



## Memoirs as History

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This issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly File* is devoted largely to the history of everyday life in Jerusalem. Featuring two memoirs—one recounting the life and times of a noted Jerusalemite popular musician, the other providing personal recollections of the Arab College of Jerusalem—this issue places life in the city at the center stage.

The memoirs of Wasif Jawhariyyeh (1897-1973) constitute the highlight of the issue. Written sometime in the late 1960s, apparently on the basis of notebooks he had kept from the Ottoman and Mandate periods, these diaries paint a vivid image of

quotidian life in Jerusalem between the years 1904 and 1948. The issue also features selections from the Jawhariyyeh memoirs that focus on the atmosphere in Jerusalem on the eve of the collapse of Ottoman rule in 1917. In an extensive study of the memoirs, Salim Tamari reflects on the vision of Jerusalem's early modernity as observed by Wasif Jawhariyyeh. He highlights the importance of memoirs as a source for writing the social history of Palestine. Sadiq Ibrahim 'Odeh, on the other hand, draws another picture of life in Jerusalem in the period following the era described by Jawhariyyeh. Through his memories of school days at the Arab College in Jerusalem, we gain a glimpse of the history of this long forgotten and important center of learning in the city in the period between 1918 and 1948.

In some ways memoirs are like photographs; through them a world we never knew comes to life. And like pictures, memoirs too frame certain subjects and fix them in time, thus shaping and configuring our memories about the past. In this sense, memoirs fill the gaps that exist in our understanding of the histories with which we often claim familiarity, but which often prove elusive. For a period in our history, such as that of the British Mandate, for example, would remain an unfamiliar territory if it were not for the eyewitness accounts of daily life such as those of Wasif Jawhariyyeh.

However, it is important to remember that memoirs are not biographies, although they are connected with particular individuals. For the writers of memoirs often place themselves more as observers rather than as the central figures in their narratives. For this reason, they are very

much like photographers who choose their subjects and bring them back to life the way they see and perceive them.

Jawhariyyeh's diaries, for example, paint a vivid picture of how Jerusalemites related to both the Ottoman and the British authorities. Through tales of everyday life, we glimpse how ambivalent Jerusalemites were towards their Turkish rulers. In this sense, Jawhariyyeh's narrative, as an account from within, reflects essentially the movement within the society rather than the grand politics of imperial domains that prevailed at the time.

This issue also features a study by advocate Ussama Halabi about the ramifications of the policy of revoking the residency rights of Palestinian Jerusalemites. Despite the legal nature of Halabi's article, it too deals with the history of everyday life of Jerusalemites, but this time under the occupation of Israel. Finally, this issue features a piece by Graham Usher, who writes about the intricate status of the Armenian Quarter as final status negotiations over the fate of Jerusalem prove to be the stumbling bloc at the Camp David negotiations.

In our classical text review section, Issam Nassar revisits the narrative of the seventeenth-century English visitor Henry Maundrell. Traveling in the closing years of the seventeenth century, Maundrell was one of the new type of travelers to arrive in Palestine from Europe. Unlike the many Europeans who flocked to the Holy Land before him, he arrived in Jerusalem and viewed it with the eye of the tourist rather than that of the pilgrim.

As usual this issue also features a library review and a chronology of the main events relating to Jerusalem in the period from May to July 2000.