

A “Scientific Expedition” to Gallipoli:

The Syrian-Palestinian Intelligentsia and the Ottoman Campaign Against Arab Separatism

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In the autumn of 1916, two years after the commencement of the Great War, the Ottoman leadership arranged to send an expedition of writers, journalists, and religious scholars from the Syrian provinces to visit the Dardanelles front. The purpose of the expedition was, according to the authors of the mission’s report, to examine at first hand the course of the military operations in Janaq Qal’a (Gallipoli), mobilize support for the Ottoman war effort in the Arab provinces of the Sultanate, and to strengthen Arab-Turkish solidarity. The last objective was an obvious reference to the rising tide of Arab separatist movements.¹ The main instigator of this expedition was Ahmad Jamal (Jamal Pasha), governor of Syria and commander of the Fourth Army on the Palestine-Suez front, who carefully organized the group to include “opinion makers” from the region. The timing of the mission was chosen to coincide with the recent military triumphs of the Ottoman forces in Gallipoli, and its composition to serve Jamal’s relentless campaign against Hijazi and Syrian dissidents. In this essay we will examine how the Great War redefined the relationship between Istanbul and the Arab provinces, and how Arab intellectuals, adopting a wide spectrum of political and religious beliefs, expressed their problematic relationship with the idea of a pan-Ottomanist identity, *Osmenlilik*, in which Arabism was a crucial component. It will focus on the work of Muhammad Kurd Ali and his advocacy of a modernist Syrian culture within the Ottoman union.

The expedition was headed by Sheikh As’ad Shuqayri from Akka, mufti of the Fourth Army, a major activist in the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and a supporter of Jamal’s campaign against Arab nationalists. A few months earlier, on 6 May 1916, he had achieved notoriety by issuing a number of *fatwas* (edicts) in support of the execution

of scores of Arab nationalists in Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem who had been charged with sedition and treason.² The expedition produced a three-hundred-page report titled “The Scientific Expedition to the Seat of the Caliphate” published in Beirut in 1916, and authored by Muhammad Kurd Ali, editor of the Damascene *al-Muqtabas* and one of the most prominent rationalist scholars in the Arab East, together with Muhammad al-Baqir, editor of *al-Balagh* in Beirut. A second report, *al-rihla al-Anwariyya*, published several months later and dedicated to Enver Pasha, addressed a subsequent mission to Hijaz and Syria to examine conditions on the southern front and Syrian preparedness for the Suez campaign.

The “Scientific Expedition” highlighted the role of a new class of intellectuals in the struggles over the national identity of the Arab provinces in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. Although the term intelligentsia is an amorphous term here, it does provide a useful reference to the emergence of a post-*Tanzimat* era category of urban professionals that were embroiled in creating a cultural base for the contested identity of *Bilad al-Sham*. Those included graduates of military academies and mission schools, public officials in the regional civil service apparatus, and religious functionaries appointed by the state. They represented substantial currents animating the urban literati of the nineteenth-century Arab *nahda* involved in private and public schooling, theatre, and journalism – as discussed by Ilham Makdisi.³ They also included a sizable number of religious scholars in search for a modernist Islamic resurgence, taking their cue from the likes of Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abdo, and Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani. Many of them, but certainly not all, were actively involved in the political struggles over the destiny and direction of the Ottoman state after the constitutional revolutions of 1876 and 1908. During WWI they were considerably involved with the issues of European cultural hegemony, modernizing religious thought, the use of Arabic (and bilingualism) in state administration and in public schools, as well with land issues and the fate of the peasantry in an increasingly acute process of land alienation, foreign settlement and indebtedness which began to shape the contours of the “national question” in greater Syria. Munir Fakher Eldin refers to a segment of this *nahdawi* group as a self-serving *arriviste* class – speaking for the national spirit of the peasantry and adopting a patronizing attitude towards the masses.⁴ Members of this intelligentsia fell on divergent sides in the debates on the issue of *Osmanlilik* (Ottomanist identity) and the question of decentralization and autonomy of the Arab provinces. A small but vocal



Muhammad Kurd Ali, Damascus 1916. Source: *Al Bi'tha al Ilmiyya ila Dar al Khilafah al Islamiyyeh*, Beirut 1916.

minority began to advocate secession from the Sultanate. These debates constitute the background to the formation of the Scientific Expedition.

The use of the term “scientific” here is intentionally ambiguous. It has a dual meaning, referring to the scholarly character of the religious leadership of the group – Sheikh Shuqairy and his *‘ulama* colleagues (sing. *‘alem*, hence men of religious sciences); but it also refers to the new modernist notion of positivist science, in deference to the investigative character of the mission. Most likely the use of “scientific” in the title was also an intentional device to deflect a propagandist reading of its goals.

Although the delegation’s mission was meant to result in political mobilization and propaganda for the CUP leadership and its war campaign, the report reveals much more than that. Read retrospectively almost a century after its publication, the collection of essays by leading members of the provincial intelligentsia sheds significant light on the state of Arab-Turkish relations during the war, as well as on the manner in which an Ottoman identity was internalized in Syria. It also contains significant observations on Anatolian cities and villages during the war; on industries and crafts; on the conditions of Anatolian peasants compared to Syrian farmers; on military preparedness on the northern front; on Turkish attitudes towards Arabs; and on transport and communication routes. One of the most striking features of this report is the use of language as an instrument of forging national identity – and the concomitant and expressed need to teach bilingualism (Arabic and Turkish) simultaneously in Anatolian, Rumi, and Syrian schools as a means of enhancing Ottoman citizenship in the Empire. The report clearly suggests that Arabs and Turks are the essential core and last remaining bulwark of Ottomanism. Other ethnic groups appear only as incidental folkloric ingredients in the Ottoman soup.



Hilmi Pasha’s Pilgrimage to Hijaz; Arrival to Medina Station: 29 Thul Qa’da 1327 AH. Source: *Al-Marifah*, <http://www.marefa.org/index.php>

A Syrian-Palestinian Expedition

The designation of the expedition as Syrian-Palestinian (*al wafd al-Suri-al Filastini*) is curious, since the composition of the group included significant Turkish (Eintapi), Iraqi, Lebanese, Aleppine, Transjordanian and other personalities. Furthermore, the Eastern Arab provinces, which included Palestine and Transjordan, were known inclusively as *Sem Serif* (the sacred region of *Bilad al-Sham*) in Ottoman discourse. Filistin was a non-administrative designation for the *mutasarriflik* of Jerusalem and its northern expanses. Why, therefore, the highlighting of the Palestinian component of this group? Filistin was continuously seen, at least since the campaign of Ibrahim Pasha in 1831, as a country *within Bilad al-Sham*, and often existing as a separate entity: “Palestine is the sister of

Syria,” proclaimed an Ottoman war report in 1915.⁵ But it was both a sacred and strategic component of the Sultanate: sacred because of Jerusalem and Hebron’s holiness, and strategic because it was the war’s southern front.

In the case of the Syrian expedition, it seems that Jamal Pasha, the initiator of the project, was intent on promoting a sacred legitimacy, associated with Filistin as the holy land, and on buttressing Arab support for the Ottoman war effort and for the Ottoman principle as an alliance of Arabs and Turks. To this end he chose Sheikh As‘ad Shuqayri, the powerful imam from Akka, to lead the expedition. The group also included a large number of hard-core CUP loyalists, several of whom championed Jamal’s campaign against the Syrian-Arab nationalists. Those included Muhammad Rif‘at Effendi Tuffaha, and Abdul Rahman al-Haj from Nablus; Sheikh Ibrahim al-Akki and Abdul Rahman Aziz from Akka, Muhammad Effendi Murad from Haifa; Taher Effendi Abul Suad and Sheikh Ali Rimawi from Jerusalem; and the poet Salim al-Ya‘coubi from Jaffa (originally from Lydda).⁶ The group was a mixture of educators, imams, and journalists, along with two leading poets.

Reviewing the membership of the expedition one gets the impression that the Palestinians constituted the religious component of the group (led by Shuqayri), while the Syrians formed the secular core (led by Kurd Ali). It should be remembered that the southern command of the Ottoman forces were in Palestine (Gaza and Beershiba) and the Sinai campaign against Suez was known as the *Sina ve Filistin Cephesi* (the Sinai and Palestine Front). The Palestinian dimension of the group was highlighted through the speeches delivered by members of the expedition, and in responses made by Enver Pasha, Jamal Pasha, the Prime Minister, the Crown Prince, and Sultan Muhammad Rashad himself. The region evoked strong associations with both al-Haram al-Sharif and the southern front where the conquest of Egypt was being planned.⁷ During the inspection of military workshops in the Istanbul the report makes reference to the involvement of Palestinian and Syrian women in voluntary work for the war effort.⁸ However once the expedition arrived at the Janaq Qal’a (Janakale) front the group became known as the Syrian delegation.

Two figures from the Palestinian delegation, Sheikh Ali Rimawi and Salim Abu al-Iqbal al-Ya‘coubi, are worth examining here because they represent an Arab intellectual trajectory which adopted strong Ottomanist identities after the Young Turks came to power. Significantly both of these figures had substantive Islamic religious training, and had acquired considerable repute in the Arab literary renaissance at the beginning of the century. Both Rimawi and Ya‘coubi demonstrated a dualist identity that may seem contradictory in retrospect – namely a strong belief in Arabism, centered around the revival of the Arabic language as medium of the Arab renaissance, while maintaining an equally strong belief in Ottomanism as a political ideology.

Sheikh Ali Rimawi (1860-1919) came from the throne village of Beit Rima, in the Jerusalem *mutasariffiyah*, well known for producing a series of Islamic scholars and Ottoman loyalists – and subsequently of Arab nationalists, Nasserites, Ba‘thists, and communists. After spending several years in religious training at Al-Azhar (1899-1907) he started his career as a writer in the first journalistic enterprises in Palestine. The

Ottoman authorities chose him to produce *al-Quds al-Sharif*, the official gazette of the government in Palestine (1908-1913). He also became the partner of Jurji Hanania, the Christian orthodox intellectual who had his own press and published *al-Quds* – the first successful private newspaper in Palestine (1908-1914).

Al-Quds (not to be confused with the similarly named *al-Quds al-Sharif*) was an Ottoman-Orthodox paper. While Hanania defended the interests of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate against the rising tide of Arabization, Rimawi addressed issues emanating from the Ottoman reform and educational policies.⁹ Earlier, in 1907, Rimawi had launched his own paper, *Beit al-Maqdis*, which had been closed down by the Hamidian censor. After the lifting of censorship he started another Arab-Turkish paper, *al-Najah*, inspired by the principles of the Ottoman revolution, which was billed as a “political, scientific, literary, and agricultural” weekly newspaper. According to Y. Yehushua, the real aim of the newspaper was to improve relations between the CUP government and Palestinian Arabs, who became discontented with the “empty and unfulfilled slogans of Ottoman freedoms.”¹⁰ He was particularly devoted to propagating the use of the Turkish language in Arab schools. One editorial which appeared in 1910 under his name was titled “Arabic and Turkish are Sisters: Why are they Quarrelling?”¹¹

The next issue of *al-Najah* will appear in both Arabic and Turkish together, as per the license of this paper. It will aim at serving the joint interests of the Arab and Turkish elements. For these two languages are sisters in the service of the *umma* and the nation, and we are today in the utmost need of solidarity and union for our common objectives.

But Rimawi was not uncritical of the government. During his tenure in *al-Najah*, and in *al-Quds*, he published several essays attacking what he considered inadequate government spending on education, corruption in municipal administration, police procedures and the lack of amenities for journalists covering criminal cases, and the lack of accountability in the public budget.¹² Besides his journalistic career, Rimawi was known primarily as a poet and teacher of Arabic literature. He taught Arabic language and literature in a number of schools, including the German-supported Laeml School for Sephardic girls.



Kurd Ali's al Muqtabas, Damascus, January 21, 1909. Source: IPS Electronic Archives, Newspapers.

According to Yehoshua he praised Jewish education in an article published in *haHerut*, the organ of the Sephardic community in Palestine.¹³

The reports of both the “Scientific Expedition” and its companion venture “al-Rihla al-Anwariyyah” are replete with Rimawi’s panegyric poetry on the Ottoman armed forces, and his encomiums on Jamal Pasha and Enver Pasha, unsurpassed in their hagiography except perhaps by Salim al-Ya‘coubi.¹⁴ Much of this poetry belongs to what is known as *adab al-mada’ih* in Arabic – eulogistic poetry that is highly stylized, effusive, with feigned sentiments, extemporized on political occasions in praise of political leaders, or patrons. In the case of Rimawi it was also ephemeral. With the defeat of the Ottoman forces in southern Palestine and the entry of the British forces into Jerusalem he made a quick turnaround in his loyalties. The official Palestine gazette issued by the British forces in the occupied territories published a poem by Rimawi celebrating the “emancipation” ushered by the new British regime:

This is the day when our shackles have been broken,
And our feet and thoughts are set free.
Oppression has been replaced with sweet justice;
And after the prolonged darkness our dawn has appeared.¹⁵

It seems that his journalistic prose and his poetry belong to two different ideological domains. Unlike the rest of his comrades, however, Rimawi did not live to see the post-Ottoman era in Palestine. A few months after the end of the war he died from a bout of pneumonia in his village of Beit Rima.

In contrast to Rimawi, Salim al-Ya‘coubi maintained his Ottomanist sympathies after the fall of Syria and the entry of the allied forces – a factor attributed by his biographer Sami Shehadeh to his *salafism*.¹⁶ al-Ya‘coubi (1881-1946) was born in Lydda, and like Rimawi was sent to study in Al-Azhar for twelve years. During his Cairo years he emerged as a leading poet in greater Syria, for which he was nicknamed Hassan Filastin, after Hassan ibn Thabit, the Prophet’s poet.¹⁷ On his return from Cairo he was appointed mufti of Jaffa, where he had moved his residence and established a study circle in the Manshiyyeh mosque.¹⁸ Ya‘coubi joined the Scientific Expedition as an advocate of the Islamic Commonwealth (*al-Jami‘a al-Islamiyyah*). In his earlier years he had dedicated a volume of poetry to Sultan Abdul Hamid which he titled *Hasanat al-Yara’* (1907), but after the 1908 revolution he became a strong advocate of the Young Turks.¹⁹

Together with the mufti of Akka, Sheikh Shuqayri, Ya‘coubi supported Jamal Pasha’s campaign against the Arab nationalists during the war. In 1916 he issued a *fatwa* against Sherif Hussein for his insurrection against the Ottoman state.²⁰ During the Scientific Expedition he distanced himself from the rhetorical propaganda of other participants, and appears to have confined himself to reciting a two-line stanza in praise of Enver Pasha.²¹ In the second trip to Medina he composed another ode in support of the Ottoman campaign in Egypt.²² Among his many comrades in the Scientific Expedition Ya‘coubi was exceptional in maintaining vocal support for the Ottomans after the end of the war – for which he was severely punished by the British. One of his closest companions was Abdul

Qadir al-Mudhaffar, an associate of Mersinli Jamal Pasha. For their “stubbornness” they were both exiled to Sidi Bishir in Alexandria.²³ After the war Ya‘qubi became close to the house of Ibn Saud, and seems to have been influenced by Saudi Wahhabism. As imam of Manshiyyeh mosque in Jaffa, he continuously agitated against Zionism and for the ideas of the Islamic Commonwealth.²⁴ He remained a staunch Ottomanist, even when there were no Ottomans left.

The New Salah ed-Din

The visit of the expedition to the Ministry of the Navy in the capital was an occasion to sing the praises of Jamal Pasha. The two main interventions on the “great reformer” were made by the president of the expedition, Sheikh Shuqayri (speaking in Turkish), and by the publisher of *al-Balagh* (Beirut) the Iraqi writer and publicist Muhammad al-Baqir (in Arabic). Jamal is compared here to Sultan Salah-ed-Din, who delivered Jerusalem from the Crusaders, in the same manner that Jamal will liberate Egypt from the imperialist yoke. His achievements are implicitly and favorably compared with those of Tal‘at and Enver, the leaders of the CUP, and even with the Sultan himself. The report reads like a hagiographic account of the future leader of the Ottoman state. Jamal’s historical achievements are discussed in terms of his political acumen, military skills as a commander-strategist, his public works, and especially in his educational reforms. In Syria, his administration was able to reform the divisive work of his predecessors. He created a new patriotism, bringing together Turks and Arabs.²⁵ His weekly councils in Damascus and Jerusalem ensured an open forum for the grievances of the public, without any mediation.²⁶

The CUP administration modernized and transformed the face of Syria through Jamal’s public works. It established a modern system of railroads which extended the Istanbul-Damascus network to Haifa, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Beershiba and Medina.²⁷ It paved thousands of roads linking the rural areas to provincial centers, and Syrian districts to Anatolia. Jamal’s administration established public security in the major cities by introducing electricity and police patrols, and by ending brigandage in the countryside.²⁸

Muhammad Kurd Ali and the Ottoman Commonwealth

Kurd Ali was one of the two principal authors of the “Scientific Report.” A Damascene scholar of Kurdish-Circassian descent originating from Sulaymaniyyeh in northern Iraq, Muhammad Kurd Ali (1876-1953), was the publisher of *al-Muqtabas*, one of the most influential (and most censored) dailies in the Hamidian period. His partner was Shukri al-Asali, who was hanged by Ahmad Jamal’s military tribunals in Aley in 1916. Kurd Ali was also the founder of the Academy of the Arabic Language in Damascus and of the author of the encyclopedic *Khitat al-Sham* (Syrian Mapping) – a magisterial work of the social geography of Syria. The book was modeled after Ali Mubarak’s *Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya*.

He described his paper *al-Muqtabas* as “politically moderate, strictly patriotic, and critical of the Ottoman administration’s conduct in governing, but we never aimed at separation from the Turks.”²⁹

In an autobiography written when he was in his eighties Kurd Ali refers to his early Islamic training in Damascus (under Sheikh Taher al-Jaza’iri) and in Cairo (under Muhammad Abdo) as crucial to the formation of his ideological mindset towards Ottomanism, Islamic reform, and Arab nationalism.³⁰ In terms of factional affiliation Kurd Ali was a solid Ottoman loyalist. For twelve years (1896-1908) he belonged to *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (CUP). After the constitutional revolution he grew dissatisfied with the repressive character of the CUP – “their deviation from their original aims compelled a movement of Turks and Arabs from Istanbul and Damascus to form a new



Ahmad Jamal Pasha, failed Commander of the Fourth Imperial Army, Jerusalem 1916. Source: *al-Bi'tha Al 'Ilmiyya*, Beirut 1916.

liberal party, known as Freedom and Entente (*hizb al-hurriyah wal i'itilaf*)³¹ The authorities continuously hounded him and his paper. In 1909 he was accused by the local governor of supporting the restoration of the Hamidian regime, which compelled him to flee to France; and he was in trouble again in 1912 for publishing material that was insulting to the Sultanic majesty (*tamissu bil al al-Sultani*) which drove him to seek refuge in Egypt.³² The war itself brought him relief and reconciliation with the regime. The new Ottoman governor in Damascus, Khulusi Beyk, was a personal friend, and encouraged him to re-launch *al-Muqtabas* on a new basis. Kurd Ali was also unexpectedly helped by a police raid on the documents of the French Consulate in Beirut, which exposed the collaboration of leading Arab intellectuals with French authorities at the beginning of the war. Jamal Pasha used these documents to pursue his campaign against the Arab nationalists. In the case of Kurd Ali a French diplomat had reported a visit he made to his house in Damascus, to gauge the potential of his supporting the French position. Kurd Ali, the Frenchman reported, lectured the diplomat on the need for France to change its policies in Algeria and Tunis.³³ Another memorandum surfaced which was sent by the French Ambassador in Istanbul to local French consular offices, listing Muhammad Kurd Ali as an “mistrusted government loyalist”. According to Kurd Ali these reports saved him from the gallows. Jamal Pasha himself summoned him and urged him to publish *al-Muqtabas* “when he realized the impact of the paper on the Syrian and Arab public.”³⁴

His authorship of the Scientific Expedition report may well have been an attempt to establish his credentials as an Ottoman loyalist, given his reputation as an oppositional

figure, and the continued closure of his paper by the authorities for its criticism of government policies. Years later he claimed that his work on behalf of Jamal Pasha and the expedition were imposed on him by Shuqayri and the Ottoman administration.³⁵ Nevertheless the chapters signed by Kurd Ali in the compendium do provide us with significant insights into Arab intellectuals' attitudes towards the "Ottoman Commonwealth" and the relationship between Arabs and Turks during early war years.

In a biographical essay on the intellectual formation of Kurd Ali, Samir Seikaly traced his intellectual evolution through his journalistic career during the crucial years separating the rise of the Young Turks and the war years.³⁶ In 1906 Kurd Ali moved to Cairo where he published *al-Muqtabas*

as an organ of Islamic reform and regeneration (*al islah wal tajdid*), then returned to Damascus in 1909 where he re-launched the paper as an instrument for propagating an Arabist cultural modernism in the context of Ottoman integration.³⁷ For Kurd Ali this revivalism involved a struggle for a synthesizing culture that borrows selectively from elements of European civilization, without losing its Islamic core, calling for what he termed a new Arab-Western civilization (*hadara 'arabiyya gharbiyya*).³⁸

The relationship of this Arab revivalism to the Ottoman idea was much more problematic in the work of Kurd Ali. In the pre-*Tanzimat* period he considered the Ottomans to be a barbaric nation (*tatars*) consolidating their power with military organizational skills legitimized by the Islamic caliphate. Ottoman decline was rooted in the inability of Eastern societies to face the challenges of Western economic and technological superiority and in the feudal appropriation of peasant land following the Ottoman land reform of 1858.³⁹ Another important root cause of Ottoman backwardness was what he considered to be the failure of the Turkish language to adapt to modern civilization. In contrast to Arabic, "Turkish was not a language particular to a universal religion or to general scientific knowledge."⁴⁰ In the struggle for a synthesized Western-Arab-Ottoman civilization Kurd Ali was keen to distance himself from imperialist schemes to control the Ottoman Empire, and especially its Arab provinces, while at the same time seeking the benefits of European educational and technological advances.⁴¹ He saw the necessity of defending the Ottoman realm, and the caliphate, as a means of preserving the unity of the Empire and Syrian lands. He looked favorably at European and Western educational institutions for the benefits they brought by disseminating a modernist pedagogy, but felt that only by strengthening native Turkish and Arab education could Ottomans survive. For this



Abdul Basit al Unsi, Editor of *Iqbal*. Source: *al Bi'tha Al 'Ilmiyya*, Beirut 1916.

reason he strongly opposed changing the language of instruction at the St Joseph Jesuit college and the Syrian Protestant College from Arabic to French and English, respectively, in the 1880s.⁴²

During the war years Kurd Ali's views on language and cultural revivalism seem to have taken a turn in favor of a new synthesized Ottomanism. His trip to Anatolia and Gallipoli during the war compelled him to rethink his cultural attitudes towards Turkish abilities to modernize Ottoman culture and society under conditions of siege. His description of the industrial resourcefulness of Anatolian workers, and the military preparedness of the leadership, often smacking of outright propaganda, was meant to dispel prevalent rumors of organizational disarray in the armed forces, as well as Arab view of "Turkish laziness." While stridently opposed to Turkification as a state policy on the part of the CUP, he now began to favor bilingualism as an instrument of Ottoman unity.

A New Ottoman Nation Both Oriental and Occidental

Two major objectives of the expedition report were to introduce the Arab reader to conditions in the Anatolian province, and to assess military preparedness at the front. The richest ethnographic material in the report was written by Muhammad Kurd Ali.⁴³ Although the principle of common citizenship and Ottoman brotherhood permeates the compendium, all writers are aware of the Arab-Turkish divide, as well as of the ethnic diversity that began to acquire seditious aspects during the war. There is an absence here of reference to the racial tension and antagonism that began to surface after the Hamidian restoration of 1909 against Arabs in Istanbul and other Anatolian centers – associating Arabs with the *ancien regime* and the reactionary advisors of the Sultan.⁴⁴ "Our Syrian-Palestinian delegation was treated [in Anatolia] to Ottoman generosity, Eastern hospitality, and Islamic brotherhood, that attest to the mutual love and loyalty between Turks and Arabs – the two greatest components and intellectually advanced segments of the state."⁴⁵ In contrast to the Arab, the Turk is more disciplined and law-abiding.⁴⁶ At the military front and in urban employment, he defers to the judgment of his commander and manager. In war he is willing to die for the cause – a hint perhaps, of the high degree of desertion reported among Arab soldiers.⁴⁷ In matters of religion the Turk is mesmerized by the Arabs. They are seen as the source of blessedness and holiness. "Educated Turks are curious about the current conditions of Arab lands, while traditional people ask about the past."⁴⁸

Once in Istanbul the expedition members were impressed by the degree of Europeanness of the capital, manifested in its magisterial buildings, wide and clean boulevards, and extensive transport system. A few years earlier, Kurd Ali noted, the visitor was struck by the amount of filth and poverty in the capital. Today (1916) the lower classes were elevated and enjoying a degree of prosperity that is trickling down to other provinces.⁴⁹ In the central square one might think oneself in Budapest, Rome, or Marseille. The population is highly diversified in appearance and dress. The transport system links Asitanah by sea and land to various parts of the Empire and the world. In matters of commerce Greeks and

Armenians had controlled the city in the immediate past, but today this dominance is disappearing as Turkish merchants and businessmen edge their way upwards. “Those who follow financial affairs now acknowledge that the Turkish family is superior to the Rumi (Greek), Armenian, Arab and Kurdish families. In general the status of the Turkish man is superior to his compatriots and they invest heavily in the education of their children. The proximity to Europe (or to European minorities in Ottoman cities) is a major factor in this judgment – thus Izmir is more advanced than Eskisehir, and Bursa is superior to Konya.”⁵⁰

The expedition to Janaq Qal’a is frequently described as a form of investigative religious and secular tourism (*siyaha*), by which the authors meant pilgrimage:

Our tour from the lands of *Bilad al-Sham* to the center of the caliphate, and from there to the war front in Janaq Qal’a, combines the religious and civil features of tourism, for it strengthens the bonds of religious and patriotic associations and helps us to gain two forms of happiness: the worldly and the otherworldly.⁵¹

It helped, in his view, to bring together the two central components of the Empire: the Arabs and Turks. It allowed each group to become acquainted with the life of the other. The war conditions also brought the Ottomans to seek the friendship of the Germanic people – “whose leadership, unlike the government of the imperialist allies, has no ulterior motives over the Ottoman domains.”⁵² The war accelerated the process of integration of the Ottoman peoples, and their search for modernity in the new world. It helped the Arabs and the Turks to create a new synthesis – “a nation of East and West, that combines the old and the new, which defends its domain by force to preserve its special character.”⁵³

Muhammad Kurd Ali devoted several pages to describing in detail the war industries, which were hastening in his view the liberation of Anatolia from dependence on Western products. Within one or two decades, he anticipated, “we will have caught up with Europe, and become an industrial and agricultural modern nation.”⁵⁴



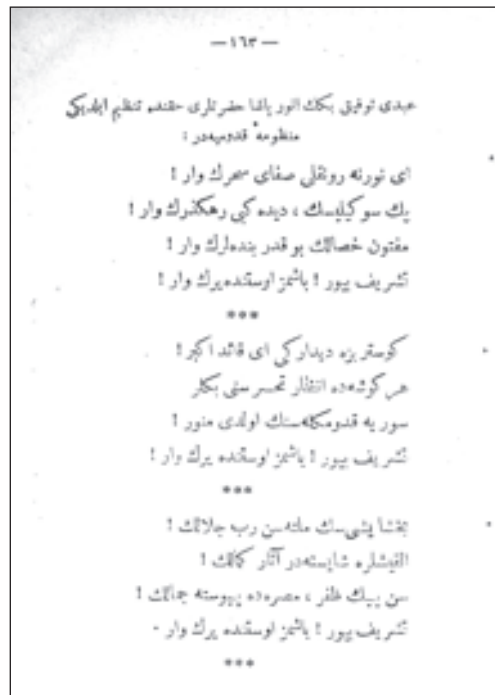
Sheikh As'ad al Shuqairi, Mufti of the Fourth Army and leader of the "Scientific Expedition", Akka 1916. Source: *Al Bi'tha al Ilmiyya ila Dar al Khilafah al Islamiyyeh*, Beirut 1916.

“Turkification of Arabs, Arabization of Turks”

The question of linguistic autonomy was a major bone of contention in the Arab provinces after the constitutional revolution. A recurrent charge made by Arab nationalists against the new regime was the imposition by the leaders of the CUP and the young Turks of a policy of Turkification – in administrative, legal and educational institutions.⁵⁵ This charge was challenged by several members of the expedition. Few of them saw Turkification, to the extent that signified increased use of Turkish in the administrative and educational domains as a mark of progress and a move towards integration of the various ethnic groups within the context of Ottomanism. Muhammad al-Baqir, Abdul Basit al-Insi, and Hussein al-Habbal observed the increasing tendency among Turks to learn Arabic, and the ease with which Syrians are communicating in Turkish. Kurd Ali was fascinated by the bilingualism in the border regions. “In Tarsus and Adana I was pleased to note that the majority of inhabitants speak Turkish and Arabic as a matter of daily use,” he noted.

The best solution for the social-linguistic problem [mas’alat al-lisan al-ijtima’iyya] is for the Arabs to become Turkified, and for the Turks to become Arabized [an yatt’atarak al-‘arab wa yata’rrib al-atraak] ... this is inevitable for Arabic is the tongue of Islam and is immersed in the history of Muslims, while Turkish is the language of politics and administration.⁵⁶

Despite the use of the idioms of Turkification and Arabization, it is unlikely that the author meant an ethnic integration of the two communities. Instead he seems to be advocating a policy of bilingualism. This becomes clear from the next paragraph where he makes policy recommendations. The ruling party (the CUP) should implement a new educational policy in all Ottoman provinces – teaching Arabs Turkish, “after they gain mastery of their own language,” while Turks would similarly learn Arabic as a second language.⁵⁷ This measure would be a positive contribution to solving the issue of Ottoman ethnicities (*siyasat al-‘anasir al-uthmaniyyah*). The Expedition members noted that in Anatolia



Abdi Tawfiq Beyk salute to Osmenlilik in the name of released Ottoman prisoners, in a rally organized by the CUP in Janaq Qal'sa Cinema in Damascus. Although this speech was translated to Arabic, it seems only the Turkish speeches made reference to Ottomanism as a mobilizing identity. *Source: Al Bi'tha al Ilmiyya ila Dar al Khilafah al Islamiyyeh, Beirut 1916.*

there is no Arab problem, and no distinction is made between Arabs and Turks.⁵⁸ The assumption here is that this is a Syrian-Arab problem. For that reason Kurd Ali believed that educational leaders in the Sultanate should move rapidly in implanting a policy of bilingualism – “for the biggest problem we face is ignorance of the other – our brothers in faith and citizenship.”⁵⁹

Syrian Interest in Defending Gallipoli

It was left to Sheikh As‘ad Shuqayri, the expedition leader, to articulate the Syrian-Palestinian interest in defending the Sultanate from collapse in the Dardanelles. He made his plea in a long speech delivered *in Turkish* at the Damascene Theatre named “Cinema Janaq Qal’a” before a large crowd which included Jamal Pasha, the governor of Mount Lebanon Ali Munif Beyk, the governor of Syria Azmi Beyk, the governor of Jerusalem Midhat Beyk, and many other civilian and military leaders. The audience also included Prince Faysal Beyk, the son of “our Lord Hussein bin Ali, the Emir of Mecca.” This was on the eve of the latter’s declaration of insurrection against the Ottoman leadership.⁶⁰

Shuqayri begins his speech by referring to rumors of the impending collapse of the northern front, and the effect of this collapse on the integrity and safety of the Sultanate as a whole. He goes on to demonstrate at length the massive diligence of men and women toiling in fields and factories to support the armed forces, which he and his companions observed throughout Anatolia, and the invincible army that was mobilized at the Dardanelles in defense of the realm.⁶¹ He mocked the rumors which prevailed in the capital that the “Syrian people were indulging in their mundane pleasures and pastimes, impervious to the dangers that threaten the [Allied] conquest of the seat of the Sultanate” – an oblique reference to Arab secessionist movements.⁶² In organizing the expedition and bringing a selected segment of notable Syrians to Anatolia and the front Jamal Pasha had succeeded in dispelling these rumors and to bringing a message of “unionist” solidarity and support to the mujahedeen in Janaq Qal’a. Shuqayri then attacked the opposition for suggesting that their expedition was meant as slavish kowtowing before the Sultan and his government whereby the delegates sought to ingratiate themselves before the authorities. He reminded his enemies that their Ottoman loyalty resulted in the material progress of the Arab provinces – evidenced by the roads, railroads, schools and hospitals the Ottomans had brought to Syria, as well as the protection of the holy land from foreign conquest. Shuqayri was referring to the expanding European presence in Palestine, and the considerable increase in Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. In Jerusalem, he warned, Muslims were in danger of becoming a minority – but with the efforts of the great helmsman this situation is being reversed. The establishment of the Salahiyah College, with hundreds of Muslim scholars undertaking advanced studies, was a milestone in this struggle for the *umma*, and for the consolidation of the Islamic Commonwealth (*al-Jami‘a al-Islamiyyah*).⁶³

He then engaged his audience in an attack on those Arab soldiers who flee conscription; and those who have criticized the formation of the *tawabeer al-‘amaleh*, in Syria and Palestine: the “volunteer labor battalions,” comprised of older civilian conscripts, as well

as Christians and Jews, made to dig trenches and perform menial labor at the front.⁶⁴ He reminded the audience that the Prophet himself was engaged in digging trenches in the war against Qureish.⁶⁵ Shuqayri ended his speech by saluting Prince Faisal, “son of our lord and master Sherif Hussein, Prince of Mecca” who had mobilized his Hijazi forces in the ranks of [Jamal Pasha’s] Fourth Army in the Egyptian campaign against the English enemies of God. “Hail to the Emir and his son Prince Faisal, and hail to the Hashemites and their allies.”⁶⁶

While Turkish-Arab brotherhood was the theme stressed by most speakers during the Syrian part of the expedition, once the delegation crossed to Anatolia, the idea of Islamic association became dominant. This was particularly noticeable in the several receptions held for the Syrians by local branches of the CUP. In Istanbul Habib Effendi al-‘Ubaidi speaking on behalf of the CUP Central Committee (*al-Markaz al-Umumi*) outlines the evolution of the Islamic policies of the Party. In part he was responding to the charges of secularism and abandonment of the caliphate leveled against the party. These were the two main attacks used by the Hashemites in justifying their break with the Ottoman leadership in 1916. During the Hamidian Sultanate, ‘Ubaidi announced, “partisans sought two major objectives: undermining the basis of despotism; and the establishment of the Islamic Commonwealth.” The dissemination of these ideas was done in secret, he said, since the enemy had eyes everywhere. With the constitutional revolution they openly began to attack the Hamidian dictatorship, but the period did not “allow for the assertion of our second objective, the enhancement of Islamic Union.”⁶⁷ With the passage of years, it has become acceptable to raise the banner of Islamic Union, until today it has become the central feature of the party.⁶⁸

The Islamic Bond

What ‘Ubaidi failed to mention was that the idea of Islamic Union precedes the CUP and was one of the major ideas propagated by Imam Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, and adopted by Abdul Hamid himself. It was later revived by the CUP, by both Jamal and Enver Pashas in particular, during the war to elicit sympathy from Islamic communities inside and outside



Cover Page of “al Rihla al Anwariyya”. Source: *al Rihla al Anwariyya ila al Asqa' al Hijaziyyeh*, Beirut, 1916.

Ottoman domains. In particular it was being used now to enhance bonds of solidarity with Istanbul in the Arab provinces, and in soliciting support for the Ottoman war effort from India, Persia, and Indonesia. Jamal Pasha played a principal role in propagating the Islamic bond during the war as an instrument of mobilization. He did this through his educational work in the Salahiyya College in Damascus and Jerusalem, but also in propaganda efforts against the British, and the use of Muslim troops from Egypt and India in the Allied campaign. He established *al-Sharq* newspaper (with government subsidy) in Damascus, edited by Kurd Ali and Shakib Arslan to propagate the idea of Islamic unity among the Ottomans.⁶⁹ Kurd Ali mentions the paper apologetically in his autobiography:

This year (1915) the government launched in Damascus *al-Sharq* newspaper with German instigation. They asked me to be editor-in-chief, which I was for a while. Ahmad Jamal Pasha asked me to remove my name from [the masthead of] *al-Muqtabas*, to ensure better circulation for *al-Sharq*, which continued to appear until the end of the war. It was basically German-Turkish propaganda aimed at audiences in the Arab world and Islamic countries.⁷⁰

According to Cicek the main purpose of the paper was to counter the influence of the Arabist movement in Syria, which dominated the local press. But its content was to show the common fate of Ottoman Muslims in the imperialist campaign. It did this by emphasizing the need to rescue Egypt from the British yoke.⁷¹ But it also had cultural content, showing the common interests of all Syrian Arabs in supporting the Ottoman state in its “civilizing mission” to restore the glorious past of Muslims, and to uplift the material conditions of Syrian youth through education and scientific development.⁷² After the rebellion of Sherif Hussein it devoted a significant portion of its coverage to the “treason of the Hashemites.”⁷³ It is clear however that one of the major problems of *al-Sharq*, as a propaganda tool for the CUP, was to maintain Arab support for the idea of Ottomanism while pursuing the repressive campaign against Arab nationalists.

The Hijazi Expedition: In Defense of *Osmanlilik*

A few months after the appearance of the Scientific Expedition report, Muhammad Kurd Ali authored a companion volume on the exploration of Hijaz titled “The Anwarite Expedition to the Hijazi and Syrian Lands.”⁷⁴ As the title indicates this expedition report was mainly a tribute to Anwar (or Enver) Pasha, who hardly appears in the earlier document. But unlike the Gallipoli report this tribute lacks an investigative analytical dimension, and appears mainly as a propagandistic and hyperbolic salute to Enver. Years later Kurd Ali was to regret his association with this report, referring to it in *Irshad al-Albab* as “a superficial piece of propaganda.”⁷⁵ This second report comprises a detailed description of Enver’s tour of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Sinai, and Hijaz in January of 1916 (Kanun Thani, 1331 Rumi calendar) – accompanied in part by Ahmad Jamal, Jamal Pasha Mersinli (Eighth Army) and Hasan Bey al-Jabi, the governor of Jaffa.

The report is a long tribute to Enver, as if paying him equal time, to compensate for neglecting or marginalizing him in the Scientific Expedition report. By contrast here he is identified as rising star of the Ottomans, and their hero.⁷⁶ In the special ceremony held in Damascus at the beginning of the second expedition he is described by Abdi Tawfiq Beyk as the “Defender of Eternal and glorious Ottomanism” (al ‘Uthmaniyyah al-Abadiyyah al-Mu‘adhama). The term used by Tawfiq Beyk was *Osmanlilik* in Turkish, and *al-‘Uthmaniyya* in Arabic, as can be seen from the translation provided of this speech. Curiously this is one of the few cases in the two reports in which the term is used in reference to the unionist ideology. Elsewhere the stress was on the Islamic affinity of the remaining ethnicities in the Ottoman lands.

Enver is credited here with four major achievements, which now seem to surpass the feats of Jamal Pasha: 1) He is the main leader of the *Inqilab Uthmani* (i.e. constitutional revolution of 1908).⁷⁷ 2) He led the march on the capital on 13 March 1909 to smash the counterrevolutionary restoration of Abdul Hamid (*ikhmad shararat al-raj‘a al-istibdadiyya*), and to remove the Sultan from power.⁷⁸ 3) He led the alliance of the Sanusi tribes in North Africa to liberate Libya from the Italian yoke.⁷⁹ 4) And finally as Minister of War he led the defense of the Dardanelles against the British and European invasion, and defeated the onslaught on Galipoli (no mention is made here of Mustafa Kemal).⁸⁰

Compared to the achievements of Enver Pasha, Jamal Pasha becomes (once the superlatives are toned down) merely the “great reformer” and the future liberator of Egypt from the British yoke, an act which was soon to become an illusory dream.

The Palestinian Episode: Conqueror vs. Reformer

In contrast to the Scientific Expedition report, which contains detailed descriptions of the Anatolian provinces and the state of military preparedness in the Dardanelles, the report on the Hijazi expedition aims at showing popular support for the Ottoman leadership in Syria, Palestine, and to a lesser extent – despite the title – in Hijaz. The coverage of the Palestine episode in Enver’s trip is particularly extensive. Filistin significantly is referred to as the “Syria’s sister,” rather than an extension of it.⁸¹ Although Jaffa was not on the itinerary, both Enver and Jamal made a detour at the beginning of their excursion at the insistence of the governor, Hassan Beyk al-Jabi. It transpired that Jabi wanted the CUP leadership to celebrate the new plan for what has emerged as Palestine’s fastest growing city: an urban façade for Ottoman-Arab modernity. Enver was asked to inaugurate the newly constructed Jamal Pasha Boulevard, described as the broadest street in Greater Syria (thirty meters in width). The parade involved tens of thousands of cheering people lining Ramleh station, the Seray, clock square, and ending at the boundary of Tel Aviv, where Hassan Beyk’s mosque in Manshiyyeh was also due to be inaugurated.⁸² In the report, the mosque is identified as the New Jabi Mosque.⁸³ On the outskirts of Jaffa the procession halts by the town’s famous orange groves so that Jamal and Enver can sample the famous oranges.⁸⁴

Here is Palestine whose Arabdom was blessed by your presence,
You, the most enlightened of people (*anwar an-nas*), Turks and Arabs.⁸⁵

Significantly, in these salutations Enver/Anwar is greeted as the *military* leader while Jamal is the great *reformer*.⁸⁶ The expedition's encampment in Bi'r al-Sabi' (Beershiba) and the visit to the military installations in northern Sinai (*tih sahrasi* in Turkish) were highlights of the trip. The city had become the pride of modern Ottoman planning for a garrison town. The Hijazi railroad and asphalted roads linking the south of Palestine to the rest of Syria were seen as major feats of engineering. "It is now possible to traverse the road between Bir Hassana and Beershiba in four hours. An engineering task which was concluded efficiently by the Fourth Army in record time, which rendered these desert roads passable, whereas previously they could not be used even by the most basic traffic."⁸⁷ The army corps of engineers is credited with digging artesian wells, laying railroad tracks, and constructing military training facilities and airports (at Hafir and Ibin). "Our army is now in full readiness to march on Egypt and liberate it from the claws of the [British] occupier."⁸⁸ In Beershiba tribal deputations from Hijaz arrive to greet the commanders, perform a ceremonial dance and chant songs "in their Bedouin dialects."⁸⁹

At Medina station the Ottoman expedition was greeted with organized demonstrations of popular support similar to those it had received in Damascus, Beirut, Jaffa, Jerusalem and Beershiba. In Medina however, the reception took an archaic, almost medieval form, perhaps because of the sacredness of the place and the attempt to confer religious legitimacy on the event. Here is how the correspondent of *al-Muqtabas* in Damascus described it:

The Assemblage moved forward in unison. The city's deputy governor Jamal Beyk and the chief of police Bashir Beyk had mobilized the commoners and notables of the city, who were preceded by the Sherifian aghas with their armed slaves and drums, followed by the permanent imams of the Prophet's haram with their instruments [?]. Then came the main mu'adhins of the haram wearing their uniforms, intoning *al-hamziyya* and *barada* chants that echoed across the whole city. Next marched the Sherifian notables and the city's potentates, followed by the shuyukh of the various sufi orders [*mashayikh al-turuq*], led by Sayyid Hamza al-Rifa'i, head of the Rifa'iyya order. Behind them came the students of the *i'dadi* schools led by Hamza Effendi Wasfi and the teachers of the city bearing the banners of victory framed in decorative silk. All were chanting patriotic verses in Arabic and Turkish.⁹⁰

The visit to Medina was the final and pivotal event of the expedition. It was significantly portrayed as the rallying moment when the collective Syrian and Palestinian leadership came to pay homage to Enver and Jamal Pashas in their Egyptian campaign. After the Hijazi notables had made their speeches, the rally was addressed by the muftis of Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem Kamel Effendi al-Hussieni, and by the dean of Damascus notables (*naqib al-ashraf*) Adib Taqi ad-Din and the ubiquitous Sheik As'ad al-Shuqayri.⁹¹

The audience included a gathering of members from the Hijazi tribes, as well as hundreds of pilgrims from India, Algeria and Morocco. In support of the campaign Shuqayri gave a major speech about *jihad* as a binding requirement on all Muslims. Just before the expedition headed back to Damascus, the two commanders appeared on the platform of the train station, holding hands with “our popular prince” Emir Faisal, bidding farewell to the visitors.⁹² Only the Sherif of Mecca, King Hussein, was notable by his absence.⁹³

The Medina rally was clearly choreographed as a major event of mobilization and solidarity for the Suez campaign. Its main themes were tribal support, Islamic unity, and Arab-Turkish brotherhood in the crucible of the Ottoman war effort. The slogans of the constitutional revolution, of citizenship, and *Osmanlilik* had faded away.

The events described took place in the shadow of secret negotiations between the Allies and the Hijazi leadership, still nominally subject to Ottoman command. The expedition lasted one month, from 13 February to 15 March 1916. Sherif Hussein declared his insurrection against the Ottoman state on 27 June 1916. Barely three months separated the events of these rallies from the final rupture between Istanbul and Medina. The Sherif of Mecca announced two reasons for the insurrection: the undermining of the precepts of the Islamic caliphate by the secular command of the CUP, and the beginnings of a campaign of repression that leadership was launching against Arab nationalists.⁹⁴ But it was clear from the announcement that it was the gallows of Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem that presented the decisive moment.

Conclusions: The Syrian and Hijazi Expeditions in Retrospect

Muhammad Kurd Ali appears in facial profile on the 25-piaster stamp issued by the Syrian Arab Republic in 1976 to commemorate his centenary. He has become a leading light of Syrian national identity and an icon of contemporary Arab nationalism. His detractors today have been reduced to *salafi* Islamic thinkers who believe that he was a propagator of materialist doctrines disguised as a Muslim reformer, and worse – an apologist for Mu‘tazilite doctrine. Interestingly enough nobody accuses him today of being an Ottomanist propagandist or an apologist for the excesses of Jamal and Enver Pashas, which he was. Those “deviations” are forgiven in the context of the new revisionism that has begun to re-examine the Ottoman past in light of the balkanization of the Middle East after Sykes-Picot, and the fall of the Faisali government in Damascus.

The two expeditions, the first to Anatolia and Gallipoli, and the second to Syria, Palestine and Hijaz, were made at a crucial junction in both the Great War and the rising tension between the CUP leadership and secessionist groups in the Arab provinces. The earlier successes in defeating British forces in Suez and at Kut al-Amara, and the thwarting of the Anzac-British forces at Gallipoli, helped to create an impression of Ottoman resilience in the minds of the Arabs. The first expedition, succeeded in mobilizing some of the main Islamic leaders, intellectuals and journalists in the Arab East, such as Baqir, Kurd Ali, Shuqayri, and Rimawi, to defend the Ottoman government and Jamal Pasha’s administration against their critics. These figures came from all the Arab districts of the

Empire, and included a large and influential Palestinian contingent. They defended the government and Jamal's leadership, with all his cruelties, in the name of Ottomanism, common Ottoman citizenship, and Ottoman modernity and its material achievements in promoting development in Syria. *But they were mainly performed in the defense of the Islamic Commonwealth – al-jami'a al-Islamiyyah.*

These were obviously contradictory aspects of Ottoman claims for Arab loyalty, and the strain shows in the various speeches, poetry, and reports of the participants. These contained valuable observations by some of the leading journalists and writers in greater Syria on progress and military preparedness in the Anatolian regions. Despite their defensive tone, the reports should not be seen as apologies for a collapsing regime. They demonstrate that the Ottoman Sultanate and the CUP government had substantial support among the Arab population in the early war years. This support was independently monitored by British and French intelligence on popular Arab sentiment towards the Ottomans during the war.⁹⁵ In undertaking a defense of the Ottoman leadership against Arab separatism the authors of the "Scientific Report" outlined in detail the major achievements realized by the Government and by Jamal Pasha's administration in modernizing the school system, building colleges, hospitals, and other public facilities. Particular attention is paid to Jamal's extension of the Hijazi railroad and telegraph lines linking central and southern Palestine to Syria, Anatolia and Hijaz.

These opposing influences within the expedition were manifested by the strong advocates of Arabism in its ranks, namely Salim al-Ya'qubi, Sheikh Ali Rimawi and Kurd Ali himself. Their stance avowed an Arab cultural identity dressed in Ottoman garb, predicating a strong association with the Ottoman state as the guardian of the unity of its ethnic components. It was expressed with a sense of pride stemming from a recognition, in their minds, of Arab superiority over slavish Turkish discipline, and of the Arab roots of Islam. Their Arabness was plainly articulated through Rimawi's literary virtuosity, Ya'coubi's strong identification with the purity of Wahhabism, and Kurd Ali's mission to restore the glory of Syrian civilization.

There is considerable focus in the expedition reporting on the Hijazi attitudes towards the Sultanate. Prince Faisal and the Hashemites appear in the first expedition as important supporters of the war effort. Their involvement was crucial for the CUP government because of their symbolic status as guardians of the Holy Places, and as legitimizing loyalists of the Ottoman caliphate. Emir Faisal, who was on a solidarity mission in Damascus during this period, and Sharif Hussein are here designated as partners in the Ottoman campaign against the British. In the second expedition the treatment of the Hijazis becomes more cautious. The Hashemites are now seen as vacillating in their support. Jamal's ruthless campaign against Syrian nationalists, including the execution of leading patriots in Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem, had alienated an increasing number of Ottoman loyalists, and even though the Hashemites had already made the decision to secede from the Ottoman regime when these speeches were made, the degree of their "betrayal" was not yet clear to Istanbul.

A third issue permeating the expedition reports is the question of "Turkification." Muhammad Kurd Ali presented the most sophisticated case for Arab support of an

Ottoman commonwealth based on Turkish-Arab unity. He also made the most succinct plea for bilingualism as an instrument of integration in the Empire. His contribution to the discourse of unity in the Gallipoli document contrasts sharply with his apologetic propaganda on behalf of Enver Pasha in the Hijazi report (*al-rihla al-Anwariyyah*). Turkification in the latter appears as a linguistic issue articulating a common Ottoman identity, and a question of political integration of the Arab provinces within the Empire.

Contrary to subsequent accusations by Syrian and Arab nationalists, Turkification is not posited as a forceful imposition against Arab culture. On the contrary, the report proposes a parallel process of Ottoman integration through what it terms as “Arab Turkification” and “Turkish Arabization” through the introduction of general curricular reform in the Syrian and Anatolian schooling systems. The framing of these assimilatory schemes was the common Islamic bond within *al-jami‘a al-Islamiyyah*. But these schemes are proposed here, mainly by Muhammad Kurd Ali and As‘ad Shuqayri, as general guidelines for preserving the union against centrifugal currents, and no attempt is made to explain how they would be implemented or their social ramifications. Nor is there any mention of the status of other ethnic or religious groups in the Ottoman domain except a single collective reference to Kurds, Armenians, Greeks (*Rumis*), and Bulgarians as constituent groups of the realm.⁹⁶ Aside from Lebanon, where the delegates visited mission schools and speeches were made by local orators in favor of *Osmanlilik*, Christian Arabs were ignored in both reports, and the campaign against the Armenians was not even hinted at.

It was emblematic of the two “apologetic” reports that their chief author, Muhammad Kurd Ali, was a cosmopolitan man of Circassian-Kurdish descent, which may have been a factor in his strident adoption of Ottomanism and bilingualism as an instrument of national integration. His descent may also have been a factor in the sudden renunciation of his national identity in favor of Syrian Arab nationalism. He was soon to regret his authorship of the report, which cast a dark shadow on his integrity as a scholar during the Faisali period in Damascus. We note here the retreat in the discourse on *Osmenlilik* and the rise in the use of references to Islam, Islamic unity, and the strength of the Islamic bond in the Sultanate. Not surprisingly this discourse on the Islamic core of Ottomanism was also adopted by several Christian intellectuals in Mount Lebanon and Palestine, such as Najib Nassar, Butrus al-Bustani, and others.⁹⁷ In their work, however, *Osmanlilik* was a secular doctrine of emancipated citizenship with an Islamic cultural core. In Palestine Zionism was a factor in creating a split in the local intelligentsia’s views towards CUP leadership. In Nablus and Jaffa, for example, there was considerable support for the Hamidian restoration, rising from the fear that the Young Turks were exhibiting sympathetic attitudes towards Jewish settlement, while the Sultan was stridently opposed to land sale and colonization.⁹⁸ A strong case has been made in recent literature in support of the view that Ottomanist ideology crystallized in the Arab East through the emergence of an imperial citizenship, or at least the quest for it, during the constitutional period. Michelle Campos examines this development in Palestine, and Butrus Abu Manneh in Lebanon. Both stress the important role of the Christian intelligentsia (as well as Jewish Ottomanism in the case of Palestine) in the growth of a common bond of citizenship, transcending sectarian boundaries.⁹⁹ On the other hand Hasan Kayali demonstrates that this

incipient, all-embracing notion of imperial citizenship was reduced during the war years to a CUP-driven notion of an Islamic Ottomanism whose core was Syria and Anatolia. This development was hastened by the secession of European provinces of the Sultanate, by colonial threats to the unity of the Empire, and by the Armenian question. But this Islamic *Osmenlilik* was itself subject to challenges within Syria and Hijaz – by Arabist intellectuals in Syria and by Hijazi opposition to the undermining of the caliphate by the Young Turks, as well as by Wahhabi challenges to Istanbul.¹⁰⁰ In the first instance the challenge came from Arab nationalists and autonomists threatened by what they saw as Turanic tendencies within the CUP leadership. In the second instance (in Hijaz as well as in Palestine) by Arab perception that the Young Turks were undermining the principles of Islamic rule as they saw it.

It is unlikely that the “Scientific Expedition” or its companion report, *al-rihla al-Anwariyyah* swayed the literate public in Syria and Palestine in favor of the Ottoman war effort. The rising tide of sentiment against Jamal Pasha’s administration was already gaining momentum and was compounded by the devastating effect of *seferberlik* and the economic blockade of the Syrian coast. But the fact that the two expeditions to Gallipoli and Hijaz could muster such an influential group of leading figures in journalism, education and ‘ulama – few of whom were known for their critical attitude towards the government – showed that public attitudes at the height of the military campaign continued to uphold the bonds that united Syria to Anatolia, and that a substantial body of the Arab public continued to believe in the Ottoman realm as their own, and that separation from Istanbul still carried the mark of betrayal.

Of all the authors involved in the two expeditions Muhammad Kurd Ali was the only one to continue to have a lasting influence in the Arab East and beyond. His detractors and supporters continue to debate his ideas until today. His opponents see him as an Arab nationalist disguised as a religious scholar– one who favors Christian Arabists over the Muslim *salafis* with whom he disagreed. He was severely criticized by conservative scholars for his championing of *sufur* (movement to discard the hijab) and claiming, according to one of his opponents, that the instruction to wear the veil applied only to the Prophet’s wives, not to Muslim women in general.¹⁰¹ He was also attacked for his defense of the deeds of the CUP leadership in the two reports, even when he himself did not believe in their mission. On his predicament Kheir al-Din al-Zarkali, who was Kurd Ali’s great student and admirer, has the last word. In his biographical lexicon he writes that “The ghost of Jamal Pasha continued to haunt him a long time after the fall of the Ottoman Sultanate.”¹⁰²

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Endnotes

- 1 Muhammad al-Baqir et al., *al-Bi'thah al-'ilmīyah ilā dār al-khilāfah al-Islāmīyah* (Beirut: Scientific Press, Dar Sadir, 1334 H, 1916), 6, 21. Kurd Ali was the chief author of the companion report to this volume on the expedition to the Hijaz, M. Kurd 'Alī, *Al-riḥlah Al-Anwarīyah Ilā Al-Asqā' Al-Ḥijāzīyah Wa-Al-Shāmīyah: Wa-hiya Ṣafahāt Ḍammāt Shaml Mā Tafarraqa Min Siyāḥat Rajul Al-'uthmānīyīn Wa-Baṭal Al-Islām Wa-Al-Muslimīn, Ṣāhib Al-Dawlah Wa-Al-'uṭūfah Anwar Bāshā* (Beirut: Scientific Press, Dar Sadir, 1916).
- 2 Michael Fischbach, "As'ad Shuqayri," in *Palestinian Personalities: A Biographic Dictionary*, ed. Mahdī 'Abd al-Hādī, (Jerusalem: Passia, 2006), 448-449.
- 3 See I. Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
- 4 Munir Fakher Eldin, "Hawajis al Nahda fi rasa'il Jubran Kuzma ila Jamal al Husseini," *Hawliyyat al Quds*, no. 12, (Winter 2012): 25-33; see also Munir Fakher Eldin, "Communities of Owners: land law, governance, and politics in Palestine, 1882-1948," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis (New York University, 2008).
- 5 M. Kurd 'Alī *Al-riḥlah*, 219.
- 6 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 8-9.
- 7 See for example, al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 63-64.
- 8 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 150-151.
- 9 Ya'coub al-Odat, "Sheikh Ali al Rimawi," in *A'lām al-Fikr wa-l-Adab fi Filastin*, Jerusalem: Dar al-Isra', 1992), 221-222.
- 10 Y. Yehōsua', *Tārīḥ aṣ-ṣiḥāfa al-'arabiya fi Filasṭīn fī l-'ahd al-'uṭmānī: 1908-1918 [The Arabic press in Palestine during the Ottoman regime]* (Al-Quds: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1974), 74.
- 11 Ali al-Rimawi, *al Najah*, no. 50; quoted in Yehōsua', *Tārīḥ aṣ-ṣiḥāfa*, 74-75.
- 12 Yehōsua', *Tārīḥ aṣ-ṣiḥāfa*, 75.
- 13 *haHerut*, April 8, 1913, quoted in Yehōsua', *Tārīḥ aṣ-ṣiḥāfa*, 76.
- 14 For Rimawi's hagiographic poetry see al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 67-68, 196-197, 208-211, 283-284. His odes to the Ottoman armed forces and to Enver appear in M. Kurd 'Alī, *Riḥlah*, 229-233 and 250-252 respectively.
- 15 *Palestine Gazette*, Supplement 38a, December 26, 1918; cited in Yehōsua', *Tārīḥ aṣ-ṣiḥāfa*, 76.
- 16 Samīr Shihādah Tamīmī, *Ḥassān Filasṭīn: Salīm Abū al-Iqbāl al-Ya'qūbī, 1880-1941 : ḥayātuhu wa-shi'ruh* (al-Quds: Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-Filasṭīnīyīn, 1991), 73.
- 17 Shihādah Tamīmī, *Ḥassān Filasṭīn*, 2.
- 18 Ya'qūb 'Awdāt, *Min a'lām al-fikr wa-al-adab fī Filasṭīn* ('Amman: Wakālat al-Tawzī' al-Urdunīyah, 1987), 272.
- 19 'Awdāt, *Min a'lām*, 273.
- 20 'Awdāt, *Min a'lām*, 273-274.
- 21 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 198.
- 22 M. Kurd 'Alī, *Riḥlah*, 234-236.
- 23 'Awdāt, *Min a'lām*, 673-674; Shihādah Tamīmī, *Ḥassān Filasṭīn*, 14-15.
- 24 Shihādah Tamīmī, *Ḥassān Filasṭīn*, 19-20.
- 25 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 90.
- 26 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 91.
- 27 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 92.
- 28 al-Baqir, *Bi'thah*, 93. For Jamal Pasha's public works schemes and infrastructural investments in Syria and Palestine see Hasan Kayali, "Wartime Regional and Imperial Integration of Greater Syria during World War I" in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation : Bilād al-Shām from the 18th to the 20th century*, ed. T. Philipp and B. Schäbler (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998), 295-329.
- 29 M. Kurd Ali, "Hayat mu'alif Khitat al Sham: tarjamatuhi binafsihi," in *Khitat al Sham*, vol. 6 (Dimashq: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥadīthah), 338.
- 30 M. Kurd Ali, "Hayat," 333-347.
- 31 M. Kurd Ali, "Hayat," 344.
- 32 M. Kurd Ali, "Hayat," 339.
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