochelle Davis, "Ottoman Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighbourhoods and their Fate in the War* (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies & Badil, 1999), pp. 10-29.

<sup>8</sup> Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the 19th Century: Emergence of the New City* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986), pp. 152-172.

Jawhariyyeh's relationship with the Jewish community of Jerusalem is more complex. His narrative is no doubt colored by retroactive memories of the clashes of the twenties and of 1936 with the Zionist movement, and with a vision mediated by the events of the 1948 war. But he is also aware of a different era when as a teenager he used to participate in the events of Purim (which he describes in great detail, including the costumes he used to wear with his brother Khalil), and in family picnics in the spring to the shrine of Shimon al-Siddiq in Wadi al-Joz. He also mentions a number of Sephardic families with whom his family was on intimate terms, including Elishar, Hazzan, Anteibi, Mani (those from Hebron) and Navon. Wasif himself performed or became acquainted with a number of Jewish musicians—including Shihadeh, Badi'a Masabni's 'oud player.<sup>9</sup> He also mentions the prominent role played by groups of Aleppo Jews known as Dallatiyyeh who resided in Jerusalem. These were Sephardic choral musicians who performed Andalusian music at weddings of Jerusalem Arabs.<sup>10</sup> Before the onset of the Mandate Wasif used to play in a number of Jewish communities surrounding Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> In one such episode he accompanies on his 'oud an Ashkenazi choral group at the house of Khawaja (master) Salmon the Taylor [sic] in Montifiore (i.e. Yemin Moshe), performing what appears to be oriental music. Their Arabic rendition of a well-known piece at

<sup>9</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327ff.

the time ("Na'im Na'im hal-Rihan") was so convoluted that Wasif assumed it was "a new Ashkenazi ballad." His mock-Ashkenazi version of this song became a popular item in his comical repertoire, which he often performed. "This," he adds sadly, "was before the onset of the cursed Balfour Declaration."<sup>12</sup>

### The Growth of the Modern City

For the social historian the Jawhariyyeh diaries also provide a contemporary record of the growth of the city outside the city walls. Although Sheikh Jarrah, Yemin Moshe, and Wa'riyyeh were established before his time, Wasif narrates the growth of Musrara and the Mascobiyyeh neighborhood along Jaffa Road in his boyhood, followed by Talbieh and Katamon in the 1930s. He witnessed the inauguration of the new road linking the Old City to Musrara under the patronage of Mayor Faidy Alami in 1906. This expansion—and a similar one which preceded it in Baq'a—saw the move of hundreds of families (many of them individually named here) to modern tiled buildings and mortar fortified by iron railings. All these new dwellings had rain-fed water reservoirs in their courtyards to sustain them in the long dry summers of Jerusalem. It was in these neighborhoods that the implements of modernity were also introduced: electricity (first in the Notre Dame compound just opposite the New Gate); the automobile on Jaffa Road; the cinematograph; and, above all, the phonograph, which introduced

Jawhariyyeh to the world of Salameh Hijazi and Sayyid Darwish.

The memoirs devote an extended section to musical and artistic life in Jerusalem during the Ottoman period. He includes a long list of 'oud makers, 'oud players, dancers and singers. Many of these performed as family teams at local weddings and later—during the Mandate—in cafés and cabarets outside the walled city. In combination with his special compendium on the typology of musical traditions that prevailed in Palestine at the turn of the century, Jahariyyeh's observations provide us with an original and unique source on the modernization of Arabic music in Bilad al-Sham and the influence of such great innovators as Sheikh Yusif al-Minyalawi and Sayyid Darwish on provincial capitals like Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> In his musical notebook, written before the end of the war, he devised a notation procedure to convert the Arabic-Ottoman quarter-note system for the 'oud into the Western system of musical notation.<sup>14</sup>

Wasif himself grew up in a household whose members were either amateur musicians, 'oud players, or sophisticated listeners ("only my brother Khalil was

<sup>13</sup> Wasif Jawhariyyeh, musical notebook, untitled, undated, and unpublished, 576 pages. This handwritten manuscript, dedicated to the Ottoman Sultan and signed "Wasif Jawhariyyeh - Quds Sharif" was clearly written in the Ottoman period. It is divided into five sections: 1) *Muwashahhat and Anashid* (choral pieces); 2) *Madhahib and Adwar* (theatrical roles), 3) "Love Songs," 4) Balads and Quartets, 5) *Taqatiq* and Erotic Songs.

<sup>14</sup> Musical notebook, "Tarkib al-Nota al-Ifranjiyya 'ala Awtar al-'oud," pp. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

unable to distinguish a good note from a bad one"). His father Jiryis treated Qur'anic incantations as a form of music and taught his children to distinguish good *adhan* (calls to prayer) from bad ones. In one episode Jiryis leads a delegation from Haret al-Sa'diyyeh to the Awqaf Department to request the replacement of a local Imam whose voice he could not stand. When the official in charge questioned Abu Khalil's credentials as a Christian to request the removal of the *mu'adhan*, he responded in verse that was replete with double entendre:

*I hear the call to prayer in a voice,  
which keeps buzzing in my ears...  
I wondered as my ears were  
humming,  
Is this a sacred prayer, or did he  
mean to damage my ears [adhana]?*

When it was pointed out to him that the *mu'adhan* was a poor orphan who had a large family to support, the elder Jawhariyyeh suggested that they relocate him to the mosque by the American Colony (Sa'd wa Sa'eed), where fewer people would suffer from his voice.<sup>15</sup> The Awqaf people were so amused by this outrageous attitude that they obliged Jawhariyyeh and replaced the Sheikh.

A self-taught chronicler and musician, Wasif had a photographic memory, which enabled him to recall not only the dramatic (the entry of Jamal Pasha and later Lord Allenby to Jerusalem), but also the quotidian thrill of the seemingly mundane. Accompanying his father—a trained solicitor, who served as an administrator

for Salim Effendi al-Husseini's rural estates in Khirbet Deir 'Amro and its environments—he was able to observe firsthand the links that tied Jerusalem's feudal aristocracy with the surrounding villages and their peasant population. As he grew up in the shadow of his father, Wasif was able to forge for himself a local reputation as a foremost 'oud player and composer. Playing in the mansions of Jerusalem's urban notables he recorded—with great wit and satire—the musings and tribulations of the city's patricians and paupers.

What comes out of this is an intimate portrait of Jerusalem's Ottoman modernity at the very moment when Zionism was about to clash with an emerging Palestinian nationalism. He recounts the introduction of the phonograph and cinematograph to the city's cafés in 1910, and the wonderment he experienced as he saw the moving images for the first time in the Russian compound ("the entry fee was one Ottoman *bishlik*, paid at the door"). In 1912 at the municipal park by Jaffa Street, he saw for the first time a horseless car ("a Ford" driven by Mr. Vester of the American Colony). In the summer of 1914 he rode a donkey with his father to Baq'a in Jerusalem's southern suburbs to watch the landing of an Ottoman military airplane: "The city was deserted from its inhabitants on this hot summer day. Peddlers made a fortune selling water." Unfortunately the plane crashed in Samakh (Tiberius), and its two Turkish pilots, officers Nuri and Isma'il, were killed. Wasif composed a special eulogy in their honor, which—he claims—was sung throughout the country. In the autumn of that year he did manage to

<sup>15</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 162.



see the landing of his first airplane in Upper Baq'a, manned by German and Turkish officers.

Deeply involved in the affairs of the Arab Orthodox community, Wasif nevertheless exhibits a unique affinity to the Muslim culture of his city. His narrative compels us to rethink the received wisdom about Jerusalem's communal and confessional structure in Ottoman times. Endless stories—many of them scandalous and satirical—draw a picture of profound triadic co-existence of Christian and Jewish families in the heart of what came to be known as the Muslim Quarter. This was not the tolerant co-habitation of protected *dhimmi* minorities, but the positive engagement in the affairs of neighbors whose religion was coincidental to their wider urban heritage. There is also no doubt that the Jawhariyyeh family, though deeply conscious of its Orthodox heritage, was also immersed in Muslim culture. Girgis made his sons read and memorize the Qur'an at an early age. When he died in September of 1914, he was eulogized by Khalil al-Sakakini ("with the death of Jawhariyyeh the era of wit has come to an end"), followed by Sheikh Ali Rimawi, his close companion: "I cannot believe that Jawhariyyeh's soul will remain in Zion [cemetery]. For tonight surely it will move to Mamilla [referring to the Muslim cemetery]." Such an attitude clearly went beyond the current normative rules of coexistence at the time, and Wasif notes how spinsters of the Orthodox community started to mutter: "Yawh...Did you hear that ladies? All his life he kept the company of Muslims, now they have christened him a Muslim in death."

As in the freethinking reflections of Khalil al-Sakakini from the Mandate period (particularly in *Kadha Ana Ya Dunia*), many of Jawhariyyeh's anecdotes challenge social and religious taboos whose exposure, or at least verbal transgression, would appear unthinkable in today's puritanical atmosphere. Few of them are printable even today, either because they are potentially libelous, or because they adopt an outrageous attitude towards religious sensibilities. An example is this anecdote titled "a dog's religion":

*My father was strolling with his intimate companion Salih al-Jamal, who died a bachelor. They passed several elderly gentlemen who were sitting by the wooden enclave built by the Municipality opposite the special opening constructed at Jaffa Gate to receive the German Emperor. After saluting them a dog happened to pass by. One of the notables asked my father: "Ya Abu Khalil, would you say this dog is Muslim or Christian?" This question was an obvious provocation since the inquirer was a well-known Muslim, and my father was clearly a Christian. But his quick wit saved him from aggravating the situation further: "It should be easy to find out, my dear sir. Today, Friday, is our fasting day. You can throw him a bone. If he picks it up, then he is definitely **not** a Christian."<sup>16</sup>*

These numerous references to his father's wit actually have the unintended result of

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 197.



delineating the critical changes that engulfed Jerusalem during the generational span that separates the two Jawhariyyehs. This is particularly valuable when we listen to the father's description of Jerusalem's geography outside the city's gates:

*In 1845 I was a little boy. I remember well that there were hardly any buildings outside the walls. Those I remember were Abu al-Huda Khalili on the Bethlehem-Jerusalem road, al-Haririyyeh mansion owned by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Ammawi Palace opposite Sheikh Jarrah mosque, the Rasas building where the Jerusalem Museum is now located, and so on.<sup>17</sup>*

*When I was thirteen, in 1850, I recall that we did all our travel on individual beasts: mules, donkeys, horses, and even camels. I did not see any animal driven carriages until a few years later when the French brought the "Tambour"—a two wheel carriage driven by mules—to transport bricks for the roof of the French church in Abu Ghosh. Boys of my generation used to run after this amazing new invention until we reached the approaches of Lifta.<sup>18</sup>*

Later he adds:

*As a child I remember the city gates being closed at sunset every evening by city officials—mainly because there was fear of night raids by Bedouins. Whenever I would forget*

*myself playing with my mates outside the walls, coming back we would find the gates closed. We would re-enter through a broken alcove located by Damascus gate and keep climbing until we reached the ramparts. We would then descend into the city at the place where Jabsheh building is located today.*

How did Wasif obtain these recollections from his father? Were they based on an earlier diary kept by Girgis the elder, or was he simply recording from memory?<sup>19</sup> I was unable to ascertain the answer. Whatever the case, we have here a juxtaposed layering of two succinct generational narratives, a diary within a diary, that guides us skillfully from the mid-century of the Tanzimat period to the commencement of World War I. The result reveals a city on the verge of a great transition from the confinement of a relatively closed confessional community within the city gates to a sudden opening of external cityscape which allowed scores of Old City families to invade the western and northern New City neighborhoods in Musrara, Maskobiyyeh, Mea Sha'arim, and Baq'a (Talbieh and Qatamon were still in their embryonic stage). The tempo and nature of this expansion is mirrored in the evolution of Wasif's own character as he grows into early adulthood.

<sup>17</sup> He is probably referring to the location of the Palestine Museum in Bab al-Sahira, which became the Rockefeller Museum after 1967.

<sup>18</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 201.

<sup>19</sup> Mr. George Jawhariyyeh kindly provided me with a copy of a diary kept by his grandfather Girgis in which he noted events from the nineteenth century. However, this manuscript is basically a family logbook in which he recorded births, marriages, christenings, and deaths, and contains almost no social observations of the kind attributed to him by Wasif here



Jiryis Jawhariyyeh with young Wasif, aged five, in 1902, while they were living in Haret Sa'diyyeh.

### Wasif's Apprenticeship: The Vagabond Years

As was customary among the population of the Old City, Wasif was sent to be apprenticed in a number of jobs in his boyhood. These assignments supplemented his formal schooling, and often involved his evolving musical career. In the summer of 1907, at the age of nine, Wasif became a trainee in the barbershop of Mattia al-Hallaq (Abu Abdallah). At the time he was attending the Lutheran primary school at Dabbaghah. A barber in Ottoman Jerusalem was much more than a hair-stylist. He was a herbalist and was trained to administer the application of leeches for bloodletting and vacuum cups for congestion relief. In general he performed the function of a local home

doctor, and it is possible that the elder Jawhariyyeh wanted one of his sons to acquire such a vocation. But it was not what Wasif had in mind for his future:

*I would hold the customer by the neck while Abu Abdallah was washing his hair so that the water would not drip down his shirt. Water was poured from a brass pot and would flow directly from his head to another brass container that was clasped around the customer's neck. [Initially] I was delighted with this first job. In the evening my brother Khalil would pass by in the company of Muhammad al-Maddah—a qabadayy [tough guy] and grocer from Mahallat Bab al-Amud. Muhammad was initiating Khalil into the arts of manhood and both of them would take me to their odah (garconierre), where we would play the tambourine and sing.<sup>20</sup>*

It is not clear what "initiating him into manhood" entails, but it seems from the context that he was being socialized into the "ways of the world" and taught to take care of himself. Wasif himself learned creative truancy during this period. He would escape his master's shop to listen to the 'oud played by Hussein al-Nashashibi at another barber's saloon (that of a certain Abu Manuel), whose shop was owned by

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad was a *fittuwa*, a street gang member entrusted with the protection of his neighborhood. The Arabic term used by Wasif is *'min Ashawis mahallat bab al-Amud'*-plural of *ashwas*, which literally means tough guy or brave man. It is not clear what "initiation into manhood" means here, but the context indicates that he was being introduced to the ways of the street. As for *odah*, see the discussion on p. 20.

the Nashashibi family. It was in this period that Wasif's obsession with 'oud performance began, and he counted the days until he would play one himself.

His musical career occupies a substantial part of the diaries. We are fortunate to have his musical notebook, which he began to record just prior to World War I and later salvaged from its hiding place in the family's Botta Street house in West Jerusalem after the 1967 War. The book reflects the progression of Wasif's interests in Arabic music from classical Andalusian and Aleppo *muwashahhat* to choral music (which he used to perform in weddings and family celebrations), to love songs, to melodies based on classical poetry, and finally to *taqatiq* (ditties) and erotic songs. Not being trained formally in reading notations, Wasif invented his own system. He also wrote a chapter on the adaptation of the Western notational system for the 'oud.<sup>21</sup>

The Jawhariyyeh house was the perfect setting for his budding musical talents. All the family members, with the exception of Khalil (who was tone deaf), either played instruments, or sang, or enjoyed good music. His father was one of the few Jerusalemites who owned a Master's Voice phonograph, and they had a number of early recordings by leading Egyptian singers, such as Sheikh Minyalawi and Salameh Hijazi. The father would encourage his children to lip-synch (to use a current term) in accompaniment to these records. He was particularly severe with Wasif when he made mistakes. Girgis was also keen at hosting prominent singers and



Wasif playing the 'oud, Jerusalem, 1922.

musicians who were visiting Jerusalem. One of these, the Egyptian 'oudist Qaftanji, spent a week with the Jawhariyyehs, and from him Wasif learned a number of melodies which he used to sing on summer nights on the roof, and more often in the outhouse (*beit al-khala*).<sup>22</sup>

Wasif traces the beginning of his musical career to the "year of the seven snowstorms"—a typical mode of reckoning events in those days, still popular among the peasants of Palestine—which he later figures was either 1906 or 1907. He was nine years old, and it was the festival of St. Dimitri when the Jawhariyyeh household were celebrating the birthday of his namesake, their

<sup>21</sup> See his musical notebook, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 19.

neighbor and friend Mitri Abdallah Muna. His brother Khalil was an apprentice carpenter, and he constructed for him his first tambourine.

*Qustandi al-Sus was one of the most famous singers in the mahallat. He sang compositions of Sheikh Salameh al-Hijazi on his renowned 'oud most of the evening. Then they allowed me to perform. I danced the dabke, then sang Hijazi's "Romeo and Juliet" to the accompaniment of Qustandi's 'oud. When the latter heard me, he was so pleased that he handed me his precious 'oud—which drove me into a frenzy—and I began to play it and sing to the tune of "Zeina...Zeina." The next day my father took his razor blade and carved me a beautiful handle for my tambourine. ...Thus began my musical career at the age of nine.*<sup>23</sup>

His father was moved sufficiently by his son's desire that he allowed him to accompany a number of well known performers in Haret al-Sa'diyyeh to learn their art. These included Hanna Fasheh, who crafted his own instruments, and Sabri Abed Rabbo, who sold him his first 'oud for four *majidis* (eighty Ottoman *qirsh*).<sup>24</sup> Wasif was eleven years old then; he had

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> To appreciate the value of Wasif's beginner's 'oud, a *ratl* (that is, 3 kilograms) of lamb meat was valued at the time at 7.5 piasters. The amount of money paid for the 'oud was equivalent to 32 kilograms of meat. That would be equivalent to \$320 at today's prices in Jerusalem (year 2000)—certainly a huge sum for a family of modest means at the time. See the section of Jawhariyyeh's manuscript entitled "A price list of basic commodities in Ottoman Jerusalem: 1900-1914" (p. 101).

saved twenty piasters from his work and borrowed the rest from his father's friend Hussein al-Husseini.<sup>25</sup> Giryis was so impressed with Wasif's persistence that he hired one of Jerusalem's best known 'oud tutors to teach him: Abdul Hamid Quttaineh. Wasif was given lessons twice a week by Quttaineh. In return, his father gave Quttaineh a special treat: *mazza* and *araq* prepared and served by Jiryis himself.

Contrary to the impression that he gives about his truancy and rebelliousness, Wasif had a substantial degree of formal schooling. This is reflected in his polished language and rich poetic imagination. His elegant handwriting was phenomenal, and he kept the standard until his old age. References abound in his diaries to diverse sources from classical poetry, as well to contemporary literary figures including Sakakini, Ahmad Shawqi and Khalil Jibran. His favorite quotation came from Jibran, whom he quoted on the occasion of his expulsion from his primary school: "They say to me, 'Be a slave to him who teaches you the alphabet.'... Thus I decided to remain free and ignorant."<sup>26</sup>

Both he and Tawfiq received their first schooling at the Dabbaghah School, which was governed by the Lutheran Church next to the Holy Sepulchre. There he received basic Arabic grammar, dictation, reading, and arithmetic. He also studied German and a lot of Bible recitation. His school uniform was the *qumbaz* (traditional male robe) and the Damascene red leather shoes known as *balaghat*, which his father bought for seven piasters from the

<sup>25</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 87.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

Perfumers' Market (Suq al-Attareen).<sup>27</sup> In 1909 (when he was twelve years old) both Wasif and Tawfiq were taken out of the Dabbaghah after being savagely beaten by the mathematics teacher for mocking him. For several years Wasif accompanied his father to his work as overseer of the Husseini estates, while occasionally performing as a singer (and later as an 'oud player) in the neighborhood.

When Khalil Sakakini established his progressive Dusturiyyeh National School in Musrara, his father intervened with the mayor to have him admitted as an external student. Sakakini had acquired a reputation for using radical methods of pedagogy in his school and for strictly banning physical punishment and written exams. In addition to advanced grammar, literature, and mathematics, the curriculum included English, French and Turkish. Sakakini was a pioneer in introducing two disciplines which were unique to his school at the time: physical education and Qur'anic studies for Christians:

*I received my copy of the Qur'an from al-Hajjeh Um Musa Kadhem Pasha al-Husseini...who taught me how to treat it with respect and maintain its cleanliness. My Qur'anic teacher was Sheikh Amin al-Ansari, a well-known faqih [scholar of Islamic jurisprudence] in Jerusalem. Sakakini's idea was that the essence of learning Arabic lies in mastering the Qur'an, both reading and incantation. My Muslim classmates and I would start with Surat al-Baqara and continue. ...I*

*can say in all frankness today that my mastery of Arabic music and singing is attributable to these lessons—especially my ability to render classical poetry and muwashahhat [classical choral pieces] to musical form.*<sup>28</sup>

Sakakini himself was a music lover, and had a special fondness for the 'oud and the violin. Some of the Dusturiyyeh students had seen Wasif performing in local weddings and taunted him for being "a paid street singer" (*ajeer*). Sakakini defended him and brought his students to enjoy Wasif's music. Eventually, however, and despite his love for the Dusturiyyeh and its liberal environment, Wasif was compelled to leave the school at the insistence of his patron, Hussein al-Husseini, and enroll in al-Mutran School (St. George's) in Sheikh Jarrah "in order to gain knowledge of the English language and build a solid base for my future."<sup>29</sup> He remained there for two years (1912-1914) until the school was closed with the beginning of the war. Wasif had finished the fourth secondary class (his tenth year of studies) and with it the end of his formal schooling without receiving the school secondary certificate. At St. George's Wasif excelled in acting in school plays where he was able to develop his musical talents. Among his classmates were Saliba al-Jozi, the well-known playwright and brother of Bandali, the Marxist historian who emigrated to the Soviet Union, and Shukri al-Harami, the noted educator and founder of al-Umma College.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 125-26.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-46.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

With the termination of his formal schooling Wasif was able to continue his musical education in the company of Jerusalem's foremost 'oud players and composers. These included Muhammad al-Sibasi, Hamadeh al-Afifi (who taught him the art of *muwashahhat* in the Turkish tradition), and Abdul Hamid Quttaineh, who was his first tutor. But he did not reach his maturity until he met the great master 'oud player Omar al-Batsh. In the spring of 1915, after his father's death, Wasif was attending a party in the company of Hussein Effendi and several Turkish officers in the house of Haj Khalil al-Nashashibi. A section of the Army military band known as the Izmir Group was performing Andalusian *muwashahhat*.<sup>30</sup> Wasif was mesmerized by the playing of a young 'oud player wearing military uniform who was introduced to him as Omar al-Batsh. For the duration of the war period Omar became his constant companion. Wasif prevailed on Hussein Effendi, who was now his official patron, to hire Omar's services to give him four 'oud lessons a week at the headquarters of the army orchestra in Mascobiyyeh.

From Omar Wasif learned how to read musical notations and expanded his repertoire considerably in classical Arabic music. On his part Omar began to take Wasif with him to sing and accompany him on the 'oud in his performances, but above all he taught him to be critical and discriminating in evaluating what he heard. In particular he taught him how to perform the classical *muwashshah*.<sup>30</sup> Throughout his diaries Wasif refers to him as "my teacher" and "my master." Wasif tells us of one episode in the company of Omar when

the latter was arrested while singing in mixed company in the house of Abraham al-Kirji in Bab al-Silsila in the Old City. Since Omar was playing to his enthusiastic crowd in army uniform and in broad daylight, he was taken by the police for "lewd and drunken behaviour while on [military] duty." When Wasif went the next day to have him released, he saw that he had been whipped and beaten by the soldiers on duty. Omar sent a letter with Wasif to the prison commander, who was a former pupil of his in Aleppo and one of his avid listeners, begging his help. Wasif mistakenly handed him a sheet of music with the ditty "Teeri Teeri ya Hammama" on it. Thinking that Omar was mocking him, he ordered that Omar be given another twenty lashes, until he started to bleed. Finally Wasif recognized his mistake and Omar was released. The commander kissed him and begged forgiveness from his former teacher. To make amends for the lashings, he himself began to accompany Wasif and Omar al-Batsh on their musical outings, thus protecting them from the law and indulging himself at the same time.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout his Ottoman years, and way beyond in his adult career, Wasif saw himself as a musician and 'oud player above all else. When he sought employment in various government and municipal authorities, it was only to

<sup>30</sup> "My master Omar was widely recognized as a grand master in the performance of the *muwashshah*, a genre which is almost extinct today in the Arab world, except perhaps in Aleppo. Omar used to tell me about his teacher, Ali Darwish, who was a world authority in this genre" (Jawhariyyeh MS, pp. 221-23).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

survive and release himself to his passionate obsession: the 'oud and the company of men and women who shared his vision.

His first paid "job" was that of a clerk in the Jerusalem Municipality in charge of recording and classifying contributions in kind for the Ottoman war efforts. The job was created for him by Hussein Effendi al-Husseini after the death of Wasif's father as an effort to alleviate the material conditions of the Jawhariyyeh family. At the end of the war and the beginning of British military occupation, Wasif resumed his career in the municipality after his short bout of service in the Ottoman navy (see below), and was now promoted to a court clerk in the Ministry of Justice, serving under the judgeship of Ali bey Jarallah in Mascobiyyeh. Government employees were still paid in inflationary (and virtually worthless) Turkish paper pounds, but they were soon replaced with Egyptian pounds minted in stone, which were more usable. Both Wasif and Khalil used to give their salaries to their mother.<sup>32</sup> With the death of Hussein bey ("my second father") Wasif resigned from his job at the central court and went on to help Hussein's widow (Um Salim) in the administration of the Hussein estates in Deir 'Amro.

Hussein Effendi was succeeded in the mayoralty by Ragheb Bey al-Nashashibi (after a brief stint by Ismail al-Husseini). Ragheb was an amateur 'oud player and socialite. He hired Wasif to give him and his mistress Um Mansour 'oud and singing lessons. As a reward he interceded so that

Wasif would be on the payroll of the Tax Bureau with a monthly salary of twenty Egyptian pounds. At the end of each month he would go to the Regie department and collect his salary, with no further duties incumbent on him. Thus began a series of jobs based on Ragheb's patronage. Wasif's special bonds with the Hussein family (and later with the Nashashibis, now on the ascendancy with British rule) helped Wasif to continue his career as a musician while maintaining a steady income from the public coffers. Here is how he describes one of those many jobs:

*Musa Kazim Pasha, then Mayor of Jerusalem, sent after me through sergeant Aref al-Nammari. I went to meet him in city hall, then located at Jaffa Gate. He rebuked me for staying out of touch since the death of the late Hussein Effendi and asked about my family's conditions, especially about the health of my mother. Then he appointed me as assistant inspector [mufatish baj] with a temporary income of twenty-four Egyptian pounds per month, until the position was institutionalized. I kissed his hands and signed for the new position working under the late Abdel Qader al-Afifi Effendi. My job consisted of the following: I had to inspect all animals sold in Jerusalem at the animal market [Suq al-Jum'a] every Friday near the Sultan's Pool area. I was to work under the supervision of the late Mustafa al-Kurd, known as Abu Darwish, a top expert in this fine art. Abu Darwish would say to*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 298.



me: "Do not burden yourself! Sit there, drink your coffee and smoke the **arghileh**. I will do all the inspection and will hand you the receipts on a daily basis." This suited me very well. I would start my day at the Ma'aref Café with friends drinking the **arghileh** until 10 or 11 in the morning when Abu Darwish would arrive and order his first smoke, then his second, then his third. Then he would pull five pounds from his 'ajami belt: "Here Wasif Effendi, this is your spending money for the day", then he would pay me another sum against a signed receipt which I would hand over to the municipality.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the contracted job was sub-contracted to Wasif. The Ottoman era was coming to a close. Wasif was entering his adulthood, but not quite the age of reason. He had been overwhelmed in what he called "the period of total anarchy in my life." Basically living like a vagabond, he was sleeping all day and partying all night: "I only went home to change my clothes, sleeping in a different house everyday, my body totally exhausted from drinking and merrymaking. One moment I am in Mahallat Bab Hatta. ...In the morning I am picnicking with members of Jerusalem's 'ayan families, the next day I am holding an orgy with thugs and gangsters in the alleys of the Old City. My only source of livelihood was my salary from the Regie Department arranged by Ragheb Bey." When his mother complained about him coming home late at night, if at all, he

retorted with the famous line: *Man talabat al-'ula sahar al-Layali* ("He who seeks glory must toil all night").<sup>34</sup>

### Café Jawhariyyeh: a Hedonistic Jerusalem?

Jawhariyyeh introduces us to a rich social milieu of Jerusalem in the post-war period and the early 1920s that can only be described as hedonistic. Nightly episodes of drinking, dance and—occasionally—hashish smoking that recur throughout the manuscript. The family made a significant contribution to this milieu with the opening of Café Jawhariyyeh in 1918 near the Russian compound at the southern entrance of Jaffa Road. Wasif's brother Khalil brought to this café/bar skills he had acquired in Beirut while serving in the Turkish army. These included serving a special *mazza* menu with araq orders and iced-water, which was a new innovation for Jerusalem and made possible with the introduction of electric power. Within months after its opening the café became a major attraction for pleasure-seekers all over the city and became renowned for bringing the best singers in the country including Sheikh Ahmad Tarifi, Muhammad al-'Asheq, Zaki Afandi Murad, and not least—Masabni. Wasif's association with the Syrian Lebanese cabaret dancer Badi'a Masabni and her husband Najib al-Rihani goes back to this period. Masabni used to visit Jaffa periodically in the summer en route from Cairo to Beirut and would occasionally come to Jerusalem. Wasif met her initially in the summer of 1920 when she performed

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 335-36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

at the al-Ma'aref theatre/café just outside Jaffa Gate.<sup>35</sup> He lists several of her risqué song/dance sketches, which she used to perform in what he terms "transparent costume." She also did several Sayyid Darwish songs—which were very popular—especially her social satire of the rich, "Il Haq 'al Aghniya." One stanza which often moved her popular audience to ask for encores was the following:

*Eimta baqa nshuf qirsh al Sharqi  
Yifdal biBaladuh u-Mayitla'shi  
[When will we ever see the piaster of  
the Eastern man  
remain in his homeland and not  
depart (to the West)]*

Later on Wasif would meet privately with Badi'a in intimate parties either in the mansions of Jerusalem notables such as Fakhri al-Nashashibi, and Mustafa al-Jabsheh, or in the Hotel St. John, which belonged to his father-in-law. Heavy drinking and cannabis enhanced the atmosphere of these evenings, and we are told that cocaine was also used habitually by both Masabni and Rihani. On one occasion Wasif himself accompanied Badi'a on his 'oud in an all night party which started in the Jawhariyyeh café and continued in his father's house—a night of which he fondly kept a photographic record. Badi'a was one of several Egyptian and Lebanese performers with whom Wasif associated, including Salameh Hijazi, Dawood Husni, and Sheikh Yusif al-Minyalawi. Many of these singers became popular in Palestine with the importation of the new music machines: first the cylindrical wax record machine and then

the hand propelled gramophone using 78rpm vinyl records, which he refers to as Edison Phonographs. At the beginning of World War I there were only ten such gadgets in Jerusalem, costing about twenty-five French pounds each—a small fortune in those days—making it accessible only to an exclusive number of owners.<sup>36</sup> During the war several Jerusalem cafés began to attract customers by purchasing phonographs and playing selected pieces on demand.

*I would take a matleek [the smallest Ottoman coin] from my father and go to Ali Izhiman's café near Damascus gate. A blind man by the name of Ibrahim al-Beirut operated a phonograph in Izhiman's café. The machine was raised on a wooden cabinet full of 78rpm records and covered by red velvet to protect it from the evil eye. I used to throw my matleek in a brass plate and cry to the blind man: "Uncle, let us hear "Ballahi Marhamatan wa-Sabran lil-Ghad" by Salameh Hijazi. The blind man would immediately pull the requested record from the cabinet—only God knows how—and would play it on the phonograph. Later my music teacher Kamil al-Qal'i used to say: "Listening to this music is like eating with false teeth!"*

Wasif was blessed with an exquisite voice which even as a teenager placed him in high demand for performances at weddings. But his eternal love was the

<sup>36</sup> The author makes the calculation that this was the annual equivalent of a judge's salary for the same period.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

'oud—which by 1918 he had mastered enough to make him one of the most sought after players in Palestine—or so he claims. He played the 'oud mainly for members of the city elites—usually in special homes kept for their mistresses. Several members of Jerusalem patrician families (including the Husseinis and the Nashashibis) kept special apartments for their mistresses in suburban areas of the new city; many of them were Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. The most famous of these concubines was Persephone, a Greek-Albanian seamstress who in 1895 became the mistress of Hussein Effendi al-Husseini (and possibly before him, his brother Musa Kadhem Pasha<sup>37</sup>). She lived in a special apartment on Jaffa road and used her clout with Hussein Effendi to trade in cattle in Beit Suseen and Deir 'Amro—both Hussein estates. Wasif became her musical companion and helped her in marketing *za'tar* (thyme) oil, which she successfully processed and marketed as medicinal oil. When Hussein Effendi became mayor of Jerusalem in 1909, he distanced himself from her and gave her permission to marry Khawaja Yenni, a Greek confectioner. During the war Persephone became sick and—deserted by her husband—was brought to the Jawhariyyeh household where Wasif took care of her until her death. The Jawhariyyeh diaries relate numerous episodes of festive events spent in the company of members of the social elites and their concubines. Muslim, Christian and Jewish entertainers catered to these events.

<sup>37</sup> See Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 321.

Another feature of cultural life in Ottoman Jerusalem recounted here is the "*odah*"—a bachelor's apartment equivalent to the French *garconnerie*. It was customary for single men in established families from the Old City to rent a furnished one-room apartment where they would spend their evening playing cards, smoking, drinking and—in the long winter nights—having 'oud sessions. The apartments were also used to conduct love affairs or to bring in the occasional prostitute. The *odah* did not necessarily have a negative reputation, although it is clear from Wasif's narrative that elder family members, and certainly the female ones, were not privy to what went on. Jawhariyyeh lists a number of well known *odahs* in the Old City and in Sheikh Jarrah where he used to perform his music. For several years he himself had the key to Hussein Hashem's *odah* behind Mamilla Cemetery where he used to entertain "Russian and Greek ladies" in the company of Ragheb bey al-Nashashibi (later the mayor of Jerusalem) and Isma'il al-Husseini.

These episodes compel us to rethink the image of Jerusalem at the turn of the century, which is often—and falsely—characterized as a grim, conservative and joyless city—by visitors and natives alike.<sup>38</sup> ("The only thing he ever said about

<sup>38</sup> For popular impressions about the nineteenth century by European visitors to Jerusalem (and Palestine), see Naomi Shepher, *The Zealous Intruders: The Western Rediscovery of Palestine* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), especially pp. 170-93; for surprisingly positive, and contrary, impressions of the social life in Jerusalem during the Mandate period, see Thomas Hodgkin, *Letters from Palestine: 1932-1936* (London: Quartet Book, 1986). This exceptional account is written by a communist secretary to the High Commissioner.

it [Jerusalem] was that it reminded him of death," Edward Said quotes his father, recalling his early life in the city).<sup>39</sup> How do we account for this incongruity? We have to remember that Jerusalem was a city of religion, but not an excessively religious city; meaning that its religious status generated a large number of industries and services that catered to a visiting population of pilgrims, but its native population was not necessarily more religious than other urban centres in the hill country. Nablus, Hebron, and Nazareth, for example, had a decidedly more religious reputation than Jerusalem.

But I believe that the explanation for this toleration of what seems to be a libertine atmosphere lies elsewhere. Jawhariyyeh's narrative comes from an earlier era of the city's history when class boundaries and seigniorial privilege created an atmosphere in which the upper crust felt relatively insulated in their behavioral patterns from the moral encroachments of the public eye. In many cases they even flaunted this behavior without fear of retribution—such was the case with public drinking and the keeping of concubines. Another source of protection for these latitudes was that Jerusalem was still a reasonably closed city, exhibiting limited influx from the surrounding villages, or from Mount Hebron, of peasant migrants, who later exercised the conservative influence on the city's norms for which it became renowned.

### Syncretic Religiosity?

The Jawhariyyeh diaries invite the reader to share a world of ceremonial syncretism and cultural hybridity that is difficult to trace in today's prevailing atmosphere of ethnic exclusivity and religious fundamentalism. It was a pre-nationalist era in which religious identity embraced the Other in its festivals and rituals. Jawhariyyeh narrates the feast of Easter/Pessah as an occasion for Muslim-Christian-Jewish celebrations. He details the Muslim processions of Palm Sunday (which proceeded from the Abrahamic Mosque in Hebron towards Jerusalem). The festival of al-Nabi Musa is recalled here as a Muslim popular celebration that merges with the Christian Orthodox Easter. The fantasia of Sabt al-Nur (Fire Saturday, commemorating the resurrection of Christ) is seen as the greatest popular Christian celebration in Palestine—closely coordinated with Muslim folk festivals. Purim was celebrated by Christian and Muslim youth in Jewish neighborhoods. Wasif describes in detail the costumes they wore on this occasion. Twice a year Muslim and Christian families—including the Jawhariyyeh family—joined the Jewish celebrations at the shrine of Simon the Just in Sheikh Jarrah (at the event known as 'shathat al-Yahudiyya), where "Haim the 'oud player and Zaki the tambourine player would sing to the accompaniment of Andalusian melodies."

But the greatest celebrations of all happened during Ramadan. Wasif devotes a substantial section of his diaries to introduce the street festivals, the foods, and the dramatic displays of *Qara Koz* (shadow theater) and magic lanterns. Many shadow

<sup>39</sup> *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 1999), p. 6.

plays were performed in a mixture of Ottoman Turkish and Aleppo dialects that are reproduced faithfully by the author. Although he does not explicitly say it, some of the plays performed included daring social satire and veiled political criticism of the regime. Several manufacturers of goods and confectionery establishments (like Zalatio) used the performances to introduce commercial presentations sung by the shadow players to enhance their sales.

The city also celebrated seasonal occasions that were not tied to religious feasts. Wasif identifies two such "secular" occasions: the summer outings (*shat-hat*) of Sa'ed wa Sa'eed and the spring visits to Bi'r Ayyub. In the pre-World War I period Sa'ed wa Sa'eed became the choice location for Old City Christian and Muslim families to picnic in the hot summer afternoons. They were especially encouraged by the growth of the new mansions around Musrara and the American Colony area. Large quantities of araq and food were consumed on these outings, usually lasting until the late evening hours when revelers had to go back before the city gates were closed. In the spring these outings were directed at Bi'r Ayyub in the springs of Lower Silwan, where Jerusalem families found an outlet from the severe winters of the Old City.

With the implementation of the terms of the Balfour declaration in the British Mandate this era of ceremonial syncretism came to a close. Palestinian nationalism—though basically a secular movement so far—began to be infused with religious fervor. The new colonial authority began to interpret the protocols of religious control

and access in terms of confessional exclusivity. Christians were banned from entering Islamic holy places, and Muslims from Christian churches and monasteries by military edict. It was customary in those days for young Jerusalemites—of all religions—to picnic in the green meadows within the Haram area. Now the area was off-limits. Wasif describes an adventure on a spring day in April of 1919, during the early days of the British Military Government, when he posed as a "Musilman" to the Indian Guards of the Haram area, while his blue-eyed companion Muhammad al-Zardaqa was barred because Wasif explained to them that he was Jewish.

### Serving in the Ottoman Navy at the Dead Sea

The onset of World War I brought to an end five centuries of Ottoman rule of Jerusalem and Palestine. With the war years Wasif undergoes the most dramatic period of his life: the death of his father, his entry into adulthood, his move to Jericho, and his conscription into the Ottoman Navy—in the Dead Sea!

The war saw the conscription of thousands of Jerusalem youth into the Ottoman army, including many Jerusalemite Christian men. With the introduction of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839, and particularly after the enactment of *Qanun al-Wilayat* (Provincial Administrative Regulations) in 1864, members of minority religions were no longer exempt from service. Wasif witnessed many members of his immediate family and most of his acquaintances sent to the Syrian front: these included Tawfiq,

his younger brother, who, after a short period of playing for the Turkish military band in Jerusalem, was taken to Damascus, where he suffered severe injuries in battle; and his older brother, Khalil, who served in Beirut. With the intensification of the allied encirclement of the Ottoman army, its general command under Jamal Pasha turned against the Arab nationalists in greater Syria. Khalil himself was witness to the public hanging of scores of Arab patriots in what later became Beirut's Martyrs' Square.

But for Wasif the war meant Jericho, the Dead Sea and the flourishing of his musical career. In 1917 he received his first substantial job working for his patron, Hussein Bey al-Husseini, administering his grain trade between Palestine and Trans-Jordan. He had just been relieved by the Ottomans from serving as mayor of Jerusalem in favor of a Turkish officer (Wasif sees in this step the beginning of the Turkification of the Ottoman administrative system). In the absence of an effective bridge over the Jordan, trade was carried across the Dead Sea in barges owned by the Husseinis. With the commencement of the war this strategic route was taken over by the Ottoman navy, and Wasif was conscripted into the navy at the age of seventeen (although he should be twenty by now—he seems to subtract three years from his age for reasons unexplained). Unlike his brother, and thanks to his musical skills, Wasif spent most of the war years entertaining Turkish naval officers and their mistresses.<sup>40</sup>

Soon a naval port was established on the Western bank of the lake and Jawhariyyeh became a *quntarji*—deputy officer in charge of weighing imported grain, which was bought from Bedouin tribes in the Karak region and shipped, across the sea to the Palestinian side. He spent the remaining war years as a "grain soldier" by day and "oud officer" by night, as he calls himself—until he was relieved from his duties with the Ottoman defeat at the hands of the allies.

The grain trade was the lifeline of the Ottoman army and a source of enrichment for the Husseinis. To ensure steady supplies from Trans-Jordan and to consolidate the Palestinian front against the allied command in Egypt, the Turks constructed a harbor on the Western Bank of the Dead Sea. Jawhariyyeh's patron, Hussein Bey, and Wasif himself were directly involved in the building of this harbor. The process involved the mobilization of scores of Arab sailors from Jaffa, who brought their seafaring



View of the Dead Sea, with Ottoman Sailing Vessel, 1915. This is the year in which Wasif served as an Ottoman naval officer in the Dead Sea, just before the launching of the port facilities to carry grain supplies from Trans-Jordan. Source: Central Zionist Archive.

<sup>40</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 241ff.

traditions (and families) with them to Jericho, as well as the transport overland of several sailing ships and barges from the Mediterranean. The presence of the sailors created an exhilarating coastal atmosphere of drinking, singing and merriment (including nightly hashish parties) which sustained Jawhariyyeh through the war years.<sup>41</sup>

Because of his proximity to the Husseinis, and possibly by the accident of his placement in Jericho's naval garrison—Wasif was an eyewitness to visits made by Anwar and Jamal Pashas to Palestine in 1916. He even mentions a comic episode in which he tried to serve tobacco to Jamal Pasha, who did not smoke. His attitude to the leader of the new Ottoman regime is mixed. In the 1916 episodes, he describes the enthusiasm and affections expressed by the local Palestinian population in Jericho and Jerusalem to Jamal and other members of the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>42</sup> Later he describes the cruelty of the Ottoman leaders in their attempt to crush the nationalist movement. No doubt this seeming contradiction reflected the ambivalence towards Ottomanism that prevailed in wartime Palestine and the uncertain attitude towards the future, an ambivalence which one encounters in a more articulate manner in another diary—parallel to that of Jawhariyyeh—that of Khalil Sakakini.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Of the hashish parties, Wasif is careful to tell the reader that he partook of the substance to enhance his experience and knowledge only (Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 253).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>43</sup> See *Kadha Ana ya Dunia* (Jerusalem: Habash Press, 1954).

The complexity of Jerusalem's Ottoman identity is revealed in the formation of the Red Crescent Society in 1915, ostensibly to garner local support in Palestine for the Ottoman armed forces against the allies. Despite his several references to the brutality of Jamal Pasha and the Triumvirate, Wasif himself was an active supporter of the society and acted as a secretary to one of its leading members, Hamadeh al-Afifi.<sup>45</sup> The society, prominently based in the Russian Compound, was headed by Hussein Effendi, who by now was forced out of his position as mayor, and also included several prominent Christian and Jewish citizens among its founders: Ibrahim (Abraham) Entaibi, Izhaq Elishar, Salim Khoury, and Wadie Kittaneh as well as two leading Ottoman army officers. Through its public musical events and through direct solicitations, the Red Crescent Society was able to raise substantial funds for the war effort against the British and French enemy. Jawhariyyeh, however, sees the society as also aiming at creating a bridge between the interests of the Jewish community in Palestine and the Ottoman government

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of these contested loyalties, see Rashid Khalidi, "Competing and Overlapping Loyalties in Ottoman Jerusalem," in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 63-88; see also James Gevin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 141-195; and for a "revisionist" perspective, see Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 81-115.

<sup>45</sup> Jawhariyyeh MS, p. 225.



before the appearance of Zionism as an active force. Both Ibrahim Entaibi, the director of the Alliance Israelite school system in Jerusalem, and a Miss Landau—described as "the liaison between the Jewish community in Jerusalem and the Ottoman military leadership"—were pivotal in cementing those ties. With this objective they mobilized a large number of young Jerusalem women, who wore ceremonial Ottoman military uniforms with Red Crescent insignia and solicited donations and money for the army. Wasif identifies several of these as "attractive ladies" who developed intimate relations with the top Ottoman power holders: Miss Tenanbaum ("one of the most beautiful Jewish women in Palestine"<sup>46</sup>) became the mistress of Jamal Pasha, commander of the Fourth Army (after the war she married Abcarus, the famous Jerusalem attorney); Miss Sima al-Maghribiyah became the mistress of Sa'd Allah Bey, the commander of the Jerusalem garrison, and Miss Cobb became the mistress of Majid Bey, the *mutasarrif* (governor) of the city.

Perhaps because of his own personal involvement in those events, Wasif exaggerates both the significance and scope of the war effort in the proximity of Jerusalem. This is particularly true of his references to Jericho and the Dead Sea events. For example, he refers to the construction of a port, not a harbor, on the Dead Sea and calls it "a great military outpost." This also applies to the spectacles of the Ottoman retreat and British entry to Palestine under General Allenby. But

through his literary and enormously entertaining narrative of the events, he reveals the radical transformations that were encompassing Palestinian and Syrian society in that period: the emergence of secular Arab nationalism, the separation of Palestinian national identity from its Syrian context, and the enhancement of Jerusalem as a capital city.

The first volume of the Jawhariyyeh diaries ends with the chaotic retreat of the Ottoman army from Jerusalem and its environs. Turkish and German saboteurs were blowing up the Jerusalem rail lines while British planes bombarded military installations. Wasif himself was preparing to go to Jericho to his naval assignment after reading a public pronouncement threatening court-martial and execution for AWOLS. Then on 8 December 1919 the whole southern front collapsed. Young men in hiding came out into the streets, burning their Ottoman uniforms. The Turkish Governor of Jerusalem, Izzat Bey, signed an order transferring civil authority of the city to the deposed Mayor Hussein Effendi and a council of the city's *a'yan*. Ten days later General Allenby officially entered the city from Jaffa gate.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.