



Jurji Habib Hanania

History of the Earliest Press in Palestine, 1908-1914

Mary Hanania

Photo of the Nicola Farradj family in Jerusalem at the dawn of the 20th century. Standing on the right is Jurji Hanania next to his seated wife Aniseh Farradj Hanania and their children. Aniseh's sister, Marie Farradj al Issa, is seated on the opposite side of the picture near her husband Jiryis and their children, several of whom would later distinguish themselves in literary careers including newspaper publication. Standing near the center are Aniseh's brothers Yaqub and Dimitri Farradj. *Source: Collection of the author.*

When Jurji Hanania launched his newspaper *al-Quds* in Jerusalem almost a hundred years ago (1908), the only medium for the spread of information in the country was the printed word, and even that was limited to books and such occasional publications as pamphlets for tourists and tracts issued by government offices. For many years preceding, the Ottoman regime had exercised despotic control over its provinces (among them Palestine, the common name used for the Jerusalem governorship under the Ottoman Empire) and imposed strict censorship on anything that appeared in print. That period of repression ended in 1908 when the empire's constitution was restored and, with it, its subjects' freedom of expression.

Jurji established his printing business in Jerusalem's old city in 1894, for several years printing material in a number of languages before seeking a permit to publish a newspaper in Arabic. But it was only after the Ottoman regime's constitutional reform in 1908 that the permit was granted and the paper started to appear. By then,

he had had ample time to plan for its form and contents. By many accounts, not only was it the first Palestinian newspaper to appear that year, but also one viewed as a standard-bearer. Jurji himself considered his paper a national, rather than profitable, undertaking.

The year 1908 is considered by many to be the point of departure for journalism in Palestine. While *al-Quds* was the first to appear, others followed, and it has been reported that there were as many as 15 permits issued to newspapers or magazines in 1908 alone. Not surprisingly, their coverage varied widely, as did their frequency of publication, and also their period of survival. In any case, all of these publications as well as later ones ceased to appear with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Jurji Hanania's *al-Quds* never reappeared.

As Jurji stood on the roof of his house in the old city of Jerusalem one day, his attention was grabbed by a beautiful rendition of the Muslim call to prayer from a nearby minaret. In those days, the '*muezzins*' who were selected to chant the call had to have an excellent and powerful voice and had to repeat the call from several positions around the minaret balcony, so it could be heard by all people in the area—unlike the more recent practice of recording the call and broadcasting it simultaneously in all directions. The call to prayer was of course a familiar aspect of life in the city, but Jurji was so taken by the beauty of the *muezzin*'s voice that he eventually made his way to the street, greeted the man as he left the minaret, told him how much he enjoyed listening to his chanting and invited him into the house for a chat. There, over a cup of coffee, Jurji persuaded the *muezzin* to spend more time in the future making the call when he faced Jurji's home than he did in other directions! A deal was struck. The *muezzin* was pleased to know that his call to prayer gave so much pleasure, particularly to a Christian, and Jurji was pleased to get his additional daily dose of the enchanting vocal solo.

This anecdote, related by Jurji's immediate family, says much about the man who pioneered the publication of newspapers in Jerusalem in the first decade of the twentieth century—about his spontaneity, originality, outgoing nature, appreciation for good music, and the confidence he had of his status in society.

The Hananias of Jurji's family trace their roots back many generations in Jerusalem, with reason to believe those roots run to the early days of Christianity there, though no records exist for that period—only inscriptions of the family name on oil and wine vats unearthed in various archaeological digs. For several generations, in order to distinguish themselves from the other Hanania families in Jerusalem and elsewhere, this family chose to use 'Habib Hanania' as a surname, 'Habib' being the given name of one of their ancestors. Jurji's father used it, as did Jurji and his children, but later generations dropped 'Habib' from the name.

Jurji's father, Issa Habib Hanania, was the only Christian member of the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, and his mother, Katingo, was a Greek from Istanbul, the daughter of a high-ranking officer in the Ottoman regime. It was an arranged marriage. The family relates that when 14-year-old Katingo was due to leave Istanbul for Jerusalem to marry Issa, she went with her father to visit the sultan. After they had paid their respects and as she bid the sultan goodbye, she was given a ring with a strikingly large diamond as a gift. That ring must have given the young teenager some comfort as she started a new life

far from home and as she adjusted to being a wife and a mother, but there is no trace of it among the family heirlooms. It was probably sold during the lean years that the family went through later. But the language that the Greek bride brought with her to Jerusalem remained with them a great deal longer. Greek became the family's second language, and everyone spoke it fluently—not only her children but her grandchildren as well, including my father and his siblings. Greek was the language that the grown-ups used when they didn't want us, the fourth generation, to understand what they were talking about. This led my brother and me on occasion to secretly jot down a transcript of some words and run off to our aunt's house to ask her for the meaning. We too learned a little bit of Greek that way.

Jurji had a younger brother, Yaqub, who studied at the Greek Orthodox Divinity School in Jerusalem. There he learned Latin and Hebrew in addition to the languages he was already familiar with. Upon completing his studies, he travelled to Russia where he was hired to tutor the tsar's daughter in Hebrew. For years, the family would receive valuable gifts from Yacub (gold watches, precious jewellery, a samovar, specialty foods, etc.). Judging by a photograph in the family's collection showing him with some Russian friends in Jerusalem, Yacub must have gone home for a visit at least once during his sojourn in St. Petersburg. However, all contact between Yaqub and the family ended with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the end of the tsar's rule in 1917. He died in Russia during World War I (1914-18), according to his Russian widow who wrote to the family expressing her desire to visit them in Jerusalem. But, for unknown reasons, the visit did not materialize and they never heard from her again.



Yaqub (standing on right) with his Russian friends.
Source: Collection of the author

Jurji also had a sister, Irene, nine years his junior, who married a member of another old Jerusalem family, the Zakarias, and who also died during World War I.

Jurji himself undertook elementary and secondary education at the Bishop Gobat School in Jerusalem, but beyond that he was a self-educated man. He read extensively and ended up mastering what he referred to as his seven-and-a-half languages: Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, English, German, Russian and “a little Hebrew”.

Jurji was married to Aniseh Farradj, who also belonged to a prominent Jerusalem family. Of her siblings, her sister Marie married Jiryas Elissa, who became publisher of a newspaper in Jaffa and three of whose children later carried on with the newspaper business. Another of Marie’s sons, Said, became a well-known and highly respected poet in Jordan. Aniseh’s two brothers followed civic rather than literary careers—her brother Yaqub, a prominent leader of the Palestinian national movement in the 1930s, rising to the post of deputy mayor of Jerusalem, and her brother Dimitri becoming the district governor of Hebron and later of Ramallah.

Jurji and Aniseh lived in a house next to the printing press. Aniseh, a well-educated woman, was familiar with the daily running of the business and often lent a hand at the press when needed. They had four surviving children. The eldest was a girl, Katherine, followed by another girl, Futini, and two boys, Issa and Damian. Jurji was proud to send his daughters to the best available school for girls in Jerusalem and made sure they would be daily accompanied by an escort carrying their books there and back.



Jurji and his family, with his Greek mother Katingo seated on the right (circa 1904).
Source: Collection of the author



Jurji’s daughters, Futini (left) and Katherine (right), circa 1909. *Source: Collection of the author*

Presumably, the boys did not need this kind of protection when it was time for them to attend school.

It is clear from Jurji's early acquisition of a printing press, and from his persistent and eventually successful efforts to publish a newspaper, that he was a man devoted to the written word. He was also passionate about the beneficial effects of the written word on society—something that is evident in the editorials of the few copies of *al-Quds* that I have seen. He and others felt, however, that little more could be done to promote education and culture in the country unless Palestine were to free itself from Ottoman rule. They formed a secret society that called itself 'Palestine the Maiden' (*Falastin al-Fatat*) with the intention of working towards a 'young', enlightened and free Palestine. Although the original motivation was one of education and literary pursuit, the society must have developed some political overtones as well. Juji's membership in this group, when discovered, was of course severely frowned upon by the Ottoman authorities and that may have contributed to his precipitous departure from Palestine in 1914.

By all accounts, Jurji was a pious man who attended church every Sunday and, having an exceptionally good voice, regularly sang in the choir in both Arabic and Greek. Music was part of his daily life as well. He loved to play the mandolin, although there were other musical instruments in the house. Over the years, and long after he was gone, the mandolin became the family instrument of choice for his children and grandchildren. My father and my aunt often played their mandolins together at family gatherings. I never learned to play it well myself, but my brothers and an older cousin did, and one of them later chose to take extensive lessons in classical mandolin music during his college days.

Jurji paid particular attention to his appearance, for he was always seen well-dressed and well-groomed. He was also a jolly person, with a keen sense of humour. Though usually spontaneous in his actions, it seems that he also derived pleasure in observing certain formalities. One such occasion, I am told, was pay day at the press when the employees would line up to receive their weekly wages. As each worker received his share, Jurji would remind him to turn to the lady of the house, Aniseh, and thank her as well.

The Final Years

In 1914, with the newspaper in its sixth year, Jurji had an ambitious plan for expansion and improvement, and there was great excitement and anticipation among the workers. He ordered a large and more modern printing press, took out an insurance policy for it, and bought stacks of various types of paper to meet all his projected needs. He mortgaged the existing press equipment and materials against a loan to cover the cost. But the jittery political atmosphere at that time worked against him. Business slackened as the pre-war rumbles grew louder. As he failed to make one loan payment

after another, a declaration of bankruptcy became inevitable. His daughters were already married and living away from the house, but there was Aniseh and the two young boys to provide for. Jurji quickly decided to leave for Alexandria, Egypt, where he might obtain some help from his friends. The deteriorating financial situation and Jurji's departure were, of course, hard on the family. Aniseh took charge of the press and ran its business for a while, but that could not go on very long. In due course, the official gazette carried an announcement by the German Bank of Palestine to the effect that, since the owner of the press had defaulted on his payments on the loan, the equipment was being put up for public sale. Aniseh and her two boys packed their belongings and the various papers and documents that came from the press and moved to a smaller house near the home of her daughter Katherine.

Some of the papers from the press came in handy in an unexpected way, according to my cousin Henrietta Siksek Farradj. They were a collection of blank cards with raised colourful borders of flowers (some with roses and some with forget-me-nots) meant to be used for printed greetings. The family offered them for sale, and the cards soon became a coveted shopping item for the scores of soldiers who went through the city during the war—so much so that Aniseh decided to put away a few of them as a souvenir from old times. Several years later, young Henrietta came upon this hidden batch and was fascinated by them. Although she doesn't say so, those flowered cards must have been her inspiration for the beautiful greeting cards with pressed flowers from the Holy Land that she has been designing for many years, cards that are now sold for the benefit of the charity, The Four Homes of Mercy, that her mother, Katherine, founded in 1940 and that Henrietta still serves.

At the time of the move to the smaller house, Issa was only a teenager and Damian a boy of 10 or 11 who entertained himself when he was home by playing with the boxes and stacks of paper that they had brought with them from the press. It was well into the war years when Damian's playful progress through those stacks uncovered an envelope with two foreign words, "CREDIT FONCIE", written on it in block letters. He had been learning French at school and decided to show off his knowledge to his mother by reading the words to her. As soon as Aniseh saw the envelope, she realized what it was. "Credit Foncie" was the name of the insurance company for the press, and the envelope contained the insurance documents! Before long, the proper claim was made and the insurance money paid, and life for Jurji's family became a great deal easier. They had suffered through a couple of difficult years with very little income.

One is tempted to wonder why Jurji did not remove the insurance documents from the press office before leaving and hand them to his wife for safekeeping, until one remembers how abrupt his departure was and, after his departure, how impossible it was for people to communicate between Ottoman-controlled Palestine and British-controlled Egypt while the war was raging. If Jurji had hoped to send money from Egypt to Palestine, he must have soon found that there was absolutely no way to proceed.

In Alexandria, Jurji was welcomed and given all the support he needed by his friend, the Orthodox patriarch, who introduced him to several writers and scholars in the city. He settled there, participated in the various literary activities available and continued to pursue his own career. He published a yearly calendar called “The Jerusalem Outcome for the Sons of the Greek Orthodox Church” (a seemingly cumbersome title when translated into English, but which has a natural poetic rhythm in the Arabic). He worked with someone known as ‘Father Hazboun’ in compiling a dictionary and started to research the history of the Orthodox Church. He also remained active with the Palestine the Maiden reformist group, many of whose members also ended up in Alexandria. But this was a far cry from his pioneering work in Palestine, a country he dearly loved and where he had hoped his work would make a significant contribution towards a better and more educated society. That realization must have weighed heavily on his heart, and people who knew him previously could see that he had noticeably aged in only a couple of years.

Jurji was cheered, however, by the knowledge that his beloved country was at last free of Ottoman rule. In a preface to the calendar he prepared in 1918, he welcomed the news that the war had ended and that Jerusalem had fallen into British hands. He also expressed the hope that the gates of the holy city would remain forever open and that there would be no world wars any more. Although he spoke of his intention to return to Jerusalem as soon as some of the work he had started in Egypt was completed and as soon as travel across the Sinai desert became easier, he never saw his family again. Two years later, at the age of 56, he died of a heart attack at his home in Alexandria, Egypt.

The question naturally arises as to why Jurji did not return to Jerusalem immediately. There was the better part of two years after the war had ended when he presumably had the opportunity to do so. Part of the reason perhaps lies in the fact that, with the newspaper and printing press gone and with a new political order in Jerusalem, there was no business activity for him to resume and no government contacts to re-activate, whereas his scholarly activities in Alexandria were already in high gear. But that is not necessarily a complete explanation, for he was a proud man who may have wanted to avoid facing a society that once viewed him as a leader and that would now focus on his failures. One can easily imagine that he considered such an experience to be too humiliating for him and too awkward for his family, and that he chose another route. After four years in Alexandria as an active member of a literary community that he enjoyed being part of, and knowing that his family in Jerusalem had survived the war and were managing well without him, he may have decided to maintain the status quo.

In the meantime, Aniseh lived comfortably with her sons and their families in Jerusalem’s old city, not far from where Katherine and her family lived, and she saw them all daily until her death in 1936.



Photo from a wedding attended by Jurji Hanania (4th from the right) and Aniseh Hanania (7th from the right) has the names and identities of family members scrawled in Arabic. *Source: Collection of the author.*

I have a few faint memories of her: the piles of books by her bedside; the endless stream of stories, told slowly and with great dramatic effect, with which she entertained us kids as we sat around her in fascination; the frequent ringing of the doorbell as friends or relatives came to call on her; the overpowering smell of coffee and the large plate of cookies that materialized whenever visitors dropped in; the frequent visits of a bishop and other members of the clergy who stopped by to see her and who chatted with her in Greek for what seemed to us—not understanding what was being said—like hours; the plates of leftover food that she carefully put aside for the beggars she knew were expecting them; her favorite way of softening Halloumi cheese over a flame for her breakfast; her own little kitchen in the basement in which she prepared special meals for herself as she observed the weeks of fasting decreed by the Orthodox church, and so on.

I am told that in her younger days Aniseh fancied beautiful clothes and expensive jewelry, but I doubt that she had any yearning in her heart for those things at the time I knew her. I remember her as a contented, capable, companionable person, with a loving family and lots of friends, who was in full command of a busy household. And I very clearly recall the sense of total emptiness that enveloped the house and the whole family when she died.

The Hanania Press

In the first issue of *al-Quds*, Jurji describes what prompted him to establish a printing service. At that time, there were several sizeable printing presses inside monasteries and missions that printed material of interest to their own communities. He says:

Since our city Jerusalem, like many others, has thirsted for the information and knowledge whose flow had dried up for generations, and since such information and knowledge can be spread only via the printed word while all of Jerusalem's presses—being purely faith-oriented—serve their own constituencies exclusively, it has become necessary to establish a press that plants the seeds of brotherhood and treats everyone equally and whose aim is to serve the entire nation rather than one particular group in preference to another. This turned out to be a difficult undertaking because of the many hindrances and obstacles that were placed in its way by the authorities. However, being one of those who have had some experience in such matters, I considered it my duty to try to fill the need in spite of all the hardships involved.

It is clear from Jurji's other writings that the "hindrances and obstacles" referred to here are the pre-1908 Ottoman regime's utter disregard for proper procedure and its whimsical treatment of the people under its rule.

I imagine that, in those days, a printing press would have been only a slightly more primitive version of a printing press I became familiar with in Beirut in the late 1940s. As editor of an alumni magazine, I made several visits to the press and saw the workers in action. In case a young reader has no idea of the intensive and meticulous labor that was involved in producing a page of print in those days, I'm including a description of their work in the following paragraph.

To produce a page of print, one must compose a mirror image of the text, one letter at a time, on a 'printing plate' (a shallow box having the dimensions of the desired page and subdivided into parallel rows for the desired lines). For any particular letter, a 'type' (a tiny rectangular stamp of that letter) is selected from the appropriate container by the 'typesetter' and carefully placed in the proper alignment within the plate. When the page is completely set up, the plate is inked and its image is reproduced on paper.

Selecting types for composing a page was one of the most arduous tasks possible. In the Hanania press, for instance, a typesetter would have to be familiar with the contents of 340 containers of type in order to make the right choice at each step in the process. Not surprisingly, typesetters were well paid.

Before buying his own press, Jurji Hanania started out by importing what he calls “foreign letters of the latest style and attractive design” (most probably French and Russian type) and using them to print material by renting facilities at presses owned by others in town. Such material was aimed at the tourists who flooded the city around Easter time every year, and so those attractively designed ‘letters’ were used for no more than three months each year. He then imported Arabic type but was careful to use it only at presses where the Arabic language was not known and the type would not be recognized as Arabic but mistaken for Turkish (which, in those days, was written in the Arabic script), thus circumventing a ban imposed by the government on printing material in Arabic without a special permit. This went on for about a year before the authorities tracked him down and almost brought a halt to all his printing activities. But he had been serving the government by printing various forms and booklets for use in its offices and, as luck would have it, he had just finished printing a book for someone he describes as a “notable and influential” government official. This seems to have persuaded the authorities to take a more forgiving view of his activities, and he was allowed to continue with his work in anticipation of an official permit, which was issued to him three years later, in 1898.

In the years preceding the official permit, Jurji worked at other people’s presses during the day and at home in the evening. With permit in hand, however, he bought an old printing machine, moved his collection of type and other material to new premises and became an independent publisher. The first machine was a small foot-operated printer but, with the expectation of obtaining a permit to publish a newspaper, he soon imported a full-sized fuel-powered European-made printing press.

There were difficulties. Jurji refers to this period in the Ottoman rule as the “age of despotism”, when there were hardly any rules of governance and people were subject to the whims and fancies of those in authority. The sultan, after 20 years of rule in which he saw his empire lose its grip on many of its provinces, had dismissed parliament and declared an absolute monarchy. This was later reversed when, in 1908 following a popular revolt, parliament was restored and the empire again had a constitutional government. Until that time (i.e. until 1908), dealing with government officials was an exercise in frustration. The fact that one of the government offices, the Ministry of Education, had jurisdiction over all printing presses and kept close control over material that went into print added a new—and unwelcome—dimension to the publisher’s daily efforts. Another obstacle arose from the fact that, as of 1903, Jurji Hanania’s press was asked to print the government’s weekly official gazette—in Arabic and Turkish—and that led to frequent unannounced visits by government officials to the premises, which in turn discouraged other writers from patronizing that press. Thus there were times when typesetters would work for two days to produce the official gazette and then sit idle until the next issue was brought to them the following week. Although he fully cooperated with the authorities, Jurji was also the victim of accusations about having “foreign inclinations”.

In spite of these difficulties, the printing press managed to produce 281 books in various languages, including 83 in Arabic, between the years 1899 and 1908. Unfortunately, only the titles of these books are known and there is otherwise no trace of any of them, according to a recent article published by the Palestine Return Centre (a UK organization). In addition to books, the press published various forms and tracts for use in several government offices, as well as material for tourists. It was not until September 1908 that the first issue of the newspaper saw the light of day.

Al-Quds, the Newspaper

Jurji devotes a good part of his editorial in the first issue of the newspaper (18 September, 1908) to relating his experience with the authorities in trying to obtain the permit to publish it. He says that, in 1899, he submitted an application to publish an Arabic newspaper that would “serve the country” (he carefully avoided using the word “nation” because that word—presumably implying an Arab nation—would “fall as a thunderbolt on the ears of the despotic Ottoman administration”). When he went to the local administration offices in Jerusalem to check on the progress of his application, he was told that it had been lost, so he submitted another one but it also somehow got lost, as did two others subsequently submitted! By then, he had decided to take another approach. He walked into the room where the local council, which represented the community, was about to meet, told his story to one of the members and said to him, “It seems that the government assumes that everyone in our community is dead. So, since you gentlemen represent people considered not to be among the living, there is no need for you to meet at all! Why don’t we all go and bury ourselves together?” The council member, seemingly moved by the argument, promised to make immediate inquiries at the publications office and returned with the suggestion that yet another application be submitted. This was done, and the fifth application went as far as to be assigned a number, # 85.

Months passed, then years, during which various branches of the “despotic” government (this was prior to Turkey’s adopting a constitution) repeatedly made inquiries about the applicant and kept sending inspectors to check on work at the printing press. Whenever Jurji asked about the progress of his case, he was told that the permit was forthcoming and that he should be patient. According to one of the sources, he also resorted to bribery in the hope that that would help speed up the process, dishing out a total of 200 ‘Napoleons’ (a napoleon was a gold coin equivalent to 20 French francs, and probably a great deal of money in those days) in bribes, but to no avail. All he says about this in his first editorial is: “I waited long after I had emptied my pockets, but all I got from the person I had relied on was that I should not rush them”.

When the “age of despotism” ended with the introduction of a constitutional government in Turkey in 1908, Jurji quickly set the ball rolling. He telegraphed the appropriate department, quoting application # 85 that had been neglected for all of eight years, as well as other relevant documents. The permit was promptly issued and the newspaper began appearing soon after, all within months of the July 1908 announcement of the new Ottoman government. Jurji started his first editorial with the words “Thank God”, and repeated his thanks to the Almighty several times in the course of that two-page editorial.

The paper was allowed to appear twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, and consisted of four pages. Jurji was at the same time its owner, publisher and editor. It had an attractive logo made up of an artistic rendering of the word “*al-Quds*” in Arabic (Arabic for ‘Jerusalem’) over which floated three connected stars labeled “freedom”, “equality” and “brotherhood”—the motto of the popular revolt that had brought about the constitution’s restoration. The name of the paper was given in both French and Arabic, as was information about ownership (Georges I. Habib Hanania), annual subscription rates in Jerusalem, Turkey or “l’Etranger”, and advertising prices. Prices and rates for different purposes were stated in different currencies: Turkish *mejjidies*, French *francs* and local *piasters*. No price was stated for single issues, implying that it was available only to subscribers, who were required to pay in advance. Each issue was printed in 1500 copies.

As far as I can make out from all the sources that I have consulted, *al-Quds* was indeed the first privately owned Arabic newspaper in Palestine (something I know was taken for granted by the family). Suleiman’s 1987 book states that, before Jurji Hanania’s paper appeared, there was only an official monthly paper, *al-Quds al-Sharif (The Noble Jerusalem)*, irregularly issued by the Ottoman regime as of 1876 in Turkish and Arabic. Soon after Jurji’s *al-Quds* appeared, a rival paper called *Bashir Falastin (Palestine Herald)* was published for a brief period for the purpose of defending the Greek Orthodox Church against challenges to its authority from the Arab Orthodox community. But there was no mention of this paper in other sources, and I suspect that it had a very brief run or very limited circulation, or both. Yehoshua has found that, by the time the Ottoman regime ended in 1918, as many as 30 Arabic newspapers had appeared in Palestine (in Haifa and Jaffa, as well as Jerusalem) but many of them had lasted for only a few months or a year and no copies of them were to be found. In one of his editorials in 1913, Jurji himself mentions that four papers were forced to close down within a year or two of starting publication.

Jurji described his paper as dealing with “science, literature and information”. Of particular interest to him, at least in the beginning and according to his editorial policy as stated in the first issue, was the question of how best to overcome the problems resulting from the Ottoman’s earlier style of rule. It is clear from that statement that he considered “science, literature and information” to have been badly neglected during

the previous regime and needed an effective local effort to revive them. He invited his readers to send in “useful” contributions by way of letters or articles for publication in the paper. He also showed his loyalty to the sultan by calling the paper “an Ottoman publication that champions truth and aims to serve the country with the utmost sincerity”.

In any case, the paper carried a good deal of government news and remained neutral in the face of rivalries that inevitably sprang up among the various political parties. The editor also managed to avoid taking sides in the disputes that raged between the Arab Orthodox community and the Greek elements in the Orthodox Church whom the Arabs accused of high-handedness in community matters, although as a church-going Orthodox layman he must have been tempted to get into the fray, particularly as he was considered by many members of the community to be a supporter of the Greek position. He actually agreed to publish whatever news or commentaries were sent to him from either ‘side’, provided the article was signed and was “within the acceptable bounds of civility and free of abuse and libel”. He further announced that he would follow the same policy with any group wishing to air their grievances on the pages of his newspaper.

Al-Quds offered extensive news coverage of various aspects of life in Jerusalem, as well as reports from neighboring towns. Occasionally, there would also be a news report from Brazil (where some Palestinians had emigrated). But the editor was able at the same time to maintain a high literary standard for his paper by attracting articles from prominent writers of the day (among them Khalil Sakakini and Shaykh Ali Rimawi), as well as original poetry, and by publishing translations of some selected literary and social articles appearing in the foreign press. His command of several languages made it easy for him to make the selections and rewrite the articles in Arabic. It appears that he never succeeded in finding a suitable permanent editor for the paper and had to take on the entire responsibility for running it himself, while occasionally relying on a visiting editor to handle a particular issue.

Although Jurji had hoped to make *al-Quds* a daily newspaper, it is doubtful that the Ottoman authorities would have allowed that. In any case, the facts of poor circulation did not warrant such an expansion. For one thing, some officials expected to receive



Picture of a cushion embroidered by Jurji's teenage daughter Katherine, congratulating her father on receiving the newspaper permit (Date on embroidery: 21 August, 1908). Source: Collection of the author

the newspaper regularly without having to pay for it. For another, many of those who subscribed found themselves increasingly surrounded by friends who borrowed the paper on a regular basis and thus avoided becoming subscribers themselves! As a result, fewer copies of the paper were printed and distributed in its fifth year than in any of the previous four, according to its publisher. Even so, publication continued well into the sixth year, 1914. I have no record of when the last issue of *al-Quds* appeared but it is known that, at the start of the war, Jurji Hanania left Jerusalem and went to Alexandria, Egypt, where he died in 1920.

A Selection of Items from *al-Quds* in its First Year (1908-9)

The paper appeared in four pages. Columns, lines, squiggles or little patterns separated the different items, and there was an occasional design accompanying commercial ads, but there were no photographs. The flowery style, and the excessive use of honorific titles, were probably dictated by the customs of the day—and well-served by the richness of the Arabic language.

The dates of the newspaper are at first confusing. Instead of one date, each issue of the paper carried three dates: the date according to the Julian calendar¹ (used throughout the Ottoman Empire and Russia), followed by the date according to the Gregorian calendar (used in most other countries), and followed by the Islamic date. All dates quoted in the selections below are Gregorian.

***Al-Quds* on Ottoman Affairs**

The paper gave prominence to news about the Ottoman Empire and its rulers, particularly in the wake of the recently-introduced reforms.

- (18 Sept., 1908) The restoration of the constitution was an occasion for widespread celebration. (25 Sept., 1908) More celebration took place on the arrival in Jerusalem of the new governor, Subhi Beyk, who was met by cheering crowds and a lavish ceremony. Speeches and poems written to mark the occasion are reproduced in the newspaper.
- (29 Sept., 1908) The lead article announces the formation of a new society, the Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood, and goes on to argue for the utility of societies in “roaming around the government”, which is unable “by itself” to “mend the breaks and dress the wounds.”
- (11 Oct., 1908) Five-hundred Ottoman *fez* (*tarboush*) are offered for sale to local citizens at the Jerusalem branch of the Committee for Union and Progress. The shipment had been requested from the committee’s leaders in Istanbul.

- (29 Jan., 1909) The paper describes a banquet in Istanbul given in honour of a delegation from the Jerusalem Arab Orthodox community. The sultan attended the banquet and his speech was read (in Turkish) by a representative. The Arabic translation of the speech is printed in the newspaper, with mention of the numerous points at which the talk was intercepted with “prolonged and loud applause”. The paper reports that the reaction to his speech had such an effect on the sultan that he “broke into tears of joy”, and that many others in the hall wept with joy as well.

On 13 April, 1909, there was another military revolt against Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, and he was subsequently dethroned by a parliamentary resolution (*fetwa*), ending his thirty-three years of rule. Two weeks later, his brother was declared Sultan Mohammed V.

- (7 May, 1909) *Al-Quds* throws some light on the circumstances surrounding the 1909 revolt. It seems that, for the Ottoman ruling family, the oldest living male was designated as successor to the throne. For years, Abdul-Hamid had kept his younger brother Mohammed a virtual prisoner in his palace, and encouraged rumours about Mohammed’s physical and mental illnesses, in order to preserve the throne for his own son. With the restoration of the constitution, it became more and more difficult for him to maintain that deception and he ended up being dismissed by the very parliament he had restored barely a year before.
- (21 May, 1909) *Al-Quds* reports that Sultan Mohammed V was neither feeble-minded nor sick, and that there were more celebrations on the occasion of his ascension to the throne.
- (21 May, 1909) Arrangements were being made for Mohammed’s children to continue their education in west Europe—a first for Ottoman princes.
- (11 June, 1909) Also for the first time, the Sultan’s palace was to be illuminated by electricity.

***Al-Quds* and Jerusalem’s Religious Communities**

From time to time, the newspaper covered news of the conflict between the Greek Orthodox Church authorities in Jerusalem and the Arab Orthodox community, many of whose members were descendants of the earliest Christians in Jerusalem and so believed they had a right to participate in matters concerning the holy places in the city, as well as schools and other services provided by the church. The patriarch and high-ranking church officers were Greek and rarely saw eye-to-eye with the community leaders. Further complicating the situation was Russia’s avowed interest in ‘protecting’ the Christians of the Holy Land (most of whom were Orthodox), which brought about repeated confrontations between it and the Ottoman rulers.

Topics of particular interest to the sizeable Muslim Arab community of Jerusalem were also covered, and the paper published opinion articles, poetry and other contributions from this group. In addition, there were frequent announcements about copies of the Friday sermon on al-Haram al-Sharif being available for a small fee at the newspaper's office.

- (12 Aug., 1908) In more than two pages of the four-page newspaper, the publisher takes to task an article that had appeared in an Arabic/Greek publication and was written by someone at the Greek Orthodox patriarchate in Jerusalem. He says that he, Hanania, had withheld publishing anything that would reveal the conflicts between the church and the Arab congregation, but henceforth would invite anyone to write on the subject (or on any other controversy) provided that what they write is "signed, and expressed in civil terms". He analyzes the published article, pointing out errors in translation as well as fundamental factual errors in both versions. He also points out that some parts of the article that appeared in Greek were left out (deliberately?) in the Arabic translation.
- (25 Sept., 1908) During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the sunrise and sunset times in hours and minutes, as well as the times set for prayer, are listed for the benefit of those who observe the month of fasting.
- (5 Jan., 1909) The Orthodox community has elected a council of 40 members who will work with the Church on matters of mutual concern. At the same time, and against the community's will, the Synod (including monks and heads of monasteries) has demanded the resignation of Patriarch Damianos on the basis of the patriarchate's "mismanagement of the community's wealth and properties".² The patriarch subsequently resigns but is reinstated through the intervention of a delegation from other Palestinian cities: Jaffa, Ramallah and Lod.

International News

The paper made brief mention of news from other countries, quoting Reuters, Agence Nationale, Havas, and various sources in the European press, with reports from Athens, Belgrade, Paris, Istanbul, Berlin, Aden, etc. Detailed coverage was given to Ottoman-related news. Examples:

- (18 Sept., 1908) Ottoman forces have attacked the Kurdish rebels in Dersim and captured most of their leaders. The rest have surrendered, paid the taxes and returned the arms and possessions they had looted. The conditions in Cesme remain cause for concern.
- (5 Jan., 1909) Austria claims sovereignty over Bosnia & Herzegovina and quotes Russian consent to this sovereignty. Russia denies any involvement and

the Ottomans respond by confiscating Austrian goods throughout the lands. Intervention by other European countries, including monetary compensation, settles the conflict. (1/29/09) Ottoman/Austrian agreement contains clauses assuring the protection of Muslims' rights (civil, religious and political) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and free trade and travel.

- (29 Jan., 1909) Conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, cooling of relations between Italy and Austria.
- (20 April, 1909) News of famine in Algeria.
- (16 April, 1909) The "College of Chicago" has in this year received grants from "Mr. Rockefeller" totalling \$ 1,176,000.
- (25 May, 1909) A speech in the British parliament by Foreign Secretary Edward Gray decries the arms race and calls it wasteful and inciting other countries, like Germany, to spend on arms what it could use to better advantage. War is barbaric, he says. The speech is reproduced in the newspaper in full.
- (11 June, 1909) A German and an American psychologist have invented the "electric psycho meter", a gadget that can be used to judge if a person is telling the truth or lying, and the extent of his lies.

On the Lighter Side

Most issues of *al-Quds* contained items on the last page such as the following, reproduced without comment:

- (25 Sept., 1908) English doctors who have been studying women's heights have concluded that women will be taller than men 100 years from now. "European" research is also cited as having found that men have on the average lost two kirats (inches) during the past generation.
- (25 Sept., 1908) While we are accustomed to fire insurance for our homes here, we never thought of insuring them against bed bugs. This is now common in Switzerland.
- (11 Oct., 1908) Yesterday was the birthday of King Edward VII of England. In recognition of England's friendship and support for the new Ottoman regime, a special delegation went to the British consulate to offer congratulations. The delegation gave its speech in French. (An Arabic translation of the speech is reproduced in *al-Quds*.)
- (9 April, 1909) The chair that President Taft of the US sits on almost broke under his 240-pound weight. A stronger chair has been ordered for him.

- (20 April, 1909) Authorities in Augusta, US, are considering introducing a new law that makes an unmarried man who is at least 30 years old pay an additional annual tax, whereupon the totality of these taxes would be used to pay annuities to unmarried women over 40—provided the man can prove that he was rejected at least three times and the woman can prove that she was never properly proposed to.
- (7 May, 1909) On 1 April, a Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania, US) newspaper reported a Japanese attack on San Francisco that destroyed the American fleet and large parts of the city. Huge crowds mobbed the newspaper building before it was announced as an April fool.

Local and Community Affairs

The newspaper's announcements of weddings, deaths, arrival or departure of prominent community members and such personal news were each accompanied by the appropriate expressions of congratulations or sympathy on the part of the editor. There were also ads for sale of musical instruments, furniture, etc. Other items:

- (11 Oct., 1908) The address is given for a branch of Alcoholics Anonymous in Jerusalem. The society was established in Britain in 1900.
- (11 Oct., 1908) A new form of entertainment, called the “cinematograph” (moving pictures) is advertised and the week's schedule of the pictures to be shown is given, each labelled as drama, comedy, documentary, etc. The two-hour show is repeated every evening except on Fridays, and two shows are run on each of Saturday and Sunday. The program is changed on a weekly basis.
- (1 May, 1909) French lessons offered by a lady from Paris. (11 June, 1909) Evening classes for learning Turkish offered at different locations for Arabic-speaking and Hebrew-speaking individuals. (29 June, 1909) Lessons in Arabic and English offered through the newspaper.
- (4 Sept., 1909) From the Jerusalem Municipality: “All owners and drivers of carriages are hereby notified that they are now required to have a license to operate their vehicles and that every vehicle will have a license number to be attached to it. Permits to be obtained within 30 days.”
- (6 Nov., 1909) With reference to a report that Catholics in Bethlehem were refusing to have their children baptized by local priests and were appealing to the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem to send a special priest for the purpose, the editor writes:

For how long do we bow before foreigners? For how long must we rely on them for most of our needs? Were we born to be forever under the care of foreigners? Were foreigners born to be always in control over us materi-

ally, culturally and spiritually? Isn't it time for us to be men who conduct their own business and their own lives? In the past, we were poor, needing someone to help us. In the past, we were caught in the claws of a wild beast, the beast of our previous arbitrary rulers and that made us seek refuge in the protection of foreigners... Isn't it our duty to live independently? Should we not strive to make all our schools and our hospitals purely national? If we don't do that, we shall not succeed or advance and prosper but remain forever under the yolk of foreign domination.

- (30 July, 1909) Telegraphic stations are being placed throughout the country for the first time.
- (3 August, 1909) An article by 'M' (a pseudonym) chastises those who attribute selfish motives to the Jews vis-à-vis Palestine. According to him, they have no intention of claiming the country for themselves. 'M' argues that the Jews are in Palestine to build and improve and share the country, so we should treat them as brothers and welcome them.

Mary Hanania is the granddaughter of Jurji Hanania. Raised in Jerusalem, she now lives abroad where she is retired from academia.

Endnotes

¹ The Julian calendar, adopted under Julius Caesar, was universally used until 1582 when Pope Gregory XIII introduced a new calendar to correct for the discrepancy between the length of the Julian calendar year (365.25 days) and the actual length of the solar year (365.2424). By 1908, most of the world had adopted the Gregorian calendar but Turkey did not do so until 1927. Russia did in 1918. To this day, however, the Russian church and many other Orthodox churches continue to observe the Julian calendar dates which are currently 13 days behind Gregorian calendar dates.

² The Orthodox patriarch's alleged mismanagement of the community's properties in those early years of the twentieth century brings to mind the current, and more serious, crisis in Jerusalem, when the Jerusalem Arab community was shocked to learn that the Greek Orthodox patriarchate had sold, or allowed the sale of, prime property just outside Bab el-Khalil (Jaffa Gate) to the Israelis. The consequences of this particular 'mismanagement', which assists the Israeli government in carrying out its plan of encircling Jerusalem and cutting off the Arab part of the city from the rest of the Palestinian territories, can be enormous. The community was able to force this patriarch out and have him replaced. The new Patriarch, Theophilos III, may or may not be able to reverse the actions of his predecessor.

Bibliography

Al-Mausu'ah al-Filistiniya. vol. 2 (p 97) & vol. 3 (p 8) (Damascus: 1984).
 Diab, Suhair & Walid Khleif (eds.), *Muktatafat min al-Suhuf al-Filistiniya 1876-1948*, 1995.
 Suleiman, Mohammad. *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Filistiniya*, vol. I, 1876-1918 (Cyprus: 1987).

The Palestinian National Information Centre, "The History of Press in Palestine," www.pni.gov.ps
 The Palestinian Return Centre.
 Yehoshua, Jacob. *Tarikh al-sihafa al-Arabiya fi Filastin 'al-'ahd al-Uthmani*, vol. I, 1908-1918 (Jerusalem, 1974).